

# The AFA's Position

by  
Robert J. Berry  
Executive Director

Position Statement on The  
Wild Bird Conservation Act:  
Section 114

April 6, 1995

TO: United States Fish &  
Wildlife Service  
Washington, D.C.

## Introductory Comments:

The American Federation of Aviculture (AFA) is a nonprofit grass roots organization of bird breeders and pet owners with a membership base of over 5000 individuals. The AFA is also a federation of approximately 200 affiliated bird clubs representing over 50,000 aviculturists nationwide.

We serve our membership primarily as an educational organization promoting advances in avicultural knowledge and awareness.

Our Mission is: *To preserve avian species on a worldwide basis.*

In order to fulfill this mission, the AFA is involved in various activities with goals that support this ideal: conservation, noninvasive avian research, cooperative breeding initiatives, education, publications, conferences, and monitoring state, national and international legislation and regulation.

The AFA recognizes that habitat destruction on a global scale is the greatest single threat to avian species. In terms of our conservation objectives, more than being only dedicated to conservation activities *in situ*, the AFA is

dedicated to the preservation of avian species both in the wild and in captivity with the purpose of maintaining their genetic stocks for future generations.

While it is true that many individual aviculturists in the United States would probably prefer no regulation, as a professional organization, the AFA recognizes the positive potential of considering voluntary standards for this expanding cottage industry. We feel strongly, however, that any voluntary standards considered, should be developed within the avicultural community. And, that such standards should address the longterm survival and wellbeing, the humane care and management, the conservation of avian species on a global scale and the establishment of genetically stable, long-term, self sustaining populations in captivity.

## COMMENTS:

WBCA, Section 114. Exotic Bird Conservation Assistance.

### Part (a) ASSISTANCE.

The AFA already has several programs available and projects underway that support the WBCA's conservation objectives.

Plans have been formulated to establish an advisory panel of avicultural experts from our membership to offer their technical assistance to conservation efforts worldwide.

Areas where we feel their services will be of value include:

- Species identification.
- Management protocols and husbandry techniques.
- Aviary construction, materials and design.
- Humane handling and transport of specimens.
- General avicultural practices that are already proven, there is no reason to reinvent the wheel.
- Access to avicultural support services including genetic profiling and avian medical diagnostics.
- Availability of avicultural equipment and supplies with recommended vendor sources.
- Biosecurity considerations.

Our bimonthly journal, *The AFA Watchbird*, published over the last twenty years, contains a wealth of information on various topics including general husbandry, nutrition, species specific avicultural requirements, etc. We are selecting some of the more informative of these articles and making them available with translations into appropriate languages. This project was generated specifically to assist personnel in foreign countries in developing their conservation programs and enhancing their understanding of the captive breeding requirements of species or families of birds that are under their care.

In addition to our organization's ongoing recovery program for the Venezuelan Red Siskin (*Carduelis cucullata*) initiated in 1986, the AFA is currently seeking funding for implementing the second phase of our field project for the evaluation of the status and recovery of the Redfronted Macaw (*Ara rubrogenys*) in Bolivia. Both projects involve CITES APPENDIX I species. Abstracts of these grass roots initiated and supported conservation projects are included in this report as are listings of twentyfive field studies and other conservation related projects outside the United States for which AFA has provided funding.

**It is the position of the AFA** that a waste of valuable resource occurs when grassroots conserva-

tion support such as that available through our organization is not acknowledged or utilized in developing longterm conservation strategies.

**Part (b) FUND.**

The AFA would like to know what funding exists to date in order to activate Section 114? We also ask who establishes spending protocols, priorities and grants of these monies? If funding is available at this time, do our conservation activities, as outlined above, qualify for assistance under this program?

**It is the position of the AFA** that funding of U.S. based conservation activities with the potential or intent of supporting and enhancing conservation programs abroad should be considered under WBCA funding opportunities.

**Part (c) Review and Report on Other Conservation Opportunities.**

**Voluntary Program of Labeling Exotic Birds:**

The AFA has recently established a national registry for exotic birds. This is a voluntary system and membership in our organization is not a requirement for participation in this program. Considering the numbers published in a report from the American Pet Product Manufacturer's Association (APPMA), there are 14,900,000 exotic birds in this country. Their statistics further indicate that these birds are in an estimated 5,900,000 homes, other industry figures reflect dramatically greater numbers; 31 million birds in 7,250,000 U.S. households kept as pets or for avicultural purposes.

With such vast numbers of specimens involved (granted many of these birds are undoubtedly budgies and cockatiels) it seems unlikely that all of these individuals would or could be registered. The AFA, therefore, deemed it to be a far more practical approach to attempt to get as large a percentage possible of captive-bred

**Judge us by the company we keep**



U.S.D.A. • U.S. Center for Disease Control • Mayo Clinic • Saudi Royal Family Sloan-Kettering Institute • Walt Disney World • Busch Gardens • Opryland Six Flags • Lion Country Safari • U.S. Army • U.S. Air Force • VA Hospitals Countless Zoos • Universities and Game Preserves throughout the Free World

*Write for our free catalog!*

**The Humidaire Incubator Company**

Department W, P.O. Box 9, New Madison, OH 45346-0009

**(513) 996-3001 • FAX (513) 996-3633**

Serving the world for 61 years

**NEKTON® NEKTON®**

**Experience NEKTON! NEKTAR PLUS**

A COMPLETE DIET FOR HUMMERS, SUNBIRDS, HONEYCREEPERS, AND BANAQUITS.

