



the a.f.a.

WATCHBIRD

DEDICATED TO CONSERVATION OF BIRD WILDLIFE THROUGH ENCOURAGEMENT OF CAPTIVE BREEDING PROGRAMS, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, AND EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

it's bird show time

PREPARING BIRDS FOR EXHIBITION

by Joseph G. Griffith

Fall and early winter are the times for bird shows. Most birds have gone through their annual moults and are looking their best. Aside from the obvious pleasure that many people derive from showing their birds in competition there is another aspect of bird shows that is often overlooked.

It is surprising how many aviculturists see pictures of birds, talk about them, and even dream about them without ever seeing them in the flesh. Large shows allow these people to see birds that aren't generally available and to get some idea of the possibilities of each species. The larger the number of entries, the more benefit to the public.

Since many people would like to show birds, but haven't any idea of how to go about it, I would like to offer the following suggestions.

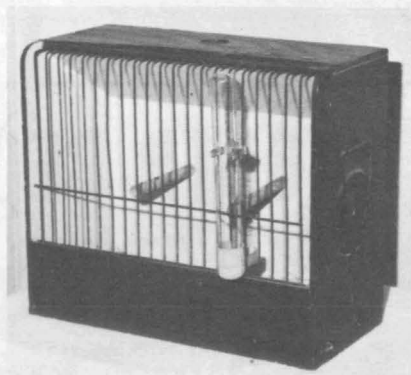
Most bird shows in this country are specialty shows, i.e. canary or budgerigar. Members of the respective clubs usually have all of the information that they need regarding the shows, but some of the hints I will give apply to them as well. Since we don't often have general cage bird exhibitions in the United States, the specialty clubs usually provide sections for "foreign birds." The class includes all hookbills, softbills, finches, and hybrids. Where large numbers of these birds are present, the class is carefully divided into smaller groups, interest is increased and competition becomes keen.

Birds are judged on condition, steadiness, clarity of color and markings, form, and in the case of hybrids, how well they illustrate their parentage. Rarity and difficulty of maintenance are also taken into account, but they are usually reserved for final decisions when two birds are competing against each other.

Many foreign birds are shown in pairs. Should you have a pair that you would like to show, it is a good idea to keep them in separate cages until the day before the show. This will insure that they remain in perfect plumage until they go before the judge. On the other

hand, it is often difficult to find a pair of birds that are equally good so it may be wiser to leave the lesser bird (regardless of sex) at home.

A standard show cage usually used to display parakeets and other small hookbills, measures 15" long, 6" wide, 12" high. Bottom, top, back and two sides are solid.



All wire (5/8" spaced) display cage measures 11 1/2" long, 8 1/2" wide, 10 1/2" high. Used for many types of medium sized finch, canaries, and foreign birds.

Birds should be in perfect plumage. Although we don't count tail and wing feathers as the Europeans do, the judge has the option of examining the bird should he have reason to suspect missing feathers. Birds with missing or crooked toes are disqualified.

Tail and wing feathers are most often dirty. This can be remedied by placing the dirty feathers on a smooth surface and rubbing with a wet cloth or sponge that has soap added. Rinse that part and put the bird into a clean cage to dry. Don't wash the whole bird

continued on page 13

PREPARING BIRDS FOR EXHIBITION
continued from page 1

unless absolutely necessary. Spray the bird daily with plain COLD water, a windex spray bottle is good for this. Spraying brings out the oils and tightens the feathers.

Steadiness is extremely important with many wild birds and judges award more points for birds that are steady and known to be nervous than for birds that are normally calm. The best plan is to put the bird in a cage several weeks prior to the show. Place the cage where there is a lot of traffic so that the bird gets used to people being around. A good plan is to keep the birds on a table and shift the cages daily. Members of the family should be encouraged to pick up a cage, at random, and carry a bird with them in their journeys about the house.

The size and shape of the cage to be used will depend upon the bird. Generally, cages should be longer than high, except in the case of longtailed birds. All unused doors and openings should be wired shut. Make sure that perches are far enough away from the ends of the cage so that the birds don't rub their tails when turning around. We don't have standard cages for foreign birds in this country, so the choice is up to you. If possible, the cage can be painted black with a non-leaded paint.

Seed and gravel for finches should be placed on the floor of the cage only. Water is preferable in a tube drinker. Hookbills and softbills should have food and water in their normal containers. Make sure that the birds know where the water is. Too often birds are put into the show cages the night before the show and they are in serious trouble by the next day.

The day before the show, go over the cage and make sure that everything is clean. Replace all food and water with a fresh supply. Show stewards have all of the necessary foods for most hookbills and finches, but it is a good idea to provide them with a small supply of food for your softbills and hummingbirds.

Entries are generally made on the Friday evening before the show. Judging is done the following day and the show is open to the public (at no charge) on Sunday. Awards are given on Sunday afternoon and the birds may be taken home after the awards are announced.

Canary judging is closed i.e. the judge goes about his or her business and there is NO communication between judge and any onlookers.

For foreign birds, I prefer "open judging". Where there is sufficient interest, the judge will explain to the observers what he is looking for and what he is doing. The communication is strictly one sided. There may be no questions put to the judge while judging is in progress. It is my opinion that this is the best way to educate people about their birds, and it also provides a basis for creating interest in new species.

Look to the show dates, prepare your birds, enter them and have a ball.

Magnolia Bird Farm

Owner
Frank Miser



**We Buy Birds
We Ship Birds
COMPLETE BIRD SUPPLIES**

(714) 527-3387

8990 Cerritos Ave. • Anaheim, Calif. 92804

Open 9 to 6
Closed Sun., Mon., and Holidays

BARONA BIRD FARM



**BIRDS
OF ALL KINDS
and
everything you need in
bird supplies**

WHOLESALE • RETAIL

Send stamped, self-addressed envelope for prices.

(714) 443-8315

Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Mon.

12995 Old Barona Road • Lakeside, Calif. 92040
(near San Diego)