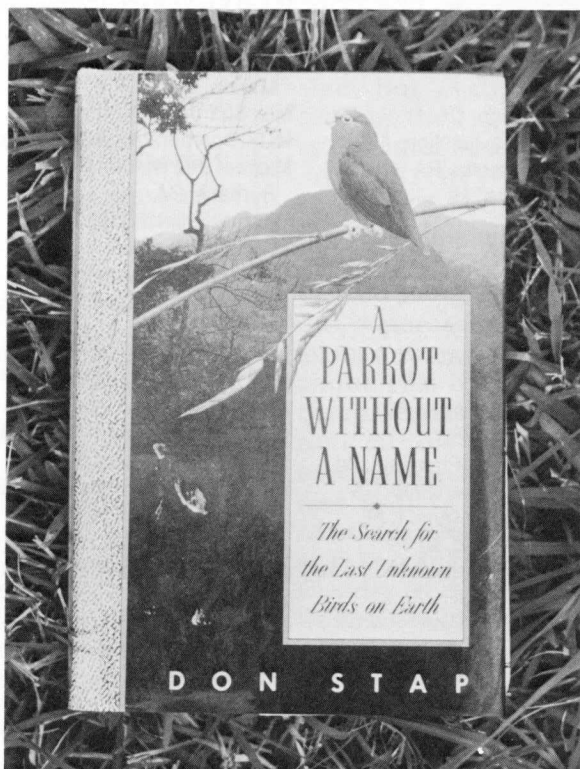


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A Parrot Without A Name

by Don Strap
Alfred A. Knopf, publisher
201 E. 50th Street, N.Y. 10022
Published Price: \$19.95
Published Date: 1990

reviewed by Jack Clinton-Eitnrear
Managing Editor



While the title of this book indicates that the subject is a parrot, in reality the reader is taken, via a well written travelogue, into field with Ted Parker and John O'Neill of the Louisiana State University. Don Strap, the author, was a member of one of O'Neill's collecting expeditions to the Cordillera Divisor of Peru in the late 1980s. From a non-scientist perspective, Strap writes of the rigors of field work.

It's an exciting book even for individuals, like myself, who have spent a significant amount of time in the field, traveling up rivers in dugouts and trekking through tropical forests. For those of you who have not yet ventured into the tropical forest, this book will certainly lure you into doing so. Emotions of another variety are, however, bound to be stirred as you read of collecting bird specimens for science. Toucans, parrots and bar-

rets: over 1,400 specimens were collected. Principally using mist nets but also shotguns, the specimens were not only killed and skinned but, in the case of one mealy parrot, eaten as well! Considering that without such collecting we would not have field guides nor much of a clue as to avian taxonomic relationships it, however, seems a small price to pay.

I found the 230 pages to be too short, just whetting my interest in the field activities of O'Neill, Parker and Gentry (the noted botanist). Oh, the parrot without a name is an unknown parrotlet first observed by Charles Munn in Manu Park but collected on the expedition of which Strap writes.

Anyone interested in neotropical ornithology should obtain a copy of this book and join Strap and his expedition crew in their "peki-peki" up the Rio Shesha of Peru. ●

Straight Talk Regarding Hybridization

by Bob Elgas, Big Timber, Montana

Hybridization is an issue which has increasingly come under scrutiny. As a practice it is controversial, emotional, and frequently not well understood. There is a misconception that it is comparatively harmless, when, in fact, quite the opposite is true. There is a need to be better informed on what hybridization is, what it does, and its affect, not only upon the resource, but aviculture itself.

Hybridization occurs when the male of one species is bred with the female of a different species. Progeny produced by mixed pairings are hybrids. It is noteworthy that the dictionary definition of the term hybrid is mongrel.

Most hybridization occurs with macaws. Because of their distinctive patterns and brilliant colors, hybridizing can produce unusual affects. Such affects notwithstanding, hybrids do not equal the beauty of pure species. For man to presume to improve upon that which nature has already accomplished is ridiculous. In view of the potential for disaster it is also irresponsible.

Proponents justify the practice under the rationale that included with ownership is a right to utilize the resource as they see fit. Opponents disagree. While it is conceded that ownership grants rights, they believe that included with those rights are responsibilities, one of which is utilization that is in the best interest of the resource. Hybridization is not considered as being in that interest.

Because of various factors, among them being habitat loss and illegal capture for the pet trade, the survivability of macaws is in jeopardy. Scientific professionals are concerned that several species will be exterminated within the foreseeable future. Should that occur, their survivability will depend upon their being preserved in captivity. For that to happen it will be necessary to establish comprehensive breeding programs which will ensure captive self sustaining populations. Although macaws are bred in captivity with some regularity, sufficient breeding programs, which could ensure their survival, do not yet exist.

Some of the basic principles of genetics are helpful in demonstrating why hybridization is wrong. The genetic composition of every species is