

THE NATIONAL COCKATIEL SOCIETY, INC. - A 23-YEAR SUCCESS STORY

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Introduction

Enthusiasm, growth, endurance, a commitment to established ideals – these traits serve as the benchmark that define the National Cockatiel Society (NCS) as a success among cockatiel societies worldwide, with its proven record of growing a prosperous membership base for more than two decades. Founded in November 1983, it shortly achieved nonprofit status as a 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt, educational organization. NCS membership has included thousands of breeders and enthusiasts from all geographic regions of the United States, with international members as close as Canada and the nearby islands of the Caribbean – to as far away as distant Japan - down to the very southern hemisphere of Australia itself, the endogenous birthplace of the cockatiel, *Nymphicus hollandicus*. NCS continues to serve the membership as an all-encompassing vehicle addressing every aspect of cockatiel culture and the needs of hobby breeders, pet owners, show exhibitors and seasoned aviculturists alike.

Mission

According to the NCS by-laws and NCS Articles of Organization, the mission of the National Cockatiel Society is to: “educate its members on the proper care, handling, maintenance and breeding of cockatiels; to provide educational and informative articles through its bimonthly journal; to support avian research related to cockatiel nutrition, reproduction and the study of disease; to encourage the breeding of color mutations through the study of genetics; to encourage selective breeding, closed banding and record keeping; to establish a standard of excellence for judging the ideal cockatiel; to establish an NCS Judges Panel of qualified judges to maintain a uniform quality in judging

governed by the standard; to hold an annual National Cockatiel Society show each year; to encourage ethical, thoughtful and constructive interactions among its members and fellow aviculturists; and any other provisions of these Articles, the purposes for which the National Cockatiel Society is organized are exclusively within the meaning of Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue law.”

History

The first meeting of the National Cockatiel Society took place at the 1983 National Cage Bird Show, which allowed for “standing room only.” This initial meeting acted as the catalyst that filled over 100 charter memberships and prompted the election of officers in January 1984, with a membership numbering more than 200. The 1984 charter year saw the election of the first board of directors, the formation of the NCS judges’ panel of grandfathered judges plus testing materials for new judges, and the initial show classifications and point system. It also produced the 52-page, educational NCS Journal, the approved and ratified set of NCS by-laws, and the authoring of the state coordinator guidelines, the written NCS Show Standard of Excellence and the visual standard that are still in use today. The first NCS annual show, held in November 1984 at the National Cage Bird Show, brought in a record-breaking number of 233 cockatiels in the newly approved NCS division.

AFA National Specialty Organization

The National Cockatiel Society joined AFA upon its founding, even before NCS elected its first slate of officers. Fully understanding the value of AFA affiliation, several members covered affiliation cost for the charter year. Once the NCS by-laws were approved by the

board of directors and ratified by the membership, annual affiliation became part of the constitution so that AFA renewal was required at the beginning of each year.

NCS has been an AFA national specialty organization for nearly quarter of a century. Over the years, NCS members have attended AFA conventions, participated in the specialty meetings and held their bi-annual meeting of the NCS membership at AFA. At one of AFA's largest conventions, the 10th annual convention in 1984 (which was attended by over 900 people from the U.S., South Africa, Trinidad, Sweden, Canada and Spain), NCS entered the club booth contest in the commercial exhibit hall and won "Second Best Educational Booth for its display of live cockatiel mutations." The display included the "new" whiteface mutation among them. NCS continues to run a booth each year in the exhibit hall, publishes AFA in Brief in its journal, run legislative updates in both the NCS Journal and on its website, and supports AFA by occasionally sponsoring a cockatiel convention speaker from time to time.

