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Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle
Norco, California

Dear Mr. Dingle,

I would like to express my thanks for the article on and the support of the thick-billed parrot project in Arizona. It's a joy to see aviculture and conservation working together for the preservation of a species. I would also like to express the feelings of a breeder of macaws, hybrid and non-hybrid in response to the letters in the Feb/Mar issue of *Watchbird*.

The breeding of any macaw, hybrid or not, helps conservation by offering a bird to the pet market that wasn't taken from its native habitat. Thousands of macaws have been brought from the wild and in the types like militarys, blue and golds, green winged and scarlets there is a large supply of adult stock. Yet, importation of wild birds continues to diminish wild populations. Instead of paying more for domestic stock, some pet stores still sell wild-caught birds.

As a macaw breeder, my goal is to produce beautiful, loving pet birds. As a macaw lover, I am fascinated with their plumage, knowing the beauty of the scarlet, the green winged, the military, the blue and gold but also the Catalina, the shamrock, the Camelot. Hybridization is not replacing the breeding of native species but goes along with it. Because macaws often choose a mate from the other type and readily produce fertile offspring, hybridizing is a natural aspect of macaw breeding. Because the hybrids themselves are beautiful with clear, new macaw colors, they are worthwhile to produce.

It is not easy to breed macaws and I would like to mention one case of the pairs we have. I had two scarlets together that turned out to be males. At the same time, I had the opportunity to get an egg-laying Catalina hen. Knowing the beauty of the scarlet and Catalina hybrid I felt excited to set this pair up without importing another bird.

When scientists set up a program to restore wild populations of any macaw threatened with extinction, I will be among the first to support it in whatever way I can. I also plan to send a donation to the thick-billed parrot project. But let's not deny a place in the world for macaw hybrids. Instead, let's try to leave some birds in the jungle by

breeding pet birds and getting our breeding stock from captive-bred and previously imported birds.

Kathie Lostetter, Abiquiu, New Mexico



Dear Editor:

Our concern for the future of cockatiel reproduction has prompted us to write this letter. In the way of background we want you to know that we have been involved in raising American Cockatiel Society banded cockatiels for three years. We are also members of American Federation of Aviculture, National Finch Society, National Cockatiel Society and the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University. We have access to the publications of the Association of Avian Veterinarians, and we attend all of the continuing education courses that are offered in our area. Candi works for Greg J. Harrison, D.V.M. of the Bird Hospital in Lake Worth, Florida. So, on a day-to-day basis, we are actively involved in the cockatiel problems in this country.

For the past year we have been working with Dr. Harrison and a number of supporting laboratories in an attempt to diagnose some chronic disorders (e.g., paralyzed eyelids, crop-emptying problems, low hatchability, dead in the shell, short life span) that are commonly seen in cockatiel flocks in this state. What we have discovered is that many of these conditions are genetically related and are rarely encountered in purebred normal cockatiels.

As cockatiel breeders, we want to see aviculture become a profitable and successful business. Some of the ways we see this happening are:

1. Commitment to aviary husbandry and record keeping. The steps outlined by the Maryland Caged Bird Improvement Plan may help to serve as guidelines for the entire industry.
2. Disease prevention guidelines for all aviculturists.
3. Re-evaluation of show and breeding standards in order to incorporate birds from long-lived, disease resistant genetic lines.
4. Limitation of imported species, especially cockatiels, in order to achieve better prices on the domestic market and prevent further exposure of domestic flocks to new diseases.

We strongly believe that disease prevention is one of the major keys to avicultural success. But it won't work for just one aviculturist to prevent diseases in his own flock. All aviculturists need to band together to eliminate the primary disease problems

