



IN SEARCH OF CANARIES...

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Young on the Perch

Another breeding season is just about passed and what a mixed season it was. Most breeders are ready to throw in the sponge but some are singing the praises of these wonderful little birds. I have one friend who raised more birds this year than he did during the last two years. Another friend raised fewer than half of the number he raised last year. Many folks are bemoaning the fact that it was a lousy breeding year. So much for the vital statistics. Each year has its highs and its lows but very few people quit completely—they just mumble for a while, rest up and when spring comes again they are ready to try anew.

Now that the young are on the perch it is time to try the sexing routine. Many of the young hens sing, so the first round of sexing is a ritual of trial and error. Take the early singers and put them in a flight together and leave the rest together in another flight. In other words, put the young males together in one cage and the young hens in a second cage. Place one good older male with the babies, one that has a good clear song so he can serve as a tutor.

After the molt, the young males begin to sing with renewed vigor and it is then time to start the second round of sexing. There will be hens in with the males and males in with the hens. The second round will separate most of them but you can count on a third round to complete the sexing. By the end of September or into October the final selection will be made and the switching can finally be accomplished.

Once in a while, though, there is a bird or two that may be about a month

or six weeks late starting to sing. The percentage of these birds is small so don't worry about these few birds.

During the growing season there is a lot of feather picking and some of the babies look just like a flank steak ready for the oven. However, these birds will recover during the molt. You can hasten the growing of new feathers by placing perches in individual compartments so the birds can perch alone. This will reduce the picking and allow the feathers to return. Also, this has the added advantage of allowing the birds to learn to sing a much stronger and longer song.

When young birds or older males are together, the singing becomes a territorial commitment and produces a lot of bickering and fighting. If this continues it will spoil the song of the birds bringing it down to a series of short tours which do not make a melodious song.

Perches in individual compartments are necessary with the hens also to prevent feather picking. Shortly after all the birds start into the molt they cease bothering each other.

This, of course, does not hold true with the glosers or crested birds. I do not know just why it happens but young crested birds always seem to have a heck of a time growing up. Their crests are constantly picked which spoils the looks of otherwise beautiful birds.

You will hear the term unflighted birds. This means a young bird that has been through only his first molt. The canaries do not molt their flight feathers during their first molt—hence the term.

When the molt is over it is time to

purchase any new birds you wish to add to your breeding flock. One should purchase the birds in September or October so the bird or birds can become accustomed to your ways of feeding, your type of food, you, and the climate to which they are moved. If one keeps a new bird for several months before trying to set it up in a breeding situation the results are much more rewarding.

The males and the hens should be flighted separately. The late fall is the time to introduce suet into the flights. Beef or lamb suet (lamb preferred) hung in the aviaries helps the birds in several ways. If one uses the lamb suet, the lanolin in it acts as a lotion to the canaries feet which become as fresh and pink as a newly hatched chick. The suet also provides a fat resource for the birds for the winter season and it enhances a hen's ability to lay eggs without problems. This is a very decided plus in the fall feeding.

The diet of the birds should be constant at this time and one should not change foods or systems. The seed, greens, fruits, treats, and the bits and pieces of bread, etc., should continue in a constant pattern.

This is the time to hand select your birds for next season's breeding. Any hen with a poor stomach pattern should be discarded. Breed only hens with a butter yellow tummy as any other pattern suggests stomach or intestinal problems. These problems can be passed on to the youngsters as well as create a problem for the hen in laying. Let the birds rest and grow. Let them be happy and have a full relaxing winter season and you will have birds ready to breed when the season strikes.

I firmly believe in breeding birds when they are ready—don't wait for some mythical magical moment when all birds are supposed to start. If they are ready in November or December, breed them then. If you wait for the 14th of February they might be all out of the notion. Breed them when they are ready and you will have a successful breeding season.

Let us all hope that each year is a banner year for us all. Take good care of your birds and they will be happy to work for you. ➤