ASA Avicultural Bulletin

SPECIAL MEMORIAL EDITION IN REMEMBRANCE OF SHELDON "DINGO" DINGLE

JULY/AUGUST 2016

Sheldon "Dingo" Dingle Memorial
March 6, 1937 – June 16, 2016
Steve Duncan

From left to right Steve Duncan, Steve Garvin, Sheldon Dingle, Bill McGinniss, Antonio DeDios, Roger Bringas

When Roger Bringas called me to tell me Sheldon was in the hospital and was not expected to survive much longer, we immediately began recalling some of the adventures we had with Dingo. It's a strange sensation to laugh and cry simultaneously, but we did exactly that on the phone that evening. Sheldon passed away shortly after.

It's an odd paradox that the amount of joy a person spreads to others in the world ends up yielding a proportional amount of pain and sadness when that person passes on. Of course, the pain and sadness is temporary and joy ultimately returns as time goes on and we continue to cherish the memories of someone like Sheldon. Today, I'm sad as I say goodbye, but I know that the heavy sadness I feel is just a reflection of the happiness Dingo brought to all of us and to me personally over so much of my life. I already know that joy wins over sadness because just last week as I was scanning through some of Dingo's many articles that he wrote for the Avicultural Bulletin, I was giggling with delight at the wonderful way he told his stories and wove his humor into everything he did. As I read each article, it was so wonderful to hear his voice in my head telling me his stories again. Joy does win.

I first came to know Sheldon through the pages of the AFA Watchbird Magazine for which he was the editor for many years. His wit and sharp-edged humor drew me straight to his editorial column as soon as each issue arrived in the mail. Think about that… I'm a kid who is crazy about everything that has to do with birds and aviculture. Despite that, I would flip right past all the great articles

about birds and aviculture because the thing I wanted most when every Watchbird magazine arrived was to read whatever hilarious editorial was written by Sheldon in that issue. I was never disappointed.

I was probably only 17 at the time, when I wrote to the esteemed editor of the Watchbird seeking some information for a paper I was writing for a high school assignment. I had seen a reference to the Japanese Crested Ibis in the Watchbird, and I wanted to write my paper on that bird, but I hadn't found any information in print. I was only hoping for a few suggestions on where to find more information about it, perhaps an article published somewhere that Mr. Dingle might know about. At that point, Sheldon had no idea who I was. He'd never heard of me. I was just a kid who likes birds. He wrote a letter back to me, but the response I got was not the list of article references that I was hoping for. Instead, it was as though this man that I had always admired shook my hand through the words on that page and spoke to me as though I was a fellow aviculturist he had known for years. He indicated that the bird was so little known that the best person to contact was George Archibald at the International Crane Foundation since George had just seen a small remnant population of them in his travels to Korea. To my teenage mind, this was almost like telling a budding musician to contact Elton John for some pointers on piano. But, I thought, why not? I did write to the Crane Foundation which ultimately led me to do an internship there a few years later, and that experience remains one of my favorite life adventures.

Sometimes, the most valuable gifts we give to others are those little gestures of encouragement that set in motion much larger events in other people's lives. With his exceptionally outgoing

From left to right Roger Bringas, Antonio DeDios Sheldon Dingle

Sheldon "I could tell you but then would have to kill you" armed to the teeth in one of his favorite photos

personality, I am sure Sheldon set in motion lots of great life adventures for many people.

After his stint as editor of the Watchbird magazine, Dingo served as Editor of the ASA Avicultural Bulletin for several decades starting in the 80's. In fact, he had already been quietly collaborating for some time with Jean Hessler, who was the Bulletin editor at the time, and with whom, he had worked on the Watchbird as well. Dingo and Jean were a great team. I began serving on the Board of Directors of The Avicultural Society about the same time Sheldon officially became the Bulletin's editor. I felt so lucky to serve as part of ASA along with Dingo. He and Jean took the Avicultural Bulletin from a newsletter with mostly local club information and a couple decent bird articles, to a respectable publication with unique information that could appeal to any aviculturist anywhere. This actually marked the return of the Avicultural Bulletin to its former status as a publication of merit in the avicultural community. This is something that Dingo knew and revered from the beginning of the Avicultural Society of America – the days of Isenberg, Karl Plath, Francis Rudkin, Lord Tavistock and the great Jean Delacour. Unfortunately, these greats were not around to write the quality of articles the Avicultural Bulletin was founded on, so the Bulletin's return may have happened mostly because when Dingo was lacking for articles, he would just write them himself. For some of those articles, he used thinly veiled pen-names so the contents didn't look like most of it came from him. However, he also knew so many great contemporaries that he was always able to get some unique and interesting articles from all over the world.

Sheldon "Dingo" Dingle at World Wildlife Zoo at the Avic

After I had served on the Board of Directors for a few years, I eventually became President of ASA. Dingo started to call me "Boss" which eventually became "Boss Man". I'm still in my 30's at that point and very much looking up to Sheldon as a role model. I thought it was odd to be called Boss by someone I looked up to, but Sheldon had his way of making

cultural Society of America Education Conference in 2008

you feel at ease. My nickname was never updated after I was no longer President. I was always "Boss Man" to him. Indeed, in recent years, he couldn't recall my real name at all, but he did still know me as Boss Man.

Most of all, Dingo loved sharing his stories whether in person or in the pages of an avicultural magazine. One of his favorite stories, and my own favorite Dingo story, is about his visit to see the Philippine Eagle breeding program and how one of these huge eagles nearly killed one of the keepers. Philippine Eagles have huge talons that can take an entire human head in their grip which is exactly what happens in this story. The victim, who had devoted his life to saving this rare bird, pleads that no harm come to the bird as they struggled to figure out how to save him without lopping off the toes of the bird. Ultimately, they are successful in getting the great bird to release its grip. The story is riveting to read, and Dingo weaves his humor into it as usual, but I've had the pleasure of hearing Sheldon tell this story in person several times. What makes this particular story my favorite is that every time Sheldon comes to the part of the story where the keeper is pleading to not harm the bird despite his own life being in very real danger, is that Sheldon's voice begins to quaver with the intense emotion that he feels as he recalls the events. He has to fight back the tears. Dingo has such great compassion for the bird and for the keeper, but what really triggers Sheldon's emotions is the passion the keeper has for saving this bird – a passion so great that he is willing to risk his own life to avoid harming a rare and magnificent bird that he has dedicated his life to saving. It is that dedication and selfless compassion that resonates with Sheldon, and you could hear it in his voice. The emotion that comes through tells you exactly who Sheldon is and how passionate he is for worthy causes and people with good hearts.

Most who knew Sheldon were familiar with his sense of humor, extreme intelligence and huge heart. Sheldon was, most of all, a compassionate man. What many may not know, however, is that he was also a master at Judo,

was in the army, and in his high school days, he once told me, he was an exceptional track and field sprinter. This means he could easily take you out physically if he hadn't already disarmed you with his charm and wit. Tough to the core, some of his time in the army was spent surviving in the remotest wilderness of Alaska listening for Russian radio communications. After that experience, he said he always loved the tropics and never wanted to see snow or ice again.

Sheldon knew no strangers. He would quickly strike up a conversation with anyone and make a friend. He loved to tell the story of someone he met while on a shopping outing with family. Like many men, Sheldon wasn't fond of shopping so he tended to lurk around outside the shops where the other poor men languished while waiting for their wives inside. Dingo approached another man about his age and struck up a conversation. The man replied with a Russian accent which, of course, piqued his curiosity even more. Dingo asked him what he did in Russia, to which the man explained that he had spent some time in the furthest reaches of Siberia in the Russian army listening for American radio communications, Dingo immediately shouted "Comrade!" and explained this may not have been the first time each had heard the other. It is fascinating to me; the number of people we may pass on the street who unknowingly may have touched our lives. Sheldon had so many connections but was always looking to make new friends. It may seem improbable for such a chance encounter, but when everyone is your friend, you are likely to encounter people you didn't know you already knew or crossed paths with.

It was very difficult for me to watch Sheldon's brilliant mind slip away. Worst of all, he was aware it was happening very early on. He told me quite a few years ago that it was beginning, and he was very insistent about it, but he faced it with his typical Dingo brand of humor. He said he had lots of amazing stories that he could not share from that time in the army since he was sworn to secrecy for 60 years. Then he would say with a twinkle in his eyes that the army knew he would not be able to recall anything after 60 years.

Dingo's smile, charm and humor are his legacy that I will always remember. His willingness to help everyone and treat them as equals makes me happy that I chose him as a role model so long ago. I hope I can live up to it. Regardless, I thankfully have a full collection of Dingo's writings in my library to make me giggle whenever I need it. Thank you Dingo. This issue of the Bulletin is dedicated to a great man who did so much to make the Avicultural Bulletin what it is today. Please enjoy a selection of his writings and humor.