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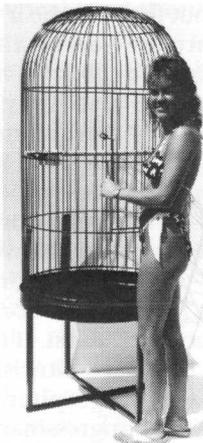
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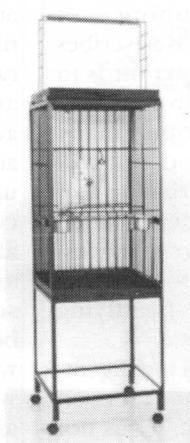
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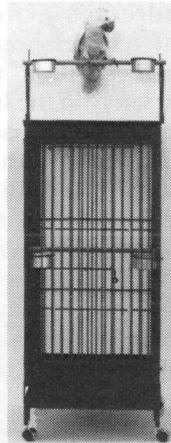
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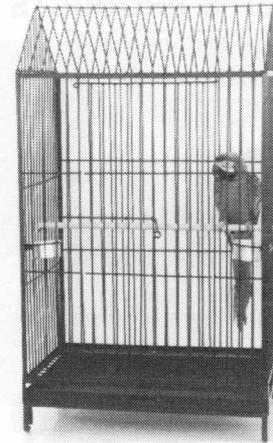
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in our birds. If we don't take the responsibility ourselves, the government may well step in and do it for us, as they did when the New York State ban on importation was passed in response to a single individual's complaint about a sick pet bird he bought.

We are committed to establishing a set of criteria for certifying cockatiels free of at least six specific diseases: Newcastle's disease, chlamydiosis, papovavirus, salmonellosis, reovirus and intestinal nematodes. Other people in South Florida have already expressed interest in working with us to establish these guidelines.

We invite the active participation of all members of the American Federation of Aviculture.

Sincerely yours,
 James and Candi Hawthorne
 4717 Weymouth Street
 Lake Worth, FL 33461
 Phone (305) 965-1753

*Dear Hawthornes,
 Your concern and recommendations are commendable. American aviculture can only profit by such efforts. Space limitations preclude our printing the Maryland Cage Bird Improvement Plan guidelines so I refer all interested persons to your personal address included with your letter. Ed.*



Dear Mr. Dingle,

I am writing in response to Liz Andreoli's article, "Clipping... a Different Perspective," which describes her method of "training" pet birds to live safely in the hostile environment of the human household. I found many faults in the author's method, but will not enumerate them here, trusting that the good sense of most readers will tell them that traumatizing a bird unnecessarily does not constitute good training technique. Furthermore, *no* free-flying bird is safe let loose in a house.

Although our pet birds are intelligent, affectionate creatures that can even learn to speak our language, let us not over-humanize them. Instead of working against their nature to instill in them an artificial sense to discriminate right from wrong, we should provide them with the safest environment possible. A bird kept in a roomy enclosure and taken out for carefully supervised play is as free in its mind as one given the lay of the house — and many times safer. The author mentions that she gave away her cherished cat for the sake of the birds, which shows that she could not deny it

its feline predation instinct. Yet, does she feel that her training will override the *bird's* natural instinct: to fly, hard and fast, at a loud noise, a sudden movement, a silent intruder? All the training the world will not keep a frightened bird from obeying this powerful impulse. A bird in such a state, *especially if unclipped*, can fly to its death in an encounter with a plate glass window, or, should the window be open, to liberty and oblivion. Wing clipping is as harmless and temporary as a haircut, and is practiced by responsible persons who understand this aspect of a bird's nature. It is unfair of the author to assume that it is used as a *substitute* for supervision, which is exactly the duty she seeks to evade by attempting to teach her birds to fend for themselves.

Your home is made for you, not your birds. The responsibility for their welfare is yours. Don't ask them to carry the burden of coping with dangers for which nature gave them no information. Sincerely,
 Catherine M. Hiller



Dear AFA:

The principal attraction in the AFA is its publication of *The AFA Watchbird*. However, upon reviewing the articles presented in this magazine during my membership over the past two years, I have decided not to renew my membership (maybe this will get someone's attention, but then maybe it won't). Let me congratulate you on the photography in *The Watchbird*. The graphics and layout are also very good. In addition, many merchants chose to advertise in your magazine, keeping me up to date on the latest products. Your coverage of various regulatory actions is also very appropriate. However, these are not my primary reasons for subscribing to *The Watchbird* or for becoming an aviculturist. If they were, I would not be an aviculturist. Instead I would be a photographer, a graphic artist, or a state congressman.

