

Multiple Clubs Existing in One City

by Tom Kinsey,
Stella Selby & Shirley Davis for AEBC
and Ed Kelly for RCBC.

San Antonio, Texas, a city of over one million people, manages to support two thriving bird clubs at a time when some groups have to struggle to stay viable. River City Bird Club (RCBC) and Alamo Exhibition Bird Club (AEBC) each perform services that compliment rather than compete with each other. They have members in common and promote and attend the other club's events – River City by selling birds at the AEBC marts and Alamo by attending the River City and Texas A & M accredited avian seminars to learn from their outstanding speakers.

The River City Bird Club

The River City Bird Club was founded in February of 1997 for the purpose of promoting a continuing program of education in the field of aviculture for it's members, member's clients, and the public in general.

The RCBC educational program includes such things as a monthly newsletter containing a variety of published articles by veterinarians and avian specialists. They also have a professional speaker at each of their monthly meetings and finally they present, in cooperation with the

College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A & M University, an annual avian seminar. This event is a two-day affair, which includes a full day of classroom lectures supported by film and slides. These lectures are presented by the teaching staff from

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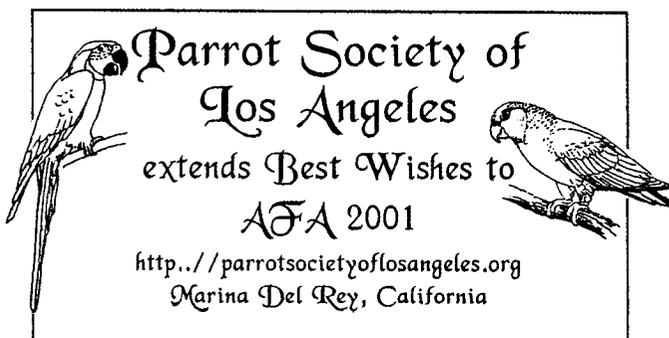
the vet school at Texas A & M and invited guest presenters from all over the country.

The second day consists of a variety of lab situations such as a "wet lab" with veterinarians teaching basic and intermediate avian first aid, techniques for tube feeding,

crop lavage, emergency temporary fixes for damaged or broken wings and legs and much more. Labs are also available on computer generated record keeping for the aviculturist. This year a special lab has been added to include the many aviculture related research projects being conducted by the Schubot Exotic Bird Health Center at Texas A & M.

This seminar is the only fund raising project RCBC has. Of the funds generated, only those needed to maintain the club for the balance of the year are retained. The rest of the money generated is donated to educational and research causes. A portion is allocated for scholarship funding at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A & M. A portion is donated to The Schubot Exotic Bird Health Center, which is an endowed avian research facility, located on the campus of Texas A & M University. Finally a portion is donated to AFA to support the CITES program or, as was the case last year, the Spix's Macaw Project.

RCBC also encourages all of it's members to establish a close relationship with a practicing avian veterinarian and to suggest to all of their clients to do the same for the



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continued health and care of their newly purchased birds.

Members of RCBC are proud of the fact that they have set very high standards for themselves (and their birds). They have taken the position that they should regulate themselves and feel that if more aviculturists would do the same we could prevent (or at least forestall) the need for government intervention and/or regulation.

Alamo Exhibition Bird Club

Alamo Exhibition Bird Club is the only 501 (c) (3) educational tax-exempt club in San Antonio. Founded in 1971, today the club has 256 members including seven founding members who are still involved in club activities. This year AEBC is celebrating its 30th anniversary and in that time has become a favorite meeting ground for pet bird lovers in south and central Texas. Many aspects of the club are familiar to anyone involved in the bird business or hobby, they have monthly meetings with educational speakers comprised of avian veterinarians, experts on different bird species, aviary building, and members sharing their expertise in bird care and breeding. They publish an informative newsletter, a directory of members, and promote a lot of "bird talk." One activity of the AEBC, however, has become especially noteworthy in the past few years. Their semi-annual Bird Marts are the largest club sponsored marts in the state and much of the money brought in from table rentals and admission goes to bird oriented organizations.

Last year the club donated thousands of dollars to the bird and education departments of the San Antonio Zoo and Texas A & M University's Veterinary School scholarship fund for avian vet training. The scholarship program has grown from one \$1000.00 fourth year gift three years ago to three \$1000.00 scholarships the past two years. They have recently added Last Chance Forever, a bird of prey rescue and education organization, to their list of recipients. In addition, AEBC has "adopted" five

zoo birds; a Yellow-naped Amazon, a Hyacinth Macaw, a Galah Cockatoo, an Eclectus Parrot, and a Palm Cockatoo. The money is used for their care and feeding. The club members voted to support AFA by helping to sponsor the President's Reception at the 2001 convention in Houston.

The Fall Bird Mart (October) and the Fiesta Mart (April) each attract over 100 exhibitors, thousands of birds and enough of the buying public to keep vendors coming back for the next mart. Being located in San Antonio offers a unique opportunity to join in the city's major celebration, Fiesta. Fiesta brings thousands of visitors to the city during its 10-day run.

Mart chairperson Stella Selby attributes much of the success of these events to hard work, great volunteers and good communication with the vendors and other bird clubs. She spreads the word about the San Antonio events at many of the other bird fairs, expos, marts, and shows she attends each year.

Stella identifies four essential factors for a successful bird mart:

Location

- Choose a centrally located facility.
- Allow adequate space for each vendor and room for growth.
- Have proper lighting and climate control

Consistency

- Have the mart at the same time each year – this helps vendors with their planning and customers become accustomed to the event.

- Don't conflict with other marts in the area – having a set date helps everyone.

Advertising

- Extensive advertising is essential to supply customers for an ever-growing number of vendors.

Participation

- None of the above can be accomplished unless there is a *dedicated group of club members* who are willing to volunteer and work together to create a marketplace for selling happy, well-adjusted companion birds and doing whatever it takes to achieve success.

The advertising budget for the marts is large enough to insure good coverage in the print and electronic media but relies heavily on free promotion through flyers well placed in veterinary clinics, pet shops and feed stores. Free event calendars in print, radio, and television are saturated weeks before the event. It's an added bonus whenever club members can appear on local TV shows with their birds.

As soon as one bird mart is over the plans for the next begin. The chairperson, co-chair person, raffle chairperson, publicity director, and any other club members interested in helping begin assessing the strengths of the preceding mart and what could be improved for the next event.

Thirty years of Alamo Exhibition Bird Club's existence speaks well for the pride, commitment and involvement of the members of the club. 

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