



FRANK'S FEEDER

by Frank Miser

KEEP "YOUR" NEW BIRD ALIVE

Whether you are obtaining your first bird, or adding to your collection, it will be your responsibility to see that the bird is properly cared for.

First, be sure you are obtaining a healthy bird. It must be bright eyed, standing on both feet, be fully feathered with a complete tail, and have a clean vent. The nostril and beak area should be clean. Listen for clicking or wheezing when the bird breathes. Does the tail bob each time a breath is taken? Does the body look filled out? Does the bird fly well? Feel the breast, not the edge of the breast bone, but on either side. The chest should be convex, not concave. By observing the above, you can be reasonably sure the bird is healthy and does not have a cold, bad feet, a feather picking problem or a lung problem, and is eating well.

Next, quiz the individual you are buying the bird from. Where did the bird come from? Was it raised indoors or outdoors? What is the complete dietary requirement? Can the bird be mixed with

other birds, and if so, what types? In the case of a pet bird, what size cage is required?

If you are buying the bird as a pet, I recommend clipping the wings. The store owner will do this for you. The bird will be easier to tame and will not be able to fly into a window, and break it's neck. Having arrived home with the bird, set up the cage properly, placing seed on the bottom of the cage as well as in the feed hoppers. A scared bird will sometimes go to the floor looking for food before examining the entire cage. Don't be upset if you notice a wet vent in the first few days. The bird does not have diarrhea but rather is excited in its new surroundings. As soon as the bird settles down, the vent area will dry up. Be sure the cage is not placed in a draft. Cover half the cage with a cloth. Check the bird regularly. If the bird looks poor in the first few days, set the cage on a heating pad, put more seed on the floor, cover all but the front of the cage, put Avimycin in the drinking water, and then call the person you obtained

the bird from. Describe the bird's symptoms. Usually, the symptoms will be recognized and a course of treatment recommended. Remember, you bought a healthy bird. Communicate with the person you got the bird from. Your lack of interest and care will not get you a free replacement.

If you are buying the bird as an addition to your aviary collection, make sure the bird will tolerate, or be tolerated, by the other birds. If it is afternoon or later when you arrive home with your bird, follow the steps outlined for a pet bird, and then release the bird in the aviary the following morning. For the first few nights, a night light is recommended. The aviary should be draft free and seed should be placed in more than one location. Check the bird several times a day for the first week or so to be sure of adjustment. If you notice anything wrong with your new bird or the old birds, again, communicate with the person you obtained the bird from.

Each type of bird has different seed, cage, handling, and environmental requirements. Pay attention to detail. The most common causes of death of a new bird are bodily harm, mistreatment by children, animals, and accidents. Other causes of death are drafts, extremes of heat and cold, fright, lack of food, and poisons such as insect sprays, deodorizing sprays, paint fumes, glue fumes, smoke from burning foods, etc.

Be aware that the little bird in the cage needs attention more than you may have originally thought ■



SPRING

by Sheldon Dingle

This time of year we expect to see a few wild bird fledglings fluttering about. It is fun to observe and identify them — which brings to mind an incident wherein I made an unfortunate mistake in identification.

Late one night as we were about to fall asleep, my wife and I heard an outlandish series of shrieks just outside the glass doors of the bedroom. A quick look

showed a young bird fluttering its way across the patio with our cat in cautious pursuit. The shrieks and aggressive stance of the bird put off the cat's immediate attack.

I thought, "Aha, a young Mockingbird!" and proceeded to catch it and care for it. The bird did pretty well, grew quickly, feathered out fully, and was on the way to maturity. Of course,

I hoped for the beautiful song of the Mockingbird, but got only the most raucous screams. I hoped for the gentle, even friendly nature of tame Mockers I'd known in the past, but got only the most passionate fury.

The whole fiasco was a puzzle until a friend correctly identified the bird as a Shrike, a miniature bird of prey who is fearless and extraordinarily aggressive. We finally gave it to another friend, who dearly wanted the ill-tempered little terror. She took it home, and had it quite a while, but finally made the mistake of putting the shrike cage alongside the cage of another bird she was feeding. The shrike dashed itself to death trying to attack the other bird.

I chalk the whole episode up as experience. Should the same thing occur this spring, I think I'll stay in bed and let the shrike eat the cat ■