BLUE-EYED COCKATOO *CACATUA OPHTHALMICA* PHOTO DOMINCK DORSA

Sheldon's favorite avian species

The purposes of the Society are the study of foreign and native birds to promote their conservation and protection; the dissemination of information on the care, breeding, and feeding of birds in captivity; the education of Society members and the public through publications, meetings, and available media; and the promotion and support of programs and institutions devoted to conservation. Front Cover: Sheldon "Dingo" Dingle Photo: Carol Stanley. Feather Paragraph artwork by Susie Christian

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Contents

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President's Message

Aviculture's Loss

My heart sank upon hearing the news of Sheldon Dingle's passing.

If a man is judged by other's words about him, then Dingo is surely in heaven. His engaging conversation and witty retorts are gone forever but, as past editor of the AFA Watchbird, and then, the ASA Bulletin, the legacy he leaves behind will stand the test of time.

Dingo's commitment and integrity are the hallmarks of this legacy. His commitment to aviculture was strong and unwavering, always making sure a torch bearer would receive the hand-off when the time came so aviculture wouldn't miss a beat.

Few have the commitment or dedication required to help perform the necessary tasks to keep an all-volunteer organization together. Dingo did. The quintessential renaissance man, Dingo's life experiences molded him into a thoughtful, expressive and compassionate man whom people enjoyed listening to. Sheldon possessed the one element so many fail to grasp, integrity. Integrity in all things.

There will be no other that fills his shoes. He was one of a kind.

Rest in Peace, Sheldon

Your P.I.T.A.

Carol Stanley

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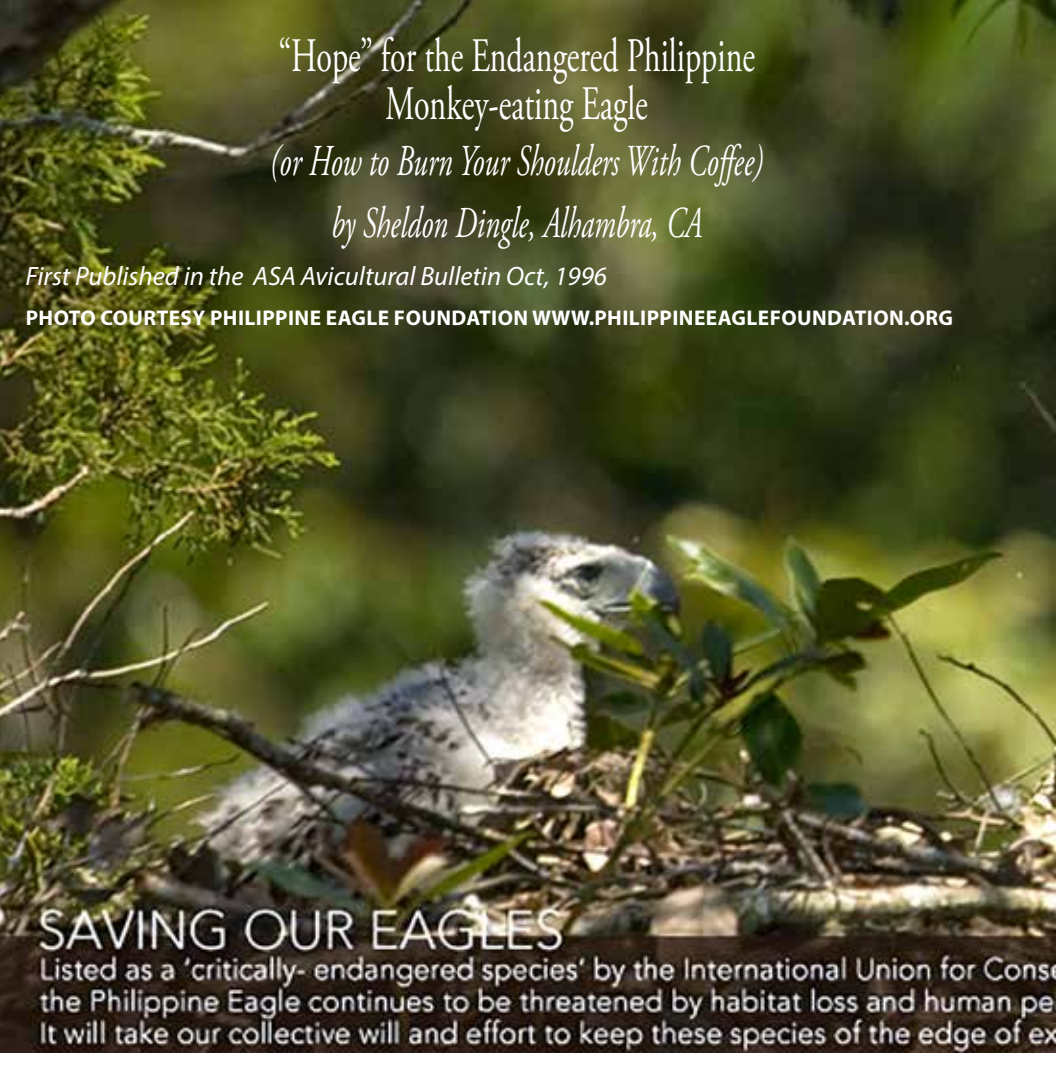
"Hope" for the Endangered Philippine Monkey-eating Eagle

(or How to Burn Your Shoulders With Coffee)

by Sheldon Dingle, Alhambra, CA

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin Oct, 1996

PHOTO COURTESY PHILIPPINE EAGLE FOUNDATION WWW.PHILIPPINEEAGLEFOUNDATION.ORG



In 1982, ornithologist Robert Kennedy, studying the birds of the Philippines, estimated the eagle's population on Mindanao to be around 300-500 individuals

On the lush tropical island of Mindanao, in the Philippines, Domingo Tadena kept a sharp eye on the huge Philippine Monkey-eating Eagle that was perched 40 feet above him. And the sharp-eyed eagle followed Tadena's every move. The instant Tadena turned his head and broke eye contact, the eagle dropped like a stone and slammed, talons first, into the back of Tadena's head. With extraordinary strength, the eagle's dagger-like talons wrapped around and punctured the man's face.

Tadena, on the ground with the great eagle gripping his entire head, c1ied out for help and two of his assistants rushed in to save him. The eagle refused to release its iron grip. One assistant used a pair of pliers to pry the talons out of Tadena's flesh but the eagle was too strong. The men tried with both hands to pull open the eagle's grip-again, to no avail. Finally, one man ran to get some limb loppers to cut the toes off the eagle's feet.

Face down in the dirt, the world's largest eagle tearing his head open, Tadena had the courage and dedication to forbid using the limb loppers. He could barely talk or see but he told his men to try one last trick-throw a cloth over the eagle's head and blind it. Unable to see, the eagle relaxed its grip and remained motionless. Tadena was dragged to safety and hauled to the nearest hospital some 40 miles away where he put in for days of repairs and recuperation.

Why, you may ask, did the eagle attack Tadena? What is the relationship between the eagle and the men? Actually, it is a story of hope. A story of a magnificent bird on the brink of extinction and of the people who are dedicated to preserving it.

The great Philippine Monkey-eating Eagle *Pithecophaga jefferyi* is one of the largest eagles in the world and is endemic to the Philippine Islands. Much of the Philippines are naturally covered with tropical jungle growth typical of south east Asia. The rain forests are vast, often mountainous and very rugged. Eagles are fiercely territorial, each pair claiming huge tracts of forest as their exclusive hunting grounds. They rarely soar above the canopy. When hunting, they fly silently through the forest from one lookout perch to another. The eagle's preferred food is medium-sized mammals such as monkeys, squirrels and flying lemurs. They will take large birds when they can catch them, and the natives claim the eagle takes pigs.

The eagles nest in huge old trees often 150 feet high where they construct nests five or six feet across. They lay just one egg which is incubated by both parents but with the female assuming about 70% of the chore. The chick hatches in about 60 days and takes about five weeks to stand in the nest. It will leave the nest in about three and a half months but may remain dependent upon its parents for several years. These eagles are obviously slow growing, slow to mature, and slow about raising a family. With good luck, a pair might raise one baby per year. Actually, at the end of 1995 there were only four known active nests and no documented wild babies raised during 1993, 1994 or 1995.

In 1982, ornithologist Robert Kennedy, studying the birds of the Philippines, estimated the eagle's population on Mindanao to be around 300-500 individuals. By the end of 1994, only 67 eagles could be accounted for on Mindanao and just seven more on other islands. Obviously, when an entire species has no more than 74 known members, it is in serious trouble-perhaps to the point of no recovery.

