



Avicultural Society News April 2020

Covid19 and birdkeeping

The coronavirus pandemic will be having a serious impact on the lives, families, incomes and avicultural activities of both amateur and professional members, and birdkeepers generally. We find ourselves in a strange situation, where many keepers will have more time to devote to their birds, but may be experiencing difficulties in keeping them supplied with food and other essentials.

With the breeding season approaching, that extra time could be used to improve results, but instead there is likely to be a reduction in breeding because the travel, events and individual meetings necessary to move on young birds later in the year may yet not be possible, and the sudden, widespread and unavoidable reduction in incomes will be exerting pressure on keepers to reduce, rather than expand, their collections.

Membership

With this in mind, the Society is offering members a 'subscription holiday'. It is too late to implement this easily this year, but all members renewing or joining in 2020 will have free membership in 2021. If any members do wish to pay their subs next year, this will be gratefully received and considered as a donation.

We hope that this will help members in a small way to maintain their birdkeeping activities and contacts through difficult times, and will also avoid reversing the small but very welcome increase in membership we have experienced over the last two years.

Thank you to all those who have already renewed this year. If you have yet to renew, you will have received a reminder; we would greatly appreciate your continuing support.

Magazine

Apologies for the late appearance of the first magazine for this year and thank you for your patience. Heron Press of Westbury, which has printed the magazine for the last five years, has ceased trading. We will now be working with Spinnaker Press in Southampton, but they have closed for several weeks because of the health situation. We will let you know when the magazine is on the way.

Once normal service is resumed, we should be in a good position to produce subsequent issues more quickly, as the editor has material in hand. However, we would still welcome your contributions; isolation provides the perfect opportunity to write those articles you've not quite got around to until now. You may not see them in print immediately, but it would be very good to build up a stock of material that we can draw on later this year or next.

Events

Chris Green has been in touch with Howard Travel to check the prospects for the Czech Republic trip in October. It is still on at the moment. If it does prove impossible to run, Karli is confident that we can cancel everything but flights without penalty, and if FCO advice is against travel at the time, we can rely on the airline to cancel the flights.

The epidemic has already led to the cancellation of the AGM. The events calendar below is of course provisional under the present circumstances:

Sunday August 2nd – Beale Park – Birdkeepers Day – poss. AGM and council

Sunday September 13th – Autumn Social - visit to Roger Cattermole (Norfolk)

Sunday October 4th – National Exhibition – Stafford

October 8th-12th - Czech Republic

Saturday March 27th 2021 – Harewood House - AGM, Spring Social & council

Raymond Sawyer Scholarship

This year we will again support the successful applicant on an incubation course at Durrell in Jersey in November. Applications will open early in May when the scholarship is launched in Cage & Aviary Birds. If the course is postponed the place will be deferred.

Stewart Pyper Conservation Fund

This year's funding round will open for applications soon. Details to follow.

Deaths

Sadly we have two deaths to report:

Bill (W.D.) Cummings died in January aged 95. Bill was almost certainly our longest-serving member, having joined in 1948. He worked at the Keston Foreign Bird Farm in the 1950s and 60s and later at Mitchell Park Aviaries, Durban SA, and wrote about both in the Avicultural Magazine.

Daniel Shearing died in March. Daniel worked on the magazine for many years with Malcolm Ellis, and may have been the last member with memories of Foxwarren Park, where he spent his childhood as his father worked for Alfred Ezra.

Fuller appreciations will appear in the magazine.

And finally...

Don't try this at home!

If the Society had an award for bravery it would have to go to Peter Neachell. Unsure what to give his wife as a present on their 25th (silver) wedding anniversary, Peter decided after long deliberation that a pair of Silver-eared Mesias would be just the thing. The birds are doing very well. I thought it best not to ask about the marriage.

We hope that you, your birds and your families remain in good health through the coming months.

Nigel Hewston