

Nestmates Anonymous

This service is to match unmated birds, to bring joy to forlorn single birds and their discouraged owners, and to broaden the gene pool in needy species.

To list a bird give as much of the following as you can: English name or names by which it is known, Latin name and sex; your name, address and phone number; one dollar for up to four birds.

To answer a listing send a separate letter for each bird sought (each one goes to a different source), including your name, address and phone number; enclose a dollar for each bird sought (to cover mailing your response).

Address all communications to Ms. Cathy Grosse, 3120 Epworth Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211. Do not write to the *Watchbird!*

Wanted:

Female yellow lored Amazon

(*Amazona xantholora*)

Female Malabar parakeet (*Psittacula columboides*)

Male Wagler (ref-fronted) conure

(*Aratinga wagleri frontana*)

Male blue eyed cockatoo

(*Ophthalmica*)

Male green wing macaw

Male blue and gold macaw

Female scarlet macaw •

What is AFA's Mission?

by Tom Marshall, AFA President
Vienna, Virginia

I have been asked by bird clubs and individuals on occasion, "What is the mission or purpose of AFA?" Our mission statement is spelled out in every issue of *Watchbird*. We are "dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding, scientific research and education of the general public." This statement is subject to some interpretation and, as president of the American Federation of Aviculture, I would like to give you my perspective on the meaning of that statement in the light of what is currently going on around us.

Conservation

In order to fully understand the phrase, "dedicated to the conservation of bird wildlife through captive breeding," we must agree on the

meaning of conservation. Webster defines conservation as "planned management of natural resources to prevent exploitation, destruction or neglect." AFA believes that birds are our natural resources and that they should be managed to prevent exploitation, destruction or neglect.

Captive Breeding

Our members' expertise lies in captive breeding. Where we can prevent or work against the destruction or neglect of an avian species through captive breeding, without exploitation of the birds in the wild, we insist on that opportunity. As a corollary to that we want recognition of the fact that captive breeding can be a valuable tool for the genuine conservationist. However, some of the more conservative conservationists, operating with the definition of conservation as, "a careful preservation and protection of something," do not see how captive breeding can play a part in the conservation efforts of endangered species. They are strongly critical of private breeders who claim their motive is conservation.

For instance, as reported by Rosemary Low at the AFA Convention in Tampa, Dr. Christopher Imboden, director of the International Council for Bird Preservation, views captive breeding as being viable only as a part of a comprehensive species recovery program. Such a program might encompass, as appropriate, habitat protection and restoration efforts, reintroduction and scientific monitoring, awareness campaigns and legislative action, and all or any of this with the full support of an enlightened government. The fact that most of these birds for which he has concern survive, precariously, in so called Third World countries where there exists little money or support for such a desirable scenario, doesn't dampen Dr. Imboden's position in the least. I, too, would wish that every threatened bird out there had such a program, but they don't and they won't. To think so is highly unrealistic, and does not serve the interests of the birds. We have evidence, e.g., the scarlet chested

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parakeet, that if enough breeders concentrate on birds where habitat destruction is especially serious, in some future time there will be larger captive stock than there are birds surviving in the wild.

The idea that nature is something that must be conquered is deeply rooted in the culture of many Third World countries. In the political domain of many of these countries, the destruction of nature is quite calmly tolerated. How can there be reintroduction of endangered species when there is little respect for nature? I contend, and I think you do too, that it is better to have a reserve of birds in captivity, whether or not it is part of a comprehensive program, than to have none at all.

Due to the interest and skill of some aviculturists, sizeable captive stock of some endangered species already exists. We all know of Ramon Noegel's fourth generation of Cuban Amazons. The same is true with the golden shouldered parakeet in Australian collections, which are also more abundant in captivity than in the wild. It is important to note that such stocks have been produced without any cost to a government, so if habitat does rematerialize and attitudes toward wildlife change, reintroduction might very well be possible.

