

# South Florida Avian Relief

by Chuck Saffell, AFA First Vice-President  
Palmetto, Florida

Early in the morning of Monday, August 31st, Hurricane Andrew destroyed aviaries in the area south of Miami. As a result of that, South Florida Avian Relief (SOFAR) was initiated.

While AFA representatives were contacting suppliers, five south Florida bird clubs joined to form SOFAR. As supplies were being shipped to Chuck Saffell on the west coast of Florida, SOFAR located warehouse space and set up a distribution network in the Miami area.

Within days, over 12,000 lbs. of supplies had been trans-shipped to the warehouse and SOFAR volunteers had begun delivering to food distribution sites.

Members of the five bird clubs; Avian Cage Bird Club, Gold Coast All Bird Club, Parrot Society of South Florida, South Florida Budgerigar Society and the Tropical Cockatiel and Lovebird Society, donated money to place ads in the newspapers, on radio and TV to let people know where they could get avian relief. To supplement the advertising and the word of mouth network among aviculturists, AFA mailed letters to all members in the 305 (Miami) area code.

The SOFAR telephone number, which is manned from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. **Monday through Friday, is (305) 887-2527; Fax (305) 887-2400. Ask for "Bear" or Bob.** If you need information or shipping instructions at other hours, please call **Chuck Saffell at (813) 722-0997.**

AFA has set up a special account to handle this. Contributions can be sent to the **AFA home office, P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218** with checks made out to **AFA Disaster Relief.**

Avian supplies are being made available to anyone who has a need, regardless of whether they belong to AFA or an associated bird club.

Nine days and nights on the phone after Hurricane Andrew destroyed aviaries in south Florida have paid off. Our phone has been ringing constantly and at one time the answering machine gave up.

It is impossible to adequately describe the outpouring of cash donations to be used for purchasing supplies and the generosity of avian product suppliers and avian veterinarian product manufacturers.

Tons of supplies have been building up

at the National Guard Armory and at Woody's Tomato Packing Corp. warehouse here in Palmetto, Florida.

On Friday, September 4th, 12,000 lbs. of seed, pellets and cage wire were loaded into a large truck and trailer and avian medical supplies were loaded into our van.

As I drove the truck with the trailer being towed behind, Louise Auger followed in our van. We arrived at the SOFAR warehouse on Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m. By 10:30, all had been unloaded and SOFAR members began taking loads to several distribution points where people picked up needed supplies.

While SOFAR took avian food to distribution points, I took 700 lbs. of monkey chow donated by the Phoenix clubs and vet supplies to Ron Johnson at the Miami Metrozoo. The now empty U-Haul immediately started north to Lantana just south of West Palm Beach and returned with another 1,200 lbs. of Avi-Cake that were being held there for AFA.

After AFA and SOFAR delivered both avian food and veterinarian supplies to the Metrozoo, including a large bird capture net, we visited Ron Johnson, curator of birds, who had spent ten years working on the Wings Of Asia exhibit. Ron, a long time supporter of AFA and recent speaker at the AFA Miami convention, guided us through a maze of twisted wire and fallen trees where once rare birds lived within the jungle environment. Only one bird, a Mandarin Duck, was seen. Amazingly, the stained glass windows over the entrance to the Wings Of Asia exhibit remained intact, a fact of which the staff is very proud.

Ron reports that thanks to the dedication of his staff who stayed even though their own homes were endangered, several hundred birds were captured and stored in horse vans within a concrete building before the hurricane hit. Birds which were stashed in a bathroom of the restaurant on the grounds survived although the second story of the building collapsed and it was two days before they could be dug out.

After the storm, about 100 lost birds were recaptured. Busch Gardens sent a convoy of trucks to the zoo and is caring for the birds and animals which survived. Meanwhile, bird traps have been placed throughout the area with the hope that others will return.

Ron mentioned that he appreciated all who called to offer help and apologizes for not returning messages, but his office and all of his papers including names, addresses and phone numbers were destroyed.

Those of you who have met Ron and



*The remains of Wings of Asia . . . heavy aviary netting was torn and wadded up like thin gauze, clumps are left hanging from cables supported by these towers. Instruments on site recorded winds at 165 m.p.h. with gusts to 200 m.p.h.!*

his wife Cindy will be interested to know that they stayed in their concrete block house across from the zoo. The doors and windows blew out and during the worst of the storm the walls started to sway. At that point, Ron said he told his wife and sister-in-law to get into a closet, he threw a mattress over them and then he dived under, too. They later learned that the Coast Guard Station behind them had recorded sustained winds of 164 m.p.h. with gusts over 200.

When we asked Ron if he would stay through another storm, he said that after securing the birds, he would open the doors and windows to his house and say "adios."

After driving truckloads of avian supplies from the west coast of Florida to the SOFAR warehouse, we took some time to see how Karen Everett, an AFA member, was making out.

After moving her birds into the house and boarding up the windows, Karen, along with eight others, rode out the storm huddled in a central hall. The birds came through okay but as the picture shows, the outdoor aviary is a shambles.

Karen, a "backyard" breeder with about 40 pairs of birds, has a generator and two wells and is acting as a contact and distribution point for five or six other

breeders. She is also providing housing for a family whose home was destroyed by Hurricane Andrew.

The courage of these people is nothing but astounding.

If you wish to send supplies to SOFAR, they will be greatly appreciated and really needed. Please call me at (813) 722-0997 and we'll advise you how and where to ship. ●



## AFA DISASTER RELIEF FUND

Donations can be sent by check or credit card directly to the AFA Business Office. Tax deductible receipts will be sent directly to you and your name will be listed in the *Watchbird* as supporters in this time of trouble.

My check is enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Send check made payable to:

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Disaster Relief  
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Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218

Photo by Louise Auger



Wide open sky is now where aviary netting once sheltered the "Wings Of Asia" display. Note two bare towers in background that held up the cables and netting. A trap/cage on the ground offers food and water to any survivor that enters. One lonely Mandarin Duck was paddling around in the debris.

Photo by Louise Auger



One of the tall towers that supported the cables and aviary netting came down. Ron and Chuck view the damage. Most all the birds were blown away along with 10 years of hard work and the beautiful display.

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