

the beginning to the present.

But time moves on, things change. As much as I've enjoyed editing the Watchbird over the years, I find now that other priorities prevail.

Throughout the years of service, the hardest part has been trying to find out just who is the boss. There have been, over the years, transitory figures elected for this or for that who have sent occasional signals my way. But, generally, by the time the signals were clarified and expounded the sender had himself faded vaporously into history and a new electee was generating new signals. Your humble servant carried on in the vacuum.

Under the circumstances, I don't feel anyone but myself can be blamed for the general contents and philosophy of the Watchbird. Its appearance, layout and art work, of course, can be laid at Hessler's door.

But I am satisfied that the Watchbird has been a pioneer in avian publication. There have arisen two or three worthy journals that have followed the trail blazed by Watchbird. And I believe that an unbiased future will look back at the first 14 years of Watchbird and say, "Well done." I sincerely hope that we've laid a worthy foundation for future years of Watchbird to build upon. My best wishes to whomsoever the new builders may be.

In the meanwhile, the groom has the horses saddled and awaiting without. The wife and I bid you all adieu, and 'til we meet again, we're off on a well deserved gallop. Ed.



The *Watchbird*, a vision in my mind long before it manifested itself in printed form, became possible over 14 years ago, along with the concept of the AFA, through discussions between myself, Jerry Jennings, Joe Griffith, Sheldon Dingle and other AFA founding personalities.

Through the years, the *Watchbird* has been guided, shaped and structured into a unique, special interest publication that was the only one of its kind in the U.S.A.

As art director and producer of the *Watchbird*, I have enjoyed many accomplishments; however, other professional opportunities ordain my resignation from the staff. It is with regret that I announce this December '88/ January '89 issue as the final *Watchbird* to be produced by the Hessler/Dingle team.

Mary Jean Hessler, AFA Watchbird
Art Director, Aug. 1974 - Dec. 1988 ●

NOTICE — as of January 1, 1989, all correspondence intended for the editor of the *Watchbird* should be mailed directly to the AFA business office. Send to the Editor, c/o AFA, P.O. Box 1568, Redondo Beach, CA 90278.

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by Sheldon Dingle
Norco, California



A Monograph of Endangered Parrots

Technically speaking, this is not a book review but is rather a book preview as the volume is not yet off the presses. The forthcoming book is titled *A Monograph of Endangered Parrots* by Tony Silva, published by Silvio Mattacchione & Co., Pickering, Ontario, Canada.

Everything about *Endangered Parrots* puts it in the "collectors" category. The text, the illustrations, and the actual physical volume itself, the thing you smell, touch and lovingly turn the pages of — all these things combine, each with its own excellence, to form a volume virtually irresistible to true book lovers. And if you love parrots also, you'll be ecstatic when you finally get *Endangered Parrots* in your hands.

The text — what the book says and how it is said — is, of course, extremely important in any book. The text is an extension of the author's mind including all the education, experience, passion and prejudices thereof. In this case, these ingredients work very well together on the subject of the world's parrot populations and their current status. This says something about the author. Indeed, the author's personal interests and experiences are the very qualities that lend veracity to his text. "Aha!" you say, "How can a kid not yet 30 years old know anything about anything?" Those were my thoughts exactly until I read the text and did a minor background check on Silva.

As it happens, Silva grew up with financial resources sufficient to allow him to do more or less as he pleased. With this advantage, he chose to learn everything in the world about parrots and, I must say, he has crammed more parrot study into the past ten years than most of us can put into a lifetime.

Indeed, Silva has travelled the world over in his quest for parrot lore. When he writes of the chain-saw destruction of the rain forests you know he's gotten sawdust in his hair. When he describes how native trappers work you know he's been with them on the remote jungle trails. His search for knowledge has taken him to the wilds of Argentina and Brazil, to Paraguay and Puerto Rico, from the islands of Grand Cayman to St. Thomas

and St. Lucia. He has tramped across the highlands of Fiji and into the Australian outback. Few people have travelled so far and wide in the study of parrots in their natural habitats.

Silva is also an experienced and successful aviculturist with several first breedings to his credit and with an enviable record that includes the breeding of many species of macaws, Amazons, cockatoos, conures and assorted other psittacines.

I point out the above qualifications (a partial listing, to be sure) because I feel it is hard for a book to be better than its author's qualifications. Silva is already well established as a world class expert on parrots and is very well qualified to write on the endangered parrots of the world.

