

# Wayne Schulenburg

## 1948-2003

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It had been two years since my last visit to the San Diego Zoo, and in late January of 1978 it was obvious a lot had gone on in the bird collection. After several years of relative stasis following the imposition of Newcastle's Disease import restrictions in 1972, a number of exciting additions to the collection had been made, both through commercial sources, and by special arrangement of the San Diego Zoological Society. The world famous parrot collection had been particularly enriched. Sun Conures were still a rarity then, and the newly-arrived flock of Abyssinian Lovebirds were the first I'd seen. Until the San Diego Zoo privately imported one pair from Papua New Guinea in 1977 there had been no Goldie's Lorikeets in the country since the 1950's, when the last ones died at the Brookfield Zoo (where they had bred). Admiring this pair in their aviary, I would never have imagined that, thanks in part to San Diego breedings, as well as later commercial exports from Indonesia, this species would be considered a widespread "beginner's lorikeet" by the 1990's. The expanding Indonesian bird exportation business had been the source of Duivenbode's Lories. For a great many people, myself included, San Diego's Duivenbode's were the first they'd seen aside from the picture in Forshaw's.

As wonderful as all this was, I was to shortly learn about even more exiting goings on. While I was enjoying the lories and lorikeets, their keeper happened by, and my asking him a few questions evolved into a conversation which I believe must have lasted an hour.

We looked at what was then the one and only Stella's Lorikeet in the country, at the Zoo since 1967, and admired its two offspring and their mother, a Violet-necked Lory. Producing these hybrids was as close to breeding Stella's Lorikeets in the Western Hemisphere as anyone had come. Little did we imagine, that in a fairly short time a number (more correctly identified as Mt. Goliath Stella's Lorikeets) would be

exported from Indonesia, and the San Diego Zoo would become a major propagator of these birds. Back on that January day in 1978, however, I was told something almost as startling. Just arrived in off-exhibit breeding facilities were a single specimen each of Papuan and Josephine's Lorikeets. These would prove to be the only specimens San Diego ever received. To my knowledge, neither had ever been kept in the U.S. previously (Rosemary Low considered San Diego's specimen "the first in aviculture"). I never did see these birds, but I did see two of their hybrid offspring (which I mistook for Stella's Lorikeets) at Crystal Gardens, in Victoria, British Columbia, in 1984.

Finally, I was told the most amazing news of all. The San Diego Zoo was shortly expecting the arrival of Tahiti Blue Lories. None had been in captivity in Europe or North America since the Second World War, and it was then widely believed to be possibly on the edge of extinction. In its long and distinguished history of lory husbandry, San Diego had never kept it. It was only through the confiscation of several birds which smugglers had attempted

to peddle to California aviculturists (who promptly informed the authorities) that San Diego had the opportunity to work with one of the most legendary of parrots. The zoo was to eventually fully rear at least fifty Blue Lories, though due to several factors, a self-sustaining population was not to be achieved. But all that was in the future. On that January morning in 1978, one could only be amazed at a completely unlooked-for opportunity to work with birds never expected in aviculture in our time.

That was my first meeting with Wayne Schulenburg. A great many people retain similar memories of their first encounter with this master aviculturist, so cordial with his time and knowledge. Wayne was always ready to share advice and information. He was constantly consulted at the zoo, and was always a popular speaker or attendant at AFA

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functions.

Wayne was a native of San Diego County, born in Chula Vista. His enthusiasm for birds began at an early age. In his late twenties, he still had his childhood Cockatiel. In his teens, he was one of the last people to work for Jerome Buteyn, whose extensive aviaries in San Diego's North County included Cocks-of-the-Rock, Bellbirds, African Crowned Eagles, and an extensive collection of toucans. He went to work as a Bird Keeper at the San Diego Zoo in 1973, and never left until September, 2003, when complications from diabetes, with which he had lived since the age of twelve, forced him to retire. He died of kidney failure on December 22, 2003.

