



IN SEARCH OF CANARIES...

by Glenn A. Mitchell
Sunny Vale, CA

Springtime Again

Never again! That is until spring starts to show her lovely self and the urge to again breed the Canaries starts to take over. Once the pleasure of birds gets in your blood it is hard to move it out. It seems that with the coming of the sunshine and the year's new blossoms, the problems of the last year's breeding perplexities seem to vanish. Hope is the one thing that keeps us going. This is the year that we are going to make it. This is the year that we are going to raise the champion bird that we have been looking for.

The raising of birds seems to carry with it the love of nature that makes the problems of our world disappear. We can lose ourselves in the work of caring for the birds to the point that we can remove ourselves from the everyday humdrum existence of reality. We don't realize that we refuse to let ourselves relax. We feel the need to continue to push forward.

Wrong!! We need to share our time with nature as that is the only way that we can do our bit to assure our continued existence. Canaries ask no quarter nor do they give any. They rely solely on the impulses of nature to do what is expected of them—and, since they are in our care—it is up to us to supply all that is needed to help them continue.

Too many people spoil their birds. They give them all kinds of little tidbits which they should not. They overfeed and in many instances kill them with kindness.

The feeding of a bird should constitute the basic seed requirements, grit and any of the fruits and vegetables that it will eat. A Canary is basically a pig. He will eat anything. The greens should not be overdone in volume, as they wilt rapidly and will begin to mold very soon in warmth. Romaine, chard, dandelion, carrot tops are all good—just no iceberg or head lettuce. Grated carrot is highly acceptable, and any of the squashes, any fruit, except avocado, any of the wild seeding grasses and Canaries dearly love zucchini.

If you have the room for it, plant the left over seed from the daily cleaning and you will find the canaries will eat it faster than you can grow it. If you do this, let some of the grasses head and feed the unripened heads to the birds. One breeder I know harvests the green heads and freezes them—feeding them thawed during the winter months. Wonderful idea! The grasses in the milk stage are wonderful foods for the hens to feed.

I also use Pet-a-mine for all of my birds. I have used it for more years than I care to remember and have found it to be of great advantage for continued good health of the birds. If you have not used it, it is comprised of a number of different kinds of seeds with some additives. After the birds have eaten all of the seeds and as much of the powdered content that they will, add grated egg to it and then *all* of it disappears—no waste! The price has gone up but I still feed it as it has done wonders for my birds.

A bird is still a captive animal and as such requires daily care. We are particular about our personal hygiene and so we should be about the care of our caged pets. It seems redundant to speak about the husbandry but I am always amazed at the lack of care in some aviaries. The food should be checked and renewed *daily*. The water should be clean *each day* and both water and food containers cleaned daily or three to four times a week at least.

In aviaries the lights are out at dusk so the birds can settle down for the night. In the house, a pet should be covered early if he is to be in a lighted room, otherwise he should be put in a dark room so he can sleep through the night. Birds require more sleep than humans and you will find the bird with not enough rest will not perform as required.

Drafts are a bird's worst enemy. No matter what kind of bird—a draft will soon signal the death knell. People feel that birds need a lot of sunshine so will put them in a nice window with the sun streaming in. A bird left in direct sun will succumb to heat stroke as even you or I. As the sun goes down the night then brings a cold to the window and with the change of hot and cold it creates a situation like a simple draft. The bird needs light and as constant a temperature as you can provide. Too much heat causes a molt and light feathering. A warm water bath makes the feathers soft—so use water from the *cold* water tap for the bath and an even temperature for the housing. Then he will fill your house with song.

Nesting material for the Canaries is of special interest. We all have used

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assorted cloth or string materials, including burlap. Once in a while some birds get the very fine threads wrapped around their feet and if ignored, a foot is lost. It behooves us, therefore, to be sure and check our hens carefully during the season so this won't happen. The tiny threads from burlap are hard to see when wrapped around a foot or leg as they are about the same color. Check your birds every few days.

I have found, to my complete satisfaction, that leaving the male bird in with the hen can create *big problems*. She is quite capable of raising the nest of chicks by herself. Also, it is of advantage to take the egg out each morning and place it in a container of seed or other soft substance and return it to the hen on the morning that she lays her fourth egg. At the same time, take out the male. He can be of help, but he more than likely will create problems by breaking the eggs, throwing out the chicks, or tearing up the nest in his desire to force the hen to remate.

The advantage of this method allows you a chance to use the male with another hen. Always rest him for a week after mating and before using him the second time. This is good if the male is a producer of strong, healthy chicks. In this fashion you can keep your stud of breeder males to a minimum and use the available cage or aviary for good hens. A healthy balance is one male to four hens. At no time should you cut down your supply of hens. It is best to keep extra hens on hand in case of emergency. Hens can refuse to feed, refuse to set or refuse to leave the nest, thus smothering the chicks. If you have extra hens that you know will take over foster duties, use them to save some wonderful babies.

If a hen balks twice, it is time to dispose of her. I do not feel that it is right to pass this problem along—but put the hen out to pasture and save problems in the future.

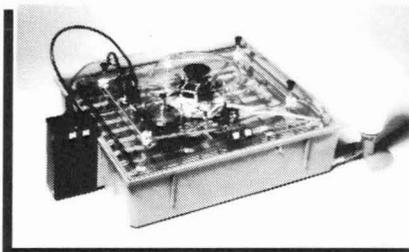
The hens carry the song and that is why, especially with the Rollers, the hens bring such high prices from the breeders. It works the same with the

normal warblers—but those birds can be trained more easily into a good song pattern with a tutor. With the Rollers, it is the breeding line that must be carried through with the hen.

Volume is not the way to produce good birds. A hen can handle two clutches a season with ease and be ready to again produce the next year. A hen with more than two clutches will be weaker for the next year. Hens with about five clutches—as some people let them have—will usually be dead before the next breeding season. If you want to raise more birds use more hens—don't abuse the good hens that you have by over breeding.

Also, give the hens a fighting chance of a good family by keeping them away from nosy people and interfering animals. They become used to you but there is no reason to have them bothered by other outside interference. When the birds show signs of wanting to molt, that is the time for you to bow out of the picture and let them rest.

They will love you for it. ➤



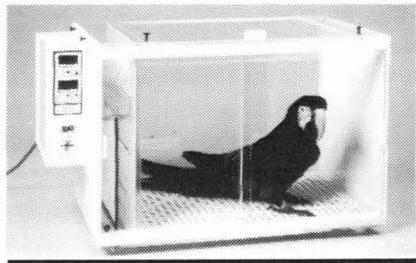
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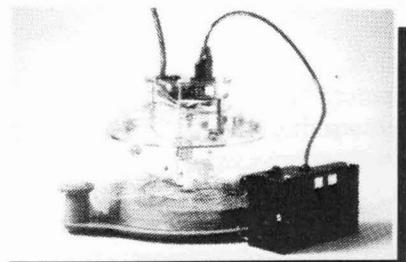


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