

ACBS NEWS

Volume 9, Issue 3

Aviary & Cage Bird Society
of South Florida, Inc.
22523 SW 55th Terr.
Boca Raton, FL 33428

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The ACBS of South Florida is a Non-Profit Organization, incorporated in the State of Florida on September 13, 1978.

It is a well-known fact that parrots are especially sensitive to environmental toxins. Chemicals that normally are only irritating to humans and other animals can be acutely toxic to parrots. The inhalation of carbon monoxide exhaust or fumes from overheated Teflon products, which would cause no apparent damage to humans or other animals, can be fatal to parrots. Their immune systems constantly are challenged by air pollution, exposure to heavy metals, water contamination and the adulteration of their foods by pesticides.

A shocking four million tons of pesticides, numbering 20,000 different products, are fogged into the air in the United States each year! We must control additional exposure of our birds to these products by not using any fumigants in their presence. Similarly we must educate ourselves as to the level of contamination

of the foods that they consume.

Many of us like to provide a bountiful harvest of vegetables and fruits along with the other staples of our parrots' diets. Yet, produce is the food group with the highest incidence of pesticide and chemical residue, linked with potential cancer, neurological problems, hormonal imbalances, and immune system disruptions. The likelihood of toxicity is more serious for birds than for humans because of their smaller size and their increased sensitivity.

Due to all the unanswered questions that parrot breeders have concerning infertility, dead in shell chicks, neurological problems, and even feather plucking, I currently am researching the possible contribution of pesticides and their "endocrine disruptors" to all or any of these problems. We all remember the

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**It's time to renew!
Everyone's club dues
are due!**



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HELP!!!

We need items for our monthly raffle table!

*Without donations,
the club must spend money
to buy items.*

*If everyone could donate
just one item, think of
what a great raffle table
we would have.*



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when you buy
your birds' supplies.*



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MEETINGS

MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE 2nd SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH

BOARD MEETING AT 1:00 PM

BUSINESS MEETING AT 2:00 PM

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NOTICE TO READERS

This bulletin is an open forum for all Club Members. We will publish your stories, articles or "Letters to the Editor" that are received by the 20th of every month. However, opinions expressed in the articles and then printed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the editor, officers, or members of the Aviary & Cage Bird Society of South Florida. The editor, club, and officers assume no responsibility for the advertisers or the quality of their products or services. The editor reserves the right to edit any material received.

(Continued from page 1)

devastating effects of DDT on wild bird populations, including Bald Eagles that laid soft-shelled eggs until they almost became extinct. Endocrine disruptors in wildlife populations have caused increased mortality, failure to mature sexually, and inability to reproduce. I believe that the hormonal disruption caused by pesticides may prove to be just as devastating to our domestic parrot population as DDT to wildlife.

Hormones are chemical messengers working in near infinitesimal amounts, molecular keys that fit into molecular locks at receptor sites, carrying signals that trigger and regulate processes ranging from formation of a fetus to development of gender, from behavioral bias to the formation of reproductive organs. When these receptor sites encounter synthetic chemicals that are enough like the hormones it was expecting, the organism responds to the signal it thinks it has gotten, with sometimes disastrous effects!

Research on wildlife populations, especially in the Great Lakes, has demonstrated that endocrine disrupting chemicals profoundly impair animal reproduction and development. Birds with deformed beaks, female birds that nest with females, and fish eggs that do not develop all have high levels of endocrine disruptors, PCB's, dioxins and DDE's. Effects on wildlife cited by researchers include thyroid dysfunction in birds and fish, decreased fertility in birds, fish, and mammals, decreased hatching success and gross birth deformities in birds, fish, and turtles, behavioral abnormalities in birds, and compromised immune systems in birds and mammals.

Why, when the foods that we give our parrots contain toxic levels of pesticides with endocrine disruptors, should we be surprised at all the reproductive and other problems they exhibit?

If you were asked to list a dozen of the fruits and vegetables that you offer your parrots most often, how many of these would be included?

1. Strawberries
2. Bell peppers (green and red)
3. Spinach (tied with 2)

4. U.S. grown cherries
5. Peaches
6. Mexican grown cantaloupe
7. Celery
8. Apples
9. Apricots
10. Green beans
11. Chilean-grown grapes
12. Cucumbers

The above list contains many of the foods that we feed our parrots daily. Unfortunately, according to a study by the non-profit Environmental Working Group, they are the most toxic conventionally grown fruits and vegetables! This report, Shopper's Guide to Pesticides in Produce, is based on data from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration studies. It found that more than half of the health risks associated with pesticides are concentrated in these twelve fruits and vegetables!