What I need is information, not just articles that are pleasant to read. Specifically, let us look at the Dec/Jan 1987 issue, page 4. Here we read about a brood of button quail dying off one by one due to apparently inappropriate care as prescribed by "a book." What I (and probably many others) would like to see here is a step-by-step list of these instructions and the method of implementation, so that I would be sure not to repeat the mistakes already made by

someone else.

In contrast, some of the articles are well presented and present a wealth of information. The same issue, page 16 is an example where the subject of incubation is covered in depth. However, it is the exception, and covers a topic I am very familiar with. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to cover this type of material on a regular basis for everyone to benefit from?

Handraising techniques might also be covered on a regular basis with in-depth scientific presentations. In other words, I would like to be able to duplicate a successful formula, step by step, feeding by feeding, hour by hour, etc. Exact amounts fed at each feeding, chick weights on a daily basis, feeding frequency, food content, incubator temperature and humidity are all necessary in a complete description of a rearing technique. In addition, the rate of success is vital in comparing one method with another. Although I can purchase a wealth of material that presents many techniques for handraising birds, it is presented only in a general fashion, relies on phrases such as "see what works best for you," and often appears to be entirely inappropriate (and it seems that others find this to be true as well). If a method works, is accompanied by exactly the right information, and is carried out to the letter, then there is no reason it should not be successfully employed by everyone else.

Diseases discussed on both a scientific and practical level should also be presented regularly. Cures and especially prevention are both of interest to me and many others. Foods accepted by picky birds, and successful diets for conditioning breeding birds should all be included in this category. Advice given by veterinarians and books, both good and bad, should be discussed. And every other aspect of a successful husbanding method should also be presented on a regular basis, and in a manner which is concise and to the point, which brings to mind another one of my peeves: *The Watchbird* is published for aviculturists, not for lovers of expansive works of literary genius.

The significance of a method can be enhanced by pinpointing or, at least, speculating upon key elements that made it either successful or a failure. Thus, by combining the good points of some techniques while avoiding the bad points of others, the work of many people might be combined to a useful end. Not only would this allow us, the

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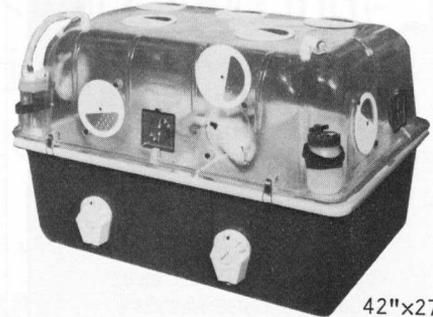
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aviculturists, to be more successful as a group and avoid unnecessary heartache, but it would also eliminate needless death and waste of countless birds. And isn't that what it's all about?

Sincerely,
Peter J. Jensen
Idaho Falls

Dear Mr. Jensen,

I admit, sir, that you present a very challenging letter. I've pondered it a good while and still don't know quite how to answer you but, perhaps, together we can explore some of the points you raise and some of the thoughts that occur to me.

First, thank you for being astute enough to recognize the quality of our photography and graphics. We feel The Watchbird is positively the highest quality avicultural magazine in these areas. Unfortunately, not all readers are able to distinguish between quality and mediocrity.

Second, I'm glad you noticed our constant attention to the legislative matters. After all, that is one of AFA's primary concerns.

The third category is more difficult — that of the contents of the magazine, the subject of the articles, as it were. Here you and I may drift apart I fear.

Admit it sir; what you want in articles is something to satisfy your own private, personal avicultural needs. You are one man, sir, and your interests are, I suspect, rather narrow. I get the impression that you want precise, step-by-step, failproof formulas for raising certain birds. You want, as it were, a detailed road map that even a dunce could follow.

Alas, dear friend, even if I knew the exact species of birds you have, it couldn't be done. Aviculture is not a precise science. There is no one map that will guarantee that journey. The way your mind seems to work I suggest you take up the study of mathematics. There you will find some immutable laws to satisfy your needs. When dealing with any sort of livestock there are so many variables that art, instinct, experience and talent play a very significant part in success.

Another factor that you seem to overlook is that The Watchbird is read by thousands of people. You, in effect, are asking me to tailor-make a magazine just for you. In fact, our last survey indicated that about half of our readers are interested in parlor-type pet birds. They want tips on training, tricks and talking birds, not hand feeding formulas. Now what?

