

AFA in action... **NEWS and VIEWS**

JUNE 1993

President's Message

Conservation small grants suspended; a sign of hard economic times or a question of priorities?

The American Federation of Aviculture has a long standing history of providing "seed money" for avian research and conservation projects. In 1982, the research fund awarded its first five grants. Five years later, in 1987, the conservation fund was established to aid in important avian field conservation studies. Over the years, the conservation fund has provided funds for the study of nearly every kind of bird imaginable from trogons to tanagers, hornbills to hawk-eagles. For years, the only criterion was that the species needed some conservation action. Recently, however, as AFA's own "in house" conservation projects expanded, it became apparent that there simply wasn't enough funds for everything. The criterion for awarding small grants was refined to require the species being dealt with to, at least, be represented in captivity and an avicultural component be incorporated in the project. With the coming of age of "avicultural conservation" more proposals continued to be submitted.

At the winter meeting of the Board of Directors, held in Las Vegas, Nevada, the opportunity to support the field release of Bali Mynahs provided the ultimate challenge. The project was tailor made in promoting "aviculture as a field conservation tool" yet no funds were available for the project. AFA's own Red Siskin project was limping along on a less than \$10,000 a year total budget. The board quickly approved the funding of the project but then wrestled, for nearly an hour, trying to locate a source for the money just pledged. During the recent spring Board of Director's meeting it was decided to temporarily suspend the awarding of all conservation grants.

The entire concept of grants for field conservation studies has always been of debatable value by much of the membership. The theory was that aviculture can learn from field studies and some field conservation strategies can be aided by including a bit of aviculture.

The financial realities of AFA are a reflection of the organization's constant desire to provide something tangible to its members in exchange for their dues. A glossy, polished magazine, monthly FASTADS, numerous costly mailouts, all have created a situation whereby the dues had to be increased simply to meet the cost of services provided. This situation does not provide organizational support of non-service related activities. Special projects and efforts must be funded through special donations and volunteer labor. Long term projects, like the Red Siskin project, are founded on the belief that funds will continue to be donated.

Aviculturists invest a great deal in their birds. In many cases, they are holding species endangered in the wild. Possibly the last of the species. Unfortunately, some species have actually been rendered endangered due to trade itself. We have a responsibility to the birds themselves to think of them as

something other than a possible source of revenue. Careless consumptive use of other nations' wildlife will encourage strict governmental regulations. A friend who is a native of a Third World Nation recently asked "Why should Americans be able to buy and sell our countries' endangered species in an effort to make a fast buck?"

Having exotic birds is a privilege. Recall that we are not able to legally possess our own bird life. If the privilege is abused on the local level, you may have to get rid of your birds. If it is abused on a national level, we all face the possibility of having to deal with endless permits and inspections. The success we have in breeding birds frequently will not make a major impact on our own lifestyles but it may determine the very existence of our birds on planet earth. Consider the fate of the Socorro Island Dove had no one bred it. Remember the Carolina Parakeet and those that said, "who would want to breed such a common bird?"

We are doing aviculture and avian conservation a disservice if we mentally separate the birds from their natural environment. While AFA is no longer providing the conservation grants, it remains committed to promoting the "big picture" of exotic birds as residents of planet earth. Thinking of them as only a means of making a few extra dollars is a short-term consumptive strategy that does not enhance aviculture or avian conservation.

Note: A list of avian field conservation projects is available at the AFA Business Office (P. O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218, Tel. (602) 484-0931) should clubs or individuals desire to contribute to field conservation projects.●

Significant Hatching at International Crane Foundation

On April 21 at 7:00 p.m., the International Crane Foundation (ICF) hatched its first Wattled Crane chick. The event was significant because, with this, ICF has now bred all 15 species of crane. The parents, Chaka (the father) and Nandi, are extremely valuable birds, genetically speaking. According to the Species Survival Plan for the Wattled Crane, Chaka and Nandi should be encouraged to have 6 to 10 offspring. Species survival plans are used by zoos throughout the world to coordinate breeding of endangered species.

