

Post-Convention Coverage of 'Jewels in Aviculture'

By Linda S. Rubin, AFA specialty organization vice president

San Francisco, California, could not have been a more ideal venue for the American Federation of Avicultures 37th national convention Aug. 3–6, 2011. The city of the Golden Gate Bridge, cable cars and perfect weather was the welcoming backdrop to more than 30 convention speakers packed in double-track talks during the four-day event.

Convention attendees flocked to the San Mateo Marriott Hotel for the latest in avicultural information, an exhibit hall brimming with the newest bird-related products, silent auctions, Super 8 raffle prizes and fantastic networking opportunities. Special events included a Legislative Panel Discussion, AFA4Kidz Program, National Specialty Organization Meetings—and the first SPBE Parrot Show held at AFA in more than 25 years!

The AFA annual board of directors meeting—open to all AFA members—kicked off pre-convention activities. Next day highlights included the House of Delegates meeting for AFA delegates of affiliated clubs and organizations, with presentations by committee chairs on AFA programs and activities. An off-site zoo trip for convention delegates followed at the Oakland Zoo, with an evening welcome reception in the exhibit hall sponsored by Bird Talk magazine that was open to all convention attendees. The hall showcased an array of vendors' booths and the AFA Sales Store including convention theme art work, and an abundance of unique avian, decorative and educational items.

A three-day lineup of renown national and international presenters included Keynote speaker Susan L. Clubb, DVM, Dipl. ABVP (Avian) on "The Past, Present and Future of the Pet Bird Industry" and "Parrot Relinquishment Survey of 2010." Additional veterinary presenters included: Scott Echols, DVM, Dipl. ABVP (Avian) "Using Nutritional Supplements to Manage Diseases" and "What are We Really Feeding Our Birds?"; Dr. Sherman Hoppes, DVM, Dipl. ABVP (Avian) "When a Dilated Proventriculus is Not PDD"; Ian Tizard, BVMS, Ph.D., ACVM, "Avian Bornavirus Update"; Leslie Woods, DVM, Ph.D., Dipl. ABVP (Avian), and Asli Mete, DVM, Ph.D. "A Survey of Avian Diseases at the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System—Parts 1 and 2."

Other scientists and expert talks included: James Gilardi, Ph.D., "World Parrot Trust's 'Fly Free' Program"; Walt Frey, Ph.D., "Breeding and Keeping the Red-vented Cockatoo—A Model for Successful and Fun Aviculture," and "Mate Aggression in Birds— Example Cockatoos"; Matthias Reinschmidt, Ph.D. "Breeding Rare Macaws at Loro Parque"; Rainer Niemann, Ph.D. "From the Wild into Our Homes"; and Johanna "Jeleen" Briscoe, DVM, Dipl. ABVP (Avian) "The Animal Welfare Act and How Regulations Could Affect You."

Behavioral presentations included: Robin Shewokis,

"Addressing Behavioral Issues" and "Enriched and Organized—What a Concept"; Kashmir Csaky, "Understanding Reinforcement and Punishment"; Linda S. Rubin, "The Ethology of Australian Parrot Flocks and Captive Behaviors"; Chris Shank, "Living With Free-Flying Cockatoos"; Alycia Antheunisse, "The Perfect Match—Ensuring the Right Parrot for the Right Person"; and Nyla Copp, "The Urban Aviary—An Insider's Thoughts on Getting Your Bird Outside."

General avicultural topics included: Steve Duncan, "Psittacine Nursery Management," and "Wild Parrots of Southern California"; Jason Crean, "Using DNA to Identify a Species" and "Mutations—How They Get From One Generation to Another"; Nancy Speed, "Caiques"; Fran Andersen, "Lineolated Parakeets, A Breeder's Perspective on Maximizing Pet Potential"; Dann Dunst, "Galiformes"; Rebecca O'Connor, "Falconry, Conservation and the Future"; Margrethe Warden, "Lories in U.S. Aviculture"; Daniel Sigmon, "Ecological Philosophy and its Application to the Keeping of Exotics"; Hildegard Niemann, MSc Biology, "Beauty Lies in the Eyes of the Beholder"; Lyrae Perry, "The Business of Birds"; Eric Antheunisse, "Parrot Breeding for American Pet Trade"; Madeleine Franco, "Knock, Knock, Who's There? It's Animal Control!"; and Susan van den Broek, "Specialty Avian Store's Role in Aviculture."

Innovative avicultural games were held Thursday evening, including Birdy Bingo, Flock Feud, and Jeo-BIRDy (based on the popular television game show, Jeopardy), where teams answered questions on a variety of avicultural topics. Jeo-BIRDy is an impressively successful teaching tool developed by AFA Mid-eastern Director and Science Education Zoo Consultant Jason Crean. Mr. Crean is a 2009 recipient of a Presidential Award for science teachers from President Barack Obama. According to Mr. Crean, "Jeo-BIRDy categories can include proper diets, geographical distribution of birds, avian anatomy and more. Most everyone comments they learn a great deal from the game and have a blast!"

AFA Specialty Organization meetings held Thursday evening included: the LoryLeague.org, Lineolated Parakeet Society, Caique Enthusiasts of America, Cockatiel Foundation, the Society of Parrot Breeders & Exhibitors and a special Hookbill Show Meeting in preparation of the scheduled parrot show. The AFA affiliated organizations, found on the AFAbirds.org website, are informal settings providing networking opportunities and the exchange of news and information, and are open to established members and first-time visitors.

