

**8. Senegal Fire Finch & Red-eared Waxbill:** Sun Coast Avian Society, Richard Ulrich (813)524-2238.

**9. Hoffman's Conure:** Dale Thompson, Woodlake CA (209) 564-3456.

**10. Parrotlets:** Parrotlet Society, Sandee & Robert Molenda, Santa Cruz CA (408) 688-5560.

Note; Most of the programs listed above require membership in the organization.

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**U.S. Fish & Wild Life Approved WBCA Cooperative Breeding Programs (Excluding Birds of Prey programs)**

**1. Jerry Jennings, Toucan Preservation Center:** Keel-billed Toucan, Red-breasted Toucan, Saffron Toucanet, Chestnut-eared Aracari.

**2. Rick Jordan, Hill Country Aviaries:** Crimson-bellied Conure (512) 858- 7029.

**3. Carl McCullough, The Lory and Hanging Parrot Breeding Consortium:** Papuan Lory, Fairy Lorikeet, Whiskered Lorikeet, Duyvenbode's Lory, Philippine Hanging Parrot.

**4. Jan van Oosten, Solomon Islands Consortium:** Cardinal Lory, Yellow-bibbed Lory, Coconut (Massena's) Lorikeet, Palm Lorikeet, Duchess Lorikeet.

**5. Susan Boyer:** Javan Hill Mynah, Sumatran Hill Mynah, Indian Hill Mynah. (760) 765-14067.

**6. David Hancock, Hancock Wildlife Research Center Turaco Cooperative Breeding Program:** Great Blue Turaco, Grey Plantain-eater, Ross's Plantain-eater, Violaceous Plantain-eater, Red-crested Turaco, Fischer's Turaco, Hartlaub's Turaco, White-cheeked Turaco, White-crested Turaco, Livingston's Turaco, Green-crested Turaco, Violet-crested Turaco, Schalow's Turaco. (800) 938-1114 FAX (800) 983-2262. ➔



# Olde Tymmer

## Conversations with Gene Hall

*an interview by  
Clio Poulykya, Roseland, FL*

**Clio Poulykya:** When did you begin to have an interest in exotic birds?

**Gene Hall:** I cannot really remember a time when birds were not a part of my life. My mother always had at least one pair of canaries and when I was seven, I was given my first pair of birds — Jungle Fowl. There has been no time since then when, either as a hobby or as a business, birds have not taken a major part of my attention.

For five years in the 1940s racing pigeons and show pigeons were a major interest. Modenas were — and still are — a special favorite.

A curiosity about hookbills was sparked by the 1947 movie *Bill 'n Coo* whose stars were a pair of Peach-faced Lovebirds with a supporting cast of thousands (of lovebirds and budgies).

Some searching turned up what was probably the most elderly pair of Black-masked Lovebirds that Anaheim, California had to offer.

Not realizing at that time that working with birds could be anything but a hobby, the need to earn a living made non-avicultural pursuits a necessity for the next 18 years. In 1969, a full time job was available at Magnolia Bird Farm in Anaheim, CA. I decided then that working with birds was more important than a management position which had no relationship of aviculture. My family and I were living in a residential area which made keeping any quantity of birds, especially the larger species, impossible.

The next opportunity which appeared was a job opening at the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park in Escondido, California to work with gorillas. After getting that job, work as a backup keeper in the bird depart-

ment was added. I was with the zoo only one year when I decided that it would be possible to turn an avocation into what I had always hoped it would be — a vocation. I began to look for a suitable location for a commercial aviary.

**C.P.:** Why did you stay in the San Diego/Anaheim area once you could relocate wherever you chose?

**G.H.:** Well, I'm a member of that rare species — a fellow California born and bred, with local family ties going back several generations. Naturally, I looked in the area I know and finally found an old poultry farm, which was no longer in use. It still had numerous buildings including a 70-year-old barn. This barn became the centerpiece of the office, display and breeding complex named Fortune Glen Aviaries.