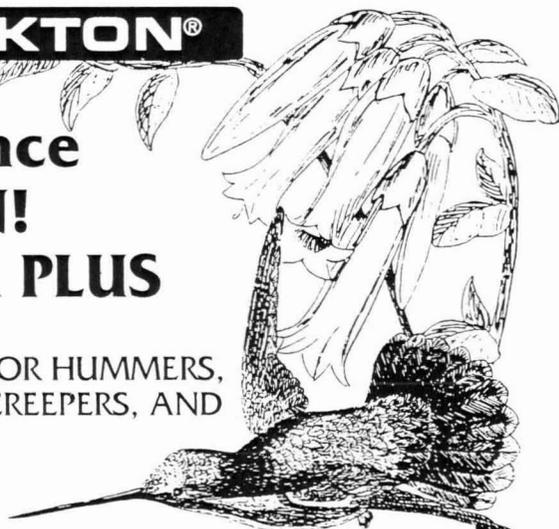
IN WATER SOLUBLE POWDER FORM.

USED BY ZOOS WORLDWIDE.

SPECIALY DEVELOPED FEEDERS ALSO AVAILABLE!

**NEKTON U.S.A., INC.**  
14405 60th Street North  
Clearwater, Florida 34620  
Phone (813) 530-3500  
FAX (813) 539-0647

**NEKTON®**



NEKTON -PRODUKTE  
W.-GERMANY

birds, from this date forward, included in our registry or some other registry system. As an additional benefit in this approach, we recognized that when their progeny are registered, the parental stock also becomes a part of the system although the parent birds themselves may not be individually registered.

As an added note, relating to numbers of birds bred in this country on an annual basis, the sales of closed bands through our office in Phoenix have totaled approximately 100,000 bands since 1991. However, band sales figures through other outlets indicate significantly higher numbers, in excess of 100,000 bands sold per year. Apparently many aviculturists in this country are already voluntarily "labeling" their captive bred birds.

As improved technology is made available, we also hope to see all ESA listed endangered species DNA archived as part of the AFA Registry. This will help ensure the legitimacy of those specimens in trade in the future.

Advances in DNA technologies will be addressed by others at this session.

There are a variety of marking systems currently being used in aviculture (banding, microchipping, tattooing, DNA sampling). Unfortunately, no one system seems suitable for all species.

For example, closed banding requires removing chicks from their parents at an early age in order to band them. Often these chicks are rejected when they are returned to the nest or the adult birds, particularly parrots, amputate the chick's feet or legs in efforts to remove these bands. Consequently, the practice of closed banding often involves the handrearing of chicks. We, therefore, feel that closed banding should not be a required form of marking, as many aviculturists do not wish to handrear their birds.

Problems are also encountered with many of the other marking systems currently being used. As a result, the AFA Registry only requests that the birds to be registered are marked in an ac-

ceptable manner and that how they are marked is recorded on their registry application.

Another concern associated with implementing a registration and marking system for birds is confidentiality. Many breeders fear theft problems, should access to information regarding the types of birds in their collections not be carefully controlled. Considering that imports of certain species have now virtually ceased, this fear is probably quite valid. There are already indications that the incidents of theft are rising due to a lack of birds for the market. For this reason, including safe-guards against free access to information contained in our registry has been an important consideration in the development of this program.

### Certification of Exotic Bird Breeding Facilities

A certification system for avicultural facilities known as the Model Aviculture Program (MAP) was established in 1990. MAP is an independent entity and is not affiliated with any other organization. Others at this meeting will discuss this voluntary program so I will not elaborate on the merits of MAP other than to say that it is endorsed by the AFA.

It is the position of the AFA that our registration program and marking program, in concert with other such registry programs (sanctioned studbooks, cooperative breeding programs, specialists breeding group registries, etc.), coupled with the certification program operated by MAP, already serve to meet the needs of any voluntary labeling and certification suggested under Section 114 of the WBCA. Furthermore, that regulatory activities other than these voluntary programs, already placed in operation, are not needed and would serve to deter captive breeding of exotic birds in the United States violating intent of the WBCA as expressed in Section 115 (b).

Respectfully submitted on behalf of our Board of Directors,  
Robert J. Berry  
Executive Director, AFA ➔



THE GATEWAY PARROT CLUB, INC  
Proudly Presents

## THE GATEWAY ALL-AMERICAN HOOKBILL SHOW

SEPTEMBER 9th & 10th, 1995

### FEATURING\*

- LARGE BIRD SALE ROOM
- BIG BIRD RAFFLE
- COMMERCIAL EXHIBITORS

### SEMINARS\*

- LAYNE DICKER

### • CASH • RIBBONS • TROPHIES •

MEET US AT THE ST. CHARLES CENTER,  
LOCATED IN THE MARK TWAIN MALL, ST. CHARLES, MO

STAY AT THE BEAUTIFUL BUDGETEL INN.  
FOR RESERVATIONS CALL: 314-946-6936

\* TO RESERVE COMMERCIAL SPACE  
CALL GLENNA JONES 314-389-4766  
OR CAROL FIELD 314-385-0323

SPONSORED BY

**Pretty  
Bird**®