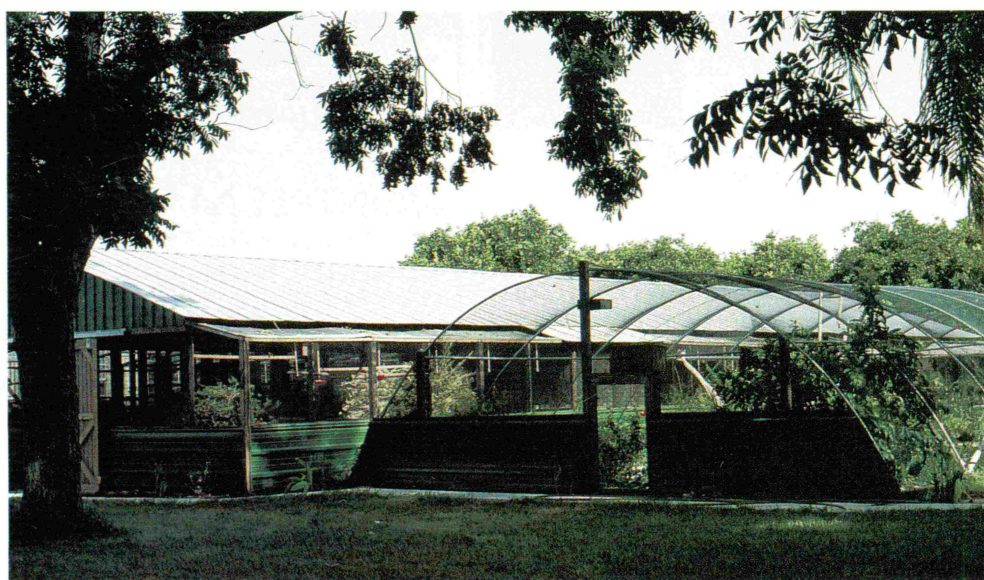


*Crested Guineas*



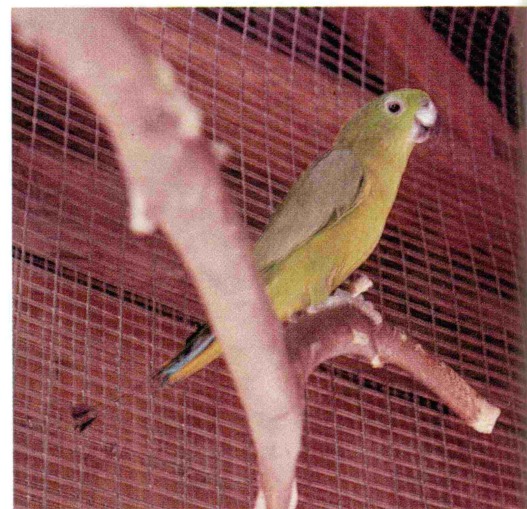
*In the foreground, a large, well planted free flight aviary was once a swimming pool. Mixed species now enjoy the big flight area. The background building is the Sharpe's 85-foot long roofed aviary with many large flights extending out from it.*



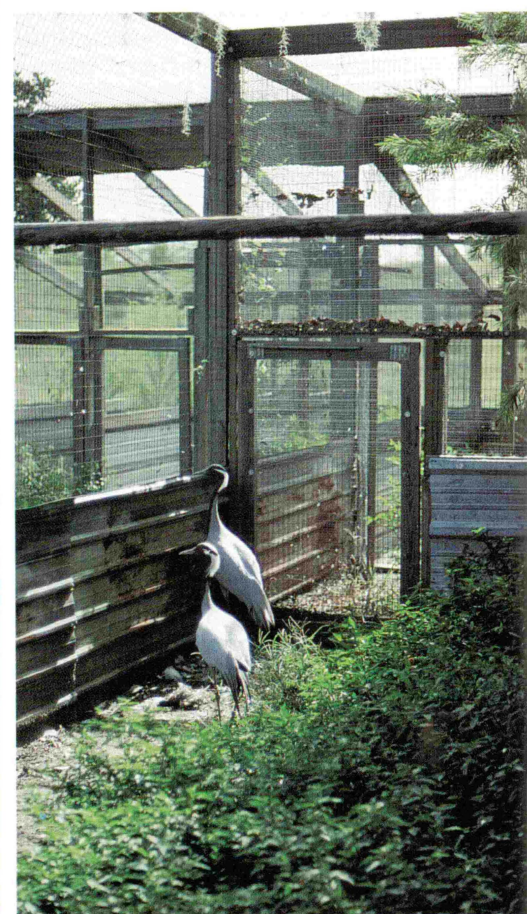
AFA Visits . . .

