

birds months prior to breeding season. In a mixed aviary, the Blue-faced Parrotfinches seemed to ignore the eggfood until they observed other finches eating it, after which I observed small amounts of egg food and eggshell being eaten by them while feeding their offspring. I also offered fruit flies cultured in a jar with wire mesh to keep the birds out of the rotting fruits peels.

### Breeding

My Blue-faced chose to breed in a tumbleweed which I suspended from the top of the aviary. It appeared they enjoyed building the nest with Bermuda grass and some of the coconut fiber I would set out as well. They also used small pieces of leaves. This nesting site made it more difficult for me to monitor their progress, but it seemed to please the birds and they did raise their offspring. The birds have also been known to breed successfully in small wicker baskets and in small wooden finch nest boxes. I provide all three nests types and let the birds choose.

These birds are really quite easy to breed and one pair can prove to be very prolific under the right circumstances. They lay between three to five eggs average, but some have laid as many as eight eggs. The average incubation time is between 14 and 16 days and the female does most of the incubation and brooding but the male was very active in feeding the nestlings. The young fledge around 21 days and continue to be fed by the parents for about 10 to 20 days.

### Conclusion

The only down side I found in them was they really were not very cold tolerant, but no more cold sensitive than the Gouldians. I am sure after properly acclimatizing them they will do fine. I am very cautious and during the cold winters (sometimes into the mid twenties) I will supply a 250-watt heating source for the birds' comfort and my peace of mind. I seldom have ever seen any bird perch next to it, but it did make me feel better to offer relief from the cold.

I encourage finch breeders to add this delightful little bird to their collection or, indeed, any of the other members of the *Erythrura* genus. 🐦

# A Truly "Rosie" Aviary

by Susie Christian, Morro Bay, CA

That's what it is like in Jeannette Duyn's corner of the world, *really Rosie* – except when it's Grey. She has been actively breeding birds in Templeton, California, since 1980 and started with cockatoos such as Moluccan and Leadbeater's, plus some Amazon parrots too. Through the years she has eliminated all other species and her focus is now entirely on Rose-breasted Cockatoos and African Grey Parrots.

### Innovative Aviaries

Privileged to visit this dazzling, bubbly redhead's domain, I saw many great ideas I'd never thought of before. The first great planning idea is that the aviaries all face a side of the house where they can be viewed at all times. If Duyn desires, she can walk out on a large deck for a closer look. Her nursery room is also on the aviary side of

the house so any time spent with the hatchlings, can also be spent observing what the pairs are "up to" in their outside cages.

Each enclosure is a work of art in itself, with much thought and care put into every aspect. All cages are 4 feet wide, 6 feet tall and 7 feet long with framing of 4 X 4s and metal pipe. Side panels are of 3/4 inch plywood and some of these panels are removable during the summer heat for increased air circulation. Wire for the aviaries is 1/2 X 3 inch, 12 gauge.

Perches are made of pine 2 X 4s. Double entry nests are used, with dimensions of 24 inches wide, 14 inches deep and 24 inches high. The nests are of wood with metal lining so the birds cannot chew their way out. The floors of the cages are sand which can be easily raked clean.

Aviary roofs are of PVC, rather than



Jeannette Duyn and her Rose-breasted buddy, "Rudy."

photo by Susie Christian



*Duyn's neat, orderly free-standing aviaries. If they have to be entered, she uses a portable safety zone.*

Misting systems in all the cages are on timers, giving the birds 10 to 15 minutes to bathe. However, on the extra hot summer days misters are left on all afternoon. Every cage also has the luxury of an electric heat lamp. Each heat lamp is on a track and can be adjusted back and forth to regulate the amount of heat, depending on the coldness of the night. Each cage has a watering system with automatic faucets. A small amount of Nolvasan is added to the drinking bowls as a precaution to the well water.

