

AFA in action...

NEWS and VIEWS

FEBRUARY 1993

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Symposium Crucial To Aviculture

by David Golub
Clackamas, Oregon

The University of California at Davis held a fact-filled symposium on Parrot Biology on October 17, 1992. The event was culminated by speaker Gary Lilienthal who is the AFA legal counsel. Lilienthal has been involved in the current Federal legislation that will curtail and limit the importation of birds.

The symposium was coordinated by Ann Brice, Ph.D. of the Department of Avian Sciences at the University of Davis, and featured guest speakers Catherine Toft (Hybridization - Pros and Cons), Nursery Management by Jeanne Smith, Factors Affecting Psittacine Fertility and Hatchability by Ursula Abbott, Avian Nutrition by Tom Roudybush, Preventing Disease by Patricia Wakenell, and the Postmortem Exam by Linda Lowenstine.

A strong case was made against hybridization or the taking of different species and mating them to produce a different looking bird. It is generally agreed that many exotic bird species, mostly tropical, are becoming endangered and threatened through a combination of the trade in wild-caught birds, smuggling, slaughter and habitat destruction. While most species are not endangered because of hybridization per se, nonetheless, interspecific hybridization in captivity threatens our ability to maintain exotic species in captivity in their "natural" state.

Of particular interest to those breeding birds was the topic and discussion on Nursery Management. Diseases are introduced into the avian nursery by food, water, utensils and other equipment, caretakers and the birds themselves.

While food does not have to be absolutely sterile, it should not be contaminated with gram negative bacteria. It is strongly recommended to purchase formulas from reputable and established manufacturers. Avoid reheated leftover formulas as it becomes a growth media for bacteria, yeast and fungus. Even refrigeration does not stop organism growth.

Beware of water softening treatments. Salt in softened water has been known to kill young chicks. Be careful when using water-warmed brooders as they can become contaminated by environmental contaminants unless attention is paid to frequent cleaning and disinfecting.

Foot traffic through the nursery should be kept to a minimum. Often we see a heavily trafficked place such as the kitchen used as a nursery. Avoid the temptation to utilize part of the nursery as a sick room as this presents an extreme risk to healthy baby birds.

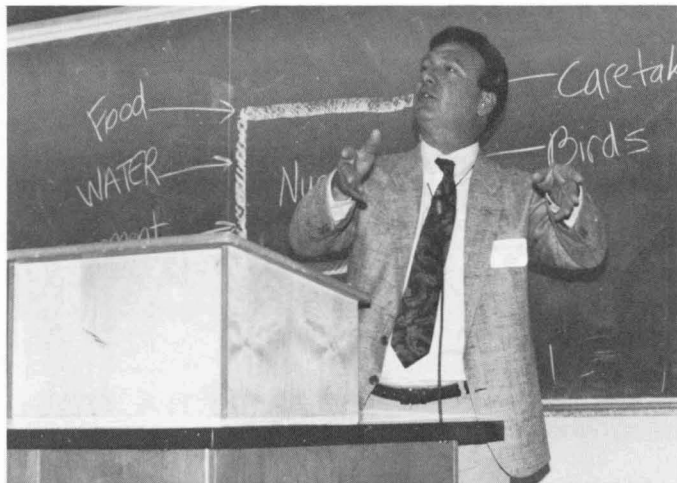
By using good sanitation procedures and being consistent, good management can keep your chicks in good health.

Incubation of eggs is increasing with aviculturists. A suitable incubator and hatcher should be able to maintain a temperature of up to 38°C with less than 1/4°C fluctuation and a relative humidity of at least 60%. It should be equipped for automatic turning of eggs through at least 90°. If turning is not automatic, it should be accomplished without opening the incubator. The machine should have an internal fan so that temperature and humidity are the same in all parts of the machine. An adequate supply of fresh air should be available. Many breeders prefer to lower the temperature of their incubators by a degree or two and increase the humidity to facilitate hatching. Hatching different species separately in hatchers thoroughly disinfected between each use can be important in the prevention of disease problems.

There are areas of avian nutrition which are on the cutting edge, particularly with new data. Very popular today with

human diets, a decrease in fat in the diet, particularly with obese birds, is practiced. Fat, of course, in excess is not healthy. In any weight loss program, the bird must be closely monitored to assess the rate of weight loss and whether any newly substituted diet is being consumed. If possible, a bird should be weighed at regular intervals if on a weight reduction program. Weight loss should not be more than three percent of the bird's body weight per week. Examination of the bird's droppings is an easy way to determine whether the bird is eating. The dropping color may change, but the volume should be larger than the volume of urine and bile combined for a fasting bird.

