

Conservation Through Aviculture

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ISBBC 2007

Proceedings of the IV International Symposium
on Breeding Birds in Captivity

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FOREWORD

Editors note: Written nearly 30 years ago, this foreword from the 1983 International Foundation for the Conservation of Birds Symposium in Los Angeles, still holds true today and describes with great accuracy the current state of conservation and aviculture, along with the goals and objectives of this symposium almost three decades later.

Man has always destroyed plants and animals on which he must subsist; such is the law of Nature. Until the last century, however, the balance of life on earth had been fairly well preserved. It is true that vulnerable species, especially those restricted to islands' special habitats, had been exterminated during the 17th and 18th centuries; the Dodo and other birds in Mauritius and Reunion; the Great Auk; the Passenger Pigeon, the Labrador Duck in North America; the macaws of the Caribbean islands to mention only a few. But since, with the advent of the industrial age, the means of access to the most remote areas of the earth have changed the situation. Man is now well on the way to exterminating many forms of life, among which birds appear to be particularly threatened.

I became keenly interested in nature, particularly birds, at a very early age. In those days, there were still large numbers of them everywhere. But some abuses, causing excessive losses, were already worrying bird lovers. They all came from excessive shooting and trapping for commercial purposes, affecting mostly game birds, which were eaten on a large scale, and those whose beautiful feathers were used for decorating hats and other ornamental articles. Societies for bird protection had already been established in England, in Germany and in the United States, when, in 1910, we founded in France the French League for the Protection of Birds. I was its first secretary and later its president for 47 years.

But bird preservation was needed on a world level and the International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP) was established in 1922, the founders, consisting of Gilbert Pearson, President of the Audubon Society, Lord Grey, Pieter van Tienhoven and myself. I was its president from 1938 until 1958, succeeded by Dillon Ripley. All these groups still are accomplishing a great deal, but much more is now needed to stop the appalling threats.

Human populations are not only increasing tremendously in numbers, but they also now penetrate

even the remotest parts of the world to overexploit its resources at an alarming rate. Not only birds, conspicuous and attractive, are the victims to their greediness; they disappear as a consequence of the destruction of their necessary habitats. The indiscriminate use of pesticides has already caused appalling casualties, even at our very doors, as have also the various air and water pollutions. We certainly must try to stop the cause of such destruction and endeavor to establish natural parks and reserves where birds will be able to continue to live a normal existence. But due to physical, political and other adverse conditions, it is not always going to be possible to preserve and reestablish suitable sanctuaries.

If we really want to save many species of birds from extinction, we must also propagate them under control. Luckily, many of the most threatened species have proven to be easy to breed in captivity and to establish sufficient numbers in suitable accommodations where they can be protected, studied and reared under excellent conditions. Such popular groups as the ratites, cranes, waterfowl, game birds, pigeons, parrots, finches and other passerine birds are among them. Birds of prey are now successfully reared and released. Zoos and other public institutions, as well as private aviculturists, are working hard and successfully at it.

We all came here to learn about captive breeding and share our achievements, to benefit from our experiences and to work together to save the wonderful birds which still exist on earth so that future generations will still be able to enjoy them. It seems essential that sufficient stocks be established to insure their survival. It is my hope that from this international symposium will come a deeper commitment to conservation through captive breeding.

— Dr. Jean Delacour, 1983

