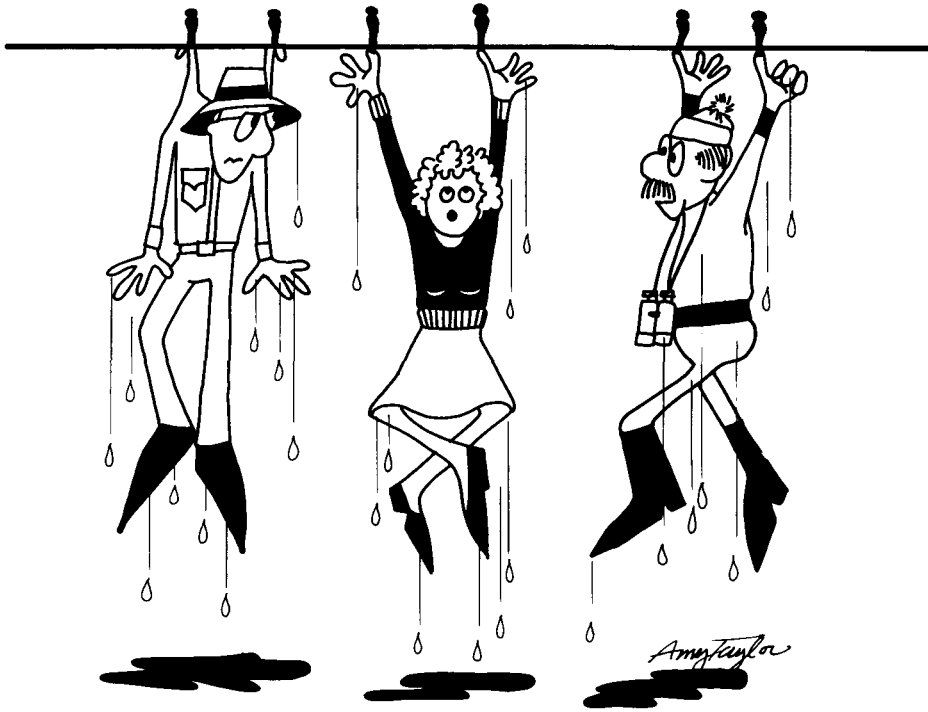


GEORGIA FINCH FANCIERS HUNG OUT TO DRY



Following the example of the Federal Government and several other states, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Game and Fish Division is busily re-evaluating and revising that state's regulations concerning the keeping in captivity of non-native species of birds.

Under the current proposal, Georgia would prohibit the possession of ALL species of the families Cuculidae, Sturnidae (except European Starling, *Sturnis vulgaris* and Greater Indian Hill Mynah, *Gracula religiosa*), Pycnonotidae, Zosteropidae, ploceidae, and estrilidae. Furthermore, all species of the genus *Turdus* (Family Turdidae), and the genera *Molothrus*, *Quiscalus*, and *Agelaius* of the Family Icteridae would be banned. The Orders Falconiformes and Strigiformes would be totally prohibited along with one Psittacine, the Monk Parakeet (*Myiopsitta monachus*), two sub-species of Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris* and *M.g. osceola*). Several others aviculturally unimportant species such as the Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) and the Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) also made the elite list.

The Families Ploceidae and Estrilidae cover most Finches — none of which could be kept without a special permit.

The argument in favor of this move is based on the preconceived notion that all the species covered are extremely dangerous to the environment, i.e. they are "... (1) harmful competition for wildlife; (2) [threaten] the introduction of a disease or pest harmful to wildlife; (3) problems of enforcement of laws and regulations relating to wildlife; or (4) [a] danger to wildlife or other natural resources."

The intended prohibition would make it illegal to keep such well known aviary subjects as the Lady Gould, Zebra Finch, and even the Society Finch, which does not even exist in the wild.

Although there has been some documentation alluding to the potentially injurious nature of certain species such as some of the Sturnids and Corvids, there is certainly no consensus of scientific opinion on the nature of any of the species being considered for regulation.

The proposed regulations serve the dual purpose of acting as a control on exotic endangered species. This effort, however, is limited to the above mentioned species and with the exception of the Rothschild's Mynah does not include any endangered species kept by aviculturists.

The A.F.A.'s response, as might be expected, has been one of outrage. Mr. Ron Simpson, the Georgia Wildlife Biologist responsible for the proposed rules, has advised A.F.A. Legislative Affairs Officer, Jerry Jennings, that the proposal was deliberately worded in strong language in order to "...draw the breeders out of the woodwork, so we could get their input". He has succeeded.

A.F.A. has deluged the Department of Natural Resources with material describing the experiences of other states in dealing with "injurious wildlife". The material supported A.F.A.'s contention that very few exotics were potentially harmful in a harsh, unfamiliar environment. A.F.A. specifically recommended the exclusion of most of the listed species from the proposed ban.