But the Filipino people are rallying to save their national bird. As with the California Condor, captive propagation was deemed a necessary tool in a desperate attempt to head off the the eagle's imminent extinction. To carry out this daunting task, the Philippine Eagle Foundation, Inc. (PEFI) was created in 1987 (http://www.philippineeaglefoundation.org/). It is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the endangered Philippine Eagle and its rain forest habitat. It is staffed by very skilled, highly trained professionals who are personally

On the left is Dr. Roberto "Bopeep" Puentespina, the highly trained and skilled veterinarian at the Eagle Center. On the right is Domingo P. Tadena, the Deputy Director for Captive Breeding. Both men are absolutely dedicated to the well being of the eagles.

dedicated to the conservation of the country's raptors and to the management of wildlife habitats.

The ultimate goal is twofold: to preserve enough primordial habitat to sustain a wild population of the eagles, and to increase the number of eagles through captive breeding techniques. These efforts work hand in hand. The hope is to eventually release captive bred eagles into safe habitats and once again populate the remote rain forest with its most majestic bird. Of course, captive bred birds are not substitutes for wild birds. They are meant to support the wild populations. And the goals are long range, extending well into the next century.

The Philippine Eagle Foundation, Inc. has the rare good judgment to recognize that the eagle's habitat is being penetrated by a growing population of slash-and-burn subsistence farmers. The farmers' plight leaves no room for concern about the status of some wild bird. Indeed, if a farmer could catch a bird (endangered or not) he would gladly feed it to his children-just to survive. To ease this situation, PEFI has begun work with the hill people in the areas where the eagle is found. Staff members live and work with the local people and help organize them, train them, and provide them with tools and equipment to make a living. The goal is to enhance the local farmers' capability to sustain themselves with a minimum impact on the ecosystem. Eventually, these indigenous communities become responsible stewards of the forest.

At the same time, there are conservation education programs in place that are designed to develop public awareness and understanding of wildlife and the natural environment. The most visible of these is the Philippine Eagle Center in Malagos, Davao City on the island of Mindanao.

In late 1995, after a surprise screw up between Borneo and Malaysia, I showed up in Davao City three weeks behind my schedule. Despite being unexpected, my .contact, Dr. Roberto P. Puentespina, rescheduled the work at his veterinary clinic and we headed s1raight off to the Eagle Center about an hour's drive up into the hills. Dr. Puentespina is the chief veterinarian at the Center and is absolutely dedicated to the well-being of the eagles. At the Eagle Center I had a chance to see first hand what a remarkable job PEFI is doing to preserve the eagles.

Captive breeding is never easy, and when working with a little known species such as the Philippine Monkey-eating Eagle it becomes a trail-blazing work of heroic efforts. Combine the extraordinarily difficult biological aspects with a sometimes dangerous physical environment and you begin to see the hurdles to overcome. Indeed,

the first captive breeding center had to be moved from its location because it was situated in an artillery crossfire zone between the local rebel army and government troops. The incoming rounds were a bother to the eagles. Of course, the eagles are a bother to the monkeys, so I guess there is a sort of balance.

Work at the relocated Center includes studying the eagles' behavior, biology and nutritional requirements. Here protocols and management techniques are developed for handling the captive birds. The Center is the main location for the captive propagation of the eagles. And here, in 1992, Pag-asa was hatched, the world's first Philippine Monkey-eating Eagle to be born in captivity. Later that year the same pair hatched another baby, Pagkakaisa. Pag-asa means "Hope" and Pagkakaisa means "Unity." Auspicious names for the beginning of the future.

At the Center, I met Domingo P. Tadena. And this brings us back to the beginning of this story. Tadena is the Deputy Director for Captive Breeding and is responsible for the hands-on management of all the eagles at the Center. To monitor the precious eagles' health, Tadena routinely slips into the huge cage to collect fecal samples for microscope work. This time the eagle got him. Tadena brushes the incident off as just another on-the-job surprise. But what really surprised him, he told me, was the hot coffee he drank on the way to the hospital. It leaked out the holes in his cheeks and burned his shoulders.

Fortunately, Tadena survived, the eagle still has all its toes, and two baby eagles have been produced. Their names, "Hope" and "Unity," say it all.

Tadena brushes the incident off as just another on-the-job surprise. But what really surprised him, he told me, was the hot coffee he drank on the way to the hospital. It leaked out the holes in his cheeks and burned his shoulders.

Editor's note:

Donations helping the Philippine monkey eating eagle may be made at:

http://www.philippineeaglefoundation.org/

Your support is needed and appreciated.

The Yellow Rosella

Sheldon Dingle Los Angeles, California

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin February, 1995

The Yellow Rosella *Platycercus flaveolus* is an Australian bird often called the River Rosella because of its preference for the tall eucalyptus trees found along the major rivers of the southeastern part of Australia. For- shaw says the Yellow Rosella seems to be more arboreal than the other rosellas and it also seems more shy, gener-ally not allowing a close approach. As its name implies and the cover photo shows, it is a mostly yellow bird with the upper chest usually flecked with red and it has a beautiful orange or red frontal band. The various Yellow Rosellas I've seen over the years have all been marked slightly different from one another. There doesn't seem to be a perfect pattern to which all the individuals adhere.

There has been much speculation as to the precise relationship between the Yellow Rosella, the Adelaide Rosella *Platycercus adelaidae* and the Crimson Rosella *Platycercus elegans*. The concensus, I believe, holds that the Adelaide Rosella is the result of hybridizing between the Yellow and the Crimson Rosellas where their ranges meet. Indeed, some books list the Adelaide as a subspecies of elegans. In any event, the Adelaide's range lies between the ranges of the Yellow and the Crimson and those Adelaides living closer to the Yellows look more like Yellows while those living closer to the Crimsons look more like Crimsons. In aviculture, all these species or subspecies can be housed and fed alike.

A number of years ago when I worked on Dave West's ranch, he acquired a pair of Yellow Rosellas. At that time, the species was very rare in American aviculture. West told me to be extra careful with the Yellows as they were one of only two or three pairs of Yellows in the States. Naturally, this made me

YELLOW ROSELLA *PLATYCERCUS FLAVEOLUS* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

nervous so I was most cautious each time I entered their 12-foot long flight to feed and water them. West didn't like automatic waterers so, each day, the water bowls were cleaned and filled by hand. He said this method forced one to visit and observe the birds daily. The rosellas were also given a seed mixture daily and a third pass was made to plant the apple or other fruit on the nail that was there for that purpose. West's bird farm was a labor intense operation but he designed it that way for a purpose. Also, he did much of the work himself and he worked slowly and took the time to watch the birds. He always noticed mating, nesting, fighting or any odd behaviors several days before I did. He really knew his birds.

Although West was far the better aviculturist, there was one thing at which I was the master -rat control. At the time the Yellow Rosellas were acquired, there was a very serious rat problem at the ranch and we were doing everything possible to gain the upper hand. Unfortm1ately, the aviaries were inadvertently designed to be everything a rat could possibly desire in the way of luxury accommodations. The framework was 2" x 2" wood covered with I" square weld wire. The aviaries were built in connected banks and set on the ground without cement footings. The flights were all 4 feet wide x 8 feet high and ranged from 8 feet to 16 feet in length. The tops were covered with the same wire as the sides and there was a solid roof about 3" above the wire tops. The effect was the most excellent freeway system a rat could hope for.

The rats burrowed and nested in the ground. For supper, they scampered up the wire to the food racks that were attached to the sides of the wire walls. After a half pound or so of fresh sunflower seeds, the fat rat took only a few steps to the fresh, vitamin-fortified water and drank his fill. Every rat had access to every aviary. Even the big rats could squeeze through the 111 wire so there were no travel restrictions. Believe it or not, but at night the thunder of hundreds of rats running across the wire could be heard clear down at the house.

With the rats eating more seed than the birds, and occasionally even eating a bird, and using the nest boxes and generally inhibiting the birds' breeding efforts, one of my main duties was rat control. We tried everything from poison to weird electronic devices that shot high frequency waves through the air or vibrations through the ground. , The rats loved the high tech stuff and sent for their distant relatives to come see and move in.

Frantically, I tried method after method to get rid of the rats and finally hit upon one that had a definite, measurable effect -I shot the bastards with a 22 caliber pistol. Three or four nights a week, I'd go into the aviaries with a flashlight, a pistol and a 50 round box of ammo. The first time I did it I was afraid the light and shooting noise would panic the birds and cause wild flying and injury but we were desperate. As it turned out, the birds were a little flighty for a few sessions but they soon became completely accustomed to my activities and just sat on the perch and watched.