Don't forget, in eight out of ten cases, the most significant factor in the decline of a species is loss of habitat. It is highly unrealistic to assume that habitat for many of these species will ever be restored, except perhaps in Puerto Rico, where the American taxpayer has already paid millions with scandalous poor results.

What is the role of the truly professional aviculturist in all of this? Fortunately or unfortunately, we have in our collections the birds that may be endangered in the near future. What happened to the Mexican red headed Amazon or green-checked Amazon? Those of you who have them, did you respond to the AFA-backed survey in reporting their whereabouts and production figures in captivity to the Amazona Society? Not in the numbers you should have, I would imagine. How about the blue fronted Amazon? It will soon fall victim to a combination of exploitation and habitat destruction. Is there really any concerted effort to save this bird now while they are cheap to import? We must build up greater stock of these birds so that plundering will become unnecessary. Unlike most countries,

we have an enormous range of exotic birds entering into the United States every year, but we cannot afford to be lulled into the belief that they will continue to pour into this country's quarantine stations unabated. You have heard it before, but it is true and needs to be repeated over and over: we need to specialize. We need to let more parent birds raise more of their own offspring. We must buy more of the domestically bred birds and decrease our demand for wild-caught birds. We must raise healthy birds, keep good records and close band our birds for identification purposes. We must not hybridize. We must be more responsible. We need to support financially the efforts of groups like ICBP and AFA, which are trying to make a difference for those birds remaining in the wild.

Scientific Research

Another aspect of our mission statement indicates our dedication to scientific research. AFA has given in excess of \$60,000 to qualified individuals doing research in avian medicine and husbandry techniques, and was one of the first groups to do so. We are also dedicated to adherence to scientific principles and data when decisions are being made with respect to the importation of birds. We are very much interested in the real status of birds in the wild and the effect of trade on populations. AFA is not interested in the exploitation of birds where it can be documented that trade is having that kind of negative impact on their well being. We are not in bed with the quarantine station owners and importers, and we will support quotas on the importation of birds into this country if those quotas do what they are supposed to do and are based on scientific findings. We support the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES), especially if they live up to their promise to be scientific in their orientation and not allow politics to erode their purpose and credibility. We support the 1976 Bern Criteria of CITES that establishes the standards for the addition, deletion, or transfer of species to one of the three appendices.

Appendix 1 — All species that are or may be affected by trade.

Appendix 2 — All species that could be threatened by trade. Permits must be issued that indicate the export of certain birds is not incompatible with their survival in the wild.

Appendix 3 — If domestic laws are inadequate, countries may list birds they feel need protection.

There has been a decline in recent years on CITES' reliance on expert scientists and their findings for information and recommendations prior to making decisions about listing birds on the various appendices. This trend has impoverished CITES' integrity in making decisions for listing, etc., thereby alienating segments of the scientific community and groups like AFA, which have the inclination and interest to be a natural ally.

Education

AFA is dedicated to the education of the general public. Most people see us as meeting this mandate, simply by publishing the AFA *Watchbird* and for producing for the last 14 years our annual conventions. The job of educating the general public includes all those special publics that don't know what aviculture is or what its potential is on behalf of bird species. We have done such a good job of educating the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Interior, that they now come to us for our input prior to implementing regulations with respect to quarantine and importation of birds. We have educated committees of the state legislatures to such a degree in Massachusetts, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Alabama, Michigan, California and Washington that they have not seen the wisdom of duplicating the infamous New York wild bird ban. We have further plans to educate the delegates of CITES by producing our message in a tri-lingual brochure for dissemination at the October 1989 meeting now to be held in Europe. Unfortunately, our biggest failure to date vis a vis education is to sell the individual who keeps birds of his responsibility professionally to belong to his professional organization, the American Federation of Aviculture. All of us have profited by what AFA has accomplished over the years protecting our avicultural interests. AFA has proven that it can do the job, but we need numbers and resources to maintain our credibility and to continue to be effective. We need you and you need us. Together, we can assure that aviculture will continue to prosper. Please act responsibly and professionally, join the American Federation of Aviculture and keep your membership current. ●