In addition to birds, we raise thoroughbred horses for the racing industry. Let me assure you, sir, that the multi-billion dollar racing industry has spent untold millions on research to find foolproof methods of producing winning horses. And yet, even now, after centuries of effort, every breeder and trainer has his or her own methods. Many apparently contradictory methods work. No one formula is agreed upon.

Aviculture as an industry is in its infancy. And there are some 8,500 widely varying species of birds to deal with. The Watchbird strives harder than any other publication to give the most complete data on breeding birds but what you ask for is patently impossible.

I invite you to continue to glean the best from The Watchbird. With ten or fifteen years of experience behind you, you will, I assure you, understand the common saying, "see what works best for you." Ed.



Dear Editor,

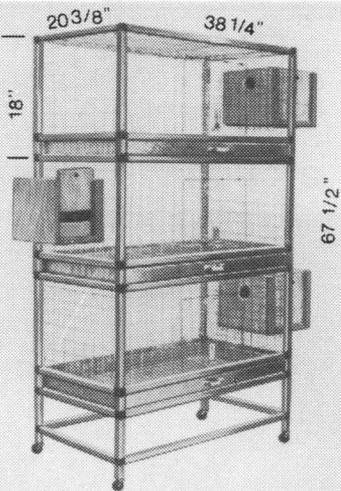
Please renew my subscription to Watchbird. Of all my bird magazines I love Watchbird best. I believe I read a letter from a reader complaining that your journal was too technical for him. I have two suggestions for him: 1) subscribe to Bird Talk. It's very simple to read, not as technical as the Watchbird, therefore, should be easier to understand, or 2) do what I did — read every Watchbird article thoroughly with a Webster's and a good medical dictionary close at hand. After awhile you'll see medical terms repeated and you'll come to know them by heart after seeing their definitions in the dictionary.

I always say, don't be too proud to look things up. Also, another tip — read every article in every journal you can. I have a variety of finches, parrots, cockatiels, etc., yet it is not beneath me to read articles on mute swans or eagles as, believe it or not, I always find something I can apply to my own birds.

All this leads one to believe that the more I learn, the less ignorant I become.

Sincerely,
Dolly Adams
Location withheld

Well said. A perspicacious young lady, indeed. Ed.



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Dear friends,

Recently the Ohio General Assembly tried to pass a new law to permit sport hunting of mourning doves.

I would like to know your organization's position on the hunting of these doves. Thank you.

David Sickles
Eastlake, Ohio

Dear David,

Although I merely edit this journal, I have been actively involved in the AFA from its inception and feel I can truthfully say the AFA does not have a position on dove hunting. To arrive at a formal organizational position on anything takes a great deal of wrestling and wrangling, arguing and debating among the board of directors which has over a hundred members. You may liken it to the efforts of congress to hammer out a policy. Don't be deceived, however. On certain red-alert issues the AFA has pounded out policy in a matter of days.

Hunting has never been a formal issue with the AFA. The AFA membership numbers in the multi-thousands of individuals each with his or her own opinion regarding hunting. Until such time as a hunting issue becomes pertinent to aviculture I doubt the AFA will expend the energy to formulate an official policy.

I, personally, am not a hunter. I much prefer the beautiful doves alive. It is unfair, however, to look down upon or to discriminate against those millions of Americans who truly love hunting.

Somthing else in the back of my mind, something I wish all AFA members would ponder deeply, is the fact that the last survey we conducted among our members indicated that only 6% of the respondents were interested in conservation. That, I feel, is an indictment that we should rectify.

Hunters, on the other hand, are probably the greatest single source of money used specifically for conservation. I read, not long ago, a government publication that told of 300 million dollars (if my memory serves me right) contributed by Ducks Unlimited to be used to improve the lakes and ponds' environment for the benefit of the many migratory species of wild North American ducks, geese and other waterfowl.

I am chagrined to think that hunters are much better conservationists than are the members of the AFA. I should be very glad to see that reversed. Ed. ●

PARROT SEXING

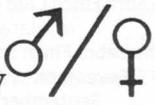
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