Of the 42 fruits and vegetables tested, strawberries were by far the most toxic. They were given a toxicity score of 189 of a possible 200 points, far greater than bell peppers and spinach, which tied at a score of 155. U.S. grown cherries rated 154 and peaches 150. The least contaminated food in this group, cucumbers, scored a disturbing 117 of 200 possible points.

Strawberry growers everywhere use large amounts of pesticides, particularly fungicides. The FDA detected thirty different pesticides on strawberries, second only to apples with thirty-six. Based on a two year sampling, strawberries were found to contain captan, benomyl, vinclozolin, iprodione, and endosulfan. These pesticides not only are carcinogenic in humans, but disrupt the endocrine system as well. Unless one is lucky enough to locate a source of organically grown strawberries, in my opinion, they never should be fed to parrots! Other fruits with far lower pesticide residues can be offered. Substitute blueberries, raspberries, oranges, grapefruit, watermelon and kiwis.

Bell peppers are more heavily contaminated with neuro-toxic insecticides than all other crops analyzed. Although green peppers are high in vitamin C, and red peppers

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add vitamin A and carotenoids, there are several less toxic alternatives. Substitute broccoli, romaine lettuce, green peas, asparagus, brussel sprouts or carrots.

Spinach contains DDT, permethrin, chlorthalonil and other carcinogenic pesticides. Because of this and its calcium binding properties, Popeye the Parrot would not be a very healthy specimen! Substitute broccoli, brussel sprouts, asparagus and romaine lettuce.

Cherries from the U.S. are three times more contaminated with pesticides than their imported counterparts, which are among the cleanest fruits and vegetables analyzed. Domestic cherries were found to contain twenty-six different pesticides! Except for their marginal amounts of vitamin C and their value as a treatment for gout, they are not as nutritious as many other fruits. However cherries DO contain a powerful compound known as ellagic acid that counteracts carcinogens, so it is worthwhile to seek out imported cherries. Substitute oranges, watermelon, blueberries, raspberries and kiwi.

Peaches are heavily contaminated with cancer causing fungicides and neuro-toxic pesticides. Peaches contain low amounts of vitamins A and C, but many other less contaminated fruits provide as many or more nutritional benefits. Substitute nectarines, watermelon, tangerines, grapefruits, oranges and kiwis.

Cantaloupes from Mexico tested positive for two or more pesticides in forty-eight percent of the samples, more than any other crop analyzed. Avoid offering this food to parrots during January through April, when Mexican imports are at their peak. Substitute U.S. cantaloupe in season, papaya, nectarines and watermelon.

Celery is a major source of exposure to neuro-toxic pesticides. Eighty-one percent of samples tested contained detectable residues. This could mean that eight out of ten bites of celery that a parrot takes are bites of pesticides. Considering the minimal amounts of nutrition in celery, it is not worth the risk. Substitute carrots, romaine lettuce, broccoli and radishes.

Apples contain thirty-six different pesticides, more than any other fruit or vegetable, according to FDA data! Who said an apple a day keeps the vet away? Substitute pears, U.S. cantaloupe, kiwi, watermelon, nectarines, bananas or citrus fruit.

Apricots contain such high levels of pesticides, fourteen different kinds to be exact, that it is better to feed our parrots other fruits that are equally high in vitamins A and C and potassium. Substitute nectarines, tangerines, U.S. cantaloupes, watermelon, oranges and grapefruit.

Green beans are a major source of carcinogenic

fungicides, neurotoxins, and endocrine disruptors. They provide only modest amounts of nutrients anyway so unless we can find organically grown greens beans, better leave them off our parrots' plates. Substitute green peas, broccoli, cauliflower, brussel sprouts, asparagus and potatoes.

Grapes from Chile add a load of cancer causing and endocrine-disrupting fungicides to our parrots' diets. From January through April, a whopping ninety percent of the grapes sold in the U.S. are from Chile, where growers use less sophisticated pest control techniques than U.S. growers. Substitute domestic grapes in season.

Cucumbers contain unacceptable levels of Dieldrin, an extremely carcinogenic pesticide that was banned in the U.S. over twenty years ago. Unfortunately it is persistent in the soil and is taken up by cucumbers. One of every fourteen cucumber samples from across the U.S. and Mexico contained this highly toxic compound. Substitute carrots, romaine lettuce, broccoli or radishes.