One of the hardest aspects of writing this book (according to Silva himself) was the selection of the species to include. Many species are in trouble but Silva narrowed it down to the 51 species he feels are most critically endangered and included them in the book.

The difficulties these species encounter are treated in detail in the section *Pressures on Parrot Populations*. This section is divided into "habitat" and "parrot trade" subdivisions in which Silva points out in compelling, graphic detail the worldwide destruction of the delicate ecosystems that many parrots depend on for life itself. He explains from first hand knowledge which species have been trapped to the verge of extinction. And, with his demand that trapping be stopped, he gives some viable alternatives.

Silva is not all gloom and doom. He writes about the possibility of reintroducing certain species into the wild and what can be done to ensure their survival. He also recognizes not all species *can* be reintroduced and explains in detail why not.

In the section on husbandry, Silva provides a virtual textbook on the most up-to-date and successful types of cages and aviaries, feeding techniques, aviary equipment (feed bowls, etc.) and sundry problems to watch for. The section is a comprehensive outline with

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varying details for each species given under that species' heading elsewhere in the text.

As a long-time (albeit reluctant) hand feeder myself, I recognized instantly that Silva has personal experience hand feeding baby parrots. The hand feeding section is an excellent guide for new or experienced hand feeders that touches on many details including when *should* a parrot be hand fed, what it can be fed, what temperatures are good, what sort of equipment (spoons, syringes, brooders, etc.) is useful, and many other details that can generally improve one's ability to successfully hand rear young parrots. It is an excellent section that brings hand feeding techniques up to date and helps one to determine under what circumstances it is necessary.

From hand feeding the book moves to the major section that treats, in detail, the 51 species of parrots Silva deems most seriously endangered. Each species' chapter is broken into taxonomy, distribution, habitat, status, general notes (very detailed), feeding, nesting, eggs, call, flight, aviary notes and conservation measures. On these species there is no source in the world where one can find more voluminous and detailed information.

In this "species" section of the book, we come to the second component of the volume — the illustrations. (The first component is the text and the third is the physical make up of the book itself, the leather, paper, size, design, etc.) There are 26 extremely well done color plates by the very talented Gracia Bennish. She has the rare ability to depict the birds in natural poses and positions. The subtle "alive" quality of her paintings stems from a sensitivity gained through long and detailed observations of the live birds themselves. Indeed, Bennish has a personal collection of 16 psittacines including cockatoos, macaws and Amazons.

Many of these original portraits have taken as long as 600 hours to complete. The colors, the feather detail, the birds' very expressions are so life-like as to be uncanny. These originals are executed in fine French pastels which seem to allow the brightness and feather sheen to glow as living birds do in the sunlight.

I find it difficult to use words to describe works of art. Suffice it to say that these bird portraits are exquisite and that Gracia Bennish is a rising star who is gaining international recognition and acclaim in the world of avian art. These beautiful plates are the perfect compliment to Silva's excellent text. As Rae Anderson noted in his review of the book, the only improvement one could hope for would be that *all* instead of half of the species covered would be illustrated.

With an outstanding text and exquisite illustrations it only remains to see how the two will be bound together.

Fortunately for book lovers, that chore will be overseen personally by the

publisher, Silvio Mattacchione, who is dedicated to the production of fine, limited edition books.

Quality is of paramount importance. Mattacchione pays meticulous attention to every detail. The finest acid-free paper, the very best goatskin leather, the top quality ink and thread, indeed, *all* of the physical components of this volume have been hand picked by Mattacchione himself.

And to work with these exquisite materials Mattacchione has gathered together some of the finest artisans and craftsmen in the world. The hand-sewing and hand-engraving, the gold inlay work, all will be done by masters of the art. Believe me, folks, the nearly lost art of old time book-binding still exists.

The only unhappy thing about this type of production is that the very labor — the actual number of hours required per volume — of necessity restricts the number of books that can be produced.

Happily, *A Monograph of Endangered Parrots* by Tony Silva is going to be produced in three different bindings as follows.

The Remarque Edition: 26 copies, lettered A to Z, full bound in goatskin by master craftsman Keith Felton, hand marbled end papers, hand sewn text and plates, hand sewn head and tail bands in pure silk, hand tooled and inlaid with 23 carat gold on spine and face, blind hand tooled back cover, each comes in a matching slipcase lined with suedel, signed by author, artist and bookbinder. Price: \$2000 U.S. each.