## *the aviaries of Mac & Cindy Sharpe*

*by Jerry Jennings  
Fallbrook, California*



*Very rare Golden-mantled Racket-tailed Parrot.*



*A pair of elegant Demoiselle Cranes are just tall enough to check out the next door neighbors.*

*Interior view of the service aisle  
of the 85-foot roofed aviary.*



The perfect location for an aviary would be as far away as possible from your neighbors, maybe three quarters of a mile away. Surround yourself with 3,500 acres of abandoned phosphate mines, 1,600 acres of county parkland and you can do what you want. Such are the surroundings of Cindy and Mac Sharpe, whose 40 acre citrus grove with home and aviaries 20 miles east of Tampa, provide them with all anyone could ask for. Just think! Your job, your hobbies, and your getaway all without any commute whatsoever!

In 1958 at the age of five, Mac encountered his first bird, a Bantam chicken. It wasn't long before he knew he wanted to be a farmer, and was soon an active member of 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA). By the age of nine, Mac was working for the J.C. Smith Gamebird Farm. There, Mac learned how to manage ornamental pheasants and began to acquire his own. He also became interested in the strange family of Megapodes, whose eggs are incubated in a mound of decaying vegetable matter, attended by the male bird, who tests the mound temperature at regular intervals, adding or removing material to maintain proper temperature.

Mac's collection grew until he went off to the University of Florida, where other interests got in the way. The collection was dispersed and he was out of birds until his senior year, when he obtained a pet Screech Owl. After graduation in 1977, he moved to Brandon, Florida, where he began raising ornamental chickens. By 1981, he was raising ornamental pheasants, Java Green Peafowl and Jungle Fowl. That same year he met Lyn Ash, the artist at Busch Gardens, and Rodney Michael, a Java Green Peafowl breeder, both of whom inspired him to become more involved in bird breeding. By the mid-1980s, he was also working with cranes.

In 1987, while visiting Busch Gardens to trade some pheasants, he noticed the beautiful variety of touracos, and was moved to acquire some, and thus began his love affair with softbills. His first touracos were purchased from Joe Longo, who had one of the best collections of touracos in the U.S., and who had developed very successful techniques for their captive breeding. Shortly thereafter, Mac met Richard Schmidt, who also lives near Tampa, and they

fueled each other's interest into an addiction.

Mac's first aviaries were a couple of chainlink pens 8' x 12' with attached prefab sheds of wood 10' x 16' for shelters. He kept his pheasants and peafowl in these. As time went on, he built more and more pens, until he now has over an acre completely under wire.


One of the more curious pens is an enclosed swimming pool. It seems that Mac's first wife, whom he divorced in 1983, liked to swim. Against his better judgement, he borrowed the money to build a pool he

didn't really want. When she left, he was faced with a useless reminder of her that he had to continually make payments on. So, he converted it into an aviary by constructing a Quonset hut-shaped framework above it and over which he stretched wire. The pool itself was filled halfway up with soil and planted. It contains a number of softbill species including Grey Wing Trumpeters, Coletta Mynahs, Indian Rollers, Abdim Storks, Fairy Bluebirds, and White Breasted Waterhens. It is the only aviary known in the U.S. to have its own custom, one meter diving board.

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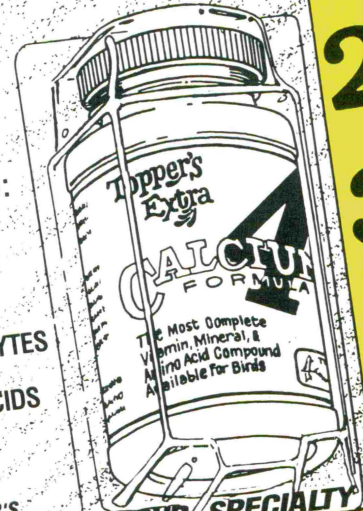
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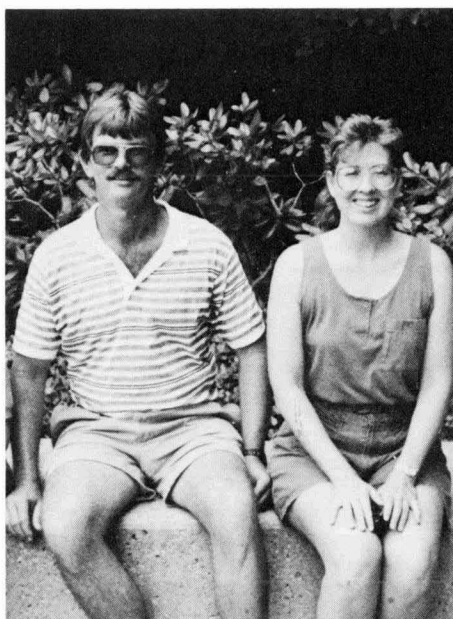
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In 1990, Mac built a new building 24' x 85' long under roof, with a number of large flights extending out from it. These range in width either four or eight feet and in length from 12 to 32 feet. There are a variety of assorted other pens varying from 12 feet by 20 feet up to 30 feet, all of which house softbills, pheasants, and cranes — 80 different species altogether!