Now that we know the twelve most contaminated foods, here are some foods that are low in pesticides and high in vitamins, minerals, and carotenoids. Sweet potatoes, broccoli, watermelon and brussel sprouts provide lots of vitamins, carotenoids, and minerals, along with relatively few pesticides.

To complement the twelve most contaminated crops, The Environmental Working Group compiled a list of the twelve cleanest crops. Ironically, avocados which are poisonous to parrots, are the very cleanest food that was tested! Onions, and green onions are not generally considered suitable parrot foods either, so these three foods are not included in the list below. These nine foods rank from only 14 of a possible 200 points in toxicity for corn, to 49 for broccoli. These are the lowest contamination scores of the fruits and vegetables commonly fed to parrots.

1. Corn
2. Sweet potatoes
3. Cauliflower
4. Brussel sprouts
5. Grapes (U.S.)
6. Bananas
7. Plums
8. Watermelon
9. Broccoli

We are fortunate indeed that corn, a big favorite of many species of parrots, is one of the least toxic foods available. Sweet potatoes are one of the most nutritious foods on earth, sometimes referred to as the perfect food, and it too is a favorite of many parrot species. Broccoli is another super food and if our birds don't like

(Continued on page 8)

UPCOMING EVENTS

(see calendar on back page)

March 13 ACBS Meeting

March 20, Brooksville, FL: 7th Annual Bird Mart sponsored by Hernando Exotic Bird Club, Inc. Hernando County Fairgrounds. 9-5. \$2, 12 and under free. Contact: Keith Feierabend (727) 861-2329.

April 10 ACBS Meeting

April 16-17, West Palm Beach, FL: Exotic Bird Society of America's Bird Expo, Seminars and Trick Bird Show. South Florida Fairgrounds, 9067 Southern Blvd. Contact: Charles Tillman (407) 855-3367; charles@ebsoa.org

May 8 ACBS Meeting

May 14-15, Tallahassee, FL: Tri State Avian Society's Annual Spring Bird Fair. North Florida Fairgrounds, #2, 441 Paul Russell Rd., I-10, exit 199 S, 6 mi. Sat. 9-5, Sun. 10-4. \$3, 12 and under free. Contact: Barry Laster (850) 668-0908; BarryL7523@comcast.net

May 29, Orlando, FL: Exotic Bird Society of America's Bird Expo, Seminars & Trick Bird Shows. Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 W. Colonial Dr. Info: Charles Tillman (407) 855-3367; charles@ebsoa.org

June 12 ACBS Meeting**July 10 ACBS Meeting**

July 17, Plant City, FL: The Ammerman's Exotic Yard Sale. Ammerman Family Farm, 4902 N. Charlie Taylor Rd. 9-4. Contact: (813) 752-2230.

August 14 ACBS Meeting

August 14, Orlando, FL: Exotic Bird Society of America's Bird Expo, Seminars & Trick Bird Shows. Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 W. Colonial Dr. Contact: Charles Tillman (407) 855-3367; www.ebsoa.org

August 27-28, Tallahassee, FL: Big Bend Bird Club's 16th Annual Fair and Festival. North Florida Fairgrounds. Contact: Jill de Bedout (850) 841-1773; jillsbirdz@yahoo.com

How to Rid Your Produce of Pesticide Residue

from www.ehow.com

Dangerous pesticide residues are regularly detected on conventional produce. If buying organic food is not an option, here are a few ways to limit your exposure to pesticides.

Steps:

1. Mix equal parts vinegar and water in a large bowl. Soak produce briefly yet thoroughly, and rinse well with water.
2. Use produce cleaners developed specifically to break down and remove waxes and other sealants holding pesticides on the food.
3. Cut your risk of exposure in half by using caution when consuming the 12 crops determined to have the most toxic residues. In order, they are: strawberries, bell peppers, spinach, cherries, peaches, cantaloupe from Mexico, celery, apples, apricots, green beans, grapes from Chile and cucumbers.
4. Fill up on foods that tend to have lower levels of detected residues. These include, in order: avocados, corn, onions, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, grapes from the United States, bananas, plums, scallions, watermelon and broccoli.
5. Eat a wide variety of all fruits and vegetables to limit your exposure to any one pesticide.
6. Wash all produce carefully. Pesticides are intentionally applied to stay on during wet weather and do not rinse off easily. Conventional farmers go as far as using bleach to rid lettuce and other leafy crops of dangerous residues.

