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by Sheldon Dingle

After years of listening to people talk about how they raise birds, it occurred to me that the birds of S.L. Dingle, your humble servant, are the only ones that die. Further thought on the matter stirred my curiosity. Finally, when a good friend out Colton way showed me a breeding pair of doves that had been working for years (he said the male was the same dove that Noah sent out of the Ark) I decided to find out why my birds preferred extinction.

I bought a book.

It was a pleasing book. Anywhere I'd flip it open it would give six or seven reasons why birds die. With a little study behind me I can now give at least four separate accounts for each bird's death. Now my birds have more reasons for dying than for living. Oh! the joys of being informed.

DISEASES OF CAGE AND AVIARY BIRDS

by Margaret L. Petrak

The book is titled *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds*, edited by Margaret L. Petrak, V.M.D. It was published by Lea and Febiger in Philadelphia in 1969. This is by far the best book on diseases and problems of exotic birds, in fact it is the only effective volume I know of that deals with the full range of health problems encountered in aviculture.

Twenty-five different scientists, each expert in his field, have contributed to the work, drawing upon the most extensive amount of avian research available. Editor Petrak has organized the book into well defined sections for the ease of the reader and for speed of reference. The work was published as an aid for veterinarians who generally have very little knowledge about birds but it will serve the average lay reader very well also.

The text is divided into two parts, Non-clinical Aspects and Clinical Considerations. Under Non-Clinical Aspects

you will learn about caging and environment, behavior of birds, genetics, bird anatomy, nutrition, and even orphan birds.

A fascinating concept in the caging chapter is that of "stimulus filtration". Here Dr. Dilger suggests that birds respond to a comparatively narrow range of stimuli in their environment. Stimuli that are irrelevant are ignored. Of course the relevant stimuli vary from bird to bird and it remains the problem of the aviculturist to figure out and provide the stimuli that will keep a bird healthy and reproducing.

The third chapter contains information regarding the psychic health of birds. For example, after reading the chapter, I decided to alter my pet love-bird's housing as the old conditions frustrated his need for physical contact with another of his species. Some of your birds may be frustrated also. In fact, some of the birds I have known have been raving maniacs.

It is not my purpose to recount details from each chapter — the book says it better than I can — but the chapters on genetics, anatomy, and nutrition are essential reading for any serious aviculturist.

The second section, and perhaps the heart of the volume, is the Clinical Considerations. Here you will find chapters on how to examine a bird, nutritional deficiencies, diseases of the various systems — skeletal, respiratory, digestive, reproductive, etc. There are chapters on infectious diseases, parasitic diseases, and a number of other problems that can afflict your birds. Every bird that you have thrown away died of something you

might have prevented or might have diagnosed and cured.

Of course, even a thorough knowledge of the contents of the clinical section will not qualify you as a veterinarian. You will, however, be better prepared to monitor your flock and to note any signs of an upcoming problem.

In my own experience, the chapter on parasitic disease has been the most valuable. Inasmuch as virtually all aviary birds have been exposed to parasites somewhere along the way, any dedicated aviculturist stands to profit from the chapter.

Parasites categorized include Protozoa (trichomoniasis, coccidiosis), Helminths (an assortment of internal worms), the Arthropods (insects, lice, bugs, fleas, beetles), and Arachnids (ticks and mites).

A digression into a personal experience might help illustrate the type of help Petrak offers. With the aid of a veterinary laboratory I gained a modest proficiency in the use of a microscope. I now quarantine all incoming birds and monitor their droppings. A new pair of Turquisines were found to be infested with two species of worms. By comparing the micro-photographs in Petrak with the worm eggs on my slides I identified the worm species. That information led me to the proper medicines and after several treatments the parasites were eliminated. Two months later the birds died of an entirely unrelated problem. C'est la vie.

