

AFA in action...

NEWS and VIEWS

MAY 1994

World Watch Reports Bird Populations Declining on Every Continent

Bird populations are declining or collapsing faster than generally realized, according to a global survey published in the January/February issue of *World Watch*. The story, based on data from Birdlife International, Defenders of Wildlife, and other research groups around the world, finds that of the 9,600 known species of birds, more than 6,000 are declining and about 1,000 appear headed for extinction.

World Watch, a magazine that focuses on the relationship between human well-being and the health of the environment, notes that the decline of birds has broad ramifications for humans, as well as for birds. The editor, Edward Ayres, notes that environmental scientists regard birds as particularly good indicators of the health of whole ecosystems.

"When an endemic bird population suddenly begins to die out, it usually means the whole ecosystem is in trouble — and other species will soon follow," he notes. "Ultimately, human life itself depends on the vitality of the ecosystems inhabited by birds."

As an example of this interdependence of avian and human well-being, author Howard Youth points to the well-documented decline of neotropical migrants in North America. Neotropicals consume large quantities of insects, including such destructive invaders as gypsy moths and tent caterpillars. The continuing disappearance of the birds that eat them "could result in more frequent epidemics of these pests," suggests Youth.

The article also notes:

- A well-documented cause of the decline in North America is the loss of forest habitat in Central America and the Caribbean, where the neotropical migrants go in the winter — often to find that the forest they left the previous spring has been burned or bulldozed for development.
- But other kinds of habitat loss are also taking a toll. As a result of overgrazing and plowing of grasslands, for example, once-abundant species such as the bustards of Eurasia and prairie chickens of North America have all but disappeared.
- Other species are being wiped out by the draining of wetlands. North America's most common ducks, for example, have declined in numbers by 30 percent in the past 27 years.
- Overhunting continues to take a toll despite protective laws — which are widely flouted. The white stork, once common in Europe, is headed for extinction — in part because thousands of hunters gather along its migratory routes to shoot it.
- In Italy alone, 50 million songbirds end up on dinner plates annually. The *World Watch* article includes a two-page map of

the world showing all endemic regions classified as "critical" or "urgent" by Birdlife International.

World Watch is published bimonthly by Worldwatch Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based environmental research organization that studies the interdependencies of human economies and the natural environment. Worldwatch publishes the annual "State of the World" and "Vital Signs" reports.

For more information contact Director of Communication, or author Howard Youth, (202) 452-1999.●

1994 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. Rueppel's Parrot *Poicephalus rueppellii*, hatch date: November 27, 1973.
2. Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta*, hatch date: June 15, 1993.
3. Purple-bellied Parrot *Triclaria malachitacea*, hatch date: April 17, 1992.●

Ron Reid Joins L/M Animal Farms

December 14, 1993 — Larry Mohrfield, president of L/M Animal Farms, announced the appointment of Ron Reid as Director of Research and Education. Reid was an employee of Mardel Laboratories as Director of Technical Services and Product Development.

Reid has written over 40 publications consisting of "Sexing Small Animals," "Nutrition of Small Animals," "Handling Small Animals," "The Management of the Guinea Pig," "Diseases of Reptiles" and "How to Care for Your Bird," just to name a few. In addition, he has been the recipient of the Pet Industry Unity Award for Joint Industry Retail Merchandising Program and the D.C. Academy of Veterinary Medicine and the Technicians Program for writing. Reid is bringing to L/M's growing company an extensive research and product development background.●

Argentina Launches Conservation Stamp and Print Program

The Administration of National Parks, Secretary of Natural Resources and Human Environment, Buenos Aires, Argentina, in conjunction with National Art Publishing Corporation (NAP) of Fort Myers, Florida, have announced the development of Argentina's first Conservation Stamp and Print Program. The fourth such program developed by NAP in the Americas, it will benefit wildlife conservation and will be patterned after the successful U.S. Federal Duck Stamp program, now in its 60th anniversary year.

Both the American and Canadian programs have been vital to the conservation of sustainable resources in North America, particularly the acquisition and management of wetlands. Funds raised through this program have exceeded \$450 million in the U.S. and Canada alone.

These funds have facilitated the acquisition and/or maintenance of more than 450 refuges in the U.S. and the implementation of over 200 conservation initiatives in Canada in only eight years.

Latin American projects initiated recently are predicted to grow steadily in the next five years as we participate in this environmentally conscious decade.

The Argentine Program

Under commission from the Argentina's Park Administration, that country's talented wildlife artist, Aldo Chiappe, has designed the program's first stamp, a pair of Torrent Ducks (*Merganetta armata*), in their unique habitat, the rocky banks of torrents and waterfalls of the Andean river system.

The program will be officially launched January 18, 1994, commemorating the initiation of the IUCN international convention to be held in Buenos Aires. All park attendees will be required to purchase the \$5 conservation stamp upon entering the protected areas. Usage of this ecostamp will be

extended to licensed hunters and fishermen within their national jurisdiction.

The highly realistic and detailed acrylic will be reproduced on stamps, first day covers, limited edition prints and other quality collectibles which will be offered to conservationists worldwide. For further information on these unique conservation items and a free color brochure, call toll free 800 DUCK ART (382-5278), or write National Art Publishing, 11000-33 Metro Parkway, Fort Myers, FL 33912-1293. ●



1994-95 "First of Country" Argentina Conservation Stamp and Print, Torrent Duck (*Merganetta armata*) by Aldo Chiappe.

Association for Parrot Conservation

We wish to announce the formation of a conservation group, the Association for Parrot Conservation (APC). Concerned scientists met in Washington, D.C. to discuss the present status, threats and conservation of the world's parrot populations.

As a result, it was decided that there was an urgent need to form an organization that provides a forum for parrot specialists to address critical research, management and conservation needs.

The mission of the organization is to promote the conservation of wild parrot populations and their habitat through scientific research, policy recommendations, and education. Initial emphasis will be placed on New World parrots. APC was founded to (1) scientifically evaluate conservation alternatives for maintaining wild populations and their habitats (e.g., field research and recovery, habitat preservation, ecosystem management, conservation education, ecotourism, captive breeding, reintroduction, sustainable use, and trade recommendations) as well as their application on a case-by-case basis to

parrots, (2) educate scientists, decision-makers, and the public about the potentials and limitations of conservation alternatives, (3) create a communication network for those concerned with the conservation of wild parrot populations, and (4) facilitate local and regional conservation projects. The guiding principle of the association is to promote techniques and strategies that maximize the conservation of biological diversity.

An Executive Council of 17 members was elected. The president will be Dr. Enrique Bucher from Argentina who is well known for his studies of New World parrots and the sustainable use of biological resources. Dr. Bucher hopes that "by initiating and facilitating effective parrot conservation actions, the association will make a substantial contribution to conserve the parrots of the New World, of which 30 percent of the species are at present threatened."

For further information, please contact Dr. Rosemarie Gnam, Executive Director, at (703) 739-9803 or via E-mail: NZPCRC08 @ SIVM.SI.EDU ●