The event culminated with a detailed discussion on the Federal legislation that will curb importation of many birds, and slow down the exportation of birds around the world. Guest speaker Gary Lilienthal said the legislation was workable as long as all parties to the legislation work together in harmony. Lilienthal has donated his time as an attorney for four years to further the American Federation of Aviculture's position on the legislation. He is a second generation aviculturist, and has worked long and hard for the interest of the AFA. In his concluding remarks, he related that he was disappointed that individual states could still impose their own regulations and certain aspects seemed restrictive but, by in large, the legislation would have been totally restrictive had the American Federation of Aviculture and aviculturists around the world not let their voices be heard. ●



Guest speaker Gary Lilienthal discusses Federal legislation that will influence aviculture forever.

Pet Birds and Lung Cancer

Four years ago, the journal published an article from the Netherlands suggesting that contact with pet birds may contribute to the development of lung cancer. On p. 986, Kohlmeier *et al* report an epidemiological case-control study conducted in Berlin to test whether the risk is increased. They found that people with pet birds had a twofold greater risk of developing lung cancer compared with people who did not keep pet birds. Long term exposure to other household pets was not associated with increased risks of lung cancer. Cigarette smoking increased the risks tremendously while regularly eating carrots was protective. The authors suggest that exposure to pet birds should be minimized, particularly among people at high risk of developing lung cancer. On p. 989, Gardinar *et al* report another study aimed at replicating the Dutch findings. It was conducted in an area of Scotland, Lanarkshire, which, like the Netherlands, has a high rate of lung cancer and a high fre-

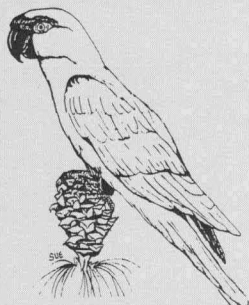
quency of bird keeping. Bird keeping patterns were compared among patients with lung cancer and two hospital controls with heart disease and orthopaedic conditions. Risk of lung cancer was not found to be related to most indices of bird keeping, but a significant association was found for keeping pigeons. Although their results do not support the relation with bird keeping found in the Netherlands, the authors consider that bird keeping may confer some risk of lung cancer but further research is needed to clarify the issue.

Reprinted from BMJ, Vol. 305, 24 October 1992●

The Club Connection

Arizona Seed Crackers Society, Inc.

by Nancy L. Vigran



Meeting Location: Casa Del Sol Recreation Center, 220 S. Chestnut, Mesa, Arizona

Meeting Date: Third Saturday of every month at 7:00 p.m.

Contact for more information: Susie Vaught, (602) 898-7564.

Club Mailing Address: P.O. Box 9021, Mesa, Arizona 85214-9021

General Information: Arizona Seed Crackers Society was formed in the late 1970's out of the interest of aviculturists in the Mesa suburb of Phoenix, Arizona. ASCS is a general interest club and although the majority of the membership is interested in hookbills, there are many finch, softbill and gamebird hobbyists and breeders in the club. ASCS brings speakers in from around the country to speak on a diverse group of fields within the avian interest. Membership is in excess of 150 with about 80 to 100 people attending each meeting.

Activities and Special Events: An exciting idea for a local club to undertake is their own breeding consortium. A couple of years ago, some members of ASCS began discussing this idea and in 1991 it became a reality. ASCS started a Halfmoon Conure consortium, which was modeled after the AAZPA Cuban Amazon consortium. ASCS applied for and received a grant from AFA for their work on the consortium.

Reasons for working with Halfmoons include the fact that since this species had been so readily available, a very popular smuggled species, many aviculturists had not been working with them. Therefore, in recent times, these birds have been declining in numbers of captive birds. ASCS has over 20 birds distributed among ASCS members for breeding purposes. Their goal is to maintain a viable population of Halfmoons for a minimum of 50 to 100 years. Although these birds are not endangered in their wild habitat, ASCS does not want them to become extinct in aviculture.

ASCS holds two bird marts a year in the Mesa area (one in the spring and one in the fall) with an attendance of over 1,000 visiting 60 to 70 booths. Booths are available to non-members as well as members and include all different types of bird paraphernalia.