A strategically informative Legislative Workshop led by AFA Legislative VP and Attorney-at-Law, Genevieve Wall, JD, was held Friday evening, "Back to Our Roots—Grass-Roots Legislation"—including panelists Steve Duncan, Brent Gattis, and Sandee

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Molenda—covered an overview of legislation affecting animal owners, explaining how bills become law and how the regulatory system works. Tips were included on how to communicate with Members of Congress, Regulatory Agencies and using the media to educate legislators and the public. Panelists presented individually and a stimulating question and answer session followed.

A colorful and entertaining parrot show held Saturday morning, drew many exhibitors and spectators from around the country. The show was hosted by the LoryLeague.org, co-hosted by the Lineolated Parakeet Society—and affiliated with the Society of Parrot Breeders & Exhibitors (SPBE)—all of which are affiliated organizations of the AFA. SPBE Certified Panel Judge Linda S. Rubin presided as judge of the event commenting on each entry in an effort to help educate those seated in the gallery watching the show.

The show featured a major entry of 51 exotic birds—from budgies to macaws—and had a multitude of special awards from AFA, SPBE, the host clubs and other donors. An impressive double yellow-headed Amazon parrot, exhibited by Janet Brubaker of Missouri, won the show and earned “Best Parrot Exhibited by an AFA Member,” while a rare colored, suffused silver cockatiel exhibited by Shanna Dollarhide of California, took Best Novice entry. A seldom seen black palm cockatoo owned by Mary Ellen LePage—a

first in the realm of exhibition—won audience favorite and 6th best novice in show. Many first time novice exhibitors won ribbons and awards for their sections and sub-divisions and special prizes included gift baskets containing products from top manufacturers. (The full article titled, “SPBE Bird Show,” appears in AFA Watchbird, Volume XXXVIII, No. 3, 2011, pp. 37-41).

An innovative program for children—AFA4Kidz—followed the show, designed to introduce children and young people from age 6 through 16, to the fun and knowledge of keeping birds in aviculture. AFA4Kidz was launched in 2010 in an effort to begin educating the next generation of aviculturists and preserve bird keeping for the future. Professional bird behaviorists Barbara Heinenrich and Robin Shewokis began the program, keeping the children engaged and involved. A variety of tame and friendly parrots brought over from the parrot show held earlier were gently introduced and used to educate. AFA Member Carol Stanley appeared dressed as a flamingo as the program’s “special guest” and representative of the non-parrot species. According to AFA Youth Chair Julie Corwin, “It really was a lot of fun in there! And, as for the working volunteers, remember, if you are going to work, it has to be FUN!”

A festive gala banquet was held Saturday evening featuring a recognition dinner highlighted by AFA service and AVY awards,

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drawings for the Super-8 grand prizes, the auction of convention theme artwork, and the annual oath of office for the newly elected AFA officers, including new AFA President Nancy Speed.

AVY Award Chair Linda S. Rubin presented the AFA AVY Awards, established by the AFA in 1977 as the industry's most coveted awards in US aviculture. Jerry Jennings, AFA founder and owner of Emerald Forest Bird Gardens, was presented with two US First Breeding AVY Awards for the Lettered Aracari and the Black-masked Emerald Toucanette. President-elect Nancy Speed was presented with a Silver AVY Award, Category 1, for "Most Progress with an Individual Species" for her work with the Golden Conure. Newly elected Western Regional Director Mary Rose—nominated by the Arizona Seed Crackers Society, Inc. (ASCS)—received an AFA AVY Appreciation Award for her exceptional service and contributions to ASCS, an affiliated club of AFA.

Julie Corwin, show organizer, with show judge Linda S. Rubin, presented the two top AFA show awards for the Saturday morning parrot show. The "Best Parrot Exhibited by an AFA Member" (also Best Parrot in Show), was awarded to Janet Brubaker. "Best Parrot Bred & Banded by an AFA Member" (also third best parrot and best lineolated parakeet in show), went to Fran Andersen.

Wrapping up thoughts on the popular convention theme artwork auctioned at the banquet, AFA Watchbird Editor and

Auctioneer Mark Moore commented, "The fantastic artwork of Wayne E. Smyth adorned the convention materials and was featured at registration. His exquisite rendition of Major Mitchell's Cockatoo, struck at the heart of many of the attendees. Several lucky winners were able to take home these one-of-a-kind pieces of art after the live auction at the closing banquet. This once a year gathering brings our comrades, peers, and mentors together to share in a common interest. I look forward to it every year!"

According to newly elected AFA President Nancy Speed, the theme of the 2012 convention, "Under One Wing," will lend itself to a spirit of inclusiveness for all avicultural groups and species.

Plans for the 2012 AFA Convention are already under way. The four-day event will be Aug. 15–18, 2012, at the Omni Colonnade Hotel in San Antonio, Texas. So get your hat and grab your boots and join us! Register online at the AFA website. This year, a lay-away plan is also available for those who wish to pay out conference costs over the year ahead rather than all at once at convention time.

Convention DVD's of speaker talks are available on the AFA website at www.AFAbirds.org. The 2011 convention theme, "Jewels in Aviculture" lived up to its name with the extensive coverage of species and live birds present for all to enjoy. And, for the many who were not quite ready to depart, the immortal words of Tony Bennett come to mind ... "I left my heart in San Francisco!"



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Susan L. Clubb, DVM, Dipl. ABVP (Avian)
Keynote Address—Past, Present and
Future of the Pet Bird Industry
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Manage Avian Diseases



Matthias Reinschmidt, Ph.D.
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Ian Tizard, BVMS, Ph.D., ACVM
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Steve Duncan
Psitticine Nursery Management
Wild Parrots of Southern California



Johanna 'Jeleen' Briscoe, DVM, Dipl. ABVP (Avian)
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**Dr. Leslie Woods (left)
and Dr. Asli Mete (below)**
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