Beat: Miscellaneous

Bird singing competitions in Thailand

Thailand culture

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USPA NEWS - In South East Asia, especially in Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore, and also in Vietnam and Laos it is common to hold regular bird singing competitions. The competition takes place on open areas where a metal framework is set up for the small wooden bird cages to hang on.

Some three meters (10 feet) away from the high hanging cages around the frames is roped off to keep the crowd of supporters and the bird's owner at a distance. Usually on an elevated platform is a judge or judges, depending on what kind of competition it is, overlooking the competition. Referees stand half way to be able to judge the performance of the birds. On a big board, other staff members keep a record of the scores and police are keeping an eye on possible heated discussions.

The most popular bird in these competitions is the tiny red-whiskered bulbul but different competitions also involve different birds. These little birds are protected and can be very expensive. Owners might have to pay between five and six thousand US dollars for the best performers. An average competition entry with these birds is between 30 and 60 US$ and winning prizes can be up to 900 US$.

In smaller local competitions the birds perform in four rounds. The owners encourage the birds to sing in the right tones for 19 to 25 seconds. The song should have a minimum of three trills while they have to jump around in their cage. In those four rounds the bird has to sing at least eight times.

Bigger competitions with full performance are called "International" where the birds are being judged by voice quality, is clarity and duration as well as modulation and of course the melody. In this competition it is even more important how much the bird jumps around in his cage.

To encourage the birds to sing, owners loudly call out their name and make specific noises. The referees listen carefully they count the warbled notes and the movements and point out the winner. The whole competition is relaxed but rather noisy with shouting people and activities all around it.

With top singing birds achieving prizes as high as 9,000 US$, these birds have to be protected against bird thieves, especially the red-whiskered bulbul. They are usually kept as family pets and pampered by family members. These birds love to be out in the sunshine which means if the family doesn't have a back yard they'll have to be hanging outside somewhere close to where they can be watched all the time.

For more photos and information go to: http://www.ilsegibson.com/

Article online:
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