Of course, there was much remodeling to be done before the facility could be opened. We — my family and I — moved to the property but for the first year and a half, I still worked at the Magnolia Bird Farm. Without the co-operation and assistance of my family, Fortune Glen would have had great difficulty in coming to life. My daughter, Amy, in her late teens at the time, was particularly involved in the business. The business soon grew to fill all of the buildings that made up the old farm. Plantings were added to create a more suitable background for the varied assortment of birds. Eventually there were softbills, waterfowl, hookbills and pheasants on site. Budgies were raised in quantity, with 2,000 producing pairs.

**C.P.:** Please tell me about your

aviaries.

**G.H.:** Although all the old structures were used, they needed modifications to fit their new tenants. Breeding pens all had floors of decomposed granite that was periodically renewed by adding a new layer. Skylighted display pens were cement floored. These were scrubbed and disinfected daily. The degree of care with sanitation made Fortune Glen one of the only California aviaries that could ship birds during the time of the Newcastle problems (1973). This was only for a short period of time when the Newcastle problems were at their worst.

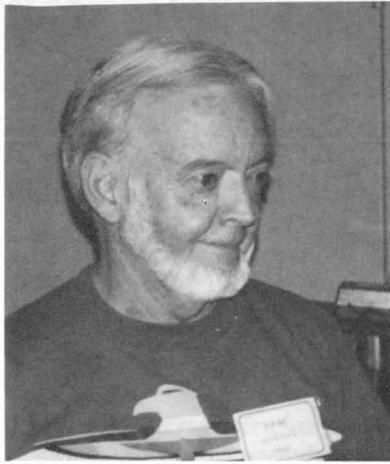
All pens had a drip system to provide a steady supply of fresh water. Metal feeding shelves were removed for cleaning. Screened doors at opposite ends of the display area insured an exchange of air. Due to the diversity of species housed, there were a dozen different diets prepared daily. Feeding alone required eight man-hours per day. All feed was offered on a free choice basis.

Away from the display area were the old poultry houses, long and narrow, with uncovered "alleys" between the houses. Some of these alleys I had covered and screened. The space was densely planted.

Those areas were used as flights for small birds (finches, doves, Australian King Parrots and *Neophemas*), and as safety areas for the poultry houses whose doors opened into the screened alleys. In other open spaces (between the buildings), four-foot fences were erected to join the buildings to create waterfowl pens. These areas were crossfenced to provide security for smaller or less aggressive waterfowl. Each area had a shallow pond dug into the adobe soil. Plantings were added for privacy. All waterfowl were pinned so the simple fencing made secure pens.

The old poultry house, if suited for flights, held Australian and Asiatic species. Larger (pole barn) spaces 80 feet x 80 feet were used for conures and Amazons. Housing here was in suspended "California" cages. All nest boxes were cleaned annually but were never seasonally closed or removed.

Photo by Susie Christian



*A life-long friend of all exotic bird species, Gene Hall is most noted for his work with Australian parakeets (rosellas in particular) and Indian Ring-necked Parakeets.*



*In addition to psittacines, Hall worked with pheasants and waterfowl, including this unusual cinnamon mutation of the Black Swan.*



Photos courtesy of Gene Hall

*Fortune Glen, a wholesale, retail, and breeding complex was built in the 1970s by Gene Hall. This is the beginning of a series of flights for Australian parakeets.*

Eventually a staff of 14 was required to perform all the necessary chores.

Macaws and cockatoos were housed in cages raised well above the landscape plantings. These were being placed in anticipation of the implementation of the dream which was part of the business—a bird park — as a separate area accessible to the public. The land was beautifully situated for horticultural display. A stream, which was the overflow from a neighbor's pond, provided a decorative accent plus humidity for breeding areas. Plantings of 40 varieties of palms, 15 varieties of eucalyptus trees were scattered over the property with more added as plants became available. The eucalyptus also provided aromatic leaves which, when sprinkled sparingly in the nest boxes, discouraged lice and mites.