Breeding this pair was especially difficult because of their history. Artificial insemination was necessary, because the male had been rendered flightless before coming to ICF, and so could not mate normally. But because both had been caught in the wild, they were extremely afraid of their keepers, making artificial insemination difficult. By using video cameras to monitor the female's behavior, ICF staff could determine exactly the right time for artificial insemination, resulting in fewer visits to the bird and less disturbance. Use of visual

barriers, and special food "treats" also helped to reduce fear. The pair also had a history of breaking any eggs they laid, but this, too, was overcome by using video monitors. As soon as the egg was laid, the staff retrieved it, before the birds could break it. The egg that hatched was the fifth from Chaka and Nandi this season — the others were infertile or failed to hatch. Chaka and Nandi were sent to ICF from the Oklahoma Zoo on breeding loan.

Ann Burke served as "matchmaker" for Chaka and Nandi. She said, "We all really worked as a team, because it took everyone's expertise to make this hatching a reality. It took getting the pair to lay, artificial insemination, successful incubation, and now, raising the chick. We all had to work together and pool ideas. It's really exciting."

Marianne Wellington, supervisor of ICF's chick program, is now feeding the wobbly little chick with a crane puppet on her arm, so the chick won't become too "imprinted" on humans. The chick can also see an adult Wattled Crane nearby, that serves as a "role model." Marianne said, "Although we've raised hundreds of chicks, I'm a little nervous this time, because it's the first chick of the season, and the first chick of this species we have ever raised. It's learning the ropes all over again."

The bird's name comes from the rough, red skin on its face, and two feathered protuberances that dangle beneath its chin. Wattled Cranes are found in several countries of Africa. They are considered an endangered species by ICF, because only about 12,000 remain in the wild, and their populations are declining due to hunting and development of their wetland homes. ICF is now organizing a conference of African crane conservationists to be held next summer in Main, Botswana. Eventually, Wattled Cranes may be introduced into areas from which they have disappeared, therefore it is important to develop breeding techniques, so a surplus of chicks can be produced for reintroduction efforts. ICF recently sent eight Whooping Cranes for a reintroduction effort in Florida.

For more information, contact David Thompson at (608) 356-9462 or 233-9589. ●

News From the AAZPA Taxon Advisory Group on Passerine Birds

In the fall of 1991 the American Association of Zoological Parks and Aquariums (AAZPA) avian interest group suggested the establishment of a Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) for the Order Passeriformes. It was our hope that the influence of a sanctioned TAG would encourage more intense management of this complex group. One of the first goals of the passerine TAG is to find ways to open the lines of communication and cooperation between zoo and private aviculturists. Utilizing the strengths of both the zoo community and the private sector, we will be able to increase our ability to maintain genetically diversified and well managed populations of passerines in captivity. To this end, we approached AFA President Jack Clinton-Eitniar and he graciously gave us this space in the *Watchbird*. It is our plan to utilize this space to let both groups of aviculturists know what is materializing as this TAG develops.

Many of you are quite familiar with the workings of an AAZPA TAG. For those who are not, I'd like to take a little time and explain what a TAG does.

Definition of Taxon Advisory Groups: A committee that advises the Wildlife Conservation and Management Committee (WCMC) for the successful formation, implementation, and operation of studbooks and Species Survival Plan (SSP) programs for a particular taxon and facilitates communication on conservation issues for that taxon.

Role of Taxon Advisory Groups:

1. Provide information on wild population status.
2. Recommend species for studbook or SSP inclusion.
3. Recruit qualified species coordinators and studbook keepers.
4. Provide advice on the scope of studbooks.
5. Broaden the scope of SSP programs through coordination with local, national and international conservation agencies and programs.
6. Provide a forum to which field biologists can communicate when they identify species in imminent danger of extinction that could benefit from captive propagation.
7. Establish a communications network among individuals that can enhance SSP programs.
8. Define both captive and field research needs to assure the success of SSP programs: help secure or recommend appropriate personnel to conduct the needed research.
9. Assist in defining husbandry guidelines.
10. Resolve conservation questions posed to the group from such agencies as WCMC, zoos and governments.
11. For the taxon, promote discussion of captive propagation and species composition of animal collections in North American institutions (i.e., provide advice for better utilization of captive space for conservation purposes).
12. Assist in obtaining needed animals for SSP programs.
13. Assist in resolving surplus animal problems.
14. Define tasks to help meet goals annually.