Tips: Most importantly, don't stop eating at least five daily servings of fresh fruits and vegetables as recommended by the Food and Drug Administration, the United States Department of Agriculture and the American Cancer Society. The benefits of eating fresh produce for reducing certain types of cancer and heart disease are undisputed.

Learn where your food is coming from and buy as many locally grown products as possible. Produce traveling long distances is often sprayed with pesticides after harvest, and fungicide waxes are more likely to have been applied to preserve food during transport.

Look for conventionally grown produce that has been screened for pesticide residue. Grocery stores often post signs saying which items have passed the test. If there are no signs, ask the produce manager.

ASU researcher finds novel chemistry at work to provide parrot's vibrant red colors

Parrots, long a favorite pet animal, are attractive to owners because of their vibrant colors. But those colors may mean more to parrots than what meets the eye.

For more than a century, biochemists have known that parrots use an unusual set of pigments to produce their rainbow of plumage colors, but their biochemical identity has remained elusive. Now, an Arizona State University researcher has uncovered the chemistry behind the colors of parrots, describing on a molecular level what is responsible for their bright red feathers.

The work casts a new light on what is chemically responsible for the colors of birds, and defies previous assumptions and explanations for color variations in parrots, said Kevin McGraw, an assistant professor in ASU's School of Life Sciences. "Evolutionary biologists have not really thought hard about parrot coloration," said McGraw. "This research is exposing a whole new world of color communication in parrots and the potential physiological and biochemical roles of the new molecules we found in our work."

Details of the work are in a paper, "Distribution of unique red feather pigments in parrots," by McGraw and Mary Nogare, a parrot fancier from Snoqualmie, Wash., published in the Feb. 16, 2005 issue of the journal *Biology Letters*. Animals, like birds and fishes, commonly use biochromes like carotenoids to acquire red, orange or yellow coloration, but McGraw and Nogare found that these compounds are not responsible for the red colors found in the parrot species they sampled.

The researchers used a chemical analysis technique called high-performance liquid chromatography to survey the pigments present in red parrot feathers. McGraw and Nogare collected and analyzed samples from 44 parrot species that have red feathers. Overall, there are some 350 species of parrots, 80 percent of which have red in their plumage.

They found a suite of five molecules, called polyenal lipochromes (or psittacofulvins), that color parrot plumage red in all of the species studied. "We've uncovered a system where all red parrots use the same set of molecules to

color themselves," McGraw said. "It is a unique pigment found nowhere else in the world. We are fascinated at how parrots are able to do this. "The fact that there is a single set of molecules unique to and widespread among parrots, suggests that it is a pretty important evolutionary novelty, and one we should carefully consider when we think about why parrots are so strikingly colorful," McGraw said.

McGraw has been studying the colors of birds for seven years. He first became interested in the behavioral significance of bird colors as a form of visual communication within a species (e.g. to denote status or attractiveness). As he studied these aspects, he wanted to understand more about what makes the colors of the birds possible, and then focused on "deconstructing the color into its component parts."

McGraw said an interesting aspect of the five polyenal lipochromes that provide the red in parrots, is that the pigment is found only in the bird's feathers and nowhere else in the body of the bird, indicating that parrots manufacture these molecules internally and directly at the maturing follicles of the growing, colorful plumage.

In addition, these pigments may play a valuable role in maintaining the health of parrots. McGraw cites an independent study on the parrot pigments that suggests that they can act as anti-oxidants to quench free radicals and potentially protect cells and tissues in the body from oxidative damage.

Now, McGraw says, he's interested in learning more about the connection between the red colors and anti-oxidants within and among parrot species, as well as "to specifically explore the balance of naturally and sexually selected costs and benefits to becoming colorful."

"Parrots are unusual among birds, in that they almost without exception display fantastic colors but exhibit very little variation in color within a species – at least in colors visible to us. Parrots in general may not be using color in the classic cases of mate choice or competitive ability," he said. "Exactly why they are so uniformly colored remains an interesting mystery to us – one we want to investigate."

"There is a sea of colors in birds," he added. "Our goal is to learn why there is such a diversity from an evolutionary standpoint."

