



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE

Dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public.

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Questions and Answers

Edited and Researched
by Richard Tkachuck, Ph.D.
Perris, California

EDITOR'S NOTE: As an introduction, let me thank the many people who have responded favorably to this column. It is nice to know that a need is being met. We are, however, going to have to set some ground rules. A number have written to be put in contact with other breeders who might be working with similar birds. This we have decided not to do. The reasons are several. In the first place, to maintain a current list of breeders of all sorts of birds would be nearly impossible to do. Secondly, we at the Watchbird are jealous to preserve the anonymity of the readers and breeders and do not wish to take the responsibility of checking the reliability of each person who makes this request. Sorry about this folks. Unfortunately not everyone involved with birds has the same degree of integrity.

Another request. When you write, please be as specific as possible. We have received some letters with the generality of "please tell me how to breed birds." Enough said.

Question: *How much cold can lovebirds stand? I'd like to move mine outside in a flight with a draftproof shelter without heat. It gets down to zero here in southeast Kansas but doesn't stay there long.*

Answer: Your question brings me back to the time when I lived in Nebraska and longingly looked at pictures of aviaries in Florida and California wishing that my birds could get out of their basement room. Your problems are several. First, zero degrees, and I assume fahrenheit and not centigrade, is actually 32 degrees below freezing. That is cold. I have looked at a lovebird distribution map and nowhere does it get this cold in their range. I know of no one who has kept them under the conditions you mentioned and if anyone has PLEASE WRITE. If you are going to experiment, use birds you do not mind losing too much. Draft free space is necessary and so is the absence of moisture such as leaking

roofs. I know of someone who lost a sun conure when the weather dropped to freezing and the bird took a bath and got a chill.

Having lived in the midwest, I am especially concerned for bird people there as they have special problems. I am willing to devote space to these problems, but need to know of innovative ideas as to how these problems can be met.

Question: *What is the smallest pen that rosellas can be kept in for breeding?*

Answer: According to one breeder, his success, and it was considerable, was attributed to flights of 25 feet in length and perhaps 10 feet in height. Another breeder I know of has had success in a flight 8 feet in length, 6 feet high and 4 feet wide. I am sure some have had success in even smaller flights but do not know of these. (If true, let's hear from you.)

Someday, I am going to write an article on the probability of breeding a bird. In outline it will say the following: Let's say that all things being equal, the probability of breeding a bird is 100% if you put oat groats into the feed and 90% if you do not. Let's also say that if you put a bird in an 8 foot flight, all things being equal, that there is 100% chance of breeding the bird, but only a 90% chance if you put it into a six foot flight. This means that if the bird is in a 6 foot flight with no oat groats in the feed that there is only an 80% chance that you will have success. The problem in bird breeding is that there are a large number of factors which lead to ultimate success. If each one is less than at the 100% level the probability of reproductive success rapidly diminishes. What often happens is that a person sees where corners have been cut by some individual and these ideas are then incorporated into the personal methods of the breeder. When there is no success, it may not be that the newly tried item is at fault but that the new method lowered by just a little what was already a close to unideal breeding situation. It should be the goal of the breeder to attempt in every way to raise the probability of breeding in all aspects of bird care. I realize that captive breeding methods can seldom be 100% for all necessary factors, but these should be worked towards.

Help: We have a question on breeding Brazilian cardinals, (how big a flight, food, compatibility with other birds, nesting needs, and how to sex them). Remember, if you reply, please give a phone number. ●



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Mark these dates and plan to attend!

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May 19 thru 20, 1984 ● Las Vegas, Nevada

August 1 thru 5, 1984 ● Orlando, Florida