

# From The Editor's Desk

The newly approved Watchbird staff (Jack Clinton-Eitnrear, Jerry Jennings, Dale R. Thompson — editors; Mary Jean Hessler — art director) wishes to thank those many people who supported us through the recent transition. We have an excellent team with a wide range of expertise. We shall be incorporating old and new concepts into the Watchbird and, hopefully, we will broaden its scope of avicultural information. We plan to provide as many special avicultural interests as possible. Although we will still have an abundance of psittacine articles, we plan to have a minimum of one article on the subjects of finches, canaries, gallinaceous birds, softbills, doves and/or pigeons, avian medicine, pet birds, and avian conservation in each issue.

This is in addition to the standard information already published. These include Veterinary Viewpoints, letters to the editor, center insert updates, AFA visits, AFA News and Views, and the classified ads. There will also be many additional concepts that will appear in upcoming issues.

We invite our readership, all interested aviculturists and bird lovers to submit avicultural articles on the avian subject of your choice and interest to the editorial staff. We would ask for double-spaced, type written material with one or more photographs if possible. This will greatly aid in our editing. We are looking for the full spectrum of articles from information to aid the beginner to detailed information on specific avicultural subjects. We will strive to make this magazine meet the need or interest of every reader.

We have the Board's approval to expand the Watchbird by eight pages in the upcoming issues and ask for your support in making the Watchbird, the best American avicultural magazine, even better.

Dale R. Thompson, co-editor

Dear Editor:

Our club members (Mid America Cage Bird Society) donated assorted finches and canaries to the Botanical Center in Des Moines, Iowa a couple months ago. We have our monthly meetings there and, believe me, we are very proud of how well our birds are doing! As of this date our total number released is 25 with a known loss of only two. Isn't this remarkable for previously considered "cage birds"?

I am sending you a newsletter I received from them with a nice article written by their administrator. I am especially proud of the picture as two of the birds, I am certain, are mine!

Sincerely,  
Flo Horrell (M.A.C.B.S.)  
Agent/Treasurer

Dear Flo:

Thank you for the enclosed Botanical Center newsletter, and our "bats off" to the members of the Mid America Cage Bird Society in their civic minded support of the Botanical Center. I hope other AFA member clubs will emulate Mid America. Your efforts will go a long way towards furthering aviculture.

Sincerely,  
Editor (J.J.)



Dear Editor:

Re: article entitled "Parrot Breeding for Conservation" by Al McNabney, Watchbird, Oct/Nov 1988 issue

I would love to see a world class avian facility dedicated to the protection, preservation and propagation of endangered birds of all kinds. It would only be appropriate for the AFA to become involved on a large scale basis in this venture. I fear for many avian species. The manner in which the human race continues to foul our planet is astounding. Awareness of this seems greater all the time, but I feel the general public still has a long way to go in understanding the long-term consequences of such behavior.

Because we plunder the earth to make our lives more comfortable, we must take the responsibility to see we do not eliminate other forms of life in the process. Until all people recognize their responsibility, a select few must take the initiative to preserve those other life forms.

The AFA should continue to take this initiative by sponsoring a world class avian facility.

Royce King  
Rapid City, South Dakota

Dear Editor:

My first reaction to the proposal for the "world class avian facility" was to grab my checkbook and wonder whom to lobby to get the thing located within a short drive from my home. But I think the first step must be clearly to define the goals of such a facility. The second step should then be a *step*, not a running leap. The proposal raises many questions in two entwined categories: those regarding the birds to be produced and those regarding the information to be produced.

Would the goal be to establish self-

sustaining populations of endangered birds? If so, I think the facility would have to be limited to a handful of species. Should they be species of particular interest to many aviculturists or species most likely to be overlooked by (or impractical for) the majority of aviculturists? Are they to be limited to psittacines or would other birds be considered?

Would the goal be to raise the maximum number of birds even if this means using methods not practical for "backyard" breeders? Or is the goal to develop the best methods which could be implemented by the greatest number of amateur aviculturists? Or should the birds be bred as naturally as possible (in large aviaries with plants from their native habitat, with maximum parent feeding, etc.) so natural behavior can be studied and preserved to the extent possible in captivity, with an eye to release into the wild someday?

Would some of the goals be better achieved by establishing a network of aviculturists who might agree, for example, to devote all or most of their resources to a single "assigned" species or genus (to encourage specialization and minimize duplication of effort)?

Will the information to be produced differ from that which could now be extracted from a study of existing facilities and, if so, in what respects? Is the goal to produce scientific information on breeding factors even if conducting controlled experiments results in fewer birds being produced in the short term?

If there is an interest in educating school children and the general population regarding birds (pet care, captive breeding or birdwatching and conservation), does this need to be connected with the breeding facility? Some sort of educational project on this level could be undertaken anytime.

Finally, how will these and other questions be addressed and answered?

There are many worthwhile niches to be filled in the world of aviculture. No one facility, even a "world class" facility, can fill them all. To fill even one niche with work of sustainable high quality is a laudable accomplishment and certainly preferable to an unfocused attempt to do too much. Let us define our niche.

