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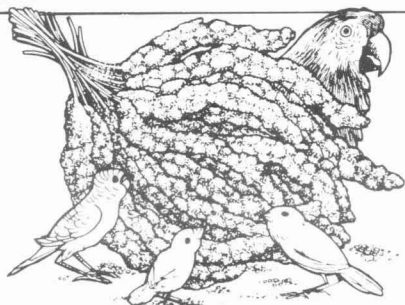
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# Canary Culture

by Tony Bucci

## Breeding Canaries in Aviaries or Cages?

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Here in Southern California, with mild weather throughout the year, the beginner will undoubtedly build an aviary in his back yard. A large aviary makes sense; there is a lot of room for the birds to fly around. To keep birds in a large aviary is easy. Supply them with a large seed dispenser which needs to be refilled only one a month, running water, a few nest boxes or nest cups, and you are all set to enjoy your birds. You can even go on vacation without worrying about your birds. Unless there isn't a sufficient amount of seed in the hoppers and unless the city water runs dry, there should not be any problems. The above is true only if you are keeping birds other than canaries.

Now let us look at the keeping and breeding of the canaries in aviaries. Suppose you have a nice aviary and you have decided to breed several pairs of canaries. If you have not totally screened your

aviary, the first problem may come up. Mosquito bites on canary legs and feet will cause sores. These sores will infect and cause death. Furthermore, if mosquitoes carry canary pox, which they are most likely to do, you will probably lose all your canaries.

I know some of you will say, "I've kept canaries in an aviary for ten years and have never lost one to mosquito bites." Yes, and I know of people who have been smoking for thirty years and are still alive.

One year I raised more canaries than I could keep in my bird room. I placed several of these canaries in the outside aviary (which I no longer have), and lost many due to mosquito bites.

I could give you names of several people who lost all their canaries in a non-screened aviary due to canary pox.

Now, let's see what happens if you have a screened aviary and no mosquito prob-

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The Bucci's enclosed patio serves as a bird room.

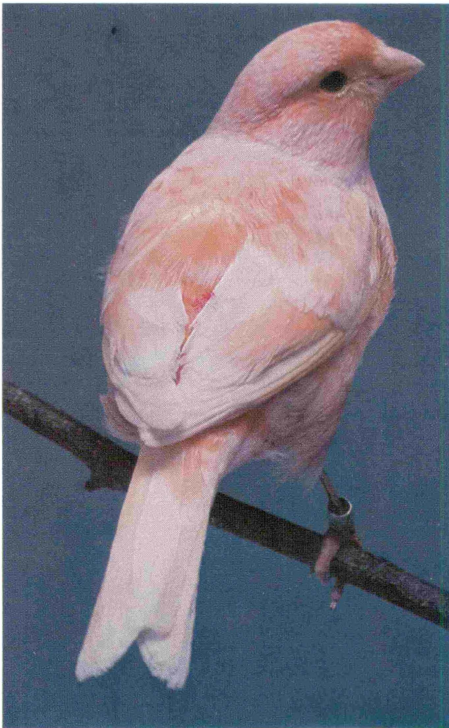
black and white photos by Tony Bucci



photo by Steve Clause

*Buff Yorkshire, owner/breeder, D. Gillilan/L. Mize*

photo by Steve Clause



*Red Factor Frost, owner/breeder, D. Gillilan/L. Mize*

lems. You are now in the breeding season. All the males are in top breeding condition. They are all singing and fighting with each other, wasting all that good energy which could be devoted to one hen. Yes, canaries are very aggressive and possessive. If two males happen to go for one hen, due to bickering she will not deposit fertile eggs. If by chance she does have one or two fertile eggs, who is the father?

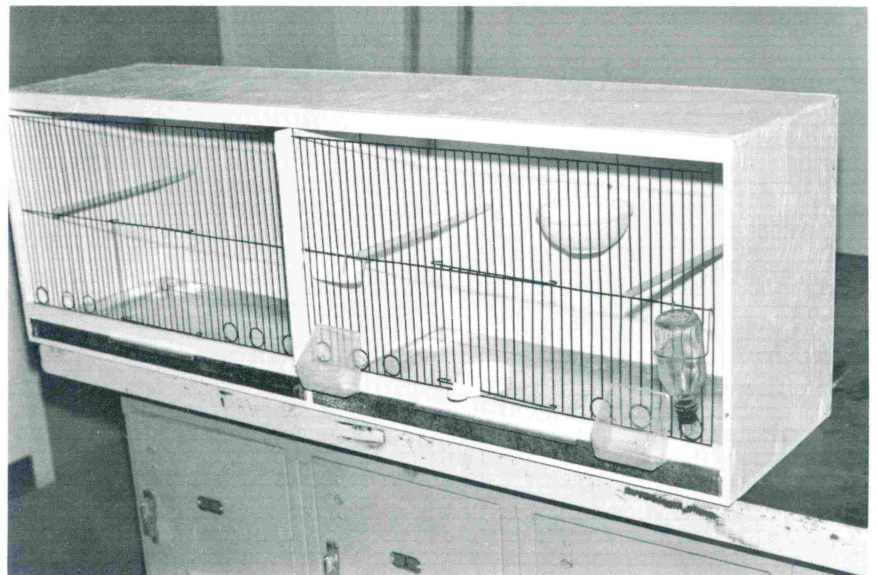
Canary hens are also very aggressive.

They will fight for a nest. No matter how many nests you have set in the aviary, two hens will squabble over that one particular nest and lay their eggs in the same nest. The hens will fight over who is to sit on the eggs. Both will sit in the same nest, sometimes on top of each other: a ridiculous sight, indeed. If you are lucky, some babies will hatch. Again, two hens will fight over who is to feed the babies. In most cases they will not feed properly and you end up with dead chicks. If extremely lucky and you have one or two chicks to

reach maturity, you have to guess which one is the mother of the survived chicks.

From the above description of my own experience, we can conclude that colony breeding will not produce genetically known canaries. Also, the chances of raising any quantity of canaries are very slim.

Now, then, the alternative is cage breeding. Yes, much more demanding of care, each cage will house one pair of birds or one hen and cock added as needed. Cage breeding offers many advantages.



*A good example of versatility is this double breeding cage. The center divider is removable to create a four-foot flight cage.*





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First, one need not live in a warm climate. A bird-room can be improvised in a spare bedroom, attic, basement, or any other spare room. City dwellers can enjoy the hobby of canary keeping and breeding.

My grandfather kept canaries in his barber shop. I recall many cages lining the walls. He bred canaries for fine song. He gave his canaries to his clients as gifts — sort of a “Green Stamps” technique to keep them coming.

Canaries have been bred for centuries in small cages and are no longer capable of living in total liberty. The cage is the beginning and the end of all their desires, and in the cage they prosper happily. The psychological and physical make-up of the canary is adjusted to a small enclosure.

This doesn't mean that any small decorative cage is suitable. Those tall round cages often sold for decorative purposes are not suitable to keep canaries in. Remember, canaries can't fly straight up like a humming bird or a helicopter. They need some horizontal flying room. Two feet should be the minimum length allowed for a comfortable and healthy environment. English “four-in-line” breeding cages make ideal small flights when the partitions are removed.

Indoor flights or outdoor screened flights are desirable to encourage exercise during non-breeding periods. Exercise stimulates vigor and fertility. Controlled breeding is best done in small cages. If you insist on breeding canaries in the aviaries, keep only one pair per flight ●



*Neatly stacked breeding cages can be built by anyone handy with a power saw.*



*The bird room, breeding cages to the right and center, large flights to the left.*

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