



Photo courtesy of Busch Gardens, Tampa, FL

Ed Bish, retired curator of psittacines at Busch Gardens, Tampa, with a friendly Hyacinth Macaw.

Ed Bish

premier aviculturist retires from Busch Gardens

by Panky Snow Tampa, Florida

Bird breeding is not for the impatient or easily discouraged. That's why, when you find someone involved in it 34 years, you know that person is dedicated.

Such is the case of Ed Bish. In January 1992, he retired as curator of psittacines at Busch Gardens, Tampa, leaving behind a legacy of successful breeding programs and parrot management.

Busch Gardens long has been recognized as a leader in the field of zoological animal management and reproduction. At Busch, conservation, education and propagation always have been top priorities.

Bish, 62, is responsible for much of the credit given Busch Garden's bird breeding program.

"He did an outstanding job here with our parrot collection," Jerry Lentz, vice president of Busch Gardens' Zoological Operations, said recently.

"Ed is an expert in the field of parrot husbandry and breeding and parrot management," added Lentz, who has known Bish 20 years.

Thanks to Bish's special talents as a

bird curator, Busch Gardens has one of the best private parrot breeding facilities anywhere, Lentz said.

Lentz described Bish as a quiet, "kind of private" person, who did a good job of teaching the animal care personnel under him the finer points of animal husbandry.

During his years at the Gardens, Bish received first breeding awards with a number of species and is still the only person in the world to have bred a Lear's Macaw in captivity, according to John Olsen, Busch Gardens' staff veterinarian.

"Ed has a tremendous amount of experience and knowledge," Olsen added.

Bish received an American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) award for the First Breeding of Lear's Macaw in 1983, after the AFA awarded him for the First Breeding of the Festive Amazon the previous year.

Also under his belt are three zoo category Avy awards from the AFA for progress in establishment of a species or group of birds — the Caribbean Flamingo, Golden Conures and Macaws.

Ed also is responsible for awards Busch Gardens received from the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA). First Captive Breeding in North America awards were received for Maximilian's Parrot, Patagonian Conure, Festive Amazon, Golden-naped (Yel-

low-collared) Macaw, and Jardine's Parrot.

In 1963, Busch Gardens received the Edward H. Bean Award in recognition of the most notable birth of a Golden-naped Macaw. Busch also received a Golden Propagator's Award from the AAZPA for the American Flamingo.

Mike Wells, current curator of birds at Busch Gardens, recalls that Bish worked two years with the Clydesdale horses at Busch's brewery in St. Louis before coming to Tampa to work with birds.

The brewery was putting in a hospitality center here in 1958 when Bish was asked to transfer to Tampa.

"But instead of becoming just a hospitality center for the brewery, we became Busch Gardens," said Wells. "We opened officially in 1959, so that makes him the first employee in the zoo area."

"He didn't have anybody to work with him but contractors back then," Wells continued. "He was the one who directed their efforts."

From the early years until 1979, Bish was curator of all birds. He then was made curator of psittacines so that he could put more emphasis on this group of birds.

In a major effort by Busch Gardens to establish a large psittacine breeding program, the unit was moved from the brewery area to a new, secluded facility on the other side of the Gardens in 1984.

"You can find bird-breeding farms everywhere now. But Ed was a pioneer in the business of breeding birds," Wells said. From his captive populations, he began breeding programs.

Bish was patient with the birds and understood them, according to Sharon Thompson, supervisor of the bird breeding area, who worked for Bish about 12 years.

Once the breeding area moved to the new facility, Bish was able to produce species of parrots he had not been able to produce in the former space, Thompson said.

Thanks to him, Busch probably has the largest collection of Golden Conures anywhere, Thompson added.

When Bish left Busch Gardens as curator of psittacines, he had five employees working under him at the parrot breeding area. He left more than 800 parrots of 114 species. Last year, 391 psittacines were hatched at the Gardens, Wells said. ●

2-1 Peanut Toy—The 2 day peanut stick,

100% natural & spicy, for large pet parrots.
For \$1.50 you really get your money's worth.
12 peanut sticks for \$18.00 plus 2 free toys
for small & medium parrots.

Send check to: **HD PET PRODUCTS**

9805 NW 80th Ave., #13U, Hialeah Gardens, FL 33016
(Florida residents add 6-1/2% sales tax)