

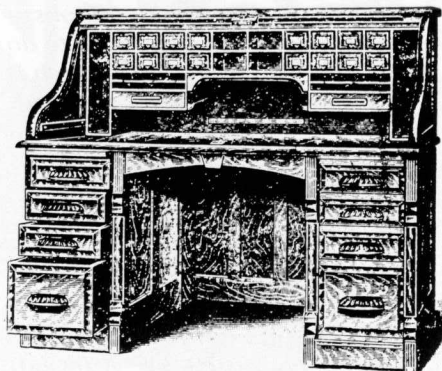
NOTICE

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

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 1568
Redondo Beach, CA 90278

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



Have any birds become extinct because of hybridizing? Is it really that big of an issue? I don't think so. Ironical as it may sound, the one bird that could have become extinct because of hybridizing, the Venezuelan black-hooded red siskin, is being assured of a future by a program set up by, in part at least, the AFA. I think that's great!

You know, many birds have become endangered because of deforestation. This is serious. Laws are trying to be passed by some very narrow minded people to hinder the progress aviculturists have made in this country. This is

The just past AFA convention in Seattle was so good I can hardly believe it. The people were warm, the experts were expert, the weather was ideal — everything was perfect. And there was no blood spilled. It seems impossible. Everyone who has ever been involved in organizational, corporate, etc. politics takes the occasional throat-cutting or backstabbing pretty much in stride. This is business as usual. But in Seattle there were no mortalities. The AFA leadership exuded a jovial confidence that at once put folks at ease and inspired enthusiasm and optimism for the future. Bravo! There are more detailed articles on the convention in this and future issues but I just had to voice my personal pleasure at how well the convention carried. You all should have been there. The Northwest Exotic Bird Society outdid itself as a host club.

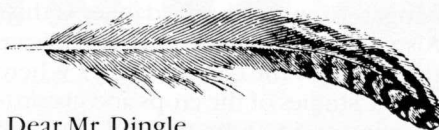
And, speaking of bird clubs, please never forget that if the individual members are the life's blood of the AFA, the member clubs are the heart that pumps it. I have long desired to feature a different member club in each issue of Watchbird. Actually, I've written articles on a couple of local clubs but there are one hundred and fifty or so clubs all across the USA and I surely can't visit them all.

Club leaders, take notice. Do your club a favor and have a little fun at the same time. Write an article extolling the various virtues of your club. Let us know what your club has done and what it wants to do. Show us in living photos who did it and how. Show us the exalted club leaders and heavy duty workers. And you might even throw in a few shots of the local black sheep and ne'er-do-well just for variety. Try not to write anything that would be actionable in a court of law, though.

Send your articles (typed, double-spaced, please) and photos (properly captioned) to Sheldon Dingle, P.O. Box 1568, Redondo Beach, CA 90278. In fact, all material pertaining to

Watchbird, articles, letters, etc., should now be sent to the above Business Office address. At present, about half of the material arrives at my private P.O. box rather than at the office. I have been justly accused of very tardy acknowledgements (if a year or two can be considered tardy) of material sent to me. The Business Office will remedy that situation by promptly sending an acknowledgement and forwarding the material to me. Contrary to popular opinion, I don't have an office in the AFA building. I do my work in my own library 50 miles removed. The Business Office management prefers it that way for some odd reason.

With the above being said, it is time to get on with a few letters.



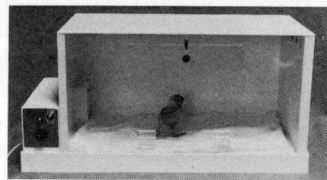
Dear Mr. Dingle,

I have been a member of AFA for a few years now and as far as I'm concerned, it is the best organization in aviculture today. I have learned many things from reading the Watchbird. But one thing worries me, it is the attitude some of the ones in the AFA are taking towards hybridization. Why such a hard line?

First, I would like to say that your reply to the letter about dove hunting in the last issue was excellent and appropriate to the subject. You, as myself, do not hunt doves yet you did not discriminate against those who do. If more people were open minded to subjects like this there would be less animosity in the world.

I hope with the many letters you have been getting on the subject of hybridization that the AFA will take a middle of the road attitude, so to speak, on hybrids. If I personally had in my care some endangered birds I would not hybridize them. Several species of birds hybridize in the wild. Is that wrong?

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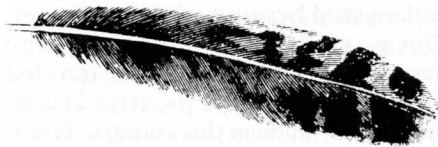


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very serious. If it were not for the AFA who knows what shape we would be in? Why don't we leave those who raise those beautiful Catalinas, red factor canaries and whatever else, alone and concentrate on more important matters? Sincerely,
Ivan Hartley
Lithia, Florida



Dear Mr. Hartley,

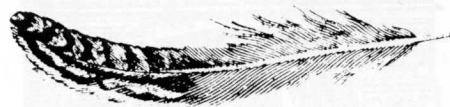
Thank you for your appreciation of the AFA and the Watchbird. And I like your regard for openmindedness. Indeed, I'm so wide open minded that many folks doubt that my mind exists. But the AFA doesn't reflect the mind of just one or two individuals. On a few issues the collective best minds of the AFA leadership over the years have reached a concensus and have hammered out policy statements that have been ratified by the AFA directors. Hybridizing is one such issue. AFA leaders, with the support of the AFA directors, have agreed that hybridizing is an activity that the AFA formally rejects. I don't have any problem with that. It is merely the AFA position.