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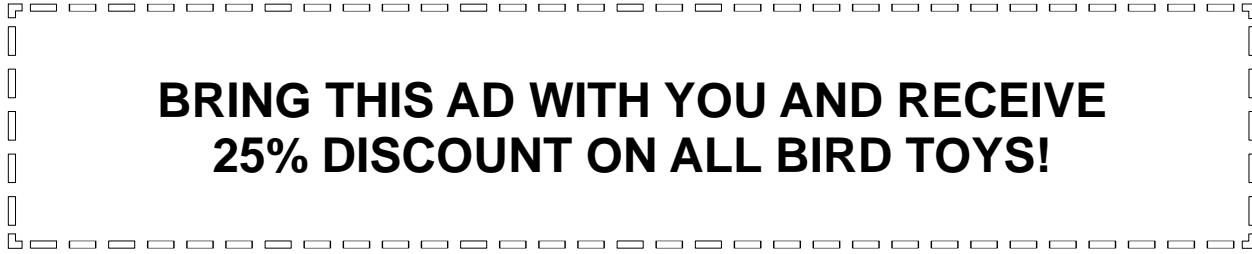
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(Continued from page 4)

it raw, often they will enjoy it lightly steamed. We also can feed grapes and cantaloupes safely if we give them in season, from May through December.

As disturbing as the news is of widespread toxicity in our fresh foods, according to the Environmental Working Group, the picture is actually much bleaker than painted by the FDA data. Some of the foods listed as the least contaminated have incredibly high contamination rates if they come from certain countries. Examples are pears from Korea, blackberries and green peas from Guatemala, peas from China, kiwis from Chile, carrots and leaf lettuce from Mexico, and green onions and tomatoes from the United States.

Farmers must contend with some 80,000 plant diseases, 30,000 species of weeds, 1,000 species of nematodes and more than 10,000 species of insects, so the problem of pesticide residues is not likely to end soon. Every year 100-150 million pounds of pesticides that cannot be used in the United States are exported for use in other countries. The foods that are treated with these banned chemicals are then imported back into the United States, to be sold at grocery stores nationwide. It is the recommendation of the EWG that we buy organic produce whenever possible!

Common sense practices can somewhat reduce

pesticide residues on fresh fruits and vegetables. The USDA recommends that produce be washed under tap water before serving. Consumers should peel away and discard outer leaves, skin or rinds. Certain hardy vegetables, like potatoes and carrots, should be scrubbed if the fiber-rich skins are to be given to parrots.

The twelve most contaminated fruits and vegetables represent the majority of the health risks from pesticides that cause cancer, neuro-toxic and endocrine effects. We should minimize or eliminate these foods, and maximize the amount of foods with the least toxicity. By so doing, and by using organically-grown produce whenever possible, we can vastly reduce the amount of dangerous pesticides that we feed our parrots.

One way to provide inexpensive, organically-grown foods to our parrots is to start SPROUTING! Sprouts are live food which our parrots are biologically adapted to consume, high in enzymes, extremely nutritious, easy to grow, and best of all, uncontaminated by pesticides and other chemicals! When we grow them ourselves, we can be certain that they are pesticide free. By becoming informed and by diminishing this very real threat to our parrots, we can help them to achieve the level of health and longevity that they so richly deserve!

BIRDS IN DISTRESS FUND

The Birds in Distress fund has been set up by Aviary & Cage Bird Society as our way of helping with the care and maintenance of lost or injured birds or those who have been placed in sanctuaries to live out the remainder of their days.

Donations may be made to this fund to honor and remember those individuals for whom you would like to show your respect.



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OF SOUTH FLORIDA, INC.**

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New _____ Renewal _____

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____

Email: _____

Since our club is run entirely by volunteers, all members are requested to participate. Please indicate at least one activity that you would be willing to help out with on a regular basis.

Advertising Bird Show Librarian
 Newsletter Raffle Table Refreshments
 Web Site Other: _____

CLUB DUES

Single membership - One Vote - \$18.00

Family membership - Two Votes - \$20.00

Outside the U.S - One Vote - \$20.00

The types of birds I have include:

Applicant's Signature

Mail to:
Glenna Lewis, Membership Chairman
Aviary & Cage Bird Society of S. Florida
480 Petersburg Terrace
Plantation, FL 33325

Meetings held the 2nd SUNDAY of the month.

Board meeting at 1:00 p.m.

