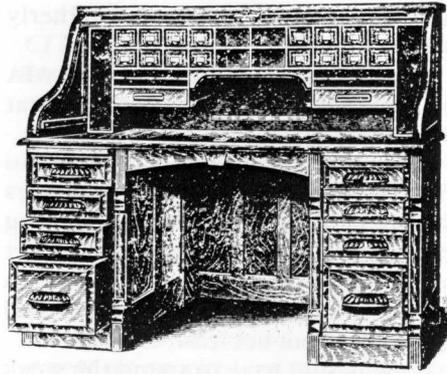


From The Editor's Desk



The *Watchbird* magazine is under new editorship as of November 18, 1988. Jack Clinton-Eitniece, San Antonio, Texas; Dale R. Thompson, Canyon Country, California; Jerry Jennings, Woodland Hills, California, will be serving as the editorial staff.

Eitniece has been a contributing author to *Watchbird* for many years. He is president of the International Softbill Society and editor of its quarterly bulletin, "The Honeycreeper," editor of "The Eyas," a publication of the Institute of Wildlife Management of the National Wildlife Federation's Raptor Information Center, Latin American Region. He also serves as co-editor for *Vulture News*, a journal of the Vulture Study Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust, South Africa. Eitniece has published over fifty articles, both popular and scientific, in various magazines, journals and bulletins and has made literary contributions to several books and films.

Thompson is one of AFA's original members and a long-standing contributor of fine photos and articles to the *Watchbird* and has served many years as staff photographer. Thompson was assistant curator of birds at the Los Angeles Zoo during the '60s and through the mid '70s. He then moved on to become director of Behavioral Study of Birds, Ltd., Newhall, California. In addition to his regular contributions of talent to the *Watchbird*, he has served AFA as Avy Awards chairman and convention speaker committee chairman. Some of his current projects are involving production of wildlife programs for PBS television.

Jennings has written over one hundred articles for *Watchbird* magazine since its founding and has served in various capacities on its staff including assistant editor, photographer and advertising director. He has traveled extensively as an amateur

biologist throughout Asia and South America. Currently, he is director of the Toucan Preservation Center which is funding on-going field studies on toucans in southeast Peru and Honduras. He is involved in writing a book on toucans and practices law specializing in wildlife legal issues. Jennings is the founding president of AFA and most recent past president, compiling a total of four and a half years in that office.

All three of these men have been frequent speakers at various symposiums, international wildlife meetings, and conventions throughout the United States and have represented AFA in foreign countries. All three have intimate knowledge and experience with a wide variety of birds.



Dear Mr. Jennings,

A favorite of mine was a childhood story which dealt with the recognition of worth *when it was right in front of you*. It has been a lifelong inspiration. Does this subject pertain to aviculture? Believe it!

Remember the myriad articles in avian publications which mourned our failure to collect and to breed various species while they were still: 1. plentiful, 2. available, 3. even existing? How sad to let anything life-enriching slip away. And how completely upsetting (infuriating) to learn in the final '88 issue of AFA *Watchbird* that its two superlative editors are leaving. Did we write frequently to encourage, praise, and thank Sheldon and Jean? (Not nearly enough — which is how, I imagine, they were paid.) Did we really appreciate the beautifully professional manner in which the breeders' best interests were represented (thought out, plotted, researched, articulated) and produced?

And was our editors' delightful company parted with best wishes? Hardly. They were summarily dismissed by our feckless (yes, and reckless) president, Mr. Marshall, please to explain. Because it is this member's feeling that, with leadership like yours, it may not be long before some keen-eyed, kind-hearted observer starts a fund for the endangered U.S. aviculturist.

Sincerely,
Dorothy Taylor
Newport Beach, California

Dear Ms. Taylor:

I wish you had recited your favorite childhood fable (perhaps next time), but I think I understand your drift. Although Sheldon resigned rather than having been "dismissed," perhaps your letter will yet inspire amongst us a more charitable indulgence.

*Sheldon will be missed by most of us, for he did an excellent job in filling the pages of *Watchbird* with the best material any bird journal could aspire to publish. His wit and humor, as expressed in this column, were often the highlights of an entire issue. There were those, of course, who received an occasional "judicious jab from the ole umbrella," and probably won't miss his charming demeanor. Sheldon's knowledge and understanding of birds and the various interest areas in aviculture, from Anis to Zebra Finches, gave him an ability to recognize quality and credibility in the articles that have found their way to the pages of *Watchbird*. In that respect, Sheldon was a unique asset to AFA. His shoes will be most difficult, if not impossible, to fill.*

*As a close friend of Sheldon's, I was deeply sorry to see the crusty fellow go. Alas, he has many projects to engage his energies and is relieved to have this burden lifted from his now stooped shoulders after fourteen long years at the helm of *Watchbird*. We may yet hear from him now and again in these pages.*

*Jean, as you may know, has agreed to hang in there, so *Watchbird* will continue to benefit from her superb artistic talents. Coupled with the editorial toilings of the new troika of Jack Clinton-Eitniece, Dale Thompson, and myself, we hope to maintain the typically high standards of *Watchbird*.*

Thank you for your support. Ed. (Jerry Jennings)

Dear Editor and AFA readers:

Being a macaw breeder, I have made many trips searching for a true Buffon's macaw, *Ara ambigua*. I advertise for them and have found that many bird dealers, importers and expert collectors have no firm idea of what a true Buffon's looks like. There is a marked difference which is, ironically, simple.

