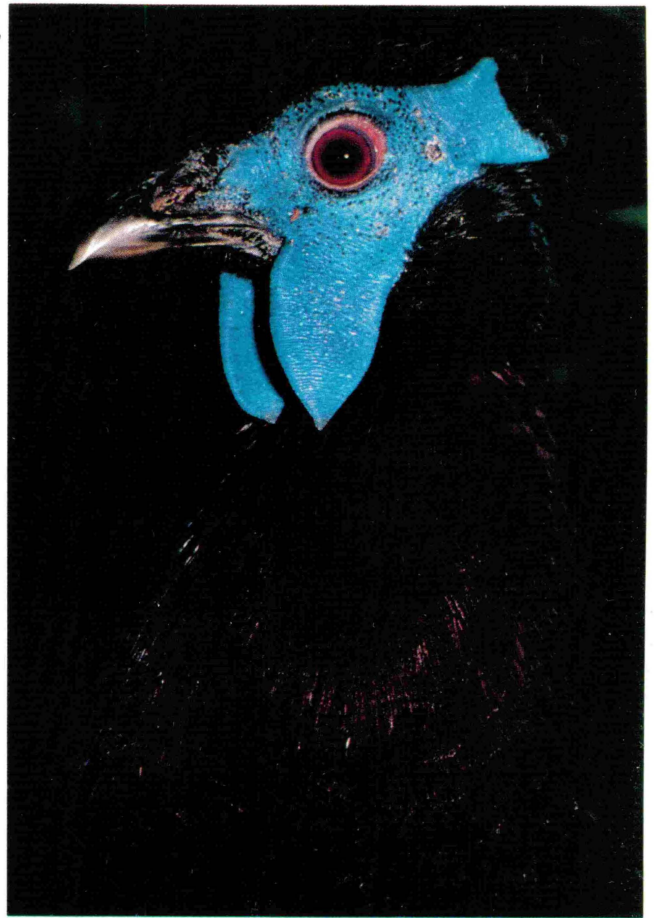


*Bulwer's pheasant, Lophura bulweri.*



*Temminck Tragopan, Tragopan temmincki.*



*Golden pheasant, Chrysolophus pictus.*

*Burmese grey peacock pheasant, Polyplectron bicalcaratum bicalcaratum*

Photos courtesy of San Diego Zoo

# Pheasants

by Mary Dam  
Haines City, Florida

The propagating of pheasants has been a happy experience for our family for 15 years. At TruLi D Farm we raise pheasants, ducks, geese, swans and assorted other birds. It is a family project and is so varied to accommodate the interests of all family members. We began this avicultural hobby with pheasants, and these interesting birds continue to be the most challenging and fascinating of all the birds to us. We began our collection with the most common of pheasants and kept adding to the number until we, at one time or another, have kept most of the species. As we matured in our expertise, and more importantly in our thinking, we finally settled in with pheasants whose natural habitat is most closely related to that of ours in Florida. Our other concern is to keep birds in danger of extinction and it gives us great pleasure to see good results with the endangered species.

The word pheasant applies to a group of game birds which are very different from others by very important characteristics. (From Delacour, Pheasants of the World). They are classed in a family where the male possesses a highly ornamental plumage and large size. Pheasants of some species have been known to man for 3 or 4 thousand years. They have been portrayed in Asian art works. All pheasants are found today in Asia, Malaysia and Pacific Islands, with one species in Africa. There are 49 species and 124 subspecies.

I would like to begin with some of the characteristics of the wild birds and then continue into captive propagation. Pheasants in their natural habitat range from hot tropical species, to lowland forests and up to high mountain ranges. The females lay their eggs in simple nests on the ground sheltered by grasses or shrubs. A few species will lay in tree nests. Peacock pheasants (which are the smallest) and the Argus (which is the largest pheasant) lay only 2 eggs to the clutch but all others average 6-12.

1. In general the males and females live in isolation, and come together for breeding which occurs in the spring of the year.

2. In some cases a male with 2-3 females

may form close ties. However, pheasants generally do not form a bond as do many other birds.

3. It is interesting to note that polygamy or loose association exists among birds of all orders in which the male shows a highly specialized and ornamental plumage.