**C.P.:** With so many birds to guarantee as pairs, what method did you use to sex the birds?

**G.H.:** Fortune Glen Aviaries was probably one of the first to do surgical sexing on a large scale. A lab was set up in one of the barns. One day each week was set aside for the on-site work and there were also visits, with the veterinarian in tow, to other aviaries.

**C.P.:** What husbandry methods would you recommend as having worked for you?

**G.H.:** I give birds plenty of room and plenty of privacy. Birds also demand predictability. If the aviary is closed, birds learn to expect no intrusion. Any visitors will disturb and distract them. If access to the aviary is allowed, keep the time of disturbance as uniform as possible.

The most important advice I can give is for the eventual benefit of future aviculturists. When breeding any species, keep no less than five pair —10 would be better — to ensure genetic diversity in the progeny. Needless to say, excellent breeding records must also be maintained

**C.P.:** How did you get into breeding Indian Ring-necked parakeets?

**G.H.:** I originally acquired the lutino Ringneck while at Fortune Glen Aviaries. This was for commercial purposes as the lutino was very popular. Since blue Ringnecks were so expensive, I did not purchase any. However, while I was back in the Anaheim area, I received a pair of green Ringnecks split for blue from Dave West.

Dave sent them to me on a breeding loan because the pair were terrible egg-eaters and he felt I could maintain them better than he could. I contrived a nest box with a small hole in the bottom of it so that any egg laid would hopefully fall through the small opening before either of the parent birds could eat it. There was a cushion covering the second bottom of the nest so the eggs would not crack after going through the small hole. This was not always successful but a few came through the hole without cracks. These eggs were fostered and this is how I got my first blue Ringnecks.

Years later, after Fortune Glen Aviaries closed, I was working with Jim Gunderson in Fillmore, CA, and received seven unsexed birds from him — six green birds and one lutino. Since their precise genetic background was unknown, Gunderson wanted to sell them outright. I knew that the birds could have blue and lutino in their background and convinced Jim to let me set them up for breeding.

The green birds turned out to be three males and three females and the lutino was a female. I randomly set the lutino up with a green male and for five years this pair produced green and lutino offspring. On their sixth year they produced a clutch of four babies — all different in color. The babies were one each green, lutino, blue and albino. Over the following years they did this again three times. It goes to show that one cannot guarantee the colors hidden in the genes with only a few clutches. This pair took six years to show that it had blue and albino. Obviously each of the parents was also split for blue.

**C.P.:** What Ringneck color is your favorite and how did you acquire it?

**G.H.:** My favorite Ringneck muta-

tion is the cinnamon-blue. It is a favorite, not only because I was one of the very first American aviculturists to acquire it, but I also love its pastel colors. I received several Ringnecks from Stan Coldsnow that had American cinnamon and fallow in them. It was through combining these birds with some of the Gunderson stock that I first acquired the cinnamon-blue Ringneck. It was a very strong mutation combination, as I did not inbreed to acquire it.

When I produced my first cinnamon-blue Ringneck, Dave West was as excited as I was about it. Both West and I had conjectured how this color combination would come out and it was indeed beautiful. I well remember the day I took this bird to show to Dave West.

**C.P.:** You have been so involved in aviculture for so many years; have you had any awards or interesting assignments?

**G.H.:** Of course there have been many bird club activities. I was Treasurer of the ASA (Avicultural Society of America) in 1971 and 1972, President of the ASA in 1974 and 1975 during which time I presided over the meeting that worked toward formation of the AFA (American Federation of Aviculture). I have been on the AFA's AVY Awards Committee for six years and am presently President of the Central California Avian Society.

**C.P.:** What about awards?

**G.H.:** I did receive the AFA's Silver AVY Award in 1977 for "Rosella Reproduction." What might also be considered an honor was the work I was requested to do in 1976 through 1979 as an expert third party negotiator for the USDA (APHIS Division) Newcastle settlement.

**C.P.:** Finally, what has given you the most pleasure during all your years in aviculture?

**G.H.:** The fact that I have been privileged to be custodian of and to know some of the most beautiful parts of creation — birds. ➤