

EX LIBRIS

by Sheldon Dingle
Norco, California



The holiday season is fast upon us bringing with it the problems of what gift to get for aunt Rose or what surprise to give cousin Herbie. Supply your own names, the problem is the same. If said relatives and friends can read, your problem is half solved. If they are bird people, your problem is no problem at all. Give the folks a bird book. If you actually like the person in question, lay two or three bird books on them.

In this short article I don't propose to give extensive and thorough reviews of any of the books listed. I merely point out a few highlights, make you aware that the books exist and tell you how to get them should you decide to favor a bird friend. Or, better yet, forget the fair-weather friends and keep the books yourself. You *deserve* a good avian library.

First, for you old timers who remember the very early bird books published by TFH, let me assure you there have been many improvements. The first few books (dated some 10 or 12 years ago) all had the same (often misidentified) handful of rather poor bird photos. And the texts were simplistic. TFH wasn't sure what birds were in those days.

Now, however, I'm very glad to report that TFH has a really large selection of very good books. Indeed, a few of the newer TFH titles are very excellent volumes that will be read and re-read by novices and experts alike for they contain more information than one can assimilate in one or two readings.

One such volume is **Encyclopedia of Amazon Parrots** by Klaus Bosch and Ursula Wedde, translated by Annemarie Lambrich. This book is

written for the complete novice who would like to own a talking parrot, for the novice breeder who is just getting under way with a parrot breeding program, and also for those breeders, dealers and zookeepers who are familiar with Amazon parrots. And, believe it or not, the book succeeds in presenting matters of interest to all the above folks. Of primary interest to me were the lists and photos of all the Amazon parrot species and subspecies. The data on breeding was also useful and caused me to modify my own Amazon breeding techniques. If, however, you are more inclined toward pet birds in the parlour, there are many handy hints that pertain to talking and tame birds — even clues regarding when and where the pet parrot may deposit his droppings. Such a thing had never occurred to me before. All in all, the book contains a veritable wealth of material, some crucial, some trivial, which will add much to your understanding of Amazon parrots. The volume is very profusely illustrated with drawings, maps and outstanding parrot portraits. It is 208 pages, hard cover, and I like it.

Another excellent TFH book was published recently (March 1987) that features a much broader spectrum of birds. Indeed, it is entitled **The Complete Cage and Aviary Bird Handbook**. How much broader can a book get? It is by David Alderton with photos by Tony Tilford. The text runs the gamut from avian origins and features through housing, feeding and management guidelines to avian ailments. Wisely, the author points out many disease symptoms and other medical difficulties to look for but doesn't try to prescribe specific cures. A veterinary text book this volume isn't. It

goes on to chapters on breeding and color, then to the breeds and species. This last chapter is in something of an encyclopedia form and has over 150 beautiful color photos of numerous avicultural specimens ranging from assorted and sundry finches to weavers, whydahs, buntings, cardinals, tanagers, honeycreepers, hornbills, toucans, touracos, doves, pigeons and parrots various. Geese, swans, pheasants, ducks and dodos it doesn't deal with. To gain a good idea of the large number of avian species often kept in captivity, this book is perfect. It also will fill your head with lots of little known, unusual but fun-to-know facts. There are 160 pages in this hardbound book and it sells for under twenty dollars. Get it.

Both of the above titles are published by TFH Publications, Inc., One T.F.H. Plaza, Third and Union Avenue, Neptune City, NJ 07753. If you don't find them in your local book store, contact the publisher.

If TFH is the largest and most well known publisher of pet books, Barron's is, perhaps, less well known for pet books but is equally deserving of your attention. I have in my library several Barron's books, two of which I'll touch on here.

The New Parrot Handbook by Werner Lantermann (December, 1986) provides a wealth of information to help determine whether a parrot is the right pet for you. There are pointers about making a good selection, transport and introduction to the new home, information on housing, care and feeding as well as diseases. Much consideration is given to the responsibilities of ownership and creating the right environment — physically and socially. With proper treatment, parrots can live

to be quite old. If improperly cared for, they may disappoint their owners by being shy and screeching continually.

The New Parrot Handbook concludes with a concise encyclopedia of the 35 best known species providing a full page of discussion for each variety including various cockatoos, eclectus parrots, senegals, gray parrots, and a number of Amazon parrots and macaws. The book is illustrated with many excellent drawings and 50 full-color photographs. As a boon much appreciated by me there is an outstanding index that makes the book a good one for reference.

It is paperback, 6½ by 7⅞ inches with 144 pages. It sells for the ridiculously low price of \$5.95. A very good book for the prospective or current pet parrot owner.