Editorial Note: The Club Connection is designed to let members of A.F.A. know what regional clubs are available to them, and to give clubs ideas and a chance to learn from what other clubs do. If your club is a member club of A.F.A. and would like to be highlighted in the Club Connection, please send information with a contact person's name and phone number to: Nancy Vigran, c/o A.F.A., P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85017.●

AFA Board Meets Future to Plot of Organization

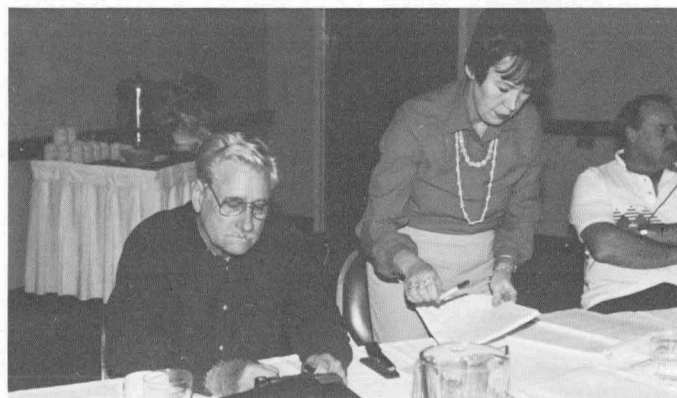
The fall quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors was held from 4 - 6 December 1992 in Chicago, Illinois. A number of important matters were discussed including:

- Approval of the 1993 operating budget
- AFA's Disaster Relief Program
- 1993 Convention in Salt Lake City, Utah
- Renewal of the contract with the *Watchbird* staff
- Review of AFA's paid staff
- Approval of a major advertising campaign including running a display ad in *Birdtalk* magazine
- Establishing a "task force" to review our small grants program in conservation
- Approval of a research grant to Kim Joyner for blood studies in wild Yellow-naped Amazons
- Establishment of a Special Committee to do a feasibility study of AFA conducting a captive breeding bird survey in 1993

Additional matters included approval of the Nominations and Elections Committee members. The committee will consist of: Co-chairpersons Diana Skalsky and Debbie Clifton, Dale Thompson, M. Jean Hessler, Greg Rich, Dick Schroeder, John Van Der Hoof, Julie Rach, Rick Jordan, Kevin Gorman, Al Decoteau, Barb Koffron, Lyrae Perry, Nancy Vigran, Dennis Lewis, Bill Sager and Susan Clubb.

Due to increasing costs to AFA for its publications and services, the Board recommended a dues increase of \$10.00. Club and commercial membership dues will not change.

The most significant topic discussed was that of the direction AFA should take in the future. It was agreed that the management of captive populations was the most pressing issue. Numerous species will be lost to aviculture in coming years if some effort is not made to propagate them. Other species will suffer from inbreeding if better record keeping is not established. In order to implement this major effort, the Board agreed that a new salaried position needs to be created. A Director of Captive Management Programs position was approved. Some of the duties of this position will include: development of a national, non-domesticated bird registry, aiding Kevin Gorman with the Red Siskin program, development



Chuck Saffell, First Vice President (left); Linda Sun, Executive Secretary (center) and Ron Sweere, Northwest Regional Vice President (right) organize their papers and thoughts during a break at the recent AFA Board of Directors meeting held in Chicago, Illinois.

Photo by Jack Clinton-Eitnien

of bird transfer and medical record forms for the membership, soliciting funds through grants and corporate sponsorships and attendance at major captive management meetings representing AFA.

A copy of the meeting minutes will be mailed to all members of the House of Delegates. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be in Las Vegas, Nevada from 5 - 7 February 1993. ●

New Way to Monitor Breeder Aviaries Protects Sense of Privacy for Exotic Birds

Two-way Vision Window Panels Allow Continuous Undetected Observation of Behavior and Improve Breeding Environment

Charlotte, North Carolina, April 3, 1992 — One man's idea to equip his aviary with an unusual vision control product used for advertising signs promises to have a sizeable, perhaps industry-wide, impact on the way exotic birds are bred for the marketplace.

Called Contra Vision® and "discovered" by Charlotte, North Carolina bird breeder Jim Garzoni, the two-way vision product allows printing of opaque color or graphics on one side of a transparent surface, such as glass or plastic film. When viewed from the reverse side, the opaque image disappears, allowing clear, see-through vision. The patented product, designed primarily for two-way advertising graphics, has been used for signage by such businesses as Wendy's, Pizza Hut, Jiffy Lube and Tri-Star Pictures.