The softbills are fed a diet of fruit cocktail (canned) which is rinsed, canned mixed vegetables (rinsed), and a variety of fresh vegetables. Some of the birds, such as the corvids, get WalMart's Old Roy dog kibble (named after Sam Walton's hunting dog) along with Purina Nutra Blend Gold Pigeon pellets, mealworms, crickets and occasional pinky mice, especially when young are present in the nest and when they are handfeeding. Twice a week, the diets are supplemented with Vionate vitamins and Spirulina Algae Feast.

The gamebirds receive a diet of the Nutra Gold Pigeon pellets, Purina Game Bird crumbles, and Vionate



Mac and Cindy Sharpe

Photo courtesy of the Sharpe family

verted irrigation microjet system for watering groves. They simply turn on a single valve which blasts water into the bowls, cleaning them out under high pressure. The valve is then partially closed letting water drip in to fill. The bowls themselves are hand scrubbed once a week and disinfected with both Nolvasan and bleach.

Mac and Cindy met in 1985. Cindy hails from Iowa City, Iowa and moved to Florida when she was hired as a high school teacher. Since their marriage on Valentine's Day 1992, Cindy has given up teaching in favor of full time bird farm manager. "She was a novice," Mac says, "but she is now a real pro, especially when it comes to handfeeding." Mac manages several groves and sells citrus grove properties in the area. Though they have no children of their own, Mac has an eleven year old son from his previous marriage.

The Sharpes belong to a number of bird organizations. In addition to their participation in the AFA, they also count themselves among the membership of the American Game Bird Federation, the International Society of Zooculturists (ISZ), the American Pheasant and Waterfowl Society (APWS), the World Pheasant Association (WPA), and the International Avicultural Society (IAS). They have attended many AFA conferences, but have not been able, with their busy schedule, to get actively involved in other groups.

The Sharpes believe firmly in the role of aviculture in the international efforts for the conservation of the world's endangered avifauna. Mac believes "this is especially important here in the U.S. where we have the means to be effective." He says, "it is hard to talk conservation with third world people, who are starving." To their fellow aviculturists, they say, "if the love of birds isn't number one in your heart, you won't be successful." They feel too many people have their priorities backward. "If you are in it strictly for the money, forget it," he says. "You can make a lot more money doing other things," he added.

NOTE: Their handfeeding formula consists of:

1/3 Carnation Cat Chow  
1/3 papaya juice concentrate  
1/3 mixed fruit and vegetables (Gerbers). The diet is fed either with a syringe or by spoon depending on the species. ●

twice weekly.

Most of the softbills in the collection are unusual in that they are not often seen outside of zoos. Mac and Cindy have had good fortune in breeding them. Many are incubator hatched and handfed from day one. They have accomplished this with several species of touracos, Collie's Magpie Jay and recently with the rare Pied Crow. Though difficult to come by, the Pied Crows laid eggs within two weeks of their arrival in spring 1992, and the Sharpes were rearing them a couple weeks later.

A number of rare parrots also have been handreared on the farm. Next year they hope to rear the very rare Golden-mantled Racket-tailed Parrot, which they recently imported from Indonesia in partnership with Richard Schmidt. These are the only Racket-tailed Parrots known to be in captivity in North America.

Among the rare gamebirds in the collection are a variety of cranes, jungle fowl, pheasants and Guineas. They produced 20 Ceylonese Jungle Fowl in 1992, yet there are probably no more than 20 producing pairs in the entire U.S. They are having good luck with the rare Vulturine Guinea as well, and eggs were hatching in the incubator during our interview.

The collection is cared for on a daily basis by Mac and his wife, Cindy. While he oftentimes gets most of the credit, he says, "she does most of the work." The work is made somewhat easier by the neat watering system in use. It consists of a con-

## Deadline Schedule

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Feb. 1 — editorial copy  
Feb. 15 — display ADS

### June / July '93

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### Aug / Sept '93

June 1 — editorial copy  
June 15 — display ADS

### Oct / Nov '93

#### Featuring AFRICAN FINCHES

Aug. 1 — editorial copy  
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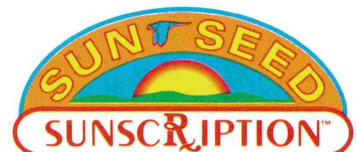
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