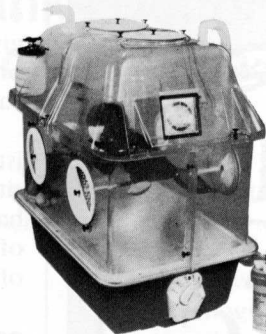
The second Barron's book is **African Gray Parrots** by Annette Wolter. It is a comprehensive guide for the beginning or intermediate owner of these intelligent, friendly and amusing birds. This fact-filled manual covers considerations before purchase, the actual purchasing, suggestions for housing in a cage or aviary and for setting up a climbing tree, advice on supplying a varied diet, treatment for illnesses and injuries, understanding African grays, and speech training. I wish I'd had this book years ago when I got my first of several African gray pets. Perhaps then I could have outsmarted the birds instead of vice versa. This volume is sure to help many pet owners develop an understanding of this remarkable bird to find it a source of everyday pleasure. There are many delightful drawings and a number of color photos illustrating various points made in the book.

It is paperback, 64 pages and can be had for under four dollars. You can find it in your local pet store or contact Barron's, 113 Crossways Park Drive, Woodbury, NY 11797.

Next is a little book with a big name, **First Breeding Records For Birds Reared to Independence Under Controlled Conditions in the United Kingdom** compiled by Dave Coles. This book, of course, is not for everyone. If you are of a curious mind and really want to keep your finger on the pulse of British aviculture (from which American aviculture largely stems) you'll find the data fascinating. In Cole's own words, "It is sixty years since the first attempt at listing breeding records was made. On that occasion Dr. Emilus Hopkinson, in his book, *Records of Birds Bred in Captivity*, covered not only the United Kingdom but also

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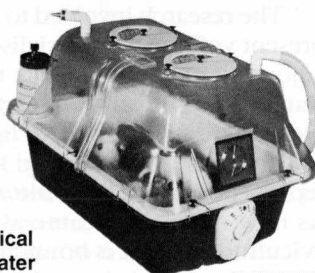
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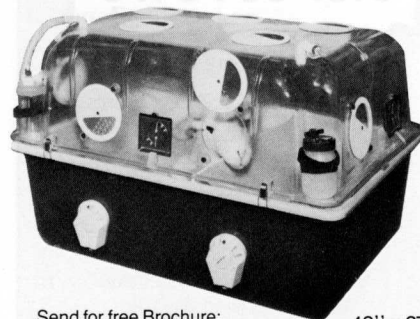
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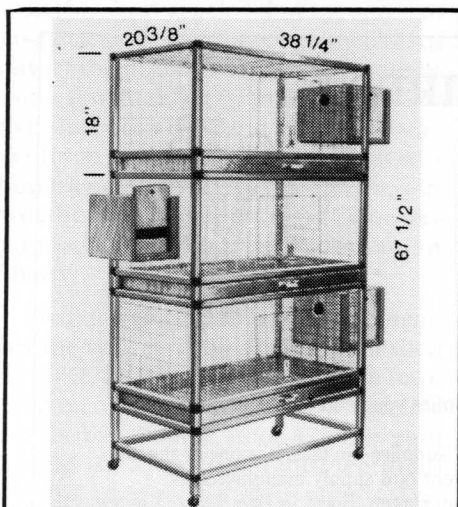


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included the rest of the world, plus a list of known hybrids. Each species was given several paragraphs outlining not only known breeders but, in many cases, a summary of breeding data.

"Such a format today is totally unrealistic and a probably impossible proposition, hence the layout of these records has been much simplified and consists of only the barest facts, an explanation of which follows.

"The research involved to enable the present volume to materialise has been enjoyably painstaking, if at times frustrating. Despite all the research, new records are still coming to light, either in the form of additional species or reports pre-dating those already on file. As new species become available to aviculture, the list is bound to expand. Consequently, it is my hope that an addendum can be issued periodically to keep the list as up to date as possible. In this respect, I would be extremely grateful if aviculturists breeding a species not listed or knowing of an earlier success, could please contact me."

Coles has done a great service, at great effort, that serious students of aviculture will find fascinating. The lists are very well organized by families and the English common names are used followed by the scientific names, the date of the first breeding and the name of the breeder. The literary source is also cited should you want to look it up for more details.

I think it is high time someone gets busy on preparing just such a book recording American first breedings. It is an excellent way to get an overview of the long range continuity of avicultural activity. Coles' efforts have produced a remarkable little book that will be of great interest to many of you. It is paperback, has 56 pages and can be gotten only from Dave Coles, P.O. Box 110, Cobham, Surrey, KT11 1BE, England. The price is 5.50 in England, 6.00 in Europe and 6.00 elsewhere payable in pounds sterling.

