

# Canaries

## A Life-long Hobby

by Gerald Hays  
Woodlake, California

When the days begin to grow brighter and the world shows signs of waking from winter, something stirs within. It's the old desire to participate in the process, an urge to be somehow a part of the eternal promise of new life. I used to tell myself that next year would be different. We would take a trip and not be home-bound all spring. But every year that same old feeling returns, and I can't help wondering what this or that combination will produce. No use to fight it. I've decided simply to yield and enjoy it. Once again, the birds are paired up and I'm sticking close to home for the season.

At the urging of a friend, I have attempted to record a few things that have worked for me. These are things that I have learned, mostly the hard way, over the last 50 years. These habits have brought me satisfaction with my backyard hobby. (It took only one season in the house to convince my wife that the hobby should be backyard, not spare-bedroom!)

My bird house consists of three major parts. On either side of the center walk-in storage area are two walk-in flight pens that are 8' x 10' in size. The roof covers all and extends well beyond the walls to add further shade and protection. The back wall is solid. Three sides are partially covered with wood that extends from the concrete floor up 3-1/2'. This protects the birds from our bird-hunter cocker spaniel. The outside open part of the house is covered with screen for protection from mosquitoes which can and do bring a pox if they get to the birds. The screen makes it more difficult to see the birds, but I consider it a necessity. I have used a vaccine against avian pox, but find the screen more satisfactory.

On the inside of the flight area, and separated from the screen by three or four inches, I use common 5/8" aviary wire. This works well to keep the birds off the screen in which their toes might become entangled. The space

between the screen and the wire also keeps the birds away from any cats that get past the cocker spaniel. Cats may be trusted to be interested in birds! Their fish-hook claws can snag a bird against aviary wire and tear it to pieces.

I am very careful to guard against anything on which the birds may catch a claw or snag their seamless leg bands. Small, stiff wire ends, if long enough and in areas where birds light and hop around, may result in a bird's ensnaring itself and twisting off a leg in an attempt to become free.

The center section entry, which leads to either of the flight pens, is a lifesaver and prevents the loss of birds that might dart out an open door. It also is handy for storing seed and other items used in the flight pens.

When it's time for identifying young males in late August or September, I set up a series of cages in which I put three or four young birds that are marked or colored differently enough from each other that I can identify which ones I hear and see singing. These I mark with a blue plastic band on the left leg, then return them to the flight pen. My memory being what it is, I find it helpful to make a diagram of the cages being watched and to record which birds have sung. This gets us started. The process goes on through the fall. It usually works for me. Of course, in breeding season the vents of the sexes begin to show marked differences. I usually check these. The vent area of the cock bird protrudes markedly and in older cocks is rather easily identifiable. The female's vent area is broad and flat and, as laying time approaches, resembles somewhat the area of the laying chicken's vent and abdomen — broad and full. I have never had success with needles on strings and some of the other gimmicks by which some swear to tell sexes. For me, the only sure way is to hear and see the male sing. Of course, if a singing hen (almost a non-happening) lays an egg,

one would need to rethink the matter!

One needs to remember that caged birds can feed their babies only from the foodstuff made available to them by their keepers. They will not reproduce effectively if they are not properly fed. Along with a good roller mix of seed and cuttlebone, I offer my birds a formula given to me by Great Aunt Clara about 40 years ago. The mix included two finely chopped hard-boiled eggs, shell and all; two heaping tablespoons of finely rolled bread crumbs; two heaping tablespoons of any kind of dry baby cereal; one heaping tablespoon of wheat germ and about one-quarter spoon of sugar (optional). These I mix well in quantities large enough to last four or five days and store in covered containers in the refrigerator. I feed as much as the birds will clean up, twice a day. This varies according to the number of babies; I start with one tablespoon at a time. I also feed a round slice (quarter of an inch thick) of boiled carrot, a bit of broccoli flower and chickweed, in season. The birds are fond of romaine lettuce, raw cabbage, orange and apple. I have not had a problem with apple as some people report they've had. My birds seem to like the softer varieties of apple better than firm ones such as Granny Smith. A quarter of an orange, especially in hot weather, is another way of giving your birds the liquid they need.

For nests, I have offered a variety of cup-like containers including tuna cans and cottage cheese cartons. Now I use commercial plastic nests onto which I sew or tape a bit of flannel cloth for a bottom liner. If screen nests are used, cloth covering is especially important so that the birds do not catch their toenails and hang themselves. I shred 3" x 4" squares of burlap and give them to the birds so that they can fashion their own nests. They also like to use horse hair and make beautiful nests from it. In the past when I kept Shetland ponies, an abundance of hair was readily at hand.

