

**November 10, 1979
The Greater New England
Cage Bird Show**

sponsored by
**Connecticut Association
for Aviculture**

at the
Hotel Sonesta, Hartford, Conn.
Judges:

Cockatiels, Nancy Reed
Type Canaries, Gabe Dillon
American Singers, Russ Gallini
Budgerigars, Dan Gallo
Foreign & Hookbills, Tom Ireland
Variety Singers and Color Bred
Canaries, To Be Announced

For Information:

Show Secretary
Natalie Molaver
28 Piping Rock Drive
Waterbury, Conn. 06706
(203) 756-1753

**November 10, 11, 1979
Columbia Canary Club
Annual Open Show**

Fowler Jr. High

Tigard, Oregon

Judge:

Greg Farina of Canada

Show Manager:

Glen Haddock

10495 S.W. Walnut

Tigard, Oregon 97223

(503) 639-7157

**Nov. 30, Dec. 1, 2, 1979
Orange County Bird Breeders
3rd Annual Open Bird Show**

Orange County Fair Grounds
Bldg. No. 14

88 Fair Drive, Costa Mesa, CA

Open to Public—Dec 2, 1979

10 am to 4 pm

Contact: Show Treasurer,

Finest Van

c/o Orange County Bird Breeders

P.O. Box 644

Garden Grove, CA 92642

**November 9, 10, 11, 1979
14th Annual Show
San Diego County Canary Club**

combined with

The Hookbill Hobbyists

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U.A.W. Union Hall

2266 San Diego Ave.

San Diego, CA

contact:

Janice Pritchard

5734 Dugan Ave.

La Mesa, CA 92041

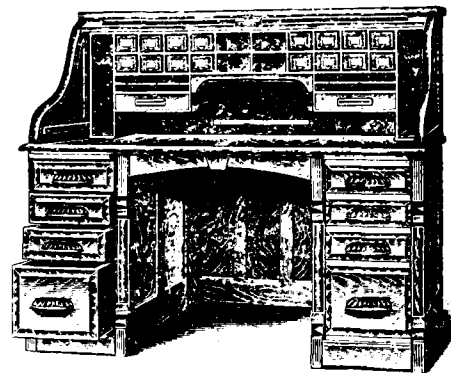
NOTICE

All correspondence
intended for the editor
of the Watchbird
should be mailed directly
to his address.

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

*From
The
Editor's Desk*

by Sheldon Dingle



Dear Mr. Dingle,

Having handled and collected snakes for the last 35 years, I have yet to handle one that is slimy, poisonous or not. I feel you have badly maligned all snakes and you owe them an apology. Only humans can be as low as the people you describe.

In answer to "name withheld" (June/July Watchbird Editor's column), when I say red eyed, I mean like an albino, i.e. lacking the ability to produce melanism in the eye. I don't believe you could produce this bird in a fawn, since this would need melanism for color. Yes, you could see the difference between a normal copper-bar and the red-eye at fifteen feet. In hand examination, the pupil is black and the iris red. In the red-eyed, the whole eye is red at fledging and as an adult the pupil and iris are different shades of red, as in the adult albino cockatiel.

I feel that this mutation is an albino, since the original term referred to an animal lacking the ability to produce-express melanism. This gene can be bred to the standard white to produce a totally white red-eyed bird, also an albino.

I hope I have answered all Mr. name withheld's questions.

Sincerely,
Joseph Lannom Jr.

Thanks for your response, Joe. When I spoke of snakes (slimy ones at that), I was alluding to the serpent in the third chapter of Genesis, the same snake who beguiled Eve. Like that ancient serpent, our contemporary crook is intent upon beguilement and deception. I meant no offense to your lovely snakes crawling about in the grass. My apologies to all innocent serpents.

Ed.



Dear Sir:

Recently someone told me a story about a man who was cooking with teflon pans and, though the label warns against it, had the heat up too high. His parrots were in the other room with some canaries and other birds. They all died of what was called "teflon poisoning". If you could supply more information of this type of poisoning I believe it could benefit everyone.

Thank you.

John L. Gagné
J & R PARROT RANCH

I have made several inquiries about "teflon poisoning" but to no avail so far. The people I spoke with had never heard of it. If any of our readers has available evidence either for or against "teflon poisoning" we would be most pleased to publish it.

Ed.



Dear Sheldon Dingle:

I am addressing this letter to you for I feel you will understand my misgivings concerning the up-coming National A.F.A Convention in Florida. I was truly shocked — couldn't believe what I read — when I saw that the "entertainment" for the banquet — which is the high-light of the whole convention — would be "Alba Ballard and her birds".