All military macaws (mature — be careful of baby grey eyes) have a distinct eye color: dark pupil, yellow eye ring, another yellow eye ring.

Buffon's macaws (again, mature birds only): dark pupil, steel grey ring with a fine band of dark color surrounding that, and one yellow ring.

Aside from a substantial size difference, there are color differences that are subtle and hard to describe for people who have not seen both birds. I have seen light colored militaries that approach the green of the Buffon's, but eye color is a constant denominator. Once seen, the differences are unmistakable 50 feet away!

If you can help us expand the genetic pool, please call me, (602) 585-4701.

Cordially,
Geoffrey Gould, Scottsdale, Arizona

See *Watchbird* Vol. XIII, No. 5, Oct/Nov '86, page 8 for an article on Buffon's macaw. Included are several additional ways to tell a Buffon's from a military. Ed.



To the AFA and all those who attended the convention,

I greatly appreciated and enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the 14th annual convention of the AFA. It was very encouraging to note the increased interest in conservation among those present.

I would like to thank all those who donated to my appeal for funds for the Dominican Parrot Project. This raised a total of \$770 which I will forward to ICBP on my return to Tenerife. It will be used to help purchase the land on Dominica which will be crucial for the survival of the imperial and red-necked parrots. Thank you again.

Yours sincerely,
Rosemary Low, Curator
Loro Parque, Tenerife, Spain



Dear AFA members,

I just returned to Pennsylvania after attending the AFA convention in

Tampa and making a short daughterly visit on the east coast of Florida.

If you have never attended an AFA convention you have no idea what you've missed.

It's wonderful to hear and talk to people whose books and articles you've read for years. To hear differing opinions and/or methods. To meet such a disparate group of people with at least one thing in common. And almost last, but not least, to LEARN.

One would have to spend the week in a cocoon with blinders on not to learn something!

The last, unexpected, but pleasant result was to pick up the new issue of *Watchbird* and feel as though I was reading about close friends and family.

Everybody did a great job and made it such fun.

Sincerely,
Sandy Woosnam, Pennsylvania



Dear AFA,

How we've missed you! We are your Sri Lanka subscription (probably the only one you had) and we're now here in the U.S.A. When we decided to leave war-torn Sri Lanka, we gave all our old *Watchbirds* to very grateful avicultural friends in Colombo. We carried the last issue we had received with us, and now that we're settled down in California we'd like to renew our subscription.

I'd like to tell you how much your magazine helped us in Sri Lanka. My husband and I kept over 100 breeding pairs of birds in the past five years and we had several close friends who also kept large numbers of birds. Unfortunately, the veterinarians in Sri Lanka know very little about avian medicine and we quickly learned that we were "on our own." Our friends also had many tragic experiences with the veterinarians attempting to treat their birds.

I had been a subscriber of the *Watchbird* before I married my husband and moved to Sri Lanka, and I remembered how helpful the articles were. I wanted to subscribe again, but there was a problem sending currency out of Sri Lanka and we found that it could not be done. However, my family agreed to send it to us as our Christmas present and it was the best gift they could have sent us. We read it cover to cover, of course, and often re-read it several times before the next issue came.

We can't count the number of birds we saved with the help of the informa-

tion in your magazine. We became "the bird people," and even advised the zoo on many aspects of bird care (at their request). Of course, we can never claim to be experts, but we *were* more informed than most people because of your magazine. Our birds were happy and bred for us, with our biggest achievement being two clutches from our pair of green-wing macaws.

Now that we're here in the U.S., we're very anxious to be members of AFA again.

Kathleen Ratnavira,
Fallbrook, California



Dear Editor,

I have kept birds for many years and am a judge serving at many Danish bird exhibitions. At the shows the aviculturists talk mostly about "new color mutations," "many young," and "money."

These aviculturists — or rather, bird manufacturers — suggest one can get more young by pulling the first clutch of eggs or "milking" the birds. Then they must be hand fed. I disagree with hand rearing birds except in an emergency where the parents can't or won't.

It is Mother Nature's birds we keep and if we keep them well they will breed. I prefer wild-caught birds because I know that they are natural birds — not "manufactured."

And regarding all the color mutations that are abnormally produced, I ask are they produced for the eye or for the wallet? In the wild they would serve as prey for predators.

I am not in sympathy with planned hand-rearing of birds or with planned breeding of color mutations. I do hope other normal aviculturists will agree with me.

Jorgan Hare
Hvidovre, Denmark



Dear Sir:

I wish to congratulate you on the subtle change in the type of content in the last few issues of *Watchbird*. The increased emphasis on articles depicting the role aviculture plays in the overall conservation picture can only benefit private aviculture.

It is mandatory that private aviculture become integrated with the conservation effort both from the point of survival and on moral principles and obligation.