Banding, as well as identifying, gives your birds a sort of class. The babies' feet will be right for banding sometime between five and eight days old, depending on the kinds of birds you have and the rate at which the birds are growing. Some parent birds are better feeders than others, and their babies do grow better than those

from poor feeders. Some breeders look for the little feathers forming on the wings as a sign for size for banding. I simply watch the feet. In large clutches, not all babies from the same nest will be ready on the same day. If you band too soon, the band comes off and may be lost. If you wait too long, you may injure the foot or not be able to band at all. Pushing three toes forward and through the seamless band and pulling the band over the foot, and over that toe that extends backward, and up the leg until that last toe slips through, requires dexterity and skill. The reward comes later when you spot a bird and think, "That's my bird." Sure enough, the band confirms it (or blows a hole in your self-confidence).

Seamless, color-year coded, numbered bands make a number of helpful practices possible. I could never tell all my birds apart, remember which were related, which produced well, or which were mated, without numbers and written records. I also find the colored plastic marker bands helpful. I use blue for males and red for females. My seamless bands go on the right leg, my plastic bands on the left. Anytime when handling a bird is a good time for me to trim extra long toenails. This is a routine part of setting up pairs for breeding.

Although I occasionally use a male with more than one female, I have never had very much success with the practice. In colony breeding, I find that the hens tend to destroy or steal each other's nests. Over the years, I have discovered what kinds of birds my customers like. My own tastes include a wide variety of color and variation, but my buyers tend to like clear yellows and reds. In order to let my birds pay their own way, those are the colors for which I strive mostly. Since I have lived in the same location for almost 30 years, I no longer need to advertise. A sign at the feed store and word-of-mouth bring enough people to clean out any extra birds by the time breeding season is half over. The newspaper has rarely been a happy source of advertising for me. Additionally, I have found it a good policy to replace any birds which are supposed to be singers and do not sing or which die suddenly upon leaving my place.

Canaries like to bathe and will do so almost every day, if given a chance.

When I am color feeding through the drinking water, I offer bath water only for a limited time and then remove it so that the birds go back to the color food.

Following the advice of Dr. Bob Vanderhoof, his son, John, and Gene Hall, I finally found a way to cure the wheezing which sometimes is found in canaries. It's a medication used for worming cattle, Ivermectin. We dilute it greatly (one part medication to nine parts water) and simply dab the diluted mixture under the canary's wing. What a relief to go into a pen of birds at night and not hear any wheezing.

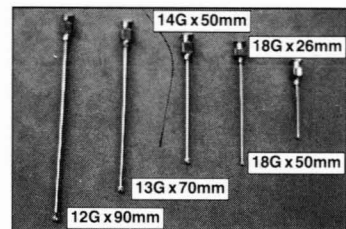
I'll always remember the first little yellow and green birds given me by a lady who would later become my mother-in-law. She kept a cage (about 3' x 4' x 4') out-of-doors. It stood elevated on legs and was covered with a single layer of aviary wire. Each year, a nest or two of babies would be produced. Frank, her husband, was as fond as she was of hearing the song in the yard. In summer, the cage caught the shade of buildings or trees. A canvas tarp was partially draped

around it to keep out the cold wind. Occasionally, a gopher snake would find its way into the cage only to trap itself by feasting on a helpless bird and then being too big to leave by the hole through which it entered!

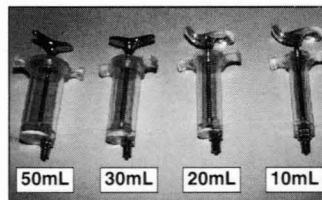
Those were the days when the common canary hens sold for one or two dollars. Singers might bring as much as five. I'll never forget watching five dollars fly away one time when I was cleaning my outside cage, and a green singer escaped. Before I could grab the garden hose and douse him with water, he was gone. Sometimes if you can get water on a bird so that he is good and wet and can't fly, you can retrieve him. Another age-old method was told me by my grandfather who said that a sure way was to sprinkle salt on the tail of the bird. Somehow I could never get close enough to the birds of western Oklahoma to do that! Although I never managed to catch the little wild goldfinches and other fantastic creatures that sang in our fields and trees, I must say that I found many ways to enjoy the bird world. Raising canaries has been a delight for me. ●

