

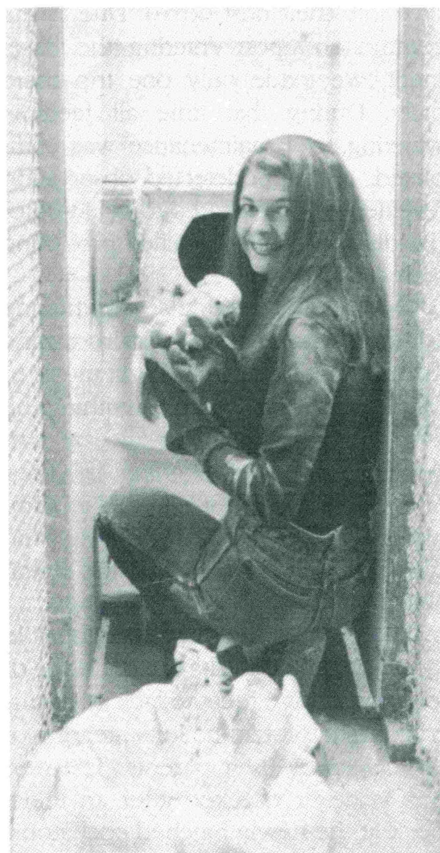
Basement Breeding Moluccan Cockatoos

by Donna Kotz, Temple Terrace, FL

We who are unfortunate enough to live in a climate that prohibits year around outdoor breeding accommodations for our birds are often confronted with a limited amount of space in which to house our birds. Such was the case in our aviary — a *disadvantage* that may have contributed to successful breeding of two pairs of newly introduced Moluccan Cockatoos two years in a row.

The basement space available was long and narrow. After much discussion with and discouragement from other aviculturists, two 14 X 8 X 6 foot flights were constructed in extremely close proximity. Two metal drums were installed as nest boxes in the rear of each enclosure, one barrel placed vertically on top of the other, "condominium" style. One pair's access to their box was high, the other entry low.

To provide security, an opaque screen covered two thirds of each cage. To simulate communal or flock feeding, dishes were placed in full



The author's smile of success.

view cage to cage. Perches were placed to encourage flight, with additional 2 X 4s offered to fulfill instinctive chewing and destruction. The light cycle provides 12 hours of daylight with one hour of dawn and one hour of dusk. A night light supplies continual moonlight. Humidity control during the two-year time period fluctuated greatly during the cockatoo breeding season.

Our much disputed diet consists of Lefeber's Special Needs Diet in pelletized form and water. We add a few sunflower seeds each day as we change water, mostly for our own psychological satisfaction.

The backgrounds of both pairs of birds were similar. Females were purchased from private parties, former pets, and the males were gotten directly from quarantine.

Without closed circuit cameras, basement breeding complicates observing the behavior pattern in the birds. A hurried scurry occurs at the initial sound of a foot upon the staircase and most birds

Photos by Ray Kotz



Two basement beauties.

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Condo style nest drums with inspection doors open.

dive into their nest boxes. Due to the commotion upon entering the basement, we made only one trip there daily. During that time all feeding, watering, and maintenance was completed. A rare undetected observation revealed what appeared to be a territorial display between males protecting their feed bins.

During the breeding season blaring screams encompass the house during the middle of the night. What music to one's ears! Predictably, within the month eggs have been laid by pair number one. After hatching, the cries of the young chick(s) seemed to stimulate the other pair to follow suit. Within three weeks of the first clutch hatching, the second hen clutches.

The parents have been responsible for rearing their chicks up to the age of four weeks. We feel the lack of disturbance is helpful in the initial rearing of the chicks by their parents. The nest box is never checked after an initial peek at the newly hatched cockatoos. Neither parent-neglect nor chick devastation has been a problem. During

the past two years each pair has successfully hatched and raised three chicks. Each pair hatched one chick in their first clutch and two chicks in their second clutch. Perhaps the calm nature of our cockatoos was a determining factor in such instant success.

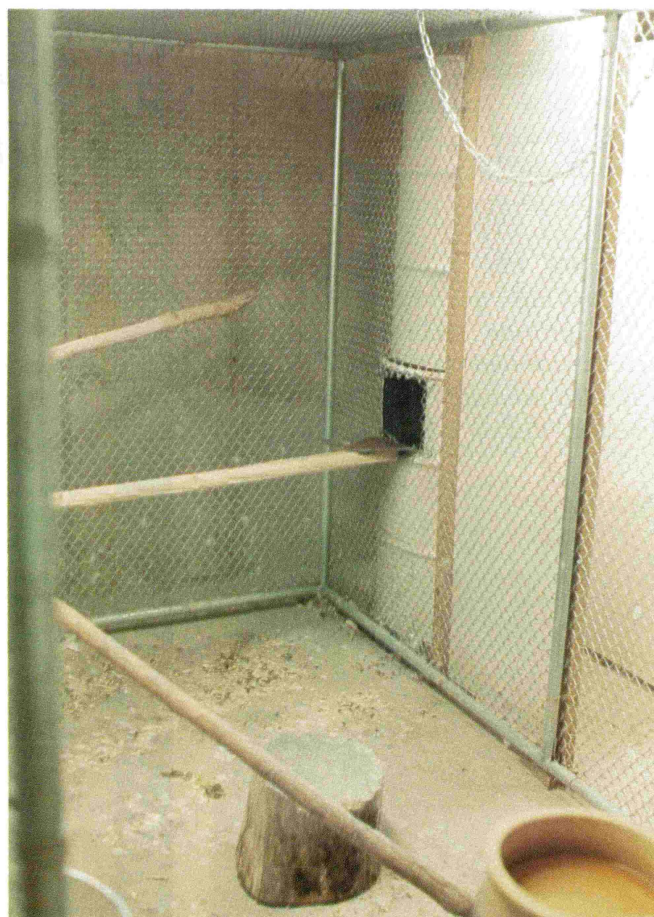
I have reported in this article two relatively new concepts in psittacine bird breeding. The concept of a pelletized diet is one I strongly recommend. The arrangement of nest barrels "condominium style" to help conserve space is another concept that worked for us.

Hopefully, the greatest asset gained from my writing will be to encourage you. Don't be afraid to try a different concept with your birds if you feel strongly about a new idea. We were very discouraged after all the hard work and long hours of preparing our facility when experienced breeders would tell us our setup would never work. That anguish has totally dissipated today.

Editor's Note: Since writing this, the author moved to Florida and built new aviaries, still condo style, but outdoors.



The second story apartment.



The entrance to the downstairs nest barrel.

Photos by Ray Koiz