I initiated a breeding project with 800 wild caught birds just over six years ago and have been heavily involved in overcoming problems of management, breeding and rearing of the species. We became aware of a serious health problem when our first batch of young birds were about eight weeks old. They came under stress easily and died off without any indication of ill health. We have strived to diagnose, treat and cure the complaint and have met with a degree of success.

We believe the problem to be caused by an inherent virus which manifests itself after birds (young birds in particular) come under stress. We further believe it to be inherent in wild populations as we captured our stock birds ourselves and housed and bred them in complete isolation to any other species. We have had indications that a specific virus is present, but have not as yet managed to have it isolated or confirmed. However, we have proceeded along a programme of vaccination and have met with a large degree of success in that we have second and third generation of captive bred birds which are themselves breeding.

Although we have met with this success, there is still a long way to go before a resistant strain could be assured. This would require prolonged and expensive research (with some of it done in the U.S.A.) which we are sure would not be supported by the bird trade itself which is now extremely sensitive to the costs of this malady.

We are therefore reducing our stock and keeping only a few of our now relatively hardy strain for ourselves and have asked if the National Parks will exercise constraint on exports until such time as proven resistant birds are produced by whoever should have the funds and dedication to take up the cause.

The only solution may be for public conscience to produce funds for a trust to save and captive breed the Nyasa Lovebird and I am sure this applies to many other species. I also appeal through the media for CITES Authorities, particularly in neighboring countries, to observe constraint.

Would you please be so kind as to publish this letter in the Sunday Mail? Your indulgence would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

T.E. Cox

18 July/August 1995
there had to be a better way. Does AT&T have to look you up in notebook to find your account number? I don't think so.

My search has come to an end. A company called "Portable Data Systems" from Richardson, Texas has been working for over a year to write a database program that acts as a breeder registry for your flock. It is fairly easy to use and keeps track of the entire breeding program all the way from buying the breeder stock to pairing them, recording their eggs, tracking the chicks to adulthood, and selling the chicks. If you wanted it to, this program even produces a printout of sales and expenses to be used when you file your income tax.

The nice thing about this program is that it can track all of your birds, their eggs, and all of the offspring too. It shows interrelationships, incubation data, rearing data, formula consumption, growth rates, sales, individual pair productivity, purchases, mutation data, banding or transponder information, and so much more. I was truly amazed at the complexity of the program. It has made my life so much easier. Of course, at first I had many questions but the support personnel at the company always explained it in "idiot" terms so I could catch on. Since I have started using this program, there is no need to keep journals and notecards on each and every baby bird I produce. Now I can go to the computer and print out a sheet on the parent birds that will show all of their progeny for as many years as I request it to do.

If any of you are now keeping track of your breeding on paper, you must invest in a copy of this program. The company has given the name "AIMS" (Aviary Information Management System) to the program and marketing has just begun. It is available from the company by calling (214) 4370949, ask for Phil Elrod. This program could become the standard in the industry if this company keeps up the good work on trying to make each and every section work for all of us. As it stands, small breeders and huge commercial operations would benefit from using this program as it takes the "memory" work out of record keeping. I give this product the official seal of approval and you should tell them I told you to call. Perhaps they will give you a discount, they seem quite willing to help aviculture in any way they can!

So what does the future hold for exotic bird breeders in the United States? If we can prove to the "animal crazies" that we are doing a legitimate job of preserving genetics in the aviary, maybe they will leave us alone and go after some other group. To prove our point we must provide hard copy statistics, not just handwritten notes. It is time for aviculture to show the opposition that we can and do breed birds in the numbers that we say we do. We are not the responsible party for exploiting the wild populations of birds. The trappers have not stopped trapping even though the United States is no longer a customer of Wildcaught birds. This means that our government has not succeeded in stopping the trade in wild birds, and we must do our part to preserve the ones we have now. As the forests are cut, conservation fails, and captive preservation will be the only chance for many rare and wonderful species.