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.....in Congress Assembled

by Jerry Jennings

U.S. SENATE HEARS TESTIMONY ON ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT

The American Federation of Aviculture was invited to testify at hearings on the Endangered Species Act conducted by the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works April 13-14, 1978.

The Committee, chaired by Senator Culver (D-Iowa), solicited comments from aviculturists, conservationists, federal and state agencies in an attempt to eliminate some of the problems the various diverse interests have experienced. The Senators apparently feel the Fish and Wildlife Service has been somewhat inflexible in their interpretation of the Act, which may require legislative changes to restore the balance. Until now, Fish and Wildlife has demonstrated little interest in the problems of those who keep captive wildlife.

The American Federation of Aviculture and the North American Falconer's Association were the only two avicultural organizations on the agenda. Represented by Jerry Jennings, the AFA pointed out the extreme difficulties aviculturists are experiencing in obtaining reasonable regulations from the Fish & Wildlife

Service, that would ease the burden on the interstate sale and shipment of captive born endangered species.

It was noted at the hearing that two years previous, when the same Committee held oversight hearings on the Endangered Species Act, the Fish & Wildlife Service announced a proposal soon to be published that would alleviate the aviculturists' problems. That announcement diverted the Committee's attention to other concerns, while the proposal, known as the Captive Self-Sustaining Population Rule, did very little to improve on the existing regulations.

The CSSP proposal took over thirteen months from publication to final rule-making. Furthermore, the rule required permits be obtained by breeders wishing to sell and ship endangered species interstate. Unfortunately, the CSSP rule applied only to six species of pheasants. Virtually no change and the burden of adding more species to the list under the CSSP umbrella rests upon aviculturists — a painstaking task of data collection.

Again, on Thursday April 13th the Fish & Wildlife announced a "proposal soon to be published that would alleviate the aviculturists' problems". AFA reminded the Committee of the previous "announcement" and was invited to review the proposal and forward comments to the Committee.

The proposal has been reviewed and comments have been sent to Senator Culver, stating that the proposal is not a proposed rulemaking, but a request for ideas from aviculturists on how the regulations could be improved. AFA's dissatisfaction with Fish & Wildlife's slow pace of change has been communicated to the Committee with reasonable hope that the Senate will ultimately amend the Endangered Species Act.

That there will be some amendments to the Act is apparent in a Bill authored by Senator Culver, which will establish a seven member arbitration panel as a last appeal to decisions handed down by the Fish & Wildlife Service, which now enjoys absolute authority over the Act and its interpretation.

AFA personnel in attendance at the hearings included Ruth Hanessian, Washington, D.C. Co-ordinator and Clifton Witt, Legislative Liaison, both of whom were responsible for having AFA placed on the agenda.

U.S. TO BAN PARROTS

U.S. Public Health Service of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare has drafted a proposal calling for a

total ban on the importation of all Psittacine birds into the U.S. on the grounds that parrots and parrakeets are a hazard to human health.

It is quite clear that if Psittacine birds are too hazardous to import, they are also too hazardous to keep, resulting in future prohibition of possession of these birds by the states, cities, and counties — THIS IS ALREADY HAPPENING IN MARYLAND WHERE THE STATE AND THREE COUNTY GOVERNMENTS ARE TRYING TO BAN PARROTS AND PARRAKEETS.

YOU — the members of AFA — can help AFA by writing your congressman requesting he get you a copy of this proposal, which is the proposal to ban all Psittacine birds “drafted by” Communicable Disease Center in Atlanta, GA, for the U.S. Public Health Service.

Also, please advise your congressman that you are opposed to this proposal because it leads to the end of your hobby and greatly increases the traffic of smuggled birds. ■

AFA REPRESENTATIVES MEET WITH CONGRESSMAN GOLDWATER

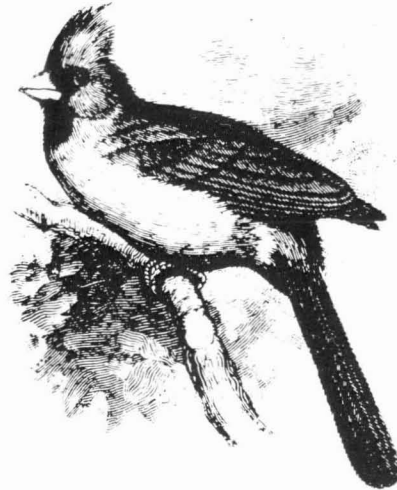


Congressman Barry Goldwater, left, Jerry Jennings, right.

Ruth Hanessian, Washington, D.C. Co-ordinator, Clifton Witt, Legislative Liaison, and Jerry Jennings, Endangered Species Committee Chairman, met with Congressman Barry Goldwater in his Washington Office April 13th to discuss AFA's upcoming legislative program. Also discussed were some of the problems AFA has been encountering with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and other government agencies.

Congressman Goldwater and the members of his staff have been very generous with their time and assistance over the years, for which AFA is very appreciative. ■

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