



## **FROM MATT'S PERCH**

By Matt Russell

In our major zoos, conservation used to be all the buzz, now it appears to be a side project. It seems there is not much interest in the conservation of exotic bird species being shown by the zoos. It would appear that if we wish to keep these birds in Australia it falls back on the every day aviculturist. It would be interesting to know the origin of the birds in our zoos, and if the zoos have been able to keep breeding these birds in a sustainable manner since they first acquired them, or if they have needed new blood from us. It would also be interesting to know where their original birds originated, did they come from Australian aviculturists, or were they imported into Australia by the zoos when it was still legal.

It would be nice if we had the funds that the zoos have, and to be able to put them into breeding up and in some cases saving species. I could think of much better ways to spend the sort of money the governments throw at them, other than ordering the construction of the next monument to themselves.

If you ask me, our zoos have been turned into theme parks where the animals are the attraction, and there is nothing wrong with that, but who is going to keep up all the great conservation work that the zoos used to do?

There are people out there, like Jack Marshall, who has managed to breed a lot of native birds in his time (look out for a article on him in the magazine in the not too distant future) and then there's the McKechnie family, look how many birds they have bred, and they don't keep them to themselves. (Which the major zoos sometimes do with their rare species, and only share them among their own little "club".) They put their birds out where they can continue to keep the gene pool viable. So I take my hat off to the Jack Marshalls and McKechnies of this world, and encourage you to support them in their fine work.

It seems stupid to stop breeding a particular species just because all those in the zoos' elitist "club" have enough of them. Surely, any excess should be shared with the wider avicultural community and be used to grow the gene pool, in the end that must be better for the conservation of the species. You have to ask yourselves this: "Who will take over from the Marshalls and McKechnies one day?" Are we getting enough new people interested?

Please let me know what you think, and we'll publish it in the magazine. You can e-mail me at: [tara\\_matt@hotmail.com](mailto:tara_matt@hotmail.com).

Cheers,

*Matt*