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# Avian Trade Shows & Seminars

## Macaw Landing Foundation Public Viewing Aviary

**Third Thursday of each month**

Jantzen Beach Center, exit 308 off I-5  
1919 N. Jantzen, Portland, Oregon  
Mon. - Fri. 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
Sat. & Sun. 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Bird care seminar. Speaker Pat Huff, D.V.M.  
Macaw Landing 7:30 p.m.  
For information call: (503) 286-0882

## Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club Spring Bird Fair September 17, 1994

10:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Hattendorf Center

225 E. Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove Village, IL  
(1/2 mile east of Arlington Heights Road)

Semi-annual event, open to the public.

Features a wide variety of birds, cages, toys, seed, treats,  
and equipment for sale.

For everyone from single pet owners to serious breeder/  
hobbyists.

General information: (708) 705-6260

## Erie Cage Bird Club's Annual Auction September 17, 1994

2306 Norcross Rd., Erie, PA

Public welcome, no admission charge

Starting at 1:00 p.m.

For info.: Diane Holtz (814) 898-2675

## Capital District Cage Bird Club Bird Show / Bird Mart September 17, 1994

Howard Johnson Motor Inn

Albany, New York

Use exit 23 New York State Thruway

Info: Charles Galusha (518) 686-5263

## The Aviculture Society of Puget Sound (ASOPS)

presents its

### Fourth Annual Exotic Bird Fair September 24, 1994

10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Seattle Center Flag Pavilion

For more information contact:

Carla Ritchie (206) 862-3358 or

Ann Jones (206) 868-7871

## Town & Country Feathered Friends 7th Annual Bird Fair September 25, 1994

11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Washtenaw County Fairgrounds

on Ann Arbor-Saline Road

Saline, Michigan

For info contact:

Nancy Egerer

11533 Newman Rd., Brighton, MI 48116

or call (313) 227-6503

Town & Country Feathered Friends meets in Michigan  
Center the 4th Wednesday of every month. Contact  
Secretary Barb McNamara, 8735 Greenwillow, #8,  
Brighton, MI 48116.

## Coastal Bend Cage Bird Club's 5th Annual Bird Fair September 25, 1994

9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Moose Lodge, 8001 S. Padre Island Dr.

Corpus Christi, Texas

For more info:

Linda Young (512) 991-2704

## Black Hills Exotic Bird Fair September 25, 1994

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge

I-90 and LaCrosse, Rapid City, South Dakota

For info. contact:

Black Hills Cage Bird Club

4796 Greenfield Lane, Rapid City, SD 57701

(605) 393-1720

## Association of Avian Veterinarians Aviculture Seminar

Sept. 30 and Oct. 1, 1994

Nugget Hotel, Reno, Nevada

Theme subject: Common Problems Associated with

Breeding, Hatching and Rearing Exotic Birds

Call AAV Conference Office, (303) 756-8380

or (303) 759-8861, Denver, CO. to receive

registration brochure information

## Classic Feathers

### All Cage Bird Show

October 1, 1994

Class A Divisions

D.A.V. Hall

State Route 111, Defiance, OH 43512

Judges:

Finch & Cockatiels - Harold Bowles

Color Bred Canaries - Ken Klingler

Hookbills & Budgies - Ceci Gurnby

Type Canaries - Sig Larson

For info call:

Dennis Seibeneck (419) 784-5985

## South Jersey Bird Club Bird Show

October 1, 1994

Garden State Park Racetrack

Cherry Hill, New Jersey

Open to the public: 10 - 6

Judging, educational seminars, vendors, DNA sexing,  
bird sale room, and more.

For more information, contact:

Bob Hence, show manager (609) 753-8949

## Sunshine State Cage Bird Society

proudly presents

### The 23rd Annual Exotic Bird Show

Saturday, October 8, 1994

9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Plaza Inn, I-4 and Lee Road, Orlando, FL

For info. contact show mgrs. John & Shirley Flaherty

(407) 774-0367

## Minnesota Pet Bird Society Bird Fair October 9, 1994

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Howard Johnson Hotel

3300 West Russell St.

(use Russell St. exit off Interstate 29)

Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Information, call Donna Kappenman (605) 334-4891

## Cage Bird Club of Charlotte County Show & Expo October 9, 1994

Charlotte County Memorial Auditorium

Punta Gorda, Florida

ACS, ALBS, SPBE, Pet Shows

For more information contact:

Mark Runyon (813) 475-3440 or Warren Panem (813) 743-2069

## Greater Rochester Hookbill Association

presents their

### 11th Annual Parrot Exhibition

October 15, 1994

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Rochester Museum & Science Center

Eisenhart Auditorium

657 East Avenue, Rochester, NY

Admission \$1.50 / children under 12 free

For further information contact:

Denise Testa, show chairman (716) 768-8933

## The New York Finch and Type Canary Club 2nd Annual Canary and Finch Show October 15, 1994

Plattdeutsch Park Restaurant Annex

1132 Hempstead Turnpike, Franklin Square, NY

Regina McCarthy judging Gloster Canaries

Fred D'Amato judging Type Canaries

N.F.S. Finch judge to be announced

For info. contact Terrence Arthur (516) 378-4799

## Miami Valley Bird Club's 3rd Annual Bird Fair

October 16, 1994

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

I.U.E. Hall

1675 Woodman Dr.

For more information call:

(513) 836-3404 or (513) 898-5906

or write to P.O. Box 595, Vandalia, OH 45377

## Avicultural Society of Tucson (Arizona)

### Ninth Annual Bird Fair

October 16, 1994

Tucson Exposition Center,

Marketplace, USA, Irvington Road

9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Demonstrations, lectures, raffles

(hand-fed bird grand prize).

Contact Su Egen, P.O. Box 41501,

Tucson, AZ 85717-1501

Phone & fax: (602) 325-0009

# Avian Trade Shows & Seminars

## Central Kentucky Cage Bird Society's 5th Annual All Bird Show and Fair October 22, 1994

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
The Continental Inn  
801 New Circle Road N.E., Lexington, Kentucky  
General Admission \$1.00 / children under 12 free  
Judges:

Dr. Al Decoteau - Hookbills  
Geraldo Cherta - Colorbred Canaries  
Ray Rudisill - Type Canaries  
For more information call Boo Shea (606) 744-3481

## Connecticut Association for Aviculture presents its

### 18th Annual Exotic Bird Show October 22, 1994

"Tails-U-Win" Hall  
175 Adams Street, Manchester, CT 06040  
For information call:  
Show Secretary Chris Voronovitch  
at (203) 649-8220

## Capitol City Bird Society's 18th Annual Bird Show October 22 & 23, 1994

Sat. 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. / Sun. 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.  
Roseville Fairgrounds  
All American Blvd., Roseville, CA  
Admission: \$3 adults, \$1 youths (12-17),  
children under 12 free when accompanied by adults  
For more information contact:  
CCBS, P.O. Box 417700, Sacramento, CA 95841  
or call:  
Mariana Mejia (916) 452-2037  
Linda Nichelmann (916) 722-4604  
Suzie McKinney (707) 448-0680

## Exotic Bird Club of Florida Bird Show October 29, 1994

Holiday Inn Cocoa Beach Resort  
1300 N. Atlantic Ave.,  
Cocoa Beach, FL 32931  
Reservations: (407) 783-2271  
For information contact:  
Maureen O'Steen  
613 Dianne Dr., Melbourne, FL 32935

## Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club hosts its annual Fall Show/Fair Extravaganza October 29-30, 1994

Nashville, Tennessee State Fairgrounds  
Creative Arts Building  
One day judged show - Sat., Oct. 29  
Show chairman Bill Hite (615) 643-2617  
Runs simultaneously with a  
two day sale/fair Oct. 29-30.  
Fair chairmen:  
Wilma Crawford (615) 890-6906 or  
Joy Johnson (615) 895-3386

## Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club 62nd Annual Cage Bird Show November 5, 1994

(more info top of next column)

12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Rolling Meadows Holiday Inn  
3405 Algonquin Rd.,  
Rolling Meadows, IL 60008  
Phone (708) 259-5000

Judges:  
Type Canaries - Harold Sodamann  
Hartz Canaries - Harold Sodamann  
American Singer Canaries - Mike Bacon  
Colorbred Canaries - Ignacio Perea  
Finches & Softbills - Brian Binns (England)  
Lovebirds - Lee Horton  
Hookbills - Ray Johnson  
Budgerigars - Don Langell  
American Cockatiel Society - Carl Helton  
National Cockatiel Society - Lee Horton  
General information: (708) 705-6260

