

Letters to the editors should be directed to:

Watchbird editors,
P.O. Box 56218
Phoenix, AZ
85079-6218

From The Editor's Desk

To the editors of *Watchbird*:

I want to write you and let the editors (Jack, Jerry and Dale) know what a fine publication you have. I have always enjoyed Dale Thompson's lectures and speaking with Jerry Jennings.

The *Watchbird* has certainly come a long way thanks to all of your efforts.

Sincerely,
David Golub
Oregon



Dear Dale Thompson:

I wish to extend my humble thanks to AFA for the award recently presented to me for my efforts in the field of pionus parrots.

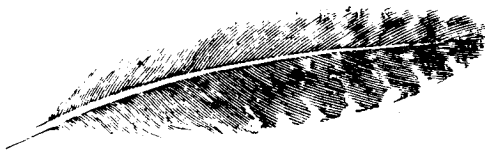
As I pondered this bird during 1979 and was told and read that the bird was not known to have ever bred in captivity, that got to me. I do not believe, if proper study and management is applied, that there is any creature that will not reproduce.

You wrote me a short note in 1980 indicating that if I played it low-key and kept non-political that you and your four or five plum-crown hens would join us.

It has been handled that way and, strange to say, you ultimately furnished the first hen, and I the first male, to produce the first captive breeding in the U.S.

To reflect on 45 years of bird breeding, I offer the comment, "Blessed is the man with a few breeding pairs of which he knows the thoughts, wants, and needs of each bird he owns as opposed to the aviculturist who has 500 birds of all descriptions, and knows nothing of any particular bird or species."

Thanks again,
Hank Brawley, president
Pionus Breeders Association
Dallas, Texas



Dear A.F.A.:

Please do the feasibility study for a breeding facility! Also, please spell out in *Watchbird* exactly what steps breeders can take towards conservation, i.e. record keeping so babies can be traced back to imported ancestors, close banding, inbreeding (is breeding brother to sister okay?, father to daughter?, etc.). I breed for conservation only, not to sell babies. What hope is there that my collection will be useful someday, and useful in what way?

Sincerely,
Emily Wendell

Dear Emily:

Thank you for your donation to AFA. We will put it to good use, and we will go forward with the feasibility study on a breeding facility.

Banding and record keeping are vital tools in the effort to track a bird's ancestry and avoid unnecessary inbreeding. I use the term "unnecessary" since some species' founder stock may be so small as to make it difficult to avoid inbreeding. Most species, especially parrots, however, are well represented in captivity and inbreeding is, therefore, unnecessary.

Aviculture best serves conservation by providing the means to assure species do not become extinct. A species' very existence in captivity

is insurance against the day that species becomes extinct in the wild, e.g. Socorro Dove. God willing, the habitat for that species will eventually be restored, permitting the reintroduction of captive-born members of the species back in the wild, as is planned for the Socorro Dove and the California Condor.

As aviculturists, our task is to master the husbandry techniques that result in the production of numerous, healthy, genetically diverse offspring and to maintain these birds in large numbers so they are available when the day for reintroduction comes.

You might want to become involved in the AFA Siskin project, which will soon provide birds for reintroduction. Please contact Jack Clinton-Eitniear, Conservation Committee chairman.

Sincerely,
Editor (J. Jennings)



Dear Mr. Jennings,

Thank you very much for your letter. I appreciate it very much that you give me the opportunity to answer some questions that were raised in a letter by Don Wells and Dick Schroeder, who wrote to you in reply to my letter to you of February 28. In my original letter, I had written to you about my reservations concerning an advertisement for a "Lory Luncheon Dry Formula" that appeared in the *Watchbird* issue of Feb/Mar 1989.

In my original letter to you, I had specifically mentioned the name of the firm responsible for the advertisement in question and even cited the page on which the advertisement appeared. I had also mentioned clearly that my concerns relate to "an advertisement"; I did not say that my concerns were directed against all dry foods for lorries.

The present exchange of letters and opinions is about the correct way to feed lorikeets. Therefore, I would like to concentrate on the real issue of this dispute, namely the claims made by "The Bird Gallery" in their advertisement. This advertisement is worded in such a way that it clearly implies that the "Lories Luncheon Dry

Formula" is a complete food for lorikeets, and that, if lorikeets are fed this formula, the droppings of the birds would be firm. The advertisement, furthermore, clearly says that this would result in less mess and less cleaning in loriculture. The advertisement did *neither* mention that the formula is only a supplemental food *nor* said that it should be given in addition to fruit and other foods appropriate for lories.

In the fourth paragraph of their letter, Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Wells say that they agree with me that lories should not be fed a totally dry diet (this is the main point of my original letter).