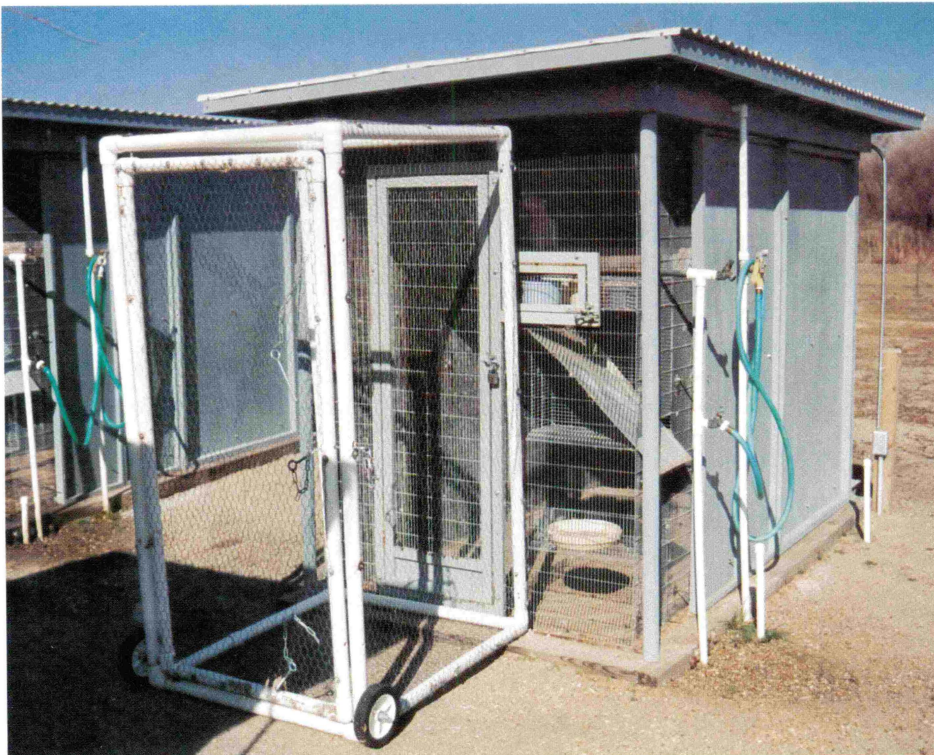
Each aviary is a separate free-standing structure with no double door safety zone. In order to enter the aviaries, Duyn invented a handy, portable safety device made of a PVC frame with wire fastened securely around the whole thing. It can be wheeled up to an aviary door when she needs to go inside, thus the one moveable safety zone serves *all* the aviaries. It has a set of wheels on the front and a doors front and back so she can enter through one door, close it and enter the aviary in safety with no escapees.

Speaking of safety and doors, Duyn tells a funny story on herself with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. She accidentally locked herself inside one of the Rosie cages one afternoon. All her pairs of Rosies are, luckily, very sweet and tame and they perched on her and talked to her the whole time she had to wait for her husband to come along and set her free. She used her noggin again and fashioned a stiff piece of wire with a hook on both ends. One of these simple but invaluable hooks hangs in an accessible place, reachable from the inside area of each cage.

### **Feeding**

All the flock is fed in the late afternoon, and they are fed basically the same food. Their diet consists of soak and cook, which is comprised of beans, lentils, brown rice, and mixed vegetables. Of course, fresh fruit and

Photos by Susie Christian



*This portable safety zone is butted up to whichever aviary has to be entered.*

fiberglass. PVC will not dry out and split in the sun.. A plywood layer is just below and attached to the PVC, which amounts to a double roof and acts as insulation against the heat and cold of the area.. The roof is also hinged so it

can be lifted up for maintenance of the sprinkler system or just for extra ventilation on hot summer afternoons. Summer temperatures often are over the 100 degrees mark and it also freezes many winter nights.

vegetables are provided also. The Rosies are fed a smaller portion than the Greys as Rosies are prone to gain weight it seems by just looking at food! They are all fed Roudybush pellets also. Duyn also feeds large amounts of broccoli and gives plenty of cuttlebone for the calcium maintenance.

### The Birds

It is pretty easy to tell that Duyn loves her Rosies passionately and she has nothing but great things to say about the species. She describes them as clown-like, not temperamental, and they stay tame even if not handled a lot. Probably her favorite plus about them is that they are quiet and do not scream like the large white cockatoos. It is easy to have a Rosie in a small apartment or condominium for this reason. They are entertaining, sit on shoulders well, can be taught to do tricks, and are great talkers. The best thing, Duyn feels, is that they are really a fun bird to breed – and she has even had breeding success with two-year-olds in the past. Rose-breasted Cockatoos are considered mature at the age of two.

### Breeding the Birds

Duyn starts hauling in the eucalyptus right after Christmas, in January each year for the Rosies to play in and construct their nests from the leaves. They begin laying in February and the first babies hatch about February 25th. Both male and female help to incubate the eggs and the usual number of eggs laid are at least five.

The nursery looks like a hospital operating room with everything you could imagine packed into a spotlessly shining bright area. Duyn shared a few tips with me about raising babies. She gives a bit of cranberry juice in the hand feeding formula to the babies to stimulate their kidneys. Chamomile tea is given to calm overactive babies and echinacea for immune system problems. She reasons, if the babies are calmer they will absorb the food better and therefore have better weight gains.