Avian Research

Throughout the years, NCS has supported avian research donating monies nearly each year of its existence. Support has ranged from awarding grants to UC Davis Avian Science Department for their work with cockatiels in the areas of nutrition, breeding, neonatal development and disease – to other institutions on a year-by-year basis. More recently, NCS has donated

grants to Dr. Thomas N. Tully, Jr. DVM, MS, ABVP Avian Diplomate, and professor of zoological medicine at the Avian Research Group of the Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine. One project using NCS monies was entitled "Validating 21-day Doxycycline and Azithromycin Treatments for Chlamydoiphila psittaci in Companion Avian Species," in which cockatiels were used. Another project, which NCS will be supporting, is an ongoing 9-year study on the development of a C. psittaci vaccine to protect pet birds from infection from this zoonotic disease.

NCS Journal

The bimonthly NCS Journal includes consultants who write feature articles and answer members' questions in the areas of breeding, genetics, nutrition, pet care, veterinary care, and other topics as needed. Experienced breeders, exhibitors, pet owners and overseas members provide additional articles and insights on a variety of topics. Journal advertising includes classifieds, member ads and commercial advertising pertaining to cockatiels and cockatiel related products. A calendar of events for NCS affiliated clubs includes information on scheduled bird fairs, show dates (including club name, location, contact delegate, class affiliation and selected judge), and show results of winning birds and exhibitors published in subsequent issues. All Journals contain contact listings of state coordinators, club delegates, the NCS judges' panel, committee members and the NCS board of directors.



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The NCS board of directors preparing to attend the 2005 annual board meeting.

Each Journal runs 52 pages with color covers featuring different cockatiel mutations, including new, popular and rare colors.

NCS Website

NCS has one of the largest online article archives of cockatiel information in its online library. The library contains sections on avian diseases, breeding, "the cockatiel clinic," healthcare, nutrition, recipes, genetics and mutations, showing, and a restricted "members only" section. Other areas of the website include the latest news on legislation and disaster relief, the NCS online sales store, a list of NCS registered aviaries, NCS affiliated local clubs, the NCS by-laws, advertising opportunities, an online NCS membership and band order application, and a form for potential volunteers to submit online. The extensive sections on exhibiting cockatiels includes the NCS show classifications and approved nomenclature, the visual and weighted show standard, the NCS show calendar, show rules, the novice awards program, affiliated club award benefits, judges listings, regional and specialty show information, the NCS hall of fame for champions and grand champions, and advanced exhibitors' band codes. Perhaps the most dynamic aspect of the NCS website is the "TalkAboutTiels" (TAT) online forum that receives thousands of "hits" and includes active message boards run by NCS volunteer panelists. This free service meets a public need, from answering emergency questions on hand-feeding newly abandoned chicks, to advice on when to seek expert veterinary care. Questions often receive answers within the same day, usually

within hours. A group of dedicated NCS members who are approved TAT panelists answer posts to boards that include news and information, breeding, general questions, lost and found, introductions, exhibiting, and a restricted members' only area. Many website visitors become NCS paid members to gain access to the "members' only" board, the "members' only" library section, and to receive the NCS Journal and other membership opportunities. Visitors can visit NCS online at www.cockatiels.org.

NCS Online Sales Store

A full line of NCS products is available online through the NCS sales store. Products range from NCS logo clothing, coffee mugs, adoption and pedigree birth certificates, to a colorful, laminated cockatiel mutation poster, the new NCS Novice Exhibitors Guide, the comprehensive Cockatiel Genetics Made Easy! workbook and other items found at <http://cockatiels.org/members/store1.html>.

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Genetics and Color Mutations

Although the new, myriad colors and combinations available in cockatiel mutations today enamor most cockatiel enthusiasts, it is this advancement in cockatiel genetics that keeps the seasoned breeder "hooked." In the United States, the decade of the 1990s brought a new mode of co-dominant inheritance introduced by the Dominant Silver, a new recessive Suffused Yellow mutation, plus a number of cheek patch varieties that initiated a hierarchy among some autosomal recessive mutations. The current decade has brought other possible new mutations and we are beginning to witness the results of some of the newer mutations when they combine.