4. There is a great variation in male courtship display. Some of the more colorful birds are magnificent with a projecting of horns from the head and an extension of wattles all the way to the ground. Some of the pheasants use foot stomping and emit a piercing scream which can be heard for miles.

5. Most pheasants roost in trees at night, but they spend much of their time on the ground. They walk and run well and use their strong feet and bills to scratch and dig the ground in search of food. Seeds and berries are the basic diet of the majority.

Pheasants are among the easiest of birds to keep and rear in a captive environment. Dr. Jean Delacour in France has undoubtedly kept more species in captivity than any other aviculturist. He is recognized as the leading authority on pheasants. He has set most of the standards that we follow in keeping and rearing pheasants.

To keep pheasants in captivity I will suggest the following guidelines which you will probably agree are pertinent to keeping any bird.

1. You must love what you are doing. Without the caring and desire one must stop here, and go no further. The trials, hard work, disappointments and frustrations seem to be a prerequisite to the joys of accomplishment.

2. You must be a responsible person. The birds are totally dependent on you for their survival. They must be cared for properly and they must be bred true. They should be bred under the best conditions to obtain strong healthy chicks. You should keep good records, and help others with their questions. Unlike some other birds, pheasants should never be cross bred.

3. Before you ever purchase your first bird you should have the proper housing facilities. As this will be one of your most expensive items it should be given careful

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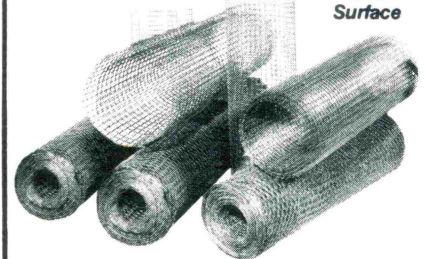
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thought. A large pen 10 x 20 feet is the most desirable, however some species can live comfortably in a smaller pen. When in doubt, the larger the better. The ground should have good drainage and so one should avoid low spots for pen construction. Once your pen has been constructed, special thought should go into the planting of shrubs and bushes. We find these to be very necessary for privacy, hiding, and nesting. Plants should be chosen with regard to your climate and should not be of a poisonous variety. We have also found that fruit bearing bushes are very nice for the birds. If you live in a cold climate it is necessary for some type of shelter to be provided in the back of the pen. Most pheasants can withstand cold more readily than wind and dampness. A roost of some sort should be provided because pheasants roost at night. The top of the pen should not be solid, but should be netting not strung too tight to prevent damage to the bird should it fly up and hit the top. Sanitation is very important and pens should be disinfected at least once a year and the ground treated with chlorohydrate of lime.

4. Now that you have the proper pens you are ready to purchase the birds. It is important to buy good birds from a responsible breeder. This is accomplished by knowing either personally or by reputation the person you are buying from. It is very discouraging to buy birds which are not healthy or are not bred pure.

5. Much has been said about specialized feed such as grains, vegetables, fruits, live food etc. However, feed in captivity must be determined by individual aviculturists, according to the area of the country in which he resides. Over all, a commercial feed is necessary for all aviaries. It is a well balanced feed which is proper for good nutrition. In warm climates grains which produce fat and body heat should be avoided where they might be advisable in cold weather. The rule we follow is to use a commercial feed and supplement it with greens, fruit, and mealworms during breeding season. Clean water changed daily should be provided at all times. Special attention should be paid to the feed so that if it gets wet it is removed before it has the opportunity to spoil.

6. Sanitation, and its importance, can not be emphasized too much. It is very important that the pens, feed, water, brooders, and incubators are clean at all times to keep healthy birds and produce strong healthy chicks.

