

# The American Federation of Aviculture

42nd Annual Educational Conference  
Aug 4-6, 2016 | Cromwell, CT

## 2016 Conference Highlights:

42ND ANNUAL  
EDUCATIONAL  
CONFERENCE  
AND AVIAN EXPO

Susan van den Broek

The sun has now set on the AFA 42nd Annual Educational Conference “Conservation Works” held in Cromwell Connecticut from August 4th through 6th.

This year we kicked off the festivities with a trip to the Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The zoo is the only AZA accredited zoo in the state and in addition to its many rare and endangered animals, it is home to an antique carousel and a historic greenhouse. The AFA group was treated to a behind the scenes visit with the penguins.

The conference was definitely a star-studded event. Our registration area was graced by no less than two Palm Cockatoos, a Moluccan and a Triton. The troop seemed to enjoy entertaining as well as being entertained by the attendees.

The featured bird for the conference was the golden conure. For those of you not familiar with the format, a different bird is chosen for each conference and an artist is selected to produce original artwork for the event. This year’s choice of bird led to some beautiful artwork by Carolyn Carr. Carolyn and her husband have lived in Belize since 1977 and she also gave a presentation entitled “Belize is for the Birds”. Certainly looked that way based on what we saw.

Carolyn’s artwork included an in-flight pose and a sitting version, which was featured on the cover of the conference program. A highlight of the banquet is the auctioning of the original artwork and this year was no exception. Congratulations to the high bidders.

# “Conservation Works”





The artwork is also used to produce a variety of custom items including t-shirts and polo shirts. Be sure to check these out on the website, [www.afabirds.org](http://www.afabirds.org). Both poses are featured on the shirts and the dark blue of the shirts coupled with the yellow and green of the bird produced some of the best looking shirts ever. You are sure to want one of these whether you were an attendee or not. They also make great gifts for any bird lover.

As an added highlight, no less than four live golden conures played at the registration desk when they weren't touring the halls hanging onto their human perch. While the artist did an outstanding job on the artwork, there is nothing like a chance to see the live inspiration. What a "golden" opportunity for attendees.

The conference attendees also had another surprise when they got to see six gorgeous macaws take to the air in free flight. What a spectacular sight! Buddy Waskey was kind enough to give us several chances during the conference to see the grace and beauty of these birds as they soared over the trees or chased each other from bough to bough. At times they completely disappeared from sight. More power to Buddy, I know I don't have the courage for this. Fortunately, they all returned after they had their fun and games and what a relief to see them swooping back for their rewards. In between their sojourns in the skies, the group entertained everyone in the vendor hall along with two Blue-throated macaws.

Wow! If you weren't there, all of this excitement was before the conference even kicked off.

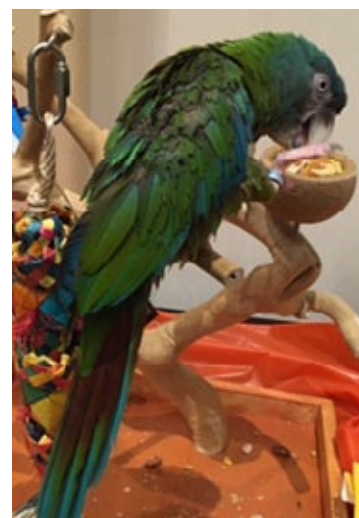
## The Speakers

Our keynote speaker, Laney Rickman is the Executive Director of Bird Endowment, Inc., a non-profit dedicated to "Saving the Blues". The program is focused on raising public and avicultural awareness of the Blue-throated Macaw's critical endangerment both in captivity and particularly in the wild. Laney is usually easy to pick out with her blue "plumage" but this year many others were inspired to "Go Blue" in sporting blue hair, moustaches

and beards. The group was memorialized in a picture taken at the banquet Saturday evening.