Doesn't anyone *know* or doesn't anyone *care* that she cuts off the poor birds wings and tails, feathers (that is), in order to fit them into the darling little hand made costumes?? She is praised and written about and praised some more for all her expertise, her love of birds, her understanding, etc. I think that what she does is obscene.

There was a colorful folder enclosed with the convention literature about Parrot Jungle. This shows cockatoos,

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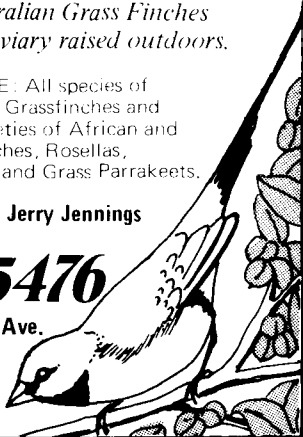
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macaws, etc. riding bikes, doing tricks, raising the flag — no costume, no play acting — just birds — as birds — enjoying themselves.

If you have ever owned a Caique you would know what delightful little clowns they are — they can entertain you for hours playing with a tin can or a baby rattle — they are inquisitive, sensitive and utterly loveable. They don't need any dumb costume to put on a show.

Alba Ballard, rather than showing her love of birds in putting on her costumed show, is promoting Alba Ballard. If you really loved your birds you would not subject them to what she does.

If I had intended attending this Convention this item itself would keep me away. I would not cross the street to see her.

Sincerely,
Catherine C. Tyler

As you well know, the A.F.A 1979 convention is over. Unfortunately I was unable to attend (rumor has it that I am too shy, that I'm in the midst of aviary construction, and that I'm too poor — all of which are true) and thus I didn't see the Alba Ballard show that you are so against. The reports I have received were generally negative regarding birds dressed up like dolls — but then folks who like that sort of thing probably wouldn't talk to me anyway.

Several thoughts cross my mind, though, and the first is that you should not be so foolish as to miss the hundreds of really outstanding features of a great convention just because you object to one program. If you are a starving person and have a sumptuous banquet set before you, don't abandon it just because there is spinach on your plate. My God, woman, just leave the spinach alone and partake of the other nourishment.

Second, we live in a relatively free society and people are able to pursue their whims and fancies be they ever so foolish. No doubt there were people at the convention who actually liked Alba Ballard's dressed up birds. There is no accounting for taste. And there is more to Alba Ballard than just her doll birds. She has nurtured and cared for many hundreds of birds that were wounded, injured or otherwise distressed. I don't doubt that she really does love birds. It is just her way of public display that many of us don't care for.

I am certain that the majority of A.F.A. members are fine aviculturists who are interested in the finer points of animal husbandry and who want to raise

birds under the most natural conditions possible. They see birds as beautiful and fascinating creatures of nature and don't apply any anthropomorphic philosophy to them. Indeed, many of our members like birds more than they like people — and they are to be commended for their wisdom. Most aviculturists deem it a holy responsibility to help perpetuate in captivity the birds which are losing ground in the wild.

I can imagine fine aviculturists and serious breeders fidgeting and squirming in their chairs while a pet bird in formal dress cavorts about on the stage. I'm sure Mickey Ollson's discomfort was more entertaining to watch than the bedecked bird's antics. But even Mickey, fine gentleman and outstanding breeder that he is, showed good grace while Alba did her thing.

Although your philosophy and mine tend to agree, I don't think we should dogmatically close our minds to other view points. I'd be interested in hearing from some of you folks who really enjoyed Alba's dressed up birds. Perhaps Alba herself will respond and broaden our understanding.

Ed.



Dear Sir

Let me first say that I enjoy your magazine very much and having gotten interested in cage birds two years ago, the magazine is full of useful and interesting information for me. Your use of colored photos both on the cover and inside the magazine make it the outstanding one of the three I subscribe to.

For your information, your magazine is not widely known in this part of the country (Dayton, Ohio). Other breeders that I have talked to in this area are unfamiliar with your magazine.

My primary purpose in writing this letter is to ask you for some information. If the questions have been covered in previous issues of the magazine, I apologize as I am only a recent subscriber.

The first piece of information relates to the use of sunflower seed. Recently a friend who, like me, is an amateur breeder, told me that he read or heard somewhere that sunflower seeds are narcotic and therefore not the best thing for the birds. At the present time I am feeding my macaws, lovebirds and cockatiels a commercially available parrot mix which is predominately sunflower seed. Is it possible that I am using too much sunflower seed — and if so I would appreciate knowing what you or other