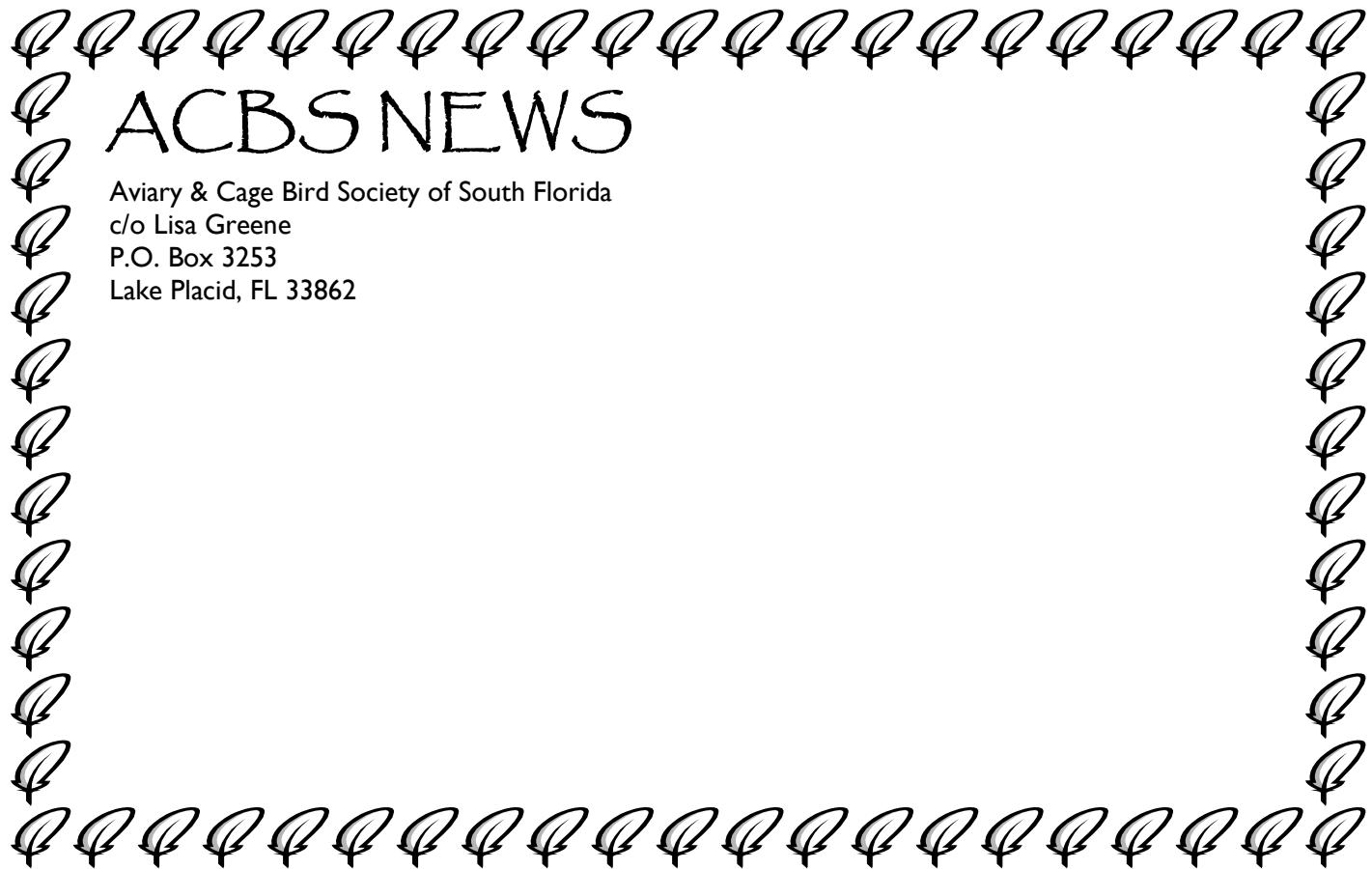
Business/Members meeting at 2:00 p.m.

Flamingo Gardens

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GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME



ACBS NEWS

Aviary & Cage Bird Society of South Florida
c/o Lisa Greene
P.O. Box 3253
Lake Placid, FL 33862

A decorative border made of black feather icons surrounds the bottom half of the page. It consists of two rows of feathers, one at the top and one at the bottom, with a larger vertical column of feathers on the left and right sides.

UPCOMING EVENTS - See Details Inside

| March 2005 | | | | | | | April 2005 | | | | | | |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat | Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
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