Again, I wish to thank you for a more interesting periodical and for your farsighted editorial policies. Sincerely, L.W.G.



Dear Editor:

As a full-time health officer, I often come into contact with various animal rights groups. I also have all of the CITES, federal and local laws pertaining to aviculture within my office.

I can state that, over the years, such organizations have evolved and most are at odds with aviculture. People For The Ethical Treatment Of Animals is now on record as being opposed to keeping and breeding any animals as pets. CITES originally was a pro-conservation movement; it, too, has been taken over by the anti-pet movement.

I have mixed views on the AFA setting up breeding facilities for rare birds. On the one hand we must do our utmost to preserve all plant and animal life. However, I am afraid that the AFA can, if it is not properly controlled, do more harm than good for aviculture. The reason for my fear is that whenever a group begins to act as a spokesman for a movement or hobby, the danger exists that said group will begin to see itself as the sole authority on the activity it represents. This would be wrong since, with birds, there is no one way of housing, breeding, or feeding them in captivity. With rare exceptions many methods work.

The leadership of AFA should take a tolerant view of all humane methods within aviculture. If it works, it is good. The AFA should also take the offensive against overly restrictive federal, state, and local ordinances or statutes that unreasonably restrict aviculture. New Jersey, for instance, prohibits the keeping of endangered species. The state is, in effect, helping in a small way to cause the extinction of various species by keeping them out of aviculturists' hands.

In short, we must use all legal means to preserve our avocation as there are many against us.

Yours truly,
Louis J. Pilas

Dear Mr. Pilas:

Rest assured we are aware of the animal rights movement. We also support the humane care and highest standards of husbandry of birds, as well as the notion they make wonderful pets.

AFA has also been a supporter of CITES and its attempt to regulate trade in species threatened with extinction. While there are some elements within CITES that oppose the keeping of birds for pets or other purposes, as an attendee of the 1985 CITES Conference, I feel the majority are sincere conservationists who want to regulate trade, not stop it altogether. The issue of birds as pets has not been a subject of discussion, except as an element of the demand side of the trade equation. AFA supports trade in species with sustainable wild populations, and is currently preparing position papers and audio-visual aids to communicate our message at the next Conference of the Parties in October 1989.

AFA does not, (nor has it ever,) claim to be the sole representative of aviculturists, but only its members. It also has not claimed divine wisdom on "the" best way to manage birds in captivity. On the contrary, it has been quite tolerant of differing views, as evidenced in the lively, and sometimes controversial, discussions in this column.

Let the heavens bring forth manna to AFA in the form of a host of articles on bird keeping, and let the field of the editor's desk be covered with a plague of letters of biblical proportions. Ed., J.J.



Dear Editor:

I recently read an article that was authored by Joanne Abramson of Fort Bragg, California entitled *Feather Sexing — a logical alternative*. What particularly caught my interest was the comments on the fact that this technique was first discovered in 1980 and was largely pioneered by Dr. Valentine. I'm enclosing a copy of two reports of articles that appeared in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* and the *International Zoo Yearbook*. * You can tell by the dates of these publications that this method of avian sexing dates back to as early as 1966. In other words, this is not a new process, but has been utilized by numerous agencies for several years.

In May 1977, a symposium and workshop was held in Houston, Texas that addressed the various methods known at that time for avian sexing. Laparoscopy, hormone measurement, c-banding, karyotyping, and vent sexing were all part of that activity. I would appreciate it if you could pass

these publications on to either Ms. Abramson or Dr. Valentine as they may be of some interest to them.

Thank you very much for your consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,
Stephen R. Wylie
Director of Oklahoma City
Zoological Park

Dear Steve,

Thank you for the fruits of your research into the historical archives. We will forward copies of your referenced articles to Ms. Abramson. Ed., J.J.

***Editorial Note:** "A Preliminary on the Application of Current Cytological Techniques to Sexing Birds" by Gregory A. Mengden and A. Dean Stock — *International Zoo Yearbook*, Vol. 16, 1976. "Chromosome Analysis and Sex Identification in the Management and Conservation of Birds" by David A. Hungerford, Robert L. Snyder, John A. Griswold — *Journal of Wildlife Management*, Vol. 30, No. 4, October, 1966.



Dear Editor,

In your Aug/Sept 1987 edition of *Watchbird* (p. 20), there is a journal mentioned called *Vulture News*. Do you know who I could write to about subscribing to this?

We get vultures in our yard all the time by putting out food for them, and I'd like to learn more about these interesting birds.

I'd also like to mention that I enjoy your fine magazine very much!

Sincerely, Tina Cesa

Dear Tina,

You are obviously one of a small number of peculiar people who are very interested in vultures. I'm not, and I won't ask what sort of food you put out to attract them to your yard (your letter was forwarded to me in a package without your envelope so I don't know where you live — but I know it's not Los Angeles. The only vultures there are professional).

*As it happens, Jack Eitniear, AFA Conservation Committee chairman, is also an avid observer of vultures. Please contact him at (512) 828-5306 and he'll direct you to the *Buzzard Bulletin* or the *Vulture News*. Sheldon Dingle, editor emeritus ●*