Another "must have" book, especially for those of you who keep Australian parrots, is **Australian Parrots — A Field and Aviary Study** by Barry Hutchins and Bob Lovell. Both authors wrote a series of articles over the past decade or so which proved to be very excellent accounts of most of the small to medium sized psittacines from the lorries to the rosellas, from the neophemas to the king parrot and from the superb parrot to the Cloncurry and its relatives. They don't touch on the cockatoos.

Of particular interest to breeders of these birds is the detailed accounts of the natural habitats and the natural diets. These data were gained only by much work and many hours in the field combined with keen eyes for detail and a good ability to communicate.

Also of special interest to most aviculturists are the detailed descriptions of the various species, subspecies, and transitional forms. The authors describe quite a few naturally accruing hybrids, birds that hybridize in the wild, many varieties of which are generally unknown in the U.S.A. This ought to add a little fuel to the hybrid-no hybrid fires we seem to stoke regularly.

This excellent book will undoubtedly become a standard reference on the parrots of Australia and there is much to be learned from it. I've read it, liked it, and put into practice some of its principles.

It is paperbound, has 185 pages, maps, a good bibliography but, alas, no photos. For more information contact Ron Brown, 10521 Dolores Ave., Southgate, CA 90280. The price is \$22.50 plus shipping and handling. The book was privately published by the Avicultural Society of Australia. The coordinating editor is Graeme Hyde.

The next two books have been published by a very small, family-owned publishing house in Canada but wait until you see what they're done.

The World of the Zebra Finch by Cyril H. Rogers, F.B.S.A., can only be described as the zebra finch bible. Rogers is widely published and is a well known avian expert, ideally suited to author such a volume. The thrust of the book is towards breeding and showing exhibition quality zebra finches. This specialty is stronger in England but is gaining ground in the U.S.A. and justly so. The ten chapter headings will give you a rundown on the book's contents.

Chapter one, classification, gives a very interesting explanation of just where the zebra finch fits into the world of birds. Chapter two deals with the first mutations while numbers three and four go into detail on "Interesting Variations" and "Non-standardized Varieties." Chapter five, the Zebra Finch Society, gives the history and details of that society in England. Part two of the book begins the management portion of the book and has chapters on accommodations, foods and feeding, breeding, color inheritance and the show world.

For the growing number of you who are becoming really serious about the zebra finch on the show circuit, this

volume is an absolute must. It is hard-bound, 128 pages, and has eight beautifully painted plates depicting all of the known color varieties of zebra finches at the time of writing (1986). It is priced at \$26.70 and can be gotten from Silvio Mattacchione & Co., 1020 Brock Road, Suite 2003, Pickering, Ontario, Canada LIW 3H2.

Now for the crowning glory of books referred to herein. Mattacchione has produced one of the truly masterful birds books of recent times. It is **Birds of Burma** by B.E. Smythies, B.A., F.L.S. It is a magnificent, thoroughly revised and rearranged third edition of a very rare book long out of print.

Birds of Burma is massive in terms of both physical size (over 500 pages) and scope (291 species illustrated). This edition will be strictly limited to 3000 copies for the standard edition (1500 for the North America and 1500 for the U.K.). The very special leather bound edition is limited to 200 copies for North America and 200 copies for the U.K.

The original hand colored plates have been made available to the publishers and this has made possible a much improved layout and increased page size allowing a better presentation of the plates and text. The original paintings were exquisitely done by Herbert Smith who captured the colors and detail in a manner which is sure to be approved by ornithologists wishing to study these birds and by all who truly value magnificent bird art.

The author spent years in the Burma Forest Service and gained a remarkable knowledge of the birds by countless hours in the field. His expert text is unsurpassed. This remarkable volume is a bird lover's and a book lover's dream come true.

Just as a reference point, the volume is about the size of Forshaw's *Parrots of the World*. The standard edition is a very modest \$95.00 U.S. each while the special edition can be had for a mere \$475.00 U.S. each plus \$2.50 each for postage and handling. A volume like this is always a good investment. To get your volumes of **Birds of Burma** contact Silvio Mattacchione & Co., address above.

This list of books should go far in solving your gift giving problems this season. Also, your humble servant possesses all the above books except the last mentioned. If you have an irresistible urge to buy **Birds of Burma** but, alas, have no one to give it to I should be very glad to personally relieve you of that difficulty. Happy holidays. ●

AFA Thanks Donors At the Seattle Convention Banquet

Many of the pledges have already been paid to AFA. All donations will be deposited to the specific fund for which they have been donated.

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