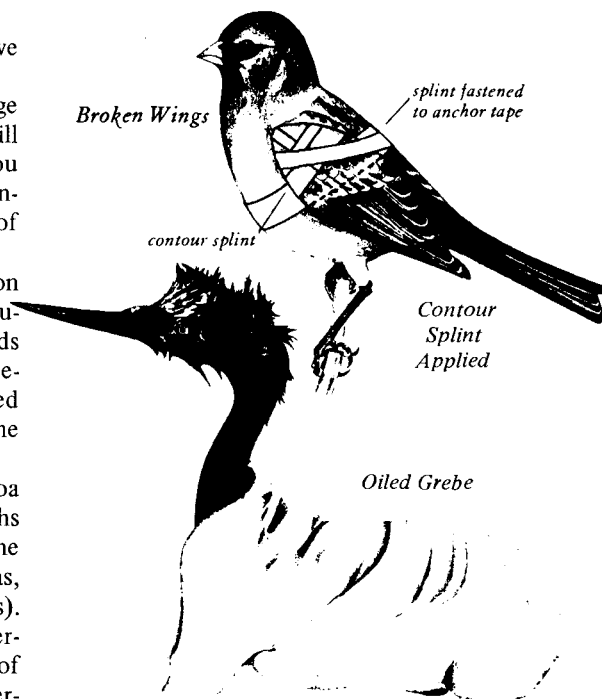
All in all, it is inconceivable how a serious bird breeder can maintain a healthy flock without the aid of *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds*.

CARE OF THE WILD FEATHERED & FURRED

by Mae Hickman and Maxine Guy

There is another book that should prove quite valuable to anyone who has birds. It is called *Care of the Wild Feathered and Furred* by Mae Hickman and Maxine Guy. It is published by Unity Press in Santa Cruz, California, and retails in paperback for \$3.95. In your local bookstore it can be found in the conservation-wildlife section. If your store doesn't have it contact Unity Press.

Whereas in *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds* a scientific propensity is helpful and intensely careful reading is mandatory, *Care of the Wild Feathered and Furred* is designed for the average non-scientific reader. It is well written and a pleasure to read. It is put forth as "a clearly illustrated guide to treating injured, lost and frightened wildlings at home. Methods for raising baby birds and animals, splinting broken bones,



suturing wounds, removing oil and tar, treating poisoning, shock and a variety of common diseases and disabilities, enable the reader to be of service in a time of diminishing wildlife."

Of the eleven chapters in the volume those of greatest interest to bird owners are Care of the Feathered, Special Equipment, Natural Wild Diet and Suggested Substitutes, Treatment for Injuries, and Treatment for Diseases.

The care of the feathered chapter delves into warmth, housing, and feeding of baby birds. It gives some general rules followed by many specifics for various kinds of birds. This chapter, and all of the others contain personal experiences that delightfully and thoroughly illustrate the point at hand. For instance, the authors tell of a peculiar sling type arrangement designed for the papoose-like transport of baby hummingbirds. The hummingers would die if left home alone for more than two hours.

The methods and techniques for splinting birds is an invaluable section. It provides outstanding descriptions and illustrations of how to cope with the various broken bone problems a bird can come up with. The equipment you need and the precise methods you can use are very well defined.

Care of the Wild Feathered and Furred can be likened to a first-aid book designed to cover the simple but essential treatment of the majority of common crises that are attendant with keeping birds. *Diseases of Cage and Aviary Birds* is more an in-depth medical treatise on a multitude of bird problems some of which baffle even the trained veterinarian. Both volumes are essential to the informed bird keeper ■

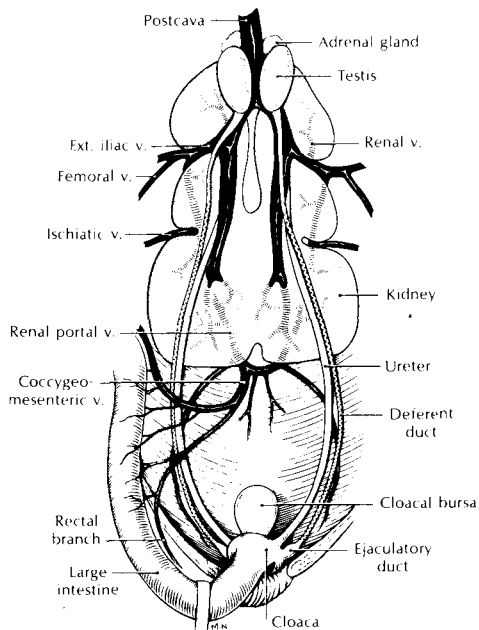


Fig. 5-28. The male urogenital system and the veins of the trunk.