Many changes are taking place that will forever effect the future of aviculture in this country. The long term cooperation between zoos and professional private breeders will determine whether or not species of passerines currently in our collections and those needing our assistance will survive into the next century.

The next year will be an exciting one for the Passerine TAG as we go about the business of beginning. Success will depend on help from everyone working with passerines. One of the most important needs of our group is to know how many of what type is out there. A good understanding of what we have to work with, both in zoos and in the private sector, will enable us to begin to establish which species need help first. A survey is currently on the drawing board that will be included in *Watchbird*, hopefully the August/September issue. Your help and patience with yet another form will be greatly appreciated and will benefit us all.

If you would like more information on the passerine TAG or if you would like to help or give advice on the survey, please contact us:

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316/942-2213 / FAX 316/942-3782

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Allegheny Commons West, Pittsburgh, PA 15212
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Passerine Birds in Zoo Collections

by Ken Reininger, Curator of Birds
Bumet Park Zoo, Syracuse, New York

The order Passeriforms is the largest and most diverse of the orders of birds. It is, therefore, not surprising that a large number of passerine species have been kept in captivity over the years in both zoo and private collections. What may be surprising, however, is the relatively small number of species which zoos have held significant populations of in recent years. A recent review of passerine populations held by North American zoos which report information to ISIS (a computerized data base of zoo collections) was compiled by Robert

Webster of the San Antonio Zoo. This review indicated only 18 species held with total captive populations of 50 or more individuals. (see complete list below).

As all breeders know, small numbers of founder stock usually lead to in-breeding and genetic problems in a few generations. Robert Webster's review indicates that over 85% of the passerine species held by zoos would likely have such problems if zoos had only their current populations to work with. As the recent changes in importation regulations begin to

MOST COMMON PASSERINES IN NORTH AMERICAN ISIS INSTITUTIONS June, 1992 AND A COMPARISON OF TAXA POPULATIONS FROM FIVE AND TEN YEARS PAST

		6/92	6/87	12/82
Bali Mynah	101.97.45	243	351	224
Red-billed Leiothrix	30.34.95	159	147	111
Superb Starling	35.39.79	153	90	89
Fairy Bluebird	59.63.15	137	109	61
Gouldian Finch	38.40.27	105	112	74
Golden-breasted Starling	54.29.19	102	28	24
Silver-eared Mesia	42.48.11	101	15	--
Zebra Finch	40.30.24	94	60	78
Red-crested Cardinal	27.29.30	86	62	52
White-headed Buffalo Weaver	33.24.23	80	13	--
Blue-gray Tanager	13.20.44	77	34	27
Black-bellied Seedcracker	26.28.19	73	14	--
Violet-backed Starling	32.27.1	60	27	25
Red-tailed Laughing Thrush	27.21.9	57	--	--
Emerald Starling	14.8.34	56	42	42
White-crested Laughing Thrush	14.19.18	51	66	36
Golden-crested Mynah	21.21.8	50	17	11
Grosbeak Starling	18.20.12	50	39	--
Azure-winged Magpie	15.17.17	49	13	--
Turquoise Tanager	23.9.16	48	39	--
Red-billed Blue Magpie	16.22.10	48	32	36
Liocichla	15.20.11	46	--	--
Hill Mynah	12.9.25	46	30	46
Southern Masked Weaver	17.5.22	44	16	11
Silver-beaked Tanager	15.16.7	38	--	10
Lesser Green Broadbill	18.18.1	37	32	--
Plush-crested Jay	25.16.6	37	27	25
Red-legged Honeycreeper	14.18.4	36	23	32
Brahminy Mynah	5.4.27	36	20	--
Red Bishop	13.9.13	35	39	42
Taveta Golden Weaver	15.11.9	35	--	--
Jerdon's Starling	7.11.17	35	--	--
Barbary Shrike	8.16.9	33	11	--
Snowy-headed Robin Chat	8.4.21	33	--	--
Blue-eared Glossy Starling	7.6.20	33	30	18
Troupial	13.10.8	31	22	13
Java Sparrow	0.0.30	30	--	--
Glossy Starling	3.5.22	30	23	16
Red-capped Cardinal	6.10.12	28	--	--
Coletto	8.11.9	28	24	--
Black-naped Oriole	11.12.5	28	19	--
Purple Glossy Starling	7.3.17	27	23	16