My habit was to enter the aviary complex, flip my light on and blast away at the rats that were running across the tops of the aisles. I'd begin shooting from the aisle way but eventually would have to open the doors to the flights and shoot the rats along the side and back walls and those on the top wire. I am an excellent shot, having had much practice on an army pistol team and having participated in a number of combat shooting exercises. Also, to hedge the bet, I was using 22 caliber bird shot which is like miniature shotgun ammunition. I would usually kill 47 or 48 rats per 50 round box of ammo. The bad part was that the rats would die up in the wire where they couldn't be pulled out. Most of them just stayed there and mummified. The smell of dead rats permeated the whole neighborhood. But Dave West could come to the ranch each day and actually count dead rats and that brought him untold satisfaction. Eventually, of course, it became impossible to count the hundreds of dead rats that accumulated and the extermination program was deemed worthwhile even though the rat population seemed to hold steady.

For several years and several thousand rats, this program worked without an accident. Now we come to the reason for this rat diversion and the part that involves West's rare Yellow Rosellas. One night, I happened to be in the long flight that contained the pair of Yellows. My light focused on a fat rat on the top wire and I drew a bead on him just as he started to run. I followed him just as an anti-aircraft gunner follows an overhead plane. Unfortunately, the trigger squeeze coincided with my muzzle sweeping onto the male Yellow Rosella who was innocently sitting on his perch watching the show. For the first and only time, I blew a bird off the perch.

The next morning, when West arrived at the ranch, I suggested to him that the male Yellow was not looking up to par and maybe I should run him out to the vet (the bird was knocked off his perch and now preferred to sit on the ground with its head cocked but it was not dead). Naturally West agreed and I raced off to the vet instantly. The vet check didn't reveal anything the vet could recognize as causing the bird's obvious distress so I suggested he X-ray the bird's head. He thought I was crazy but took the X-ray anyway when I insisted. Of course, the X-rays showed a small pellet lodged in the bird's head near the brain. The vet said it would be more traumatic to operate than to leave the pellet in place where it would eventually encapsulate and become harmless. I took the poor bird home and put him back on his perch where he hung on shakily. I told West the bird had a bit of a shock (which was perfectly true) and perhaps a touch of lead poisoning (equally true) but that it would be okay (and eventually it was). I paid the vet out of my own pocket.

I still think Yellow Rosellas are beautiful birds but the mere photo of one gives me heart palpitations and a case of serious guilt. There are other birds I've had better luck with. Now you know more about West's Yellow Rosella than he did. Let's just keep this between ourselves, okay?

When last I was in London, I went to the Tower of London to pay my respects to two venerable ancestors who were in residence there during the time of Queen Elizabeth I. One kinsman was released at the age of 85 when he was deemed too feeble to mount an insurrection, the other (a young influential Colonel) was judged incorrigible (read, caught red-handed) and, with great ceremony, was separated from his head.

Although all traces of my progenitors had faded, the famous ravens of the Tower were quite present and actually rather surly. They seemed to think they had some position of impo1tance. And indeed they had.

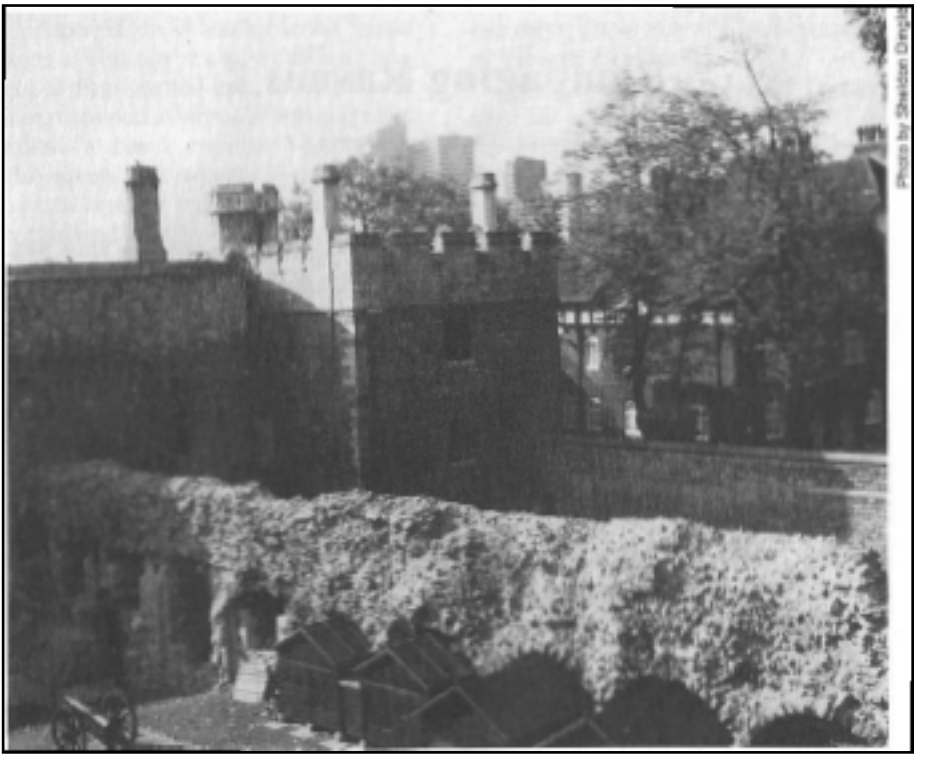
There have always been ravens in the Tower of London. At fist, long before modern garbage disposal procedures, they just nested and scavenged amongst the turrets and battlements. For centuries this was the case until the time came that their scavenging services were no longer needed. By that time, a legend had formed hinting that if ever the ravens left the Tower, it would fall and the glory and greatness of Britain would vanish. Lest legend be tempted, the British government keeps on the premises six Ravens *Corvus corax* with their wings clipped to prevent them from leaving. Indeed. The Ravens and my esteemed ancestors had two things in common - incarceration in the Tower and the perception that their absence therefrom would pose a threat to the Regency.

Rampaging Ravens

Sheldon Dingle, Los Angeles, CA

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin February, 1996

RAVEN *CORVUS CORAX* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN



Inside the walls of the Tower of London are the remains of an old 3rd Century Roman wall. Up against that wall you can see small dark wooden houses that shelter the six permanent resident Ravens. During daylight hours, the Ravens have the run of the grounds and are only housed at night or in bad weather.

I felt some kinship to the Ravens as I watched them strutting about the Tower as though they owned it.

During 1995, however, an odd twist occurred. Old Hugine, a 14-year-old male became so enamored of four year old Jackie that his fanatical pursuit and courtship antics actually caused such a ruckus that it scared visitors. In May, the two were kicked out and sent to a zoo in North Wales.

The four remaining Ravens were not enough to satisfy the legend, so two more were brought . in from Scotland. Full complement- Britain rules.

So far so good. The amorous pair was expected to get serious in the zoo and add to the numbers of captive bred Ravens. The zoo veterinarian, however, botched the plans of old Hugine and, upon close examination, found both birds to be males.
So much for the Raven breeding program at that zoo.

In the words of a well known old saying, "There's no accounting for mad dogs and Englishmen." I guess that goes for English Ravens also.

Vulturine Guineafowl

Sheldon Dingle,
Los Angeles, California

First Published in the
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September, 1995

Virtually all of us have seen and heard guineafowl at one time or another in someone's collection or at a zoo. The birds are not uncommon but they are not really well known either. How many species of guineafowl do you think there are? Where is their native habitat? Hah! I bet you guessed wrong. Actually, the Family Numididae (the guineafowl) is a very interesting one with a very long history.

Guineafowl belong to the order Galliformes which includes grouse, pheasant, turkeys, curassows and the most important bird in the history of man-the common chicken. It is an ancient bird with fossilized remains approximating Numididea meleagris (one of the guineafowl species) dating back to the upper Pleistocene Era (about two and a half million years ago). It seems to have been domesticated and bred by the people of India and Burma for thousands of years, thus it was introduced to the west as an already domesticated bird, but more about that later.

Believe it or not, there were sophisticated aviculturists about 2400 BC during the Egyptian fifth dynasty when the wealthy had large, well made aviaries to grace their walled gardens. The first historical record of guineafowl is found on a mural in the Pyramid of Wen is constructed at this time. Slightly later in history, about 1475 BC, the Egyptians extended their range of trading with other seafaring people and had, in addition to guineafowl, gotten jungle fowl as well as several other species of birds. The fowl, then as now, lent themselves to propagation by artificial incubation and they were cultivated in huge numbers. There are records of this time that refer to great "walk in" incubators that held up to 90,000 eggs. Since there were no thermometers, the techniques of incubation were closely held family secrets. Guineafowl were truly domesticated birds.