Wayne began his career at San Diego Zoo as a bird keeper. By 1976 he was at work in the Avian Propagation Center, where he was responsible for incubators and brooders, hand-rearing chicks, and caring for off-exhibit breeding birds. He was promoted to Senior Keeper in 1977, and became a Lead

Keeper in 1979. In 1986 Wayne became Animal Care Manager of the Bird Department, the position he held till his retirement. He oversaw the day-to-day functioning of the largest collection of captive birds in the Western Hemisphere. His thirty year career at the zoo (beginning one year before the establishment of the AFA) coincided with remarkable developments in American aviculture. Species unavailable to anyone, or considered extreme rarities, became commonplace as established captive populations. The propagation of soft-bills became an expected element of zoo management. Whole categories of birds, such as Fruit Doves, or Chinese Laughing Thrushes, which had little previous exposure in U.S. collections, became the focus of attention, with sustained breeding

successes, and the establishment of conservation programs. The propagation of parrots, waterfowl, and rare pheasants in both public and private aviculture exploded. The importance of aviculture as a method of preserving endangered species and populations, both in- and ex-situ has become ever more estab-

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Wayne's career also saw a transformation in the way that birds were maintained at the San Diego Zoo, commencing in the last decade of K.C. Lint's 40 year tenure, continuing through the '70's, with Art Risser's reorganization of the Bird Department in the face of decreased availability of birds and expanding opportunities for captive propagation in collaboration with other collections, and hurtling through the '80's and '90's as Jim Dolan's aggressive acquisition policies made birds previously unknown or unavailable to aviculture a major part of San Diego's collections.

Longtime visitors will remember the days, in the early '70's when San Diego's bird collection stood at nearly a thousand taxa, and encyclopedic series of parrots and birds-of-prey, often represented by single specimens, were exhibited in rows and rows of unplanted exhibits. (K.C. Lint told me he would have loved to have planted his aviaries, but veterinary practices of the time would not allow that). Today, with the collection at less than half the size it was in 1970, much more of it is exhibited in artfully landscaped recreations of habitats around the world, with a far greater emphasis on soft-bills and aquatic species. Wayne's lifelong love of plants and enthusiasm for horticulture was a definite asset in this transition. At his National City home, Wayne and his wife Annabelle maintained an impressive garden, which of course, included aviaries. This dual interest was especially exercised by Wayne's participation in a three-month expedition to Papua New Guinea, in 1989, to collect both plants and birds. (Wayne's personal aviaries were the site, in 1981, of the first U.S. breeding of the Gray-headed Social Weaver, which he documented on page 4 of the February/March, 1982 issue of AFA Watchbird.)

Of course the San Diego Zoo long ago became world famous for bird propagation, with more than 400 taxa hatched through the '70's. During Wayne's tenure as Animal Care Manager of the Bird Department, this already distinguished record was augmented by successes with such species as Whistling Herons, Milky Storks, Harpy and African Crowned Eagles, Cabot's and Blythe's Tragopans, African Jacanas, an array of Fruit Pigeons, Solitary Lories, Musschenbroek's and Red-flanked Lorikeets, Edward's Fig Parrots, New Caledonian Horned Parrots, Giant Turacos, Guam and White-throated Kingfishers, Abyssinian, European, Blue-bellied, and Racquet-tailed Rollers, Siberian Hoopoes, Wrinkled

and Sulawesi Tarctic Hornbills, Red-necked and Curl-crested Aracaris, Long-tailed and Lesser Green Broadbills, a Bolivian Cock-of-the-Rock, a Calfbird, White-breasted Wood Swallows, Yellow-bellied Laughing Thrushes, Javan Cochoas, and many others that had not previously hatched there. Quite a number of world or U.S. first breedings were included among them. San Diego's Curator of Birds, David Rimlinger, who himself rose through the ranks, starting as a keeper there more than twenty-five years ago, wrote: "Much of the credit is owed to Wayne who seemed to have a second sense about birds and their needs in a captive environment".

With such enormous responsibilities, Wayne still found time to present papers at conferences, and author a number of articles in various journals. And he also found time to be a cordial friend to and mentor to countless aviculturists. I will conclude this appreciation with a fond memory. In 1989, I brought Curator Emeritus K.C. Lint to the Zoo. He was, of course, properly appreciative of a newly-arrived Crimson Fruit Crow, the one and only (and still living!) specimen ever to reach a collection outside of South America. He was even more awed when Wayne told him it had cost \$20,000. "I never had an annual acquisition budget like that!" he managed to murmur reverently. Of course, when I later mentioned this to Marvin Jones, San Diego's registrar and Zoo Historian Extraordinaire, his comment was "Nonsense! It only cost \$6,000!" I don't think anyone else would ever have pulled K.C.'s leg that way... Wayne! Hail and Farewell! ■

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