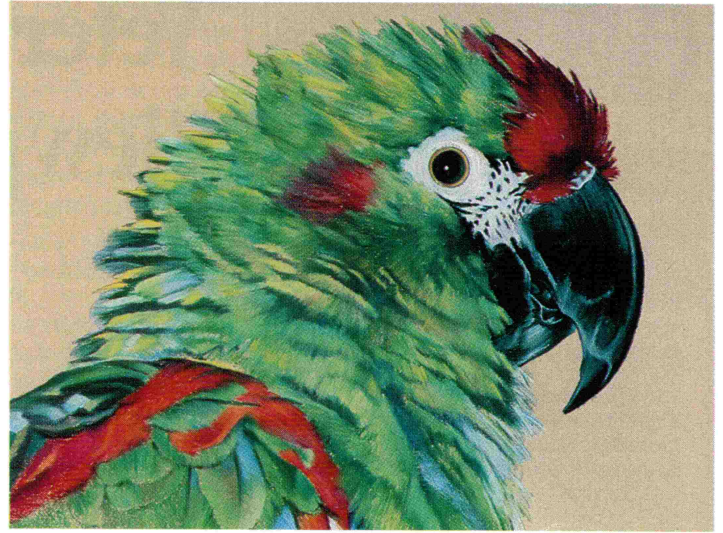
The Collectors Edition: 200 copies numbered 1 to 200 half bound in goatskin and marbled paper by Felton Book-binding Ltd., hand marbled end papers, hand sewn text and plates, silk head and tail band, hand tooled spine inlaid with 23 carat gold, matching slipcase lined with suedel, signed by the author and artist. Price: \$1000 U.S. each.

Subscribers Edition: 2,000 copies numbered 1 to 2000 bound in cloth by Austey Graphic Ltd., Smythe sewn, elephant hide paper end leaf, regular head and tail bands, gold foil stamped spine, with a four color laminated dust jacket. Price: \$125 U.S. each.

The above three editions of this outstanding book provide a range of features and price that make the volume available to virtually everyone interested in books and parrots. The only drawback, I fear, is that there won't be enough to go around. The Remarque and Collectors editions are the sort of books that major institutions (museums, universities, etc.) and moneyed collectors snap up quickly. The Subscribers edition is more accessible to the ordinary folks but it, too, is an outstanding volume and there are only 2,000 of them available. There is no trade edition that will remain in stock for years to come. Historically, books like this have appreciated over the years and are often



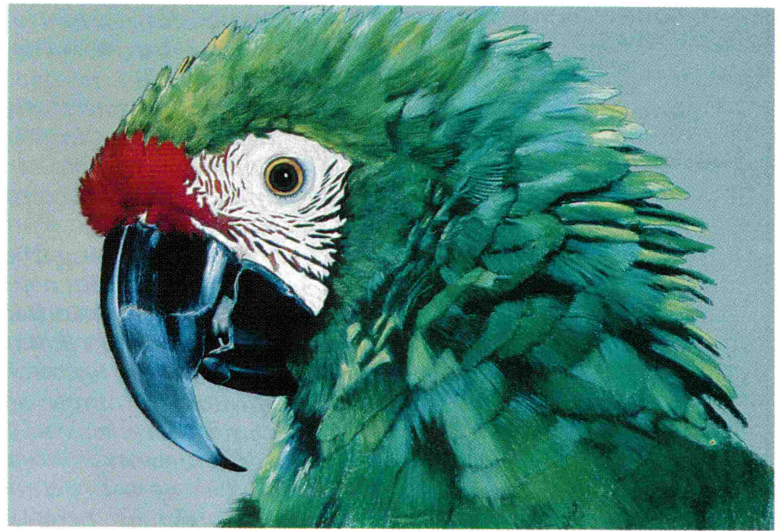
A St. Vincent Amazon (Amazona guildingii) in flight.



The red-fronted macaw (Ara rubrogenys)

acquired for investment purposes.
 To sum up this preview, I suggest that Silva's *Monograph of Endangered Parrots* is an extraordinary volume that combines the efforts of a very important world class authority on parrots with a bright new star in the avian art world and packaged in a masterpiece of the book-maker's art. How can any bird and book lover resist such a prize? I look forward anxiously to receiving my copy.

To get your book, contact: Silvio Mattacchione and Co., 1020 Brock Rd., Suite 2003, Pickering, Ontario, Canada L1W 3H2. Telephone: (416) 831-1373, Telex: 06-981428, FAX: (416) 686-3710 ●



The Bolivian military macaw (Ara militaris boliviana)



Note the very lifelike pose of this red-spectacled Amazon (Amazona p. pretrei)



The blue-throated macaw (Ara glaucogularis) is very uncommon in captivity.