The Hawaiian Goose

Most of us, no doubt, are keen on aviculture or we wouldn’t be reading (or writing) this article. For some of us, however, it is almost impossible to comprehend the current status of world affairs and how they radically and instantly affect our own backyard lives. Thirty years ago American oil companies pumped oil out of the mid-eastern deserts while the locals had camel races and popped a few rifle shots at stray members of the neighboring tribe. Now when the locals fight or get their heads together we have to line up at the gas pumps. Just so, a few years ago a Jean Delacour could mount an expedition and capture the birds he wanted and a Francis Billie could visit the local animal exchange and choose from an unrestricted flow of imported exotic birds. Now our borders are closed except for a few government regulated quarantine stations and many countries prohibit the export of an ever lengthening list of birds.

Times have changed. We may lament the good old days of thirteen-cents-a-gallon gas and unregulated traffic in birds but we can’t bring them back. While most of the businesses, industries and, yes, even hobbies, have changed with the times I keep thinking aviculture has not changed much. The government estimates there are twenty million bird breeders in this country. Of course, several thousand aviculturists in the vanguard do think along more modern, technically advanced lines but where are the others? The world has shrunk to the point that virtually every endeavor has an effect on all of the others. And in our scientifically and technically oriented society the proponent who puts forth the greatest bulk of data (even if on close examination the data are erroneous) usually prevails.

A case in point is the ludicrous proposal the Fish and Wildlife Service intends to present at New Delhi. Their backup data are laughable—but where is aviculture’s solidly researched rebuttal? Where are the facts and figures to support aviculture’s claims? At present, they seem to be almost nonexistent. The entire bulk of avicultural literature is miniscule compared to that of other endeavors of similar importance and the avicultural literature that has any scientific validity is very rare indeed. It is not easy to argue with Fish and Wildlife Service and their shabby “scientific” support if we present nothing at all.

The point I am trying to pound gently into your cranium is that the old laissez-faire days are gone. We must pull ourselves into conformity with modern methodology. At present, aviculture moves from crisis to crisis like an emotional yo-yo. When a sufficient threat appears we mobilize in a panic and try to scream the enemy down. Our blood-curdling shrieks have been remarkably successful thus far but they will become less and less efficacious in the future. The governmental bodies (our chief opponents) are piling on the insulation and I fear the Fish and Wildlife Service even now doesn’t hear us. To get their attention we will have to rap their heads with our walking sticks and have our good scientists jam irrefutable evidence under their noses.
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well written, vastly interesting...report on the nene than an illustration of it in living color. I recommend the book for its well written, vastly interesting report on how the nene was saved and also for the excellent avicultural techniques it exposes. To my notion, The Hawaiian Goose is one book that every serious breeder should study thoroughly—again and again. It is one of the first literary steps in the right direction.

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...mortality of Slimbridge nene, and rain­fall at Keauhou and Kukuku sanctuaries. These statistics tell the story in great detail and are just the sort of data all aviculturists should compile on all of their rare birds. If we had such data we could present a very strong case, indeed, in favor of aviculture.

The Hawaiian Goose is not a book on bird art. It contains twenty pages of black and white photos and one beautiful color plate and there are many very well done line drawings but the thrust of the book is more toward a report on the nene than an illustration of it in living color. I recommend the book for its well written, vastly interesting report on how the nene was saved and also for the excellent avicultural techniques it exposes. To my notion, The Hawaiian Goose is one book that every serious aviculturist should study thoroughly—again and again. It is one of the first literary steps in the right direction.

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