There are several other Egyptian references to guineafowl and there are some very nice hieroglyphic depictions of the birds that are unmistakeable-nothing else looks like a guineafowl. But domestic guineafowl were not restricted to Egypt. The birds were well established in Greece by 400 BC, probably gotten from Phoenician seamen and traders. The Phoenicians had explored and sailed all the way around Africa by 600 BC and probably brought the birds from West Africa, the native habitat of several species of guineafowl.

If the birds were in Greece, they would, like everything else Greek, eventually wind up in Rome and they surely did. In the Museo Nazionaie Romano there is a beautiful 4th century AD mosiac that shows two guineafowl pecking plants for food. And Pliny the Elder, a Roman historian that published a natural history in 77 AD, said that the guineafowl was the last bird to be added to the Roman menu and that the eggs and flesh were in great demand. During the time of the Pax Romana when Rome ruled the known world, the Roman Legions evidently carried the tasty bird with them as there have been guineafowl bones found as far north as Saalberg (a former Roman town) in Germany. And in the ruins of the old Roman town of Silchester, England, a guineafowl leg bone was found that had a metal ring on it. Imagine, Roman soldiers banding their birds.

In Europe during the Dark Ages all trace of the guineafowl disappeared. Indeed, the age was called dark precisely because the learning and literature seemed to fade out. Almost nothing was written so it is not surprising that there is no reference to guineafowl. Not until the 14th and

15th centuries did the Portuguese explorers rediscover the bird as they touched in at various points along the African coast.

At the same time, the New World was discovered and Europe was delighted with all the strange novelties that came in from newly found countries. Indeed, they often were confused about the source of the new things. Turkeys came from the New World but they were called "turkey" as though they came from the country of that name. Turkeys and guineafowls were introduced into England at about the same time and there was much confusion about which came from where. There was no confusion at all, though, regarding which birds were the most tasty. In a matter of only 50 years or so, the turkeys and guineafowl supplanted the swan and peafowl as the birds to be had at great feasts and special occasions.

Actually, the history of guinea fowl is an ancient one and covers most of the world. It is not possible to present more now than you've already read. But what about the bird itself? How many species, for instance, are there and from where do they originate?

Sibley and Monroe's Distribution and Taxonomy of Birds of the World, a current authority much in favor, lists six species in four genera, all from various parts of Africa. In the excellent book Guinea Fowl of the World, the author, R.H. Hastings Belshaw, lists seven species in the same four genera and 31 subspecies. The bird on the cover of this issue of the Bulletin is a Vulturine Guineafowl Acryllium vulturinum that inhabits arid acacia scrub in parts of Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. It is the only species in its genus.

The Vulturine Guineafowl is common in dry grasslands, scrub and thorn areas, desert regions and the high plains of its African habitat. The birds usually go about in small flocks of 20 to 75 or so individuals. The nest is made in a shallow depression in the ground and lined with soft grasses.

The hens prefer to locate the nests under scrub bushes or alongside tussocks of tall grass-anything to provide some shelter and security. A normal clutch ranges from 12 to I 7 eggs that are incubated by the hen and hatch in 24 days.

Like many gallinacious birds, Vulturine Guineafowl are superb runners and prefer to run rather than to fly unless, of course, some predatory jaws are snapping at their tail feathers. They do fly up to roost in trees each night.

These guineafowl are desert birds and have adapted to getting along with minimum water. Their metabolism makes the best use of the little water that is available and they seem to cat more insects than the other species of guineafowl, which is another source of moisture although the insect may not be altogether pleased with this arrangement.

Guineafowl are noisy. You have all heard their raucous, harsh and disorderly cacophony at a zoo or in someone's aviary. Take heart, though, in the fact that the Vulturine Guineafowl 's voice is slightly softer and more agreeable than the other species. Still, they are not birds that will endear you to your light sleeping neighbor. All guineafowl are birds for the farm or larger estate.

If your aviary is large enough and noise is not a concern, you 'll find the Vulturine Guineafowl to be an excellent aviary subject. They are gentle, very colorful, can roam about at will, and provide interesting antics for the observer. They are desert birds, though, and do not like dampness or damp cold although they acclimatize well if their enclosure has lots of sun and is well drained. For aviculturists who can provide the right environment, the Vulturine Guineafowl is a fine bird on display and a real crowd pleaser.

HYACINTH MACAW *ANODORHYNCHUS HYACINTHINUS* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

Hyacinth Macaws (Fear and Trembling)

Sheldon Dingle, Los Angeles, CA

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin February, 1996

Let me tell you straight off that I have never bred or even kept Hyacinth macaws. To be truthful, they scare me. And I can tell you exactly why. Many years ago, I've forgotten how many, Frank Miser kept a beautiful and very friendly Hyacinth on ·a perch near the entrance to his Magnolia Bird Farm in Anaheim, CA. It was a good draw and lots of people enjoyed the bird, scratching its head, cuddling it and holding it in their arms or hands. Me too.

Visiting one day, I held out my arm for the monster bird and it stepped confidently on my wrist and worked its way up to my shoulder. That's when a tiny alarm bell went off in my usually slow head.

My ears twitched.
I removed my glasses knowing how parrots are attracted to such shiny baubles. Deep down, I worried that the bird might take the glasses ear-piece in its huge mandibles and snag a large part of my ear to boot.

With the glasses in my pocket, I still worried about the ear. The U.S. Army already provided me with a partial loss of hearing and I really didn't want Frank's bird to finish the job. Naturally, I reached up with my right hand to coax the bird onto my wrist with the intent of putting back on its perch. The sweet bird cooperated-to a point. It wasn't done with me yet, though, and refused to step on its perch.

I'm no dummy. I know that if you maneuver a bird so that its chest bumps into the perch the bird will step up on it. Most parrots will hook the perch with their beak then pull themselves up on the stick.

Miser's bird was the dummy. It didn't know the maneuver. When I bumped its breast against the perch it reached down and engulfed my entire thumb--up to the very root-in its Brazil-nut-cracking beak. Beads of sweat. Now what?

Folks, I don't really know what, or even *if* birds think, but this guy looked me in the eye from his advantage around my thumb and his sinister gaze said with perfect darity, "I got you now. Turkey!" And he was right.

Things became serious. My mind whirled with a thousand possibilities -none good. Every time I tried to put him on the perch, he clamped down that much harder. Finally, as the bones ached deep inside and I feared disintegration, I panicked and made a decision to snap my arm toward the ground as though I were trying to shake a spider off my hand. I reasoned that I might lose the thumb but save the arm. I had to get that evil S.O.B. off me.

At the last second, the bird loosed his grip, went to his perch and grinned at me.

I had aged 10 years.

Folks, I don't really know what, or even if birds think, but this guy looked me in the eye from his advantage around my thumb and his sinister gaze said with perfect darity, "I got you now. Turkey!" And he was right.

I have shunned the species like the plague ever since. I am the only human being the bird ever abused and can't afford any more such humiliations.

HYACINTH MACAW *ANODORHYNCHUS HYACINTHINUS* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

But for the rest of the world, the Hyacinth Macaw is a remarkable bird that deserves the utmost respect.

The species. is not faring as well in the wild as we would like. First off, it is not a speedy breeder that raises lots of babies each year. Its slow rate of reproduction, combined with hard pressures from habitat loss and trapping for the illegal bird trade, have reduced its wild population to probably fewer than 5000 individuals. It ranges over a part of Brazil and small comers of Paraguay and Bolivia. It is specially adapted to feed on nuts and seeds that are often too hard for lesser birds to crack, the Brazil nut being an example in captivity, at least. In actuality, the Hyacinth does not frequent the real rain forest where Brazil nuts grow, but is more likely to be found on the Savannah adjacent to the forests or in the more or less open areas where there are stands of palms.

The species is protected by Brazil and also by its listing on the CITES Appendix I effective 22 October 1987. There has been a certain amount of poaching, though, and some losses are suffered from the indigenous people hunting Hyacinths for food and feathers.

The good news is that since the first U.S. breeding in 1971 (see the account of that breeding on page 14 in this issue) the breedings are becoming more and more frequent. The species is not an easy one to breed, however. Its dietary needs are unique and not the same as that for most macaws. The commercial handfeeding diets are not generally formulated for the high fat, low protein content that seem to be better for Hyacinth Macaws.

As the numbers of domestically raised Hyacinths increases. there should be a mathematical increase in the numbers bred, as the domestic birds seem much more prone to reproducing. I have no clue as to how many Hyacinths are actually bred in this country each year but I hope it is enough to stabilize the U.S. population without having to import more birds. The opportunities to legally import Hyacinths-even those captive raised in other countries-are virtually gone. It is a magnificent bird and one that should never disappear from American aviculture.