In my original letter, I wrote "Lories and lorikeets represent a special group of parrots which have become specialized on eating nectar, pollen and fruit." Let me specify: the word "specialized" does not mean that an animal will *only* eat these foods; "specialized" means that an animal will *mainly* eat these foods and that they have developed special behaviors and structures to do so efficiently. As Forshaw (1978:45) said, "Lories feed mainly on pollen, nectar and fruit, and have anatomical modifications related to this habit." When discussing the individual species of lories, however, Forshaw (1978:45-109) does refer to observations which indicate that lories eat also flower parts, insects, seeds and vegetable matter. It is in this sense that I had used the word "specialized" in my original letter.

It is important to discuss what the composition of the artificial (man-made) substitute for nectar to feed lorikeets in captivity should be. I certainly never mentioned anywhere that loriculturists should feed their birds "sloppy witches-brew type formulas" as Mr. Wells and Mr. Schroeder write. Anyway, I do not know the composition of these "witches' brews" and, therefore, cannot comment on their appropriateness as nectar substitutes. But the composition of natural nectar is fairly well known and can easily be reproduced artificially. When feeding lorikeets, one must, however, always keep in mind that lories and lorikeets need a balanced diet (like all animals) and that their food must contain enough carbohydrates, proteins, fats, minerals and vitamins. How to achieve a balanced diet for lorikeets in captivity cannot be discussed here, but would need to be discussed in a

full-length, separate article.

In their fifth paragraph, Mr. Wells and Mr. Schroeder write, "Ms. Homberger's main objection seems to be that these dry diets were developed solely for the purpose of making lories more acceptable to housekeepers. Speaking for ourselves, nothing could be further from the truth." My original letter was not aimed at Mr. Schroeder and Mr. Wells. As response, I would like to quote some parts of the advertisement in question: "Start giving your lories the new . . . formula — do not add water. Start feeding lories . . . a complete diet . . . Stop the liquid (sic!) droppings that result from most lory diets. Stop the mess, the worry, the cleaning." The advertisement does *not* mention that this new formula should be given only as a supplement to fruit and more liquid foods. Actually it says explicitly, "Start feeding Lories Luncheon because it is a dry diet; droppings become firm like a parrot's dropping."

To summarize my answer to Mr. Wells and Mr. Schroeder: It seems to me that we basically agree that a lorikeet's diet has to be balanced and varied and must contain all the necessary nutrients in appropriate amounts. My original letter was aimed at the contents of an advertisement by the "Bird Gallery." In case the "Bird Gallery" should feel attacked by my original and present letters, I repeat that what I have written is aimed solely at the content of their advertisement, and that I have not made any comments regarding the integrity of their business nor regarding the composition of their products.

At this point, I would like to suggest to you, Mr. Jennings, that you give the "Bird Gallery" the opportunity to answer my letters. It is possible that the "Bird Gallery" did not mean to imply in their advertisement that their formula should be given to lorikeets as the only food and that this company is not aware that their advertisement could be interpreted in the way as I have done.

With best regards and wishes.

Sincerely yours,
Dominique G. Homberger
Louisiana



Dear Sir,

I am the Publicity Officer of the Pied Budgerigar Society of Australasia, and publish a monthly newsletter of items of interest to our members (we have a total membership of around 70, so we are one of the smallest societies). Copies of a few recent editions are enclosed for your information and as an indication of the nature of items printed.

I was most impressed by the article on disinfectants and sanitation by Robert Clipsham, D.V.M. in the Oct/Nov 1988 edition of your magazine (Volume XV, number 5). While several of the brand names are unknown in Australia, the article provides information which we have not previously seen — I refer to the budgerigar breeders, not the veterinary surgeons!

I would appreciate being able to share this information with our members, and respectfully seek your permission to re-print that article in our newsletter. This newsletter is distributed solely to our members and is not available nor for sale to the public at large.

Yours faithfully,
Gary Heather, editor
(alias Fred, the two 'eaded Ed.)
Blakehurst, Australia

Dear Mr. Heather:

Thank you for your inquiry about permission to reprint the article by Robert Clipsham which appeared in the AFA Watchbird.

Normally, our policy has been to grant permission only to member clubs, however, we will make an exception in this instance, and you may indeed reprint it. We would, of course, ask that you give credit to the Watchbird and would request you encourage the members of your organization to join the American Federation of Aviculture.

I would also like to mention that we offer club memberships at U.S. \$100 per year and would like to invite the Pied Budgerigar Society of Australasia to join.

Jerry Jennings, editor ●

Arizona Aviculture Society
is holding its
DECEMBER BIRD MART
December 2, 1989

First Congregational Church
1407 N. 2nd Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona
For information contact:
Susan Jordan (602) 935-7062