Garzoni saw Contra Vision for the first time last year used in a sign produced by Contra Vision manufacturer Visual Technologies, Inc., located in nearby Pineville. While new to the bird breeding business, he nevertheless saw it as a better way to deal with an often overlooked, but everyday problem in the breeder aviary: how to monitor birds discreetly, yet often and accurately enough for general welfare and maintenance and, more importantly, for quick detection of mating problems and sickness.

Coping With Instincts

Garzoni, who presently manages 54 birds including several pairs of large Green-winged and Blue-and-gold Macaws, several Umbrella Cockatoos, and over a dozen Quaker and Amazon Parrots, put his finger on the problem: "You have to be anxious and very much on the alert to what's going on in the cages, yet because they're untamed and essentially wild, every entrance into the aviary is an intrusion and regarded with a lot of hostility," he says. "This means that the birds, in reacting to you, prevent a good reading of normal disposition and uninhibited pair interaction, or they may even get excited enough to break their eggs." For sick birds, this spontaneous response to an invasion of territory is even more hazardous. "Genetically aware that illness is an invitation to predators, they immediately resort to disguise by standing up straight, smoothing their fluffed out feathers, and looking alert," he explains. "Left undetected, illness progresses, the bird suffers, mating is impaired, and the bird may die." Garzoni adds that late detection of illness accounts for a high mortality rate, some vets say as much as 70%.

Garzoni's main aviary is an enclosed 200 sq. foot converted patio attached to his home. A large 8' by 3' window separates the aviary from the Garzoni family room, while a smaller 27" by 33" window is located in the aviary door. Inside, as many as 18 pairs of large birds can nest comfortably in ample individual cages in full view from the windows.

When the aviary was completed last year, Contra Vision panels, printed in white on the opaque side facing the birds, were applied to completely cover both windows. The panels were produced to Garzoni's specifications by Visual Technologies on clear, pressure-sensitive plastic film.

Eliminating Distractions

"The film was applied to wetted glass, then squeegeed to take out any air bubbles," Garzoni says. It took less than an hour to finish both windows. "We can now monitor the birds at any time or continuously without them seeing us or having any idea they are being watched," he reports. As a result, he can see immediately if a pair is affectionate and bonding and, if not, switch the pair without delay. The new two-way vision window permits observation of the complete breeding and reproductive process, as well as hatching and feeding of the young. "For some breeders, this will be a first," he says. With minimal human distraction, the birds feel more secure and relaxed, which should enhance breeding, Garzoni adds.

Dan Bost, breeder for 30 years and owner of the "Last Place on Earth" pet store in Charlotte, agrees. "The capability to observe birds 14 or 24 hours a day in an almost completely uninhibiting environment gives breeders a tremendous leg up in the business," he says. "You're in the best position to make decisions that effect their well-being, health and reproductive potential and, thereby, better protect your investment and increase profitability. What's more, it virtually eliminates the 'worry' factor, which is especially acute for new breeders. After making a sizeable investment in high value varieties and learning all about how to look after them, he's forced to do a lot of guessing and waiting." Breeders occasionally may try one-way mirror windows to achieve the same effect, Bost adds, but it's generally not successful. "Naturally, their own reflection is enough to confuse and agitate the birds," he says.

Low Cost Benefits

Cost of the two-way panels is "minimal," according to manufacturer Visual Technologies, and depends on the size and number of panels. "It's a very small fraction of any breeder's investment, when the cost of the birds may range from \$600 for one pair of cockatoos to the larger exotics that can range from \$1,800 to \$25,000 per pair," Bost says, "and far less expensive than a television monitoring system."

For more information about aviary application of patented Contra Vision® two-way vision panels, contact Linda M. Icard, President, Visual Technologies, Inc., 10920 South Loop Blvd., Pineville, NC 28134, or telephone (704) 588-7466, Fax (704) 588-7329. ●

Newsletter for Tanygnathus Fans

Christine Stokes is planning a newsletter for those bird fanciers whose prime interest lies with Great-billed Parrots or other members of the genus *Tanygnathus*. The purpose will be to share information and help breeders to locate needed males or females for sale or trade.

Interest individuals can contact: Chris Stokes, P.O. Box 97, Hooper, UT 84315, or phone (801) 825-4933, Fax (801) 825-4965. ●