I hope you noticed the young Hyacinth Macaws on the cover of this Bulletin. They were raised in the Philippines by Antonio deDios at Birds International, Inc. In 1995 he raised 82 baby Hyacinths, breeding them to the third generation. The huge flight was foll of macaws, including a very large number of Hyacinths.

I, your humble servant, took the cover photo at some peril to my person and entered the enclosure only when deDios provided an armed escort, whip and chair in hand. Although these babies were cuddly and loved everyone else, look, I say, look at the beady eyes of every one of the little SOB's - each of them, every one, has its eye on my thumb.

ZEBRA FINCH *TAENIOPYGIA GUTTATA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

The Ubiquitous Zebra

by Sheldon Dingle Los Angeles, California

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin March, 1995

The Zebra Finch *Taeniopygia guttata* (according to Sibley and Monroe, 1990 - also known as Poephila castanotis in some older works) is quite often the first bird a new aviculturist will acquire. They are plentiful and cheap and they breed very well - even for the inexperienced novice. Indeed, the perky little birds have a reputation for over-producing, a fact to which I can attest. Years ago, I had about six or eight pairs of Zebra Finches in an aviary eight feet square. Having more important things to do, I didn't monitor the Zebras very carefully. One day, a friend, looking at the birds, asked how many hundreds of Zebras were packed into that small flight. I was astonished. In a matter of a year or so they bred themselves out of living space.

The solution, of course, was to open a passage into the adjoining flight of the same size. Then that one filled up also. Fearful that the Zebras would take over the whole acre, they were sold in one fell swoop. The only reminder of their previous presence was the honking of a nearby African Grey. He beeped like a 15 pound Zebra Finch.

The Zebra Finch is now fully domesticated, due, in large part, to its propensity to breed continually. Some breeders, in fact, separate the sexes after one or two clutches and others have slowed the little

bird down by letting it sit on eggs that have been sterilized. One boon, however, to prolific breeding is that the chances for genetic mutation increase. Indeed, there are a number of color mutations of the Zebra Finch including Silvers, Whites, White-bellied, Pied, Cinnamon, Cream, Fawn, Blue and, no doubt, several others I know nothing about. Zebras offer many possibilities for aviculturists interested in genetics and mutations.

In its native Australia and a few nearby islands, the Zebra Finch is quite an interesting little denizen of the dry scrub-lands. It is thought to have originally been a dry land bird that lived and bred rather near the scarce sources of water. With livestock watering troughs now disbursed throughout the arid habitats, the Zebra is not restricted to the natural watering holes and has greatly expanded its range. It also has the advantage of being able to exist without drinking water - at least for 250 days according to one unhappy experiment. Despite their being able to survive on little or no water, the Zebra really likes water and will drink and bathe several times a day if water is available.

In captivity, Zebras are easy to care for and seem to make do with nearly any diet that contains some small seeds. It's always best, though, to offer the usual millet and canary seed supplemented with half-ripe seeding heads of Rye Grass, Shepherd's Purse, Dandelion, Groundsel and other wild grasses as they are available. Spray millet and some sort of egg food are beneficial to breeding birds and without the rich, varied diet there will be high mortality amongst the babies.

I agree with Bates and Busenbark that the Zebra Finch is one of aviculture's best recruiting agents. This species is so willing to breed that it engenders great enthusiasm in the new aviculturist. And Zebras are really beautiful little birds in their own right. I hope *your* aviary has a few of them on display.

And Your Lovely Wife

Susie Christian, Morro Bay, CA

At an AFA convention in Los Angeles, Dingo and I were together in an elevator in our hotel. He was standing by a very attractive Asian woman and I naturally assumed it was his wife, as they were acting friendly, like they weren't strangers. So I turned to her, gave her a big hug and said, "It's really nice to meet you." She hugged back and then both she and Dingo looked at me oddly. I said to Dingo, "That IS your wife, isn't it?" He laughed like mad and said he'd never seen her before. I was really embarrassed and he never let me forget about giving hugs to total strangers. Especially people who weren't his wife. I had never met Dingo's wife, so how would I know?

BENGALEE OR SOCIETY FINCH *LONCHURA STRIATA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

What the Hell is a Bengalee?
by Sheldon Dingle, Alhambra, CA

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin January, 1997

The Bengalee *Lonchura striata* is also called the Bengalese Finch or, more commonly in America, the Society Finch. We all knew that did we not?

The Society Finch, as we'll call it from now on, is probably a domesticated version of the White-backed Munia that is found from most of India south and south-east through parts of China and clown into the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal. In this large range there are several subspecies or "races" including the *L. striata swinhoei* from which the domesticated bird probably derives.

Another version of its origin is that today's Society Finch is the result of centuries of hybridization between three or four species of closely related birds found in India, China and even, perhaps, in the Philippines. In this case, there would be no true species in the wild from which Societies can be said to have sprung. Indeed, if one holds this theory, the bird may be considered a domesticated mongrel of sorts whose parentage is unknown-rather like my dog.

Of the Society Finch's numerous colors, the "Self Chocolate" most resembles the dark color of the wild species (if you hold with the L. *striata swinhoei* theory). Most of the Societies that are offered for sale today are, however, color

BENGALEE OR SOCIETY FINCH *LONCHURA STRIATA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

mutations of one sort or another and are generally lighter than the wild progenitors and have varying amounts of white feathers causing a pied effect.

The Societies also have a crested version wherein the crown feathers are fuzzed up, curled up, grow at odd angles or are otherwise rather unruly-some-thing like the experimental hairstyles I've seen on today's more adventuresome youngsters. In actuality, the bird's crest is caused by defective feathers, a genetic abnormality that is fostered by some fanciers.

Society Finches have been around for quite a long time, having been recorded in Japan almost three hundred years ago. And the Japanese surely got the birds from China where they were probably domesticated even centuries earlier.

There was obviously a concentrated effort to breed selectively toward

birds that would adapt to life and reproduction in small cages and thrive on a simple diet. The resulting tameness, strong parental behavior and ruggedness in captivity have been a boon to modern aviculture where these traits are put to great use in employing Societies as foster parents for more difficult finches.

Societies will nest almost anywhere. They will use almost any sort of nest box basket and, in an aviary environment, will build a natural nest in bushes trees or shrubs. For nest building they prefer to use grass, fiber (as from coconuts), small roots, etc. Some pairs make tightly woven nests with entrance tunnels while other pairs throw together very loose, imperfect nests.

The average clutch is five or six eggs which take about 15 to 19 days to hatch, depending upon the particular circumstances. Babies fledge in 24 to 27 days and are fed by the parents for another 12 days or two weeks but begin trying food on their own at about a week out of the nest.

Some aviculturists say that it is impossible lo tell males from females. Others say that the male's contact call differs from the female's and a person with a good ear can sex the birds by that call. The songs of the males are quite variable and are somewhat influenced by the songs the young males hear as they grow up.

It is wise when using Societies as foster parents, to place under them eggs that were hatched at about the same time as their own eggs. They will take good care of babies that do not resemble their own and they do not have a specific nesting season but will go to nest all year around-a real blessing to breeders of more difficult finches.

BENGALEE OR SOCIETY FINCH *LONCHURA STRIATA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

MOURNING DOVE *ZENAIDA MACROURA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

Mourning Music
by Sheldon Dingle, Alhambra, CA

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin October, 1997

If you live almost anywhere in the United States, Mexico or Central America, I recommend that you lie abed past sunrise one morning and listen for the beautiful, mournful cooing .of the Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*.

Its call is a very soft disyllabic coo followed by two or three much louder coos. The sound is melodic but sad. Because these doves are common all over the U.S., you can listen for their music tomorrow mourning----0r even this afternoon when you take your nap. Judge the sweetness of the song for yourself.

In addition to inhabiting many cities, Mourning Doves also occur in the most lonely parts of the mountains and deserts where they feed on the ground chiefly on weed seeds and the occasional unlucky insect or snail.

I raise Mourning Doves. Not to get excited-Fish and Game, back off. I don't keep the birds in captivity (a federal license is required to keep them), I merely feed them on my balcony and let them nest in the trees on my hill. They eat 40 pounds of seed a week and would double that if I provided it. I have counted 32 Mourning Doves piled up at my small feeding station wing-slapping and shouldering their way into the seed dish. They leave only when I open the sliding door or the local Scrub Jay shows up. The jay is the macho man and the doves avoid any contest.

These birds are adapted to the arid and semi-arid regions of the southwest. They are unaffected by

temperatures below 108° F. but above that they lose body fluids through panting. In the hot, dry regions, the doves tend to nest around streams and springs that provide a dependable source of water. They also take advantage of man-made stock tanks that are kept full of water.

These birds fly fast and can venture into the dry mountains and deserts far from water but always fly back to the steady supply of the life saving liquid.