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B6 0.50 Mgm	Methonine 35 Mgm	Iron 2.9 Mgm
B12 0.003 Mgm	Phenylalanine 30 Mgm	Magnesium 9.5 Mgm
C 6.222 Mgm	Threonine 39 Mgm	Manganese 95 Mcgm
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Biotin 3.1 Mcgm	Glycine 36 Mgm	
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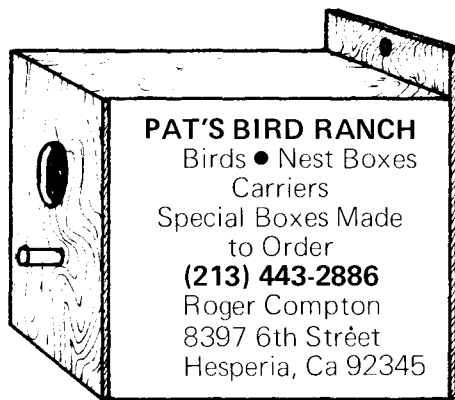
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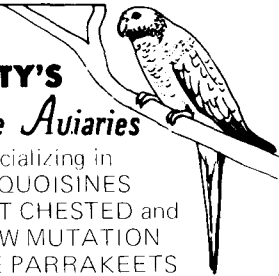
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members of your staff suggest I do about it. If my birds are hooked on sunflower seed I am concerned about taking it away from them too quickly and am not sure what to substitute in its place. I have read all of the bird books available in the local library and have found nothing on the subject.

The second has to do with the average lifespan of some of the more common cage birds. A friend of mine runs a local pet shop and frequently asks me how long a certain bird should live so he can tell his customers. Perhaps you could publish an article on this subject in the near future.

The third subject I wish to inquire about has to do with the proper age for removing birds from their parents. I recently lost some zebra finches and a parakeet probably because I removed them too soon.

Thank you in advance for any information you might offer on the above subjects.

D. Kelly
 Kettering, Ohio

Thank you kindly for the information that we are not so strong in Ohio. I'll ask our good President to boot our Ohio man in the britches and stir up a little business.

You focus upon three very pertinent questions and I'll respond to them based upon my own experience. You should know, however, that in the bird world, there are many answers to each question and that it is not uncommon to have several "experts" holding diverse opinions on a given subject.

I have in my files some correspondence from my good friend Richard Topper. In it he explains that sunflower seed does indeed have an ingredient that is narcotic — and he named the ingredient. In this issue of the Watchbird we have published the first of a series of articles on nutrition by Richard D. Tkachuck, Ph.D.. Dr. Tkachuck is a scientist who can write in a style that will appeal to our readers and at the same time impart sound scientific principles. Read his articles. He can answer your questions regarding nutrition.

Topper first looked into this matter when he noticed that all of his parrots that ate sunflower seeds had a wide grin and a spaced-out, blank look to their eyes. He then entered into a nutritional research program and developed a parrot formula that excluded the sunflower seeds. It is Topper himself who eats the sunflower seeds and has a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes.

Not to worry about unhooking your

birds from the sunflower seeds. I removed all sunflower from my bird's diet over a period of about a month. There were no noticeable withdrawal symptoms at all. I think that safflower seed is a good replacement for the sunflower seeds and you can gradually shift the balance of the two seeds until there is no sunflower seed left at all.

Your question regarding the average age of the common cage birds is more difficult to deal with. Perhaps we should approach the problem from the standpoint of an insurance company. Does the bird smoke? Does the bird use the freeway often? Is there any hereditary heart disease? Is there excess occupational stress? etc., etc.. You can see the problem, I'm sure. I have known a cockatiel male to live twenty-two years, and there are records of parrots in zoos living for seventy or eighty years. We have a pair of swans that are fifteen years old, and are still young. We also have some birds (in the freezer) that didn't make it to their first birthday. Generally speaking, I'd say the average life expectancy of the ordinary pet store bird is rather short. Few people buy a bird in a pet store and provide it with optimum living conditions. Your pet store friend would be wise to answer the age question with some ambiguous mumbling about the birds longevity depending upon how it is treated.

The answer to the third question is easy. Don't remove the young birds from their parents until they can feed and drink on their own. When in doubt, leave them in. You can usually tell when a young bird is weaned if you observe it carefully. Experience is the best teacher and perhaps the only teacher in this matter. Maybe some of our readers have specific tricks they use to tell when various types of birds are weaned. If so, we would all appreciate hearing from them.



Ed.

Dear Editor,

After reading the Mr. Maruska interview I felt I had to reply. I feel Mr. Maruska has some antiquated ideas about bird breeders that he should be educated about. Regarding decimating wild populations of birds, I would venture a guess that at least ninety percent of all the zoos in the world get their bird stock from the wild. What about exploitation of the wild fauna for the zoo industry? I don't approve of pet people being lumped into the same category as bird breeders. We breeders are a separate

species altogether. We all may have started out as pet owners at one time but our directions were different.