The color combinations available today are beginning to rival other mutation parrot genera and the skill and knowledge it takes to understand cockatiel genetics has indeed become challenging. NCS provides opportunities for its members to pose questions on genetics in the genetics column published in the NCS Journal. The NCS online library also offers a number of articles on genetics and color mutations and books on genetics are available through the NCS sales store on the NCS website.

Show Standards and Exhibiting

Because winning birds most often become future breeding stock, considering all aspects of responsible breeding, (e.g., size, proportions, shape, etc.) is important when formulating a show standard. In 1984, NCS published its "NCS Show Standard of Excellence," which describes the ideal exhibition cockatiel. All NCS panel judges who preside at the approximately 50 local, regional, specialty and national NCS shows held by NCS affiliated clubs each year use the NCS show standard to judge cockatiel shows. NCS is currently updating its show standard, and has completed a new judging exam and show classifications that reflect changes with today's mutations and advancements in breeding and exhibition stock.

A judges' panel with a ceiling of 25 nationally certified judges, preside at NCS affiliated shows so that exhibitors can earn points when placing on the top bench in order to advance their cockatiels to champion and grand champion status. Judges qualify as candidates once they earn their way on the show bench as successful exhibitors, take a written examination and serve several apprenticeships. After a probationary period and pending the board of directors and judges' panel approval, candidates gain access as a fully accredited NCS panel judge.

Each year, NCS holds its annual national show under the auspices of the National Cage Bird Show, Inc. The NCS division includes two subdivisions, one for novice



NCS Panel Judge Philip F. Feret (left), and the Best in Show winning cockatiel at the 2005 National Cage Bird Show exhibited by NCS Second Vice President Alyssandra Young (right).

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A pair of young Whiteface Pearl Pieds from top exhibition lines that sold during the Friday evening auction for a record-breaking \$2,000.

The first directors voted into office included a 17-member board represented by a president, three vice presidents, secretary, treasurer, judges' panel chair, editor, membership/bands secretary, (past president) and regional directors across the country. Only minor change has affected the infrastructure over the years. The NCS board is an active entity, exercising monthly board mailings, discussion and voting responsibilities to set policy and provide oversight. The NCS judges' panel chair and judges' panel secretary send out panel correspondence and the voting ballots for which judges are responsible to return. The judges' panel must adhere to its own rules and regulations, which will be included within the new NCS Members' Handbook. NCS state coordinators, committee chairs, and club delegates are the front line of the Society, often interacting more often with the NCS members in their respective areas. All NCS officials are always happy to assist new, current and potential members. For further information on the National Cockatiel Society, please contact our website at www.cockatiels.org, or the NCS membership secretary at membership@cockatiels.org.

exhibitors and the other for advanced exhibitors, which allows novice members to compete in competition with their peers until they earn their way as advanced exhibitors. Exhibitors compete from all over the United States, Puerto Rico and sometimes Canada, to claim top bench status and earn champion and grand champion points. The NCS national is the only show in which grand champion cockatiels may enter in competition. Exhibitors also flock to the Great American Bird Show each year, as well as the NCS annual specialty show hosted by a selected NCS affiliate. NCS is reinstating the popular regional shows when petitioned by qualified affiliated clubs.

NCS Affiliation

NCS Club Affiliation Packages are available at various levels, from non-show clubs to those who wish to award rosettes and plaques at the highest affiliation level. Club affiliation benefits also include show and fair, or special event, publicity listings in the NCS Journal, listings in the NCS online show calendar, and publication of show results both in the NCS Journal and online. NCS club delegates are NCS members appointed by the club who act as the liaison between the local club and NCS.

NCS Officers

Linda S. Rubin is a co-founder, charter member and panel judge of the National Cockatiel Society and currently serves as vice president/show standards/promotion chair, genetics consultant, parliamentarian, AFA delegate and NAWA delegate. She has been active since the founding of the society and is currently assembling the NCS Members' Handbook, a resource containing all NCS society materials. She may be contacted at info@cockatielsplusparrots.com.

Reference:

Martin, P. (1984) AFA's Tenth Annual Convention. AFA Watchbird, 11 (No. 5):40. ■



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