		6/92	6/87	12/82
Black-throated Laughing Thrush	7.10.9	26	--	--
Silver-throated Tanager	5.5.16	26	--	--
Wattled Starling	13.10.3	26	30	26
Blue-capped Cordon-Bleu	9.5.10	24	--	--
Cutthroat	16.7.0	23	13	14
Red-headed Parrot Finch	5.5.13	23	--	--
Red-throated Parrot Finch	5.3.15	23	--	--
Yellow-vented Bulbul	4.3.15	22	23	--
Chestnut-flanked White-eye	0.0.22	22	--	--
Yellow-billed Cardinal	6.6.10	22	--	--
Iiwi	8.9.5	22	--	--
Double-barred Finch	3.7.12	22	--	--
Golden-fronted Leafbird	9.8.4	21	40	29
Palm Tanager	2.5.14	21	--	21
Black-headed Weaver	10.4.7	21	39	--
Red-winged Laughing Thrush	7.4.9	20	28	--
Amakihi	11.9	20	--	--
Red-cheeked Cordon-Bleu	13.7	20	16	23
Blue-faced Honeyeater	11.5.3	19	11	14
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	7.5.7	19	17	--
Tawny-breasted Parrot Finch	6.8.4	18	--	--
Red-billed Fire Finch	10.7.1	18	--	--
Society Finch	1.1.16	18	--	--
Viellot's Mynah	9.9	18	--	--
Orange-bellied Leafbird	7.9.1	17	22	--
White-browed Robin Chat	6.4.7	17	--	--
Greater Necklaced Laughing Thrush	9.5.3	17	--	--
White-browed Laughing Thrush	5.3.9	17	--	--
White-necked Laughing Thrush	5.4.8	17	--	--
Saffron Finch	6.7.4	17	12	--
Violaceous Euphonia	10.7	17	--	--
Apapane	0.0.17	17	--	--
White-rumped Munia	6.6.5	17	14	--
Short-tailed Magpie	7.5.5	17	--	--
Spangled Cotinga	6.10	16	--	--
Orange Weaver	6.4.6	16	--	--
Blue-winged Leafbird	8.7	15	13	--
Magpie Robin	6.8.1	15	36	12
Purple Honeycreeper	5.6.4	15	--	--
Yellow-fronted Canary	6.8.1	15	20	16
Red-tailed Lavender Finch	7.7.1	15	--	--
Black-rumped Waxbill	4.4.7	15	12	19
Bluebill	7.5.3	15	12	21

affect our access to new breeding stock, these numbers become even more sobering. However, were these captive population figures to include passerines held in private collections, the long-range management prospects for many species would be greatly enhanced. In fact, for many species, numbers held in private collections greatly exceed the numbers held by zoos.