Mr. Simpson indicated their proposal was based to a great extent on the regulations of the State of California, considered by most as having the strictest rules in the country. However, a review of California's regulations quickly reveals a far smaller list of prohibited species. Indeed, only seven species of finches are regulated in California, the Java Rice Bird, Baya Weaver, Masked Weaver, and the genus *Quelea* (Red-billed Weavers).

Mr. Simpson expressed the department's willingness to negotiate, describing the list as "...a working list of possible avian species for which a permit..." would be required. He further stated their belief that exotic endangered species required regulation at the state level, thus Georgia would become only the second state in the U.S. to take such action (Illinois was the first).

In his letter to A.F.A. Mr. Simpson indicated the Game and Fish Division would recognize A.F.A. as the representative of aviculturists and said "I plan to contact you concerning other regulations being developed such as caging requirements."

A.F.A. members may contact A.F.A. for free copies of the regulatory proposal, the law authorizing the Department of Natural Resources to initiate their action, and related correspondence.

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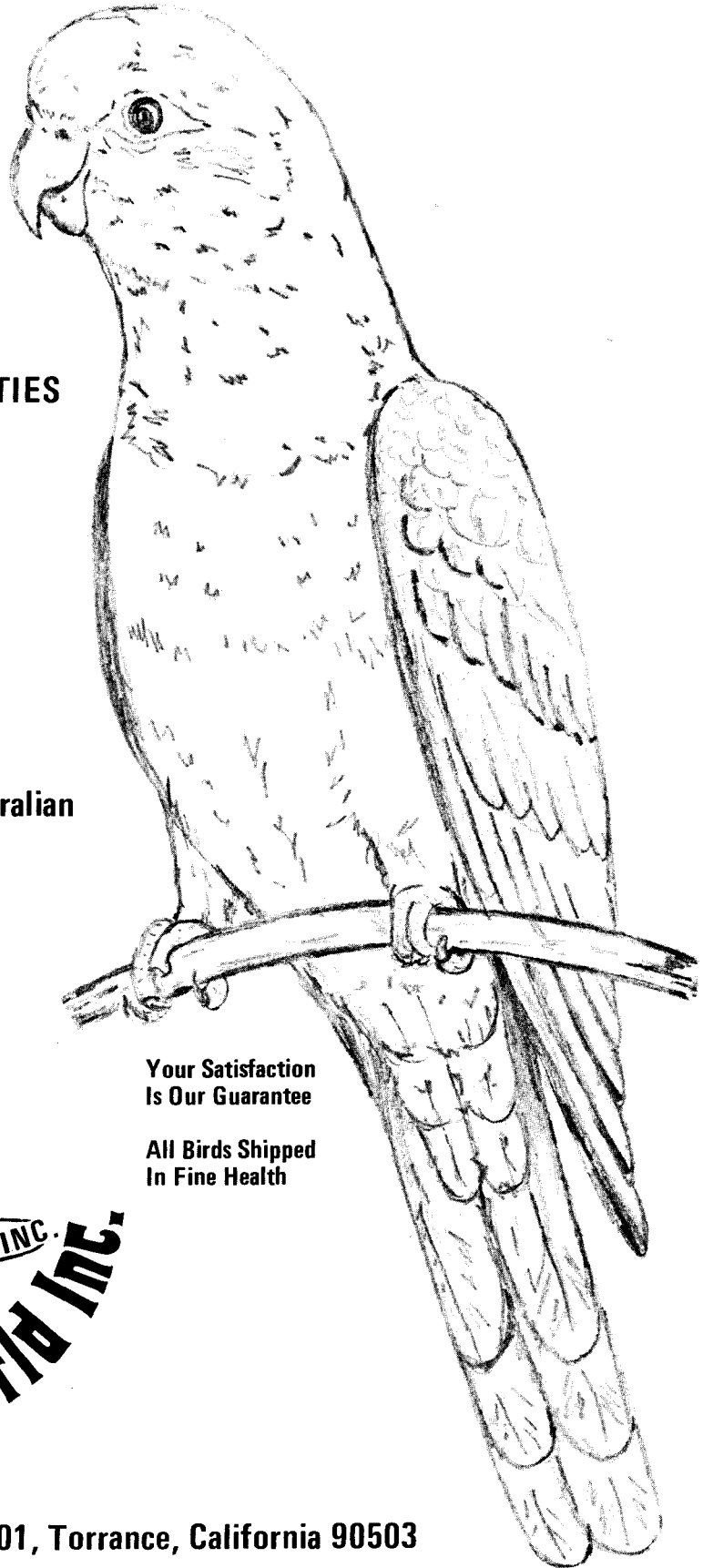
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