As to academic background, many breeders have professions in their own right. They come from all walks of life, with all kinds of degrees, B.S., M.S., Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S, etc.. And can hardly be thought of as uneducated. Zoos are publicly funded, private aviculturists are not. I am very aware that I owe the wild something back for the mass destruction that we, as humans, have done. We must be able to breed in captivity certain species so that they don't die out. We can't wait until there are a handful left, like the condor, before we decide to help out.

Zoos have alot to learn from private aviculturists, and vice versa. We must search out the answers from each other to learn how to breed birds. We private breeders spend hours trying to improve our facilities for our birds benefit.

I agree that those people interested purely in a pet should choose one of the more common species, instead of a rare one. But Mr. Maruska and other zoos would surely benefit from the experience that is printed in the A.F.A Watchbird.

After reading his article, I am even more appreciative of the continued support of the San Diego Zoo and the Los Angeles Zoo and others like them who continue to share their knowledge and successes with us, and who take the time out from their zoological magazines to read the Watchbird and learn from us.

Maybe the next time the Cincinnati Zoo needs birds they can take out an ad in the Watchbird, so as not to further depopulate the wild. I am sure there will be some one who will have breeding stock in whatever they need in their public aviaries! Maybe in the future the zoos of the world and private aviculturists will exchange breeding stock to the benefit of both parties. We MUST work together or we both will lose. Let's help each other. Our magazine is proof that it can be done. Let's put our pettiness aside.

Joanne Marie Schick

Mr. Ed Maruska may very well have some antiquated ideas about bird breeders but I don't think he exposed them during his interview with Watchbird's Terry Dunham. Of course, he may have expressed some opinions with which you take issue. Let's examine the points you bring up.

You dislike Maruska's objection to the exploitation of wild fauna for the pet trade — but, I think we all hate to see the wildlife of the world being raped and thrust into small parlour cages. "On the

other hand," Maruska says, "I'm a firm believer in the serious hobbyist and the contributions he makes". Mr. Maruska recognizes the difference between the pet trade (which he feels should be supplied with captive-bred birds) and the serious aviculturist's interest in propagating birds. I think that upon careful reading, you will find that you and Mr. Maruska are in accord regarding this matter.

Your second thrust, dealing with education, is perhaps a bit unfair to Mr. Maruska. First off, when hiring a bird-keeper, "I'd consider that background [in aviculture] and if they had a good academic background, that would be all the better". Who can argue with that? He amplifies the statement with, "I'd recommend at least a Bachelor's degree in zoology, or, if possible, related ornithological courses. But that's not an absolute criterion. I'm sure if a person came into a park and had ten years successful breeding experience and was well written, I think the academic background would still be on the bottom of the list. But I would encourage any youngster to get that academic background." I am certain, Madame, that you concur with Mr. Maruska's kindly advice.

On the other hand, your point is well taken in that there are many aviculturists who are well educated and hold various degrees. I'd venture to say that over the years, the vast majority of the Watchbird articles have been written by people with Masters degrees or Doctorates. Why, I, myself, your humble servant, am burdened with the following degrees; A.A., B.A., B.S., M.A., M.F., Ph.Art., and Ph.Ink., some of which were earned at the university, the others honorarily bestowed upon me because of certain qualities of personality.

If you read the fifth paragraph of the interview, you will find that you and Mr. Maruska are in complete agreement regarding zoos and private aviculturists learning from one other. And if you could see the overview from my vantage point you would see how the A.F.A. is working hand in glove with many zoos around the country, how they cooperate generously with us, how they respond to our needs, how they accept our services, and how a fine and profitable friendship has sprung up between the professional zoological people and the private sectors of aviculture. We who love birds and choose to work with them, whether privately or publicly, are inextricably bound together for the common good of the birds. Nowhere does Mr. Maruska suggest otherwise.

Your letter is full of positive statements and an affirmative attitude. Yes, zoos

and private aviculturists can and do exchange birds on occasion; Yes, zoos and private aviculturists can and do learn from each other; Yes, many private aviculturists are highly educated — as are many of the zoo personnel; Yes, we can and do work together; Yes, we do help each other.

Upon close examination, I find that you and Mr. Maruska are both very positive and progressive people. You both desire the best for the future of aviculture, private and public. Seldom have I seen two people so harmonious and of the same mind. It is a joy and a pleasure to see folks strolling hand in hand (philosophically, that is) into the rosy future of American aviculture. Mazel Tov! My congratulations to both of you.

Ed.

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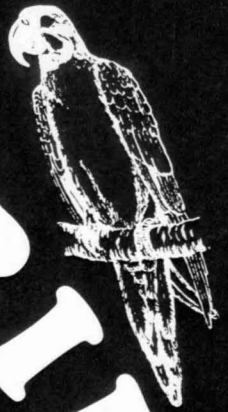
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