The Passeriform Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) has established as one of its goals the strengthening of communication and cooperative efforts with private aviculturists who work with passerines (see related article in this issue). The review of passerines in zoo collections is being provided here to make you aware of how limited zoo collections can be and how important passerines in private collections are to the long-term survival of many species in captivity. It is the hope of the Passeriform TAG that this awareness will encourage you to

participate in the management of species as entire captive populations regardless of whether individual birds are in zoos or private hands. Only by merging zoo and private populations will the captive future of most passerine species currently held be secured. Through the work of groups such as the Passeriform TAG, zoos are currently trying to organize the management of their animals as collective captive populations of species as opposed to individual collections. Many private aviculturists are already working with zoos to achieve this goal. Participation can take many forms including exchanging specimens with zoos to improve blood lines, restructuring your collection to create more space for species with greater conservation concern, or coordinating importations to ensure more birds get into breeding programs.

We invite you to become part of this organized effort.●

		<u>6/92</u>	<u>6/87</u>	<u>12/82</u>
Long-tailed Broadbill	5.9	14		
Golden-hooded Tanager	6.6.2	14		
Star Finch	8.2.4	14	18	12
Metallic Starling	10.4	14		
Ruppell's Long-tailed Starling	3.3.8	14	10	
Red Bird-of-Paradise	7.5.2	14		
Green Magpie	5.4.5	14	10	
Rufous Treepie	4.7.3	14	10	
Crested Jay	6.6.2	14		
Banded Pitta	8.5	13	24	
Red-vented Bulbul	3.3.7	13	27	41
Blue-winged Minla	3.3.7	13		13
Oriental White-eye	3.2.8	13		53
Cuban Grassquit	6.7	13		
Scarlet-rumped Tanager	6.7	13		
Pin-tailed Parrot Finch	5.8	13		
Paradise Whydah	9.4	13	12	16
Celebean Mynah	7.5.1	13		
Hooded Pitta	3.4.5	12	33	
Stripe-throated Yuhina	0.0.12	12		
Bay-headed Tanager	2.5.5	12	15	12
Munia	0.0.12	12		
Heck's Long-tailed Grass Finch	5.6.1	12		
Melba Finch	7.5	12		14
Black-winged Red Bishop	6.4.2	12	10	
Crested Mynah	2.3.7	12		
Yellow-faced Mynah	3.7.2	12		
Lesser Bird-of-Paradise	3.8.1	12		
Racket-tailed Treepie	5.2.5	12		
White-throated Laughing Thrush	5.3.3	11		
Beautiful Sunbird	5.6	11		
Diademed Tanager	6.4.1	11	13	
Pale Mannikin	0.0.11	11		
White-eared Catbird	7.4	11		
Black-crested Bulbul	4.3.3	10		
White-crowned Robin Chat	3.2.5	10		
Orange-headed Thrush	4.4.2	10		
Melodious Laughing Thrush	7.3	10		
Striated Yuhina	5.4.1	10		
Variable Sunbird	7.3	10		
Japanese White-eye	5.5	10		
Green-and-gold Tanager	0.0.10	10		
Black-cheeked Waxbill	5.4.1	10		
Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	5.1.4	10		

NOTE: If any population, in '92, '87 or '82, totalled less than ten individuals, it does not appear in the table)
Data compiled by Robert Webster, San Antonio Zoo

Sun Seed Raises Funds

SUN SEED COMPANY INC. of Bowling Green, Ohio is happy to announce that it raised over \$500 for PIJAC (Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council). Sun Seed Company held raffles at both the PIDA tradeshow in Tampa and the Backer Spring Show in Atlantic City. At each show the company displayed in its booth two beautiful, limited edition prints by Florida artist Martin Hayden which were then raffled off at the end of each tradeshow day.

Sun Seed Company Vice President Brent Weinmann said, "We would like to thank everyone who purchased raffle tickets. We are very happy to be able to raise this money for a cause as worthy as PIJAC. Hopefully this also raised awareness of PIJAC and the important role it plays in the pet industry."

For more information, contact the Sun Seed Company, Inc., Box 33, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402.●

1993 U.S. First Breeding Avy Award Nominations

To AFA members, aviculturists and all exotic bird enthusiasts: the following avian species or subspecies have been nominated for a possible U.S. First Breeding Avy Award. Any knowledge of prior breedings should be submitted to Dale R. Thompson, Chairperson, Avy Awards Committee, in care of the AFA Home Office in Phoenix, Arizona.