## Capital Area Avicultural Society 8th Annual Cage Bird Show, Fair, Sale and Swap November 12 & 13, 1994

Belmont Hotel, Great Hall  
7370 Airline Hwy., Baton Rouge, LA  
Sat. - 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. / Sun. - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
For information call Kathy Erwin (504) 926-5547

## Way Out West Bird Expo, Arizona's Biggest Bird Mart November 13, 1994

State Fairgrounds  
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
Everything from finches to macaws,  
cages, feed, bird toys and more.  
\$4.00 adults / \$2.50 seniors / \$1.50 children 5-12  
For vendor info: (602) 973-9282

## 46th National Cage Bird Show Manchester, New Hampshire November 17, 18, & 19, 1994

The Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn  
(603) 625-1000  
For more information call:  
Denise Bourgault (603) 893-8870 or  
Charles Anchor (708) 543-3757  
Judges:  
Borders - Tony Flumerodo, California  
Glostors - Margaret Moore, England  
Type - Steve Haley, England  
Old Varieties - Ray Rudisill, Missouri  
Hartz - Mark Whiteaker, Missouri  
American Singers - Richard Hoey, New York  
Lipochrome Color - Bob Metheny, Texas  
Melanin Colorbred - Wilfred DeYart, Belgium  
Finches & Softbills - Daren Decoteau, New Hampshire  
Parrots - Clarence Culwell, Texas  
Lovebirds - Walter Petty, Florida  
Budgerigars - Len Adams, Illinois  
Cockatiels - Lloyd Bailey, Wyoming  
Fife Fancy - Clarence King, Texas

## Rocket City Cage Bird Club 6th Annual Eggzotic Bird Fair November 19 & 20, 1994

Jaycee's Community Center at the Old Airport  
Huntsville, Alabama  
For information contact: Katherine Levine  
1215 Blevins Gap Rd. SE, Huntsville, AL 35802-2707  
Phone (205) 881-4809

## Cascade Canary Breeders Association 26th Annual Canary Show

Executive Inn Convention Center  
5700 Pacific Highway East (I-5 Exit 137)  
Tacoma (Fife), Washington 98424  
(206) 922-0080

### Judging Only - November 26, 1994

9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### Open to Public - November 27, 1994

10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

For info. contact: Bruce Breniman (206) 486-8673 or  
Terry Albertson (206) 839-6533

## Kentuckiana Cage Bird Society and Feathered Friends

sponsor their

### 6th Annual Exotic Bird Fair December 3 & 4, 1994

Sat. - 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. / Sun. - 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Buechel Armory  
4815 Progress Blvd., Louisville, Kentucky  
Admission \$1.00 per person  
Information: (812) 282-8435 or (502) 935-5440

## Alamo City Bird Mart "Biggest Little Bird Mart in Texas!" December 10, 1994

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
Live Oak Civic Center  
8101 Pat Booker Rd., off Loop 1604  
24,000 sq. ft. of breeders cages and supplies,  
seminars, microchipping clinic, raffle.  
For vendor info call: (210) 648-0788  
or send for space application:  
2611 Tucker, San Antonio, TX 78222

## Arizona Aviculture Society Bird Mart December 11, 1994

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
Tower Plaza Mall  
38th St. & Thomas Rd., Phoenix, Arizona  
Adults \$3.00 / Children 12 & under free  
For vendor info. call Susan at (602) 381-9934  
or Pam at (602) 973-0667

## Florida State Fair All Bird Exotic Bird Show February 18 & 19, 1995

Tampa, Florida  
Pre-registration recommended before Jan. 20, 1995  
Info: Lisa Hinton, AgriBusiness Dept.,  
P.O. Box 11766, Tampa, FL 33608  
Call 1-800-345-3247  
or call Dale Laird, show committee (407) 657-7989

## Bird Clubs of Virginia's 11th Annual Convention & Bird Mart April 1 - 2, 1995

Holiday Inn Koger Executive Conference Center  
1021 Koger Center Blvd., Richmond, VA 23235  
Hotel reservations: (804) 379-3800  
For convention info. contact: Kris Peters (804) 784-3975 or  
Jo Engels (804) 994-2191 / (804) 994-5458 (fax)  
or write: BCV, Route 1, Box 1282, Hanover, VA 23069  
For bird mart info. contact: Cindy Parry (804) 973-0275 or  
Jo Engels (804) 994-2191 / (804) 994-5458 (fax)  
or write to BCV at above address