

# I Would Like to Change Aviculture

by Don Winter, Maitland, FL

I would like to change the way you (and I) practice aviculture. Remember how much fun the hobby was in the beginning? Your early breeding successes, your first pet birds, the first time you "rescued" a bird from a poor environment? I am betting those events reinforced your interest in birdkeeping. Believe it or not, had your first experiences been unsuccessful, you would have sold your remaining birds and equipment and left the hobby to pursue something else. The fact that you are in the

hobby has everything to do with the positive reinforcement the early events provided you.

Now, years later, your agenda is probably one of drudgery, worry, and financial need. This is the case of nearly every hobby with which I am acquainted. The first phase is the initial inquiry phase, followed by the test-the-water phase, then enters the accumulation phase, and finally the let's-make-something-of-this phase. This obsessive-compulsive phase always includes earning extra money.


Remember I am talking *all* hobbies.

I have seen many people, including myself, more than once, screw up a good hobby trying to recoup some of the dollars spent through the hobby, by converting it to a business. Luckily, I did not do this with birds. I had learned this lesson with other past hobbies I no longer pursue. Notice that I no longer pursue those old hobbies. I screwed them up.

Stereotypically, I think of a bird person as one who has way too many birds, very little ready cash, and woefully inadequate equipment and facilities, using my yardstick of standards, of course. Realistically, I know this is not fair; and, that there is no *typical* bird person. However, cutting to the bottom line, this hobby has an unwritten, unspoken agenda that simply states: Raise birds and make a little (or a lot) of money.

For those of you who have not "crossed that line," do not; and for those who have (I am dangerously close to it, if not right on it) take gradual steps to cross back over. This should be a hobby for which the agenda focuses completely on two basic ideals. Your enjoyment of the birds and the birds' welfare.

I have some suggestions. Try and cement the specialty of your interest. When funds are available, spend the money on equipment, facility upgrades and books, not more birds. Play with your birds more. As difficult as it seems, take a bird out of the cage and play with it, talk baby-talk to the *breeder* birds. Worry about and improve the welfare of the birds you've got, not the ones you don't have yet. You would do that for your children. Look at your hobby long term. Use patience. Don't concern yourself about unproductive breeders. Enjoy them as birds, not production machinery. Quit "horse trading." Participate in club activities. Position yourself to enjoy the club. Preach bird welfare, not commerce.

You get the picture. Make this a hobby. Make a contribution to bird welfare. Make a contribution to your own enjoyment of birds. I rethink daily how I am going to practice what I am preaching. I do not live up to all this myself. But I am going to try to keep moving in that direction. 

Yes, count me as a member of the

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