1. Bodin's Amazon, *Amazona festiva bodini*, hatch date: April 17, 1989.
2. Rueppel's Parrot, *Poicephalus rueppellii*, hatch date: May 7, 1992.
3. Blue-rumped Parrot, *Psittinus cyanurus cyanurus*, hatch date: May 9, 1992.
4. Tui Parakeet, *Brotogeris sanctithomae sanctithomae*, hatch date: June 22, 1992.
5. Javan Moustached Parakeet, *Psittacula alexandri alexandri*, hatch date: March 14, 1989.
6. Celebes Hanging Parrot, *Loriculus stigmatus*, hatch date: October 31, 1992.
7. Peale's Parrot Finch, *Erythrura pealii*, hatch date: November 15, 1991.
8. Wompoo Fruit Dove, *Ptilinopus magnificus*, hatch date: June 28, 1992●

Conservation Action

Photo by Mark Collins



Bali Mynah

Small Grants Program

What do the Bali Mynah, Bahama Parrot, Socorro Dove, Toucan Barbet, Java Hawk-eagle and the Ocellated Turkey have in common?

They are among the more than twenty species of birds whose survival on our planet has been enhanced through the financial support of the AFA Conservation Small Grants Fund. Parrot conservation projects dominate the program with previous funding aiding the conservation of the Bahama Amazon, Cape Parrot, Yellow-shouldered Amazon, El Oro Parakeet, Puerto Rican Amazon, Green-cheeked Amazon as well as the various New World macaws. AFA cannot continue this valuable program without your financial support. Currently, urgent support is needed for the Bali Mynah project. Captive bred mynahs are to be released onto an island adjacent to Bali but without the presence of "bird catchers"! ●

Red Siskin Program

The endangered Red Siskin was driven to near extinction because of its popularity in "canary culture". While we all enjoy the beauty of a red factor canary, it hardly justifies extinction of the Red Siskin. The AFA Red Siskin Project involves a comprehensive program to manage Red Siskin populations in captivity and address the plight of the species in the wild. A siskin consortium has been in operation for several years whereby private aviculturists obtain Red Siskins on "breeding loan" from AFA. This precedent setting private sector program needs your financial support to remain viable. ●



Non-Domesticated Bird Registry

The need is clear for a non-profit registry for non-domesticated birds. Modeled after the AKC (American Kennel Club), AFA is committed to initiating such a program in 1993. Start up funds are needed to offset costs in data entry and printing.

Please help us show that "Aviculture is conservation, too!" by enclosing your donation in the envelope provided. Aviculture and the birds thank you. ●



Venezuelan Black-hooded Red Siskin

Photo by Kevin Gorman

You Can Make A Difference

Conservation isn't just helping the birds in the wild. It's also managing the birds we have so that tomorrow a behaviorally and genetically sound species will be available for return to the wild. As we all know, this costs money. But if we are committed to the survival of our birds, both in the wild and in captivity, it should be a small price to pay. Three major AFA conservation programs need your continued support. ●

AFA says THANKS to These Supporters in the Following Categories:

General

Donations received from March 9 through May 20, 1993

Mary Holt	Central Coast Avicultural Society	Rocket City Cage
Nina Dioletis	Alice Bryant	Michelle Begen
	Rochester Cage Bird	

Conservation

Donations received from March 9 through May 20, 1993

Nina Dioletis	David Schmidt	Angel Animal Hosp.
Edith Warrener	Willa Thornman	Michael Green
Sherry Rind	Sarah Filler	Urban Bird
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Dennis Norman	Raymond Smith	Kevin Gorman
Northwest Exotic Bali Mynah	James Sherer	Ralph Yehle
	Canary Bird Farm	

Research

Donations received from March 9 through May 20, 1993

Edith Warrener	Barbara Avery	Joseph Platek
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