A long pointed tail distinguishes this dove from any other local kind. Its plumage is generally brownish and gray but there is a beautiful iridescence on the hind-head and neck. As these doves are fairly shy, you may need binoculars to appreciate the subtle shades of their soft pastel colors.

In many places, doves are considered game birds and are subject to a hunting season. The following incident always brings a smile to my face when I think of it.

A close friend was in the habit of hiding little $1000 rolls of cash in secret places around his home. During one dove season his teenaged son grabbed the shotgun, four-wheeled to the desert and blasted the first dove he saw. The great shower of green confetti told him-too late-that the barrel of the shotgun was one of his dad's secret money caches.

And the poor kid missed the dove, too. Life is hard.

MOURNING DOVE *ZENAIDA MACROURA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

HOMING PIGEON *COLUMBA LIVIA DOMESTICA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

Swiss Army Knives, Watches . . . and Pigeons?

Sheldon Dingle, Los Angeles, California

First Published in the ASA Avicultural Bulletin August, 1995

In human conflict nothing is more important than communications. This holds true even for some animals. You all know about the sentry bird that perches high in a tree while its flock mates forage on the ground. If danger approaches, the sentry communicates an alarm and the whole flock ducks for cover. Communication equals survival.

This principle is true for the human species also and never more so than while one tribe is doing its best to kill off another tribe. We call it WAR.

The point of this introduction is to present a concept that many of you young folks have never heard of. Communication by carrier-pigeon. Pigeons, my dear friends, have been extremely important. in the history of man both in war and peace. Indeed, during the original Olympic Games in ancient Greece, the names of winners were sent to the outlying villages by homing pigeons. In addition to the peaceful uses, armies from the very ancient to the current have taken advantage of the pigeon's homing ability to send messages to generals and politicians at home and from one military unit to another--often 200 miles apart and over mountains and seas. And now I read that the Swiss Army (famous for its knives and watches) has announced that it is giving up its carrier-pigeon service of 77 years because of financial hard times (and all that gold in their vaults).

As late as 1994 the Swiss Army owned about 7,000 pigeons (and had in reserve another 23,000 owned by private breeders). Two hundred and fifty soldiers are assigned to care for and train these birds which fly over 35 m.p.h. and were used to great effect in the First and the Second World Wars to carry messages over the rugged mountain terrain around Switzerland.

Although the Swiss are very good at remaining neutral (their army has not fought since 1515), their army traditions border on the sacred. Because of this, a group of "keep the pigeons" protesters has sprung up to gather enough signatures to get the issue on a referendum. The private pigeon breeders are ticked off because they spent a great deal of time and effort to train their birds in the skills needed to carry messages. If the referendum fails to save the army pigeons, 250 soldiers will have to be retrained and the military carrier-pigeon station near Bern will be closed. Radio and TV may prevail, more's the pity.

No doubt one of our own long time members will be watching this Swiss affair with great interest. Gordon Hayes was an American soldier who fought under Patton in North Africa and Italy. Hayes was a pigeoneer. The U.S. Army also used pigeons very effectively in combat when all other forms of communication failed, and there are many tales of the heroic deeds of the little feathered messengers. (I' ll let you in on a little-known secret. Hayes told me personally that he is confident that U.S. Army Intelligence is still using pigeons and has a continuing role for them in its secret affairs. Cloak and dagger pigeons ... I believe Hayes.)

HOMING PIGEON *COLUMBA LIVIA DOMESTICA*
PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

Hayes told me personally that he is confident that U.S. Army Intelligence is still using pigeons and has a continuing role for them in its secret affairs. Cloak and dagger pigeons ... I believe Hayes.

Indeed, no one has told the tales better than Hayes himself in his book entitled *The Pigeons That Went To War*. It is an excellent volume that

HOMING PIGEON *COLUMBA LIVIA DOMESTICA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

is chock full of Second World War history that has hitherto-fore been rather obscure. Hayes gives in vivid and almost passionate detail the day to day life of the U.S. soldiers whose job it was to keep, breed and train pigeons under the constantly shifting and dangerous conditions of hard combat with the Germans. The book contains maps, photos and great personal sketches of fellow soldiers as well l as the individual pigeons they flew. I found it to be very enlightening as well as entertaining. It is must reading for war and history buffs and for fol ks who love and respect birds. Even Army Intelligence and the Officer's Candidate School purchased a number of the books. You might contact Gordon Hayes at 3626 Meyler, San Pedro, CA 90731, U.S.A. He may know where you can get a copy of this very hard to find book. I won't give up mine. I, along with Hayes, I'm sure, hope the Swiss protesters prevail and the Swiss Army does not discharge its smallest soldiers.

Leadbeater' s Cockatoo

by Sheldon Dingle Norco, California

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One of the most interesting, most colorful and most desirable cockatoos in aviculture is the Major Mitchell's, also called Leadbeater's cockatoo *Cacatua leadbeateri*. It is an Australian bird that has two subspecies; the nominate form C. leadbeateri, and a smaller form with little or no yellow in the crest, C. l. mollis. Aviculturists are generally so delighted to get a pair of Leadbeater's that they seem to pay little or no attention to the sub-speciation.

Even in Australia this cockatoo is uncommon and is protected. It inhabits dry, sparsely wooded prairie in the interior of Australia where it is highly nomadic. It spends much time on the ground searching for food. Usually it is seen in pairs or small groups and is quite shy. It was discovered in 1830 by explorer Sir Thomas Mitchell and first brought to the London Zoo in 1834 by English naturalist Mr. Leadbeater, hence its two common names used today.

It was discovered in 1830 by explorer Sir Thomas Mitchell and first brought to the London Zoo in 1834 by English naturalist Mr. Leadbeater, hence its two common names used today.

In captivity this bird is rather rare. Those fortunate enough to have a pair usually make every effort to breed them. Breeding successes are not uncommon but this species is best handled by experienced cockatoo people as the male can be very aggressive, often killing or maiming his hen. One must keep a sharp eye on them to head off disaster. The San Diego Zoo has probably bred more Leadbeater's than any other individual or institution. They raised 56 babies between 1932 and 1970.

Years ago when I was apprenticing with Pave West on his bird ranch there was a beautiful pair of Leadbeater's that caused me more work than any other birds on the place. Male and female alike had wirecutters for beaks. They lived in a 16 foot fight that was covered with 1" by 1" welded wire. About every second day they'd snip a hole in the wire and I'd patch it. Another hole -another patch. Finally, they took time out to raise some babies and I got a break from repairs.

One day Dave just up and sold the pair for $1,200. Lately I've been going crazy trying to remember who bought the birds. I'm willing to offer them $1,500 cash (for sentimental reasons) if they'll just step forward!

MAJOR MITCHELL'S, ALSO CALLED LEADBEATER'S COCKATOO
CACATUA LEADBEATERI PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

The Great White-crested Cockatoo

Sheldon Dingle Los Angeles, California

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To most of us the Great White-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua alba* is more commonly known as the Umbrella Cockatoo or, more correctly, the Umbrella-crested Cockatoo. We usually just refer to them as Umbrellas. Forshaw (1973) calls them White Cockatoos which is really hard to argue with as the birds are pure white in color (indeed, the literal translation of their scientific name is "White Cockatoo") with the exception of a faint yellow wash on the undersides of the tail and flight feathers. The beak is huge and black, the feet and legs are dark gray. This is not the most colorful bird in the flock but I find the white with black appointments to be a very pleasing combination. Rather formal, if you will - until it raises its great five-inch crest at which time it looks rather like a wild-haired madman that has just taken a serious fright(. Refer lo the cover photo for v1·1 JI iral ion.

There is a very close relationship between *Cacatua alba* and *Cacatua moluccensis*. The main difference is the color. C.1 moluccensis having a salmon or pinkish cast to its feathers. The birds are almost the same size with the Moluccan being a little bit larger and they are both residents of the Indonesian Islands. Their ranges, however, do not overlap. The lJ111lu1·lla inhabits five islands in the central and northern Moluccas while the Salmon-crested Cockatoo (we also call it the Moluccan) holds to three or four islands in the southern Moluccas.

Diefenbach(1985) says of the White Cockatoo (Umbrella to most of us), "Because of the remoteness of their range, very little is known about the life of these cockatoos in the wild. It is said that they are not uncommon, and they are usually observed in pairs or small groups. If they are searching for food in the branches of tall trees - they feed mainly on berries, fruits and nuts - they can be detected from far away. White Cockatoos are loud birds, and they also call during flight. When startled, the impressive crest is raised; it also has important signaling functions in courtship." In both species the back curving crest of rather wide feathers is noticeably different than the crests seen on the Australian Sulphur-crested species. About the only species with a similar crest is the Blue-eyed Cockatoo *Cacatua opthalmica*. For several years I kept both species and when they're side by side the yellow color in the Blue-eyed's crest is obvious. Of course the salmon colored crest of C. Moluccensis is not confused with any other species.