7. One must be educated in proper breeding and rearing techniques. It is important to read and also to communicate with other people who have the knowledge

and experience. Some techniques are applicable to all situations, but when problems arise it is usually during breeding season. When the birds start to lay their eggs most breeders will remove eggs daily from the pens as they are laid. This promotes more egg production. The eggs are placed in incubators or under broody hens. The skills of the aviculturist or personal choice will determine which is used. If an incubator is used it must be disinfected and cleaned so there is no danger of infection. Some breeders hold their eggs for a few days so that they will have a large hatch at one time. If this is done the eggs must be held at 55-60 degrees F. After 5 days the life expectancy of the germ goes into decline and 10 days should be maximum. The eggs of those species with small clutches such as Argus and peacock pheasants with 2-egg clutches should be incubated immediately.

a. Incubator temperature on a forced air incubator is 99.5 degrees. The forced air incubator is best because the air circulates around the eggs and keeps the incubator temperature constant.

b. The eggs should be turned at least 3 times daily.

c. At ten days the eggs should be candled to remove the bad ones which can cause contamination in the incubator and to the other eggs.

d. When the eggs are pipped they should be removed to a hatcher, and when hatched and completely dry will be placed in a brooder.

e. Everyone has their own preferences as to brooders but they are primarily small boxes heated with light bulbs or some method of keeping a constant heat. The temperatures should be 95 degrees with a lowering of 5 degrees each week. When the chicks are fully feathered they can be placed outside in pens.

Therefore to review my points:

1. You must love what you are doing.
2. You must be a responsible person.
3. You must have proper housing.
4. You must have good birds.
5. You must use good feed.
6. Sanitation is vital.
7. One must be educated in proper breeding and rearing techniques.

At this point in time the pheasants — as well as many other birds — are under intense pressure in their natural environment. It is imperative that one does all he can to protect and preserve the various species. If each of us does one small thing to preserve a species perhaps there is hope for the future. In what other hobby can we enjoy the beauties of nature and at the same time enhance the future of the world?



**November 19, 20, 21, 1981**

**4th National American  
Cockatiel Society Show**  
held in conjunction with the  
**33rd National Cage Bird Show**  
Hilton Airport Plaza Inn  
8801 N. W. 112th St.  
Kansas City, Missouri 64195  
ACS Panel Judge: Harold Bowles  
For information contact:  
Nancy A. Reed  
55 Sunnyfield Dr.  
Windsor, CT 06095

**November 6, 7, 1981**

**Annual Open Bird Show**  
presented by the  
Missouri Cage Bird Association  
at the  
Noah's Ark Motor Inn  
1500 So. Fifth St.  
St. Charles, MO 63301  
Contact show secretary:  
Eileen Karius, 1111 Dover Place  
St. Louis, MO 63111  
Judges:  
Color bred—Harry Knapp  
Type—Harold Sodamann  
American singers—John Schaefer  
Budgerigars—Russ Roberts  
Finches, Wildbirds, Hook bills,  
Exotics—Charles Anchor

**November 7th, 1981**

**Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society**  
presents their  
**7th Annual All Bird Show**  
to be held at the  
Ramada Inn North  
Route 8, Allison Park, PA  
Judges:  
Type canaries—Carl Welsch  
Color bred canaries—Bill Henderson  
American singer canaries—  
Bill Hardingham  
English budgies—Dan Gallo  
Foreign birds and American budgies—  
Dr. Val Clear  
For information contact show  
secretary: Sara Prince  
107 Richard Dr.  
Glenshaw, PA 15116

**October 16, 17, 18, 1981**

**The Buffalo Canary and  
Budgerigar Club**  
presents their  
**45th All Bird Show**  
Judges:  
Budgerigars—Corienne Traver  
Color bred canaries—Gino Abbate, Jr.  
Type canaries—Robert Ross  
Wild birds and Hook bills—  
Fitzroy Hookumchand  
For information contact:  
Conrad Menclewicz  
23rd Erb Street  
Buffalo, N.Y. 14211

**October 30, 31, November 1, 1981**

**18th Annual Show**  
will be presented by the  
**Fresno Canary and Finch Club**  
at the Hacienda Inn  
Clinton and Highway 99  
Fresno, California  
Judges:  
Color bred—Scott Richie  
Type—Greg Farina  
Finches—Joe Krader  
Hook bills—Mike Cunningham  
Budgies—Hugh Wilson  
(sorry, no ship-ins)  
Show secretary: Hazel Espindula  
1633 W. Zumwalt, Tulare, CA 93274

**October 3rd, 1981**  
**Aviary and Cage Bird  
Society of South Florida