We live in a relatively free society and often find ourselves belonging to organizations and groups that may have some policies with which we disagree. Generally, we can belong to the group but still do our own thing, so to speak. When we do our own thing we do it in our own name, not in the formal name of the group. I can cite thousands of such instances but one that I really like comes to mind.

An AFA vice president tells this tale. He found himself belonging to a military group in Vietnam whose policy was to call halt and fire a warning shot three times when a potentially dangerous "civilian" was climbing an eight foot fence topped with concertina wire. After a few bloody episodes it became clear that this policy didn't work under the circumstances so he told his men to shoot the S.O.B. with the first shot, then cry halt and fire twice more in the air.

What I'm saying, I guess, is that you can adapt to your particular circumstances and hybridize if you want, but the AFA policy remains the same. Each AFA member will ultimately do his or her own thing. I agree with you that we seem to be making a big deal out of nothing but I also think that the con-

troversy reflects the private opinions of various members and has little to do with the official AFA policy which is what it is whether we agree or not. Ed.



Dear Mr. Dingle,

What's a pet bird owner to believe about feeding grit to his birds? When I bought my cockatiels 3 1/2 years ago, everything I read on the subject in books and magazines said that you should keep a little bit of grit mixed with minerals available all the time and many suggested oyster shell also. These have been available for my cockatiels all the time and they're completely healthy.

Only recently have I been reading scary articles saying that grit results in compacted crops and maybe death. So some have said put a little grit in cages once in a while and some say none at all. One suggested that oyster shell is superior to grit because it eventually breaks down in the gizzard. Now you have an article saying that both grit and oyster shell are dangerous.

A book I have on home health care for birds gives instructions for treating crops impacted by eating too much grit but didn't indicate it was a frequent danger. How much of a danger is this? Also, where are the studies to indicate the extent of the danger, if any? Where are the studies of the crops and gizzards of parrots in their natural state? If parrots don't need grit, why do they have crops and gizzards?

Sincerely,
J.W. Kennedy
Sylmar, California

Dear Sheldon,

I am writing in response to the article entitled "Feeding your Bird the Proper Diet" by Ronald Parsons, Aug/Sept 1987 Watchbird.

While there are many statements in the article with which I disagree, there is one paragraph which I feel poses a potential danger to birds fed accordingly. Mineral oil, synthetic or otherwise, is a petroleum distillate which is used as a laxative. It is not absorbed from the gut and is not digestible, hence its effectiveness as a laxative. It poses a potential danger with long-term use, as fat-soluble vitamins (A, D and E) can become dissolved in the mineral oil and passed out unabsorbed, producing a deficiency even with adequate dietary vitamins.

I also found it interesting that he alluded to the perceived difference between sunflower and safflower seeds, in an issue where once again you tried to dispel that myth in your editorial column. An analysis of the two seeds is attached. The dangers of bread, rice, cheese, broccoli and cauliflower are also inaccurate, in my opinion, and in small quantities can only be beneficial to pet birds.

Perhaps the time has come for review of such articles to reduce the spread of misinformation. Please understand that I mean no disrespect towards the author — I only feel that the information presented is not entirely accurate. Respectfully submitted,
Susan L. Clubb, DVM
Miami, Florida



The above two letters show once again that there are varying opinions regarding diets for birds. Common sense should prevail at all times and if your birds are in good feather, bright of eye, reproduce well and live out their normal life expectancy, you are probably feeding them well. Certain items, however, have demonstrably good or ill effects in the long run. I have no problem believing Dr. Clubb's opinion regarding the potential hazards of using mineral oil routinely. In fact, I've received several letters and phone calls voicing concern about using mineral oil.

Regarding grit, I just recently read a statement by Dr. David Graham published in the "AAV Today," Volume 1, Number 2, 1987, wherein he said he's seen far more problems associated with birds being provided with grit than he has seen associated with birds being deprived of grit. As a pathologist, Dr. Graham has examined many, many birds and I have complete confidence in his evaluation of the trend. Also, none of my birds are provided with grit, nor have they ever been and they seem to do well. Why buy the stuff if it's not necessary?

Dr. Clubb touched on one very pertinent point that perked my ears up instantly. She recommended a professional review of certain technical papers — diets for instance — and I agree wholeheartedly. We tried this years ago but the effort dissolved in a miasmal mist of lethargy. I'll try again and Dr. Clubb will be the first vet I'll contact. Ed. ●

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