Cockatoos the size and vigor of the Umbrella arc not for everyone. This is not a gentle parlor bird that can have the run of the house. I like the way Dr. W. T. Greene (1979) described this species before the turn of the last century. These birds, he says, " ... are exceedingly handsome to look at, but awfully noisy: their shrieks being audible, on a calm day, at an immense distance, so much so that

GREAT WHITECRESTED COCKATOO *CACATUA ALBA* PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN

when they are flying so high up in the air as to be actually invisible to the unassisted eye, their voices can yet be distinctly heard, somewhat modified and mellowed by distance, it is true, but far too loud, even then, to be agreeable ... Occasionally one of these birds will learn to pronounce a few words with tolerable distinctness, but their forte lies in the imitation of the barking of dogs, the crowing of cocks, the' gobbling' of turkeys ... but more particularly in the rendering, with much fidelity, but in an exaggerated key, the noisy outcries of a domestic fowl that has just produced an egg ... " Keep in mind that Greene often had his birds flying free on his estate in England. And if he had problems with the cockatoo's screeches at a thousand feet think what the racket would be like on your patio. In addition to the tank cannons during my military service, I attribute much of my loss of hearing to the Great White-crested Cockatoo even though I had them spread out over several acres.

Another thing for you to consider before you lay in a large supply of Umbrellas is the huge black beak referred to above. The thing is worse than dynamite. Umbrellas are the Pit Bulls of the parrot world, easily holding their own with the biggest and best of the gnawing macaws. It is quite probable that Greene's birds were often at liberty because they ate their cages. He says, " ... it ought to be quite possible to breed them in captivity: but if it were desired to make the attempt, the cage, or aviary rather, would be required to be made of rods of iron of almost the same size and strength as those employed in the construction of a lion's den, for nothing else, we feel assured, would

be able to resist the continual assualts of those trememdous engines of destruction, the beaks of a pair of Great White Cockatoos."

It was over 70 years after Greene wrote these words that the Umbrella was bred in captivity for the first time. Paul Schneider, our good buddy and former president of the ASA (twice that I recall), got the world first breeding for Umbrellas in 1960. And, can you believe it, the male of the pair is still alive and well in Schneider's current collection. It has been with him for 37 years and was a mature adult when he got it. According to Schneider's account of this first breeding, he kept Greene's advice in mind. The Umbrella's enclosure was, " .. .4 feet wide, 32 feet long and 8 feet high, wired over completely with 14 gauge l" by l" weld wire. The 2x3 inch wood framing is covered over with sheet metal strips before attaching the wire ... the nesting receptacle was a 55 gallon oak barrel, with top and bottom, and placed on the ground. A 5 inch diameter entrance hole was placed near the top and a wire ladder inside, to permit entrance and egress. To make sure that the barrel would not collapse about the time the eggs or young were in the nest, as usually is the case, I used over a gross of screws. A screw was put in at each stave at each hoop ... " So Schneider's aviary and nest box were stout enough to last at least until the birds did their duty.

The Umbrellas in my collection were scattered throughout several different sorts of aviaries, some being suitable while others were not. The cages that worked best for me were 4 feet wide and high and 12 feet long. The wire (as I recall) was 1/2 inch x 3 inch 12 gauge. These cages had no wooden components at all and were supported 4 feet above the ground on pipe legs. This made the top of the cages 8 feet above the ground and the perches were high enough that the birds could look down on the average person and gain a sense of security. Of course, these cages were serviced without having to enter them. The nest boxes for all my larger birds were custom made of 3/4 inch plywood that was completely lined on the inside with sheet metal. The older flights that had been designed for Australian parakeets proved totally inadequate for the larger cockatoos. They chewed through the 1/2 x 1 inch wire in a matter of moments if they really tried (which they often did) and I had lots of repair work in addition to the stress of having to catch a hostile cockatoo out of his neighbor's flight before the blood flowed.

All of the cockatoos are magnificent birds that tend to do well in captivity if given the proper housing and diet. Umbrellas are probably too noisy for the average small backyard with lots of close neighbors but are beautiful to watch in an avicultural setting that gives them room to fly and to act somewhat naturally. Mine were placed against a background of green shrubbery and I loved how their dazzling white color contrasted with the shade of the bushes.

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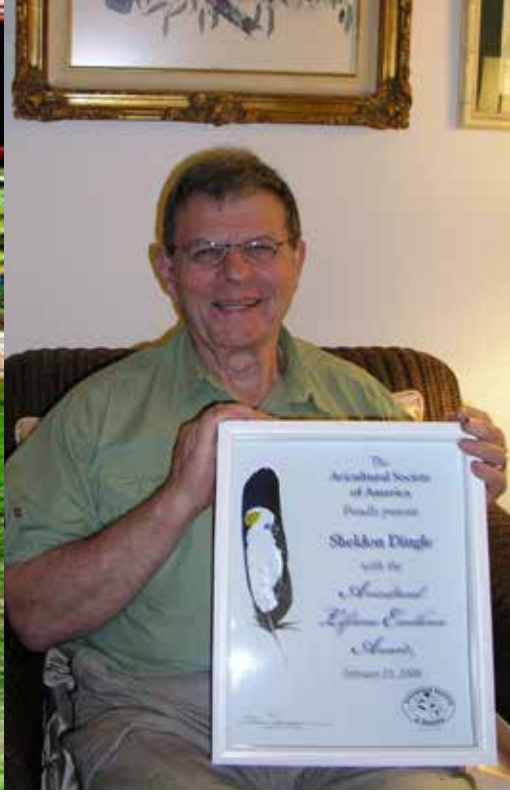
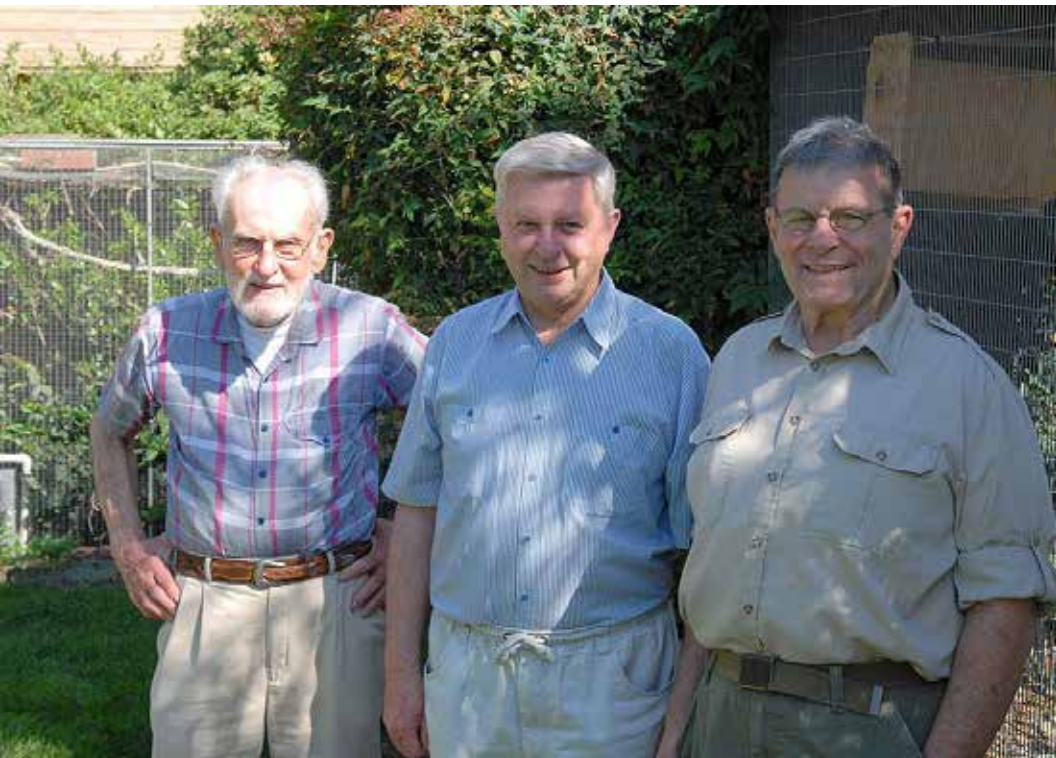


TOP: LEFT; JEAN DELACOUR AND SHELDON DINGLE, RIGHT; SHELDON DINGLE DISPLAYING HIS AVICULTURAL LIFETIME EXCELLENCE AWARD. BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT; RAE ANDERSON, JOSEPH FORSHAW, SHELDON DINGLE PHOTO STEVE DUNCAN.



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