Sincerely,  
Lynne Page  
Thousand Oaks, California

Dear Editor:

I am writing in support of Al McNabney's idea for a world class avian breeding facility. Such a facility could eventually serve as a data center for private breeders; that is, one central registry like the American Kennel Club or the programs that zoos have to keep track of what's being bred where.

I'd certainly like to see such a project exist under the AFA wing but I question whether AFA has the people, the power, the money, etc. to make it happen. Who is going to work on the initial planning? Develop funding? The people who breed birds seem to be such individualists that it's difficult to imagine them working together with the kind of unity it would take to create a major institution.

However, just as it's imperative to improve the status of endangered species, so is it imperative to improve the status of aviculturists in the world of powerful conservation organizations, zoos, and universities. Creation of the AFA was the beginning; Mr. McNabney's proposal looks like a logical progression from there.

Sincerely,  
Sherry Rind  
Redmond, Washington

Dear Royce, Lynne and Sherry,

*Thank you for your support of the concept of an AFA breeding facility. The idea has been kicking around in the minds of a few of us for several years, and is one deserving some action.*

*An AFA breeding facility would give the AFA control over its projected breeding programs, eg. Venezuelan red siskin, and provide it with an important goal in the pursuit of its mission — the conservation of birds through captive propagation. The facility would be a unifying factor in the growth and development of the AFA and provide an educational experience for visiting AFA members and the general public.*

*The questions of funding and staffing are important, but not insurmountable. We will first develop a plan, e.g. blueprint of the facility and cost analysis of land acquisition and development, which the board will have to approve. Then we will need to embark on a fund raising campaign to develop funding and an endowment to carry the operation of the facility.*

*I believe AFA has the ability to make this happen, but it will need the support of its members, especially any who have experience in planning, development, and fund raising. It would be appropriate here to ask for volunteers skilled in these pursuits to come forward. Let us begin!*

Sincerely,  
Editor (J.J.)



To whom it may concern:

I have a problem that, perhaps, you can help me with, if you please will.

I have been trying to obtain some addresses of falconry clubs, publications, and organizations concerning birds of prey. If you could give me such a list, I would very much appreciate your time. I have enclosed a stamped envelope for such.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,  
William H. Jones

Dear Mr. Jones:

*Unfortunately, we have no member associations or clubs that are involved in falconry and, therefore, have no addresses. If any of our readers would like to send such addresses to us, we will be happy to publish them in this column.*

Sincerely,  
Editor (J.J.)



Dear Editor,

First and foremost, I would like to thank you and the entire staff of the *Watchbird* magazine for the great job you are doing for aviculture.

I have an idea which I would like to pursue but feel I need some advice. It is my desire to start a group (club) of avian enthusiasts in our area. A few guidelines would be appreciated as I don't quite know how to begin. From this group, I would like to get a 4-H group of young people started with aviculture in mind.

I feel it is time we start educating the younger people or aviculture will belong only to the retired persons. I myself have had an interest in birds all my life but had no way of getting information until after I turned 50! I am always willing to share any knowledge I have with others and do so quite regularly. It astounds me sometimes with the antiquated ideas some people have!

I have been breeding birds about six years. My first experience of hand feeding came 20 years ago when two

baby robins were presented to me. That was a very rewarding summer as the babies grew and matured. I taught them to fend for themselves and to fly outdoors. They eventually joined the wild birds but would visit us from time to time. This continued for six years! Now my avicultural interest is in the psittiformes. I am now breeding grey cheeked parakeets, Quakers, Amazons, peach faced lovebirds and cockatiels.

Thanking you in advance for any suggestions and help you may have for me.

Sincerely,  
LaDemah Germeau, aka "Smiles"

Dear Smiles:

*The AFA home office has a nice little brochure that describes the steps you might follow to start a bird club in your area. I would send you a copy, but there was no return address on your letter, therefore I urge you to call the office for a copy, (602) 484-0931.*

*Briefly, you will want to identify those with an interest, which you could do by placing an advertisement in the local newspaper, announcing the date, time and location of a formation meeting. You should identify an inexpensive location site, such as a public school auditorium, church meeting hall, hospitality room at a bank or savings and loan, restaurant, or even someone's home.*

*You might enlist the support of local pet shops, pet supplies dealers, and local bird veterinarians who could distribute flyers announcing the club meetings, and could also serve as resource persons for your speaker program. These same people may be willing to donate services or goods to go on the raffle table.*

*Once you have gathered together an interested group of people, you will want to generate some by-laws under which you will operate. These will include a delineation of offices (pres., vice-pres., etc.) and their duties. Dues and a raffle will be the primary means of financial support, and a newsletter will disseminate information, classified ads, etc.*

*Once you have established your club, you will want it to become an AFA Member Club and support the many AFA programs. The AFA office will also provide you with that information on request, as well.*

Sincerely,  
Editor (J.J.) ●