In keeping with AFA's educational goals, the conference was host to some 27 speakers including breeders, behaviorists, veterinarians, trainers, physicians, teachers, curators, bird owners, rescuers, conservationists, exhibitors, researchers, retailers, government employees, bird toy manufacturers and engineers. The speakers came from as far away as Germany and India. Aside from their interest in aviculture all have one other thing in common—a willingness to share their knowledge and experiences. Speakers at AFA are do not receive payment and they are responsible for their own travel expenses.

In addition to the Blue-throated macaws, we got some in depth looks into Quaker Parrots, Golden Conures, Kakas, Kakarikis and Keas, and as Dr. Susan Clubb, DVM, ABVP, puts it those "uncommonly cool parrots", the Blue-headed Macaws. Bonnie, my blue-headed macaw, was delighted to share the podium with her and happily posed for pictures.



Two presentations by Tim Van Norman and Yula Kapettanakos, PhD, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife caused emotions to run high. For those of you not familiar with the process, US Fish and Wildlife has the responsibility for enforcing the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Mr. Van Norman explained the connection

between the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and ESA. While the US has not imported parrots since 1992, even domestically raised parrots who are added to the Endangered Species List (ESL) in the US, due to endangerment in their native habitats, are subject to serious restrictions here which include the right to sell them across state lines and even the right to own them in certain states. While the ESA is responsible for the preservation of many species native to the US, including the bald eagle and the California condor, many of us are concerned about threats to our rights to keep and own our domestically bred parrots in light of their inclusion on the ESL.

Mr. Van Norman discussed the permitting process for parrots on the ESL and the difficulty in obtaining permits. Make sure you follow this issue on AFA's website and in the Watchbird. This issue concerns all of us. The birds already listed on the ESL are not necessarily scarce in the pet trade and include, the Military Macaw, the Buffon's Macaw, the Golden Conure, the Blue-Throated Macaw, and the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo, to name a few.

Conservation was a common theme throughout many presentations. We heard about efforts on behalf of specific species in certain parts of the world, including reintroduction of captive bred into the wild often in or near their native habitats. Many of the programs presented involved collaborative efforts by the avian community including breeding facilities, nutritional researchers and avian medical practitioners as well as cooperation by governments. It seems it takes more than a village for parrot conservation.

Two presentations highlighted the threats to wild parrot populations in Texas and Florida, respectively. While none of the species successfully surviving and even reproducing in these states are native, the uncertain future of these same parrots in their native habitats would suggest that populations anywhere are valuable for conservation.

An innovative approach to conservation was discussed by Dr. Greg Burkett, DVM, ABVP, involving the use of prosthetics in treating health problems. We explored ways to "Go Green" in our aviaries. We got a "sneak peek" into the nests of Scarlet Macaws in Peru and a new concept for artificial incubation.

Always popular with attendees are the presentations involving day to day living with our parrot companions whether it be understanding aggression in our birds, improving trust and harmony, free flight training, enrichment, bird safety, what we can learn from our parrots, how life in the wild is so different, the animal/human relationship and presenting a positive parrot image as well as aviculture in India.

An ever evolving area for aviculturists is discussions of various illnesses that can affect our birds. We experienced the challenges faced by one facility in preparing for avian Influenza. We explored

some of the bird illnesses that that can be passed to their human companions and how to deal with them. And if you didn't know it, there are also some illnesses that we can transmit to our birds.

There are two other presentations that I have not yet mentioned. Jason Crean, MA, MS, EdD. discussed the evolution of flight which explored different organisms ability to fly, the relationships among these species and how their adaptations may have facilitated their ability to survive.

Dr. Clubb discussed the problem of the "John Doe" bird and the need for a national avian registry. I must admit I went this presentation thinking "why" and came out realizing we must. More on this topic in future editions of the Watchbird.

Thanks to all of our speakers. We couldn't have done it without you.

## Our Vendors

Our vendor hall exploded this year! We were excited to welcome a record number of vendors (both new and returning) and the majority reported sales were brisk. We were pleased to have several affiliated clubs, a local vet clinic, some amazing artists displaying everything from paintings to jewelry as well as an array of bird toys, accessories and pretty much "everything parrot" you could imagine. Special thanks to Natural Inspirations for providing an aviary for the free flying macaws during their grounded time.





## The Banquet

Our banquet is always a fun end to the conference. As they say—a picture is worth a thousand words, so read on



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(1) New Board of Directors sworn in by Past President Tom Marshall. Presidential Awards: Jamie Whittaker with (2) Mark Moore and accepting for Rick Jordan. (3) Concetta Ferragamo. (4) Georgia Hayes. (5) Mary Ellen LePage. (6) Jason Crean. (7) Terry Timberlake. (8) Melanie Allen with Jamie Whittaker. (9) Buddy Waskey recognized for all his work and support. (10) Andy Sanford, Concetta Ferragamo, and Sharon Garsee; Raffle winners were drawn at the end of the banquet. (11) Tiffany Latino presents AFA with a donation. (12) Live Auction Art winners. Nancy Speed and Concetta Ferragamo with the artist, Caroline Carr. (13) Bob and Barbara Cosgrove with Jamie Whittaker.



## Conference Ends on a High Note

On Sunday, several people visited the Horizon Wings Raptor Rehabilitation and Education Center. They received a warm welcome from the staff and an up close and personal visit with the ambassadors of various species, including a Bald Eagle, a Golden Eagle, and a Great Horned Owl. As one person described it, the rapport between handler and bird was a pleasure to watch and it was evident that the birds were healthy and happy in their environment.

## Observations of a First Timer

AFA is always excited to attract new people to our conference. While the conference is a chance to catch up with old friends, it is also an opportunity to make new ones. When newcomers are also part of the next generation of aviculturists, we are especially pleased.

I had the opportunity to speak with first time conference attendee and next generation aviculturist, Matthew Irving. Matthew became interested in birds when he had the opportunity to breed lovebirds when he was 13. He and his family have shared life with a Blue-throated macaw for the past 9 years. Matthew did his homework before choosing the Blue-throated and characterizes them as being mechanical, expressive and interactive. The attraction of the keynote speaker in addition to living in the New England area made attendance at his first conference the perfect opportunity. He particularly mentioned how welcome he and his mother were made to feel.

Matthew attended as many sessions as possible and enjoyed all of them. While only a bird owner at this time, he commented that it was interesting to hear about different species of birds and some of the difficulties breeders had encountered in trying to successfully breed them.

One of the highlights for Matthew was the question and answer session at the end of each presentation. He felt this helped to clarify points for everyone.

He also mentioned that he has DVDs of speeches from previous years. Unfortunately, the sessions were not recorded this year but check the AFA store for copies from previous years.

Matthew enjoyed his experience and would attend again. He's already considering

Tucson. I hope to see him there. I'm looking forward to continuing the conversation about some of the subjects we discussed including our mutual love of Blue-throated macaws.



To quote Matthew, the conference has "an atmosphere of caring and involved people willing to share whether they know someone or not"

## Save the Date

The 43rd Annual Educational Conference is in Tucson, Arizona at the Westin La Paloma Resort from August 3rd through 5th, 2017. Watch for more information in the coming months and mark your calendars.

If you have a topic you'd like to present or know someone, be sure to submit an abstract. Papers will be accepted now through February 1, 2017. Specifics about the submissions of papers are listed on the AFA website.

See you in Tucson!



**Beautiful Westin La Paloma Resort**

**The American Federation of Aviculture**  
**43rd Educational Conference & Avian Expo**  
*Aviculture is Conservation too*  
**Aug 3—5, 2017—Tucson, Arizona**

**Lory League Bird Show**  
**Junior Aviculture Workshop**  
**Learn from the experts!**  
**Network with other bird enthusiasts**  
**Shop with your favorite vendors**  
**See new bird products!**

**Silent Auction & Live Auction**

**For More information or to register—[www.AFABirds.org](http://www.AFABirds.org)**  
The American Federation of Aviculture is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit educational organization

**SAVE THE DATE**