Aviculture has come a long way according to Duyn, and has attracted many breeders who put the welfare of the birds first – and a lot of them allow their breeding pairs to incubate their



*The handfeeding nursery is spotless and well organized.*



*This light and clean room is used to wean and house birds before they are sold.*

Photos by Susie Christian

own eggs. She is happy that the birds are getting more attention and that aviculturists are becoming more concerned with the diets and environments of their birds.

Many years ago aviculturists were secretive and unwilling to share their knowledge about birds, she told me. I certainly can see that Duyn is more than willing to tell me anything about

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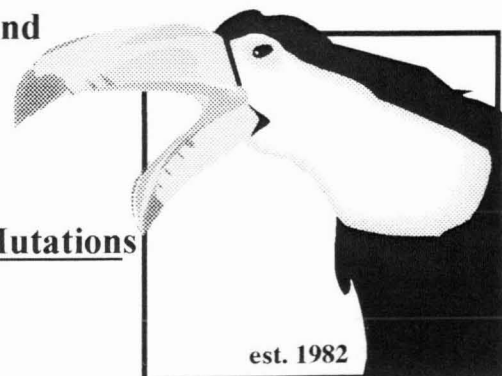
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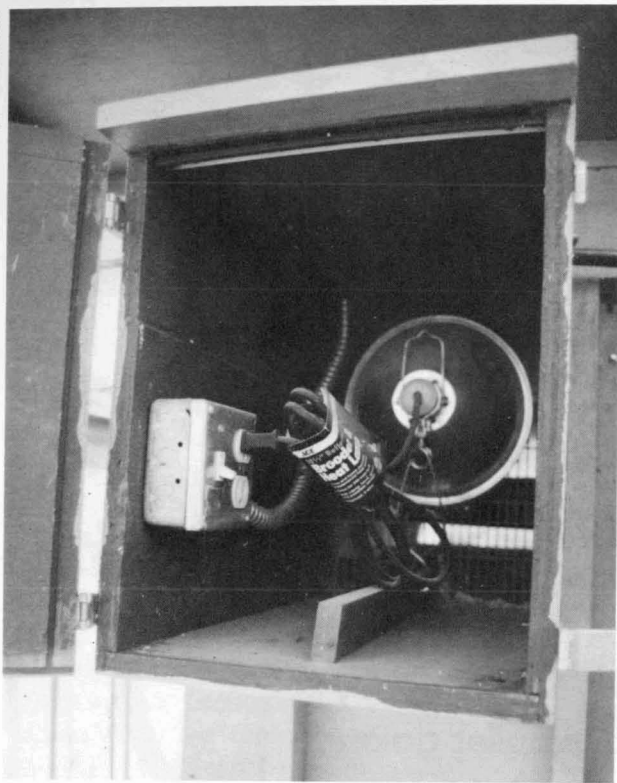
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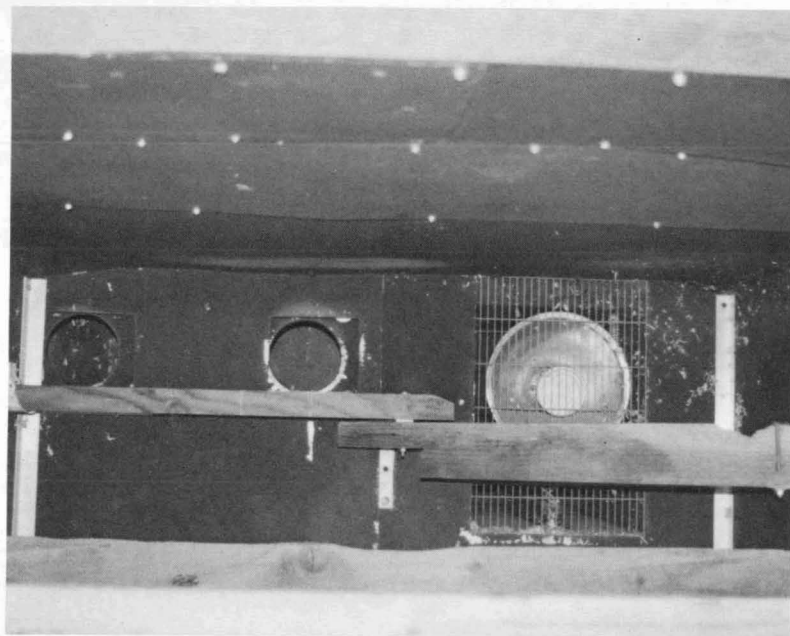
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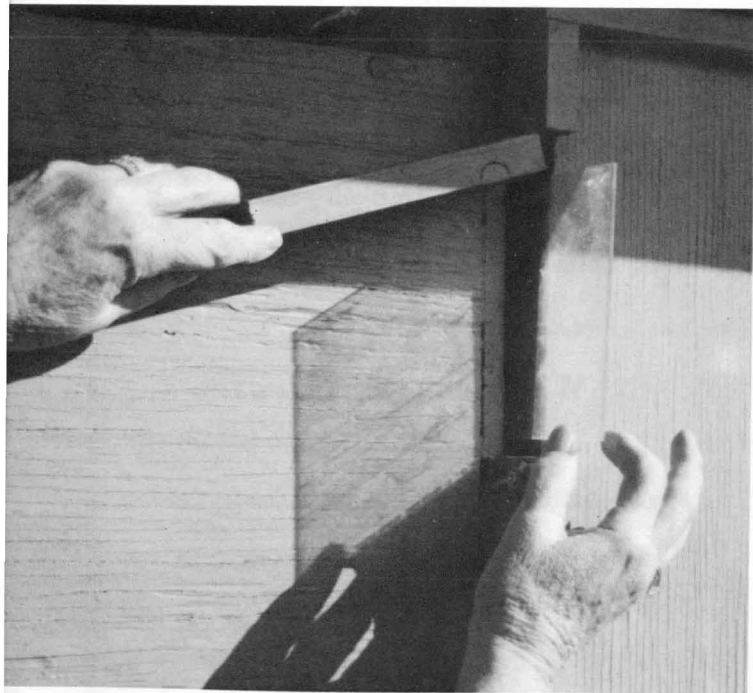
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*A rear view of the box containing the heating lamp for use on very cold nights.*




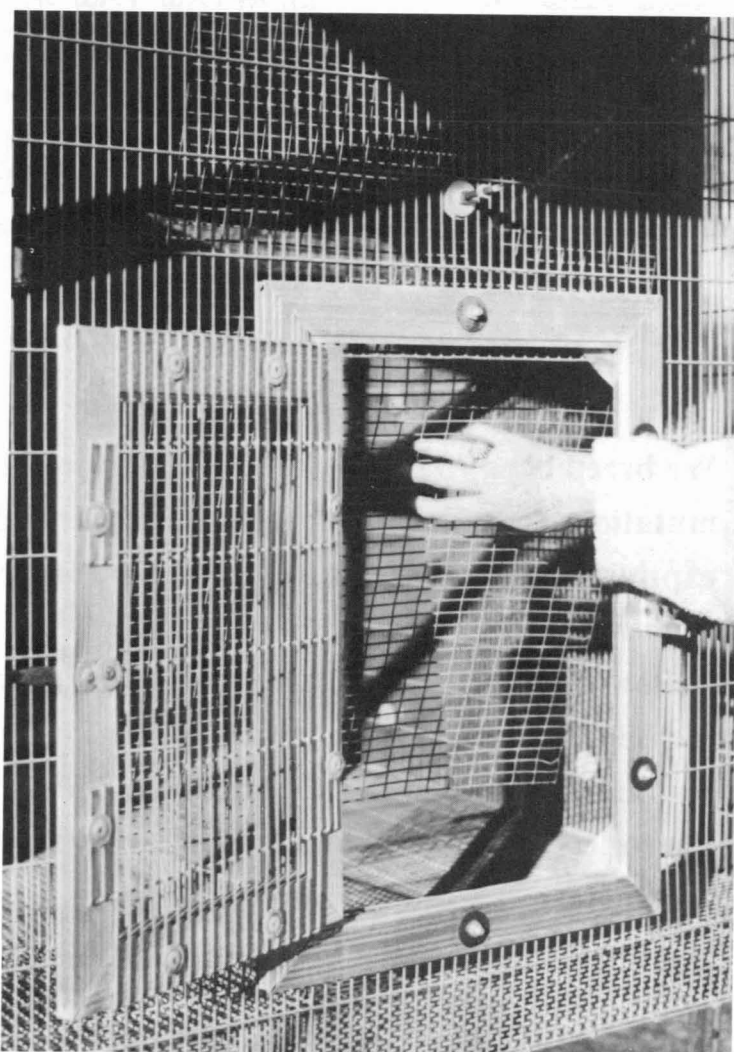
*This shows the double-holed nest boxes and a perch in front of the heat lamp behind the wire mesh.*



*The piece of plexiglass is used as a door to lock the birds out of the nest boxes at need.*

her flock and how it is maintained. Every visit I pay her, I learn many new ways of thinking about my own feathered crew and ways to benefit their well being.

If everyone who keeps birds had Duyn's gusto for her bird-kids, and for life in general, there would be a world full of tremendously spoiled and fortunate psittacines. 



*Note the special safety wire that still covers much of the door after it is opened.*

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