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CONSERVATION

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by Ross S. Anderson, D.V.M.
West Valley City, Utah



Toledo Bird Association
Zebra Finch Club of America, Inc.
affiliated with
The Zebra Finch Society of England
Seventeenth Annual Show

September 26, 1987

at

The Grotto Building
3005 West Laskey Road,
Toledo, Ohio

For information contact
Roxann Bennett
4449 Jackman #5
Toledo, OH 43612

Cascade Budgerigar Society, Inc.
Sixth Annual Budgerigar Show
to be held

October 16, 17 and 18, 1987

at

The Ramada Inn
at the Coliseum
10 N. Weidler Street
Portland, Oregon 97227

For information contact
show manager Roy Krause
5500 S.W. Lombard Ave.
Beaverton, Oregon 97005

Rocky Mountain
Society of Aviculture, Inc.
Annual Show
to be held

Saturday, October 31, 1987

Location to be announced.

For information contact
Terry Rune
6700 Van Gordon St.
Arvada, CO 80004
(303) 422-6529

For those of us who keep, breed and enjoy birds, the ban on importation of wild caught birds in New York has had a marked impact. Even though it may not directly affect us in our own states, the law can be likened to the falling of the first stone preceding an avalanche. Anti-exotic animal sentiment has been around for quite some time, however, organization of this sentiment into a political force is recent and quickly spreading.

Proponents of the ban many times view aviculturists as resource consumers. The decline of many avian species is oftentimes focused on the pet trade without due consideration of other factors, e.g. habitat decline, interspecies competition. Positive achievements of bonafide breeders are discounted or vastly underestimated.

All of us in aviculture realize the pitfalls of importation of nondomestic avifauna. There will be losses of birds whenever they are subjected to capture, confinement, transport and handling. It becomes our duty to demand these animals reach us with only a minimum death loss and are treated humanely throughout the ordeal. Birds, like deer and timber, are a renewable resource. In any ecosystem, responsible, controlled harvesting can have a beneficial effect if properly done. Losses through transit can be acceptable. We can maintain our access to new and different genetic stock without cumbersome and insensitive legislation.

The future of aviculture is nearing a crisis. If old methods prevail, we will eventually be doomed to keeping fewer and fewer of the more easily bred species. Species of birds in which aviculturists can make a significant worldwide contribution will become unavailable and eventually disappear from aviculture. If legal channels are closed, the void will be filled by illicit trade. This brings with it a lack of control of bird-borne diseases and

resultant conflict with the public health and poultry industries.

Aviculturists can circumvent further governmental regulation through acting responsibly. By making a bonafide effort to breed our birds and making sure their progeny do not go unaccounted, we can convince the public that our interest is more than superficial. A tally of birds raised by each bird club is one way to provide accurate figures while retaining individual privacy. A genuine effort to pair birds, especially those in short supply, is needed. Individual breeder specialization by genus would insure the greatest expertise as well as increase the chance for success by flexibility in pairing. Regardless of price, birds and their progeny should be discouraged from entering a pet situation unless the species is well represented in the breeding population. A marking system for "truly" domestically raised stock should be implemented by each breeder.

Every change carries with it certain costs. Some are monetary. The price of unusual birds will inevitably rise as their availability declines. The cost of importing birds will go up; domestically bred birds usually cost more than imported birds. This, however, is a two edged sword. Though we pay more for initial stock, we will also get more for their offspring. Our investment will be justified.

Although not mandated by law, we will need to keep better account of our birds. Through banding and record keeping, we will be able to trace the genetic makeup of our birds and verify their origins. We should view our birds as a business and a trust, forsaking the old haphazard methods of the past. When we earn the recognition and respect of the public as protectors, not consumers of wildlife, we will be free of the threat of governmental interference. ●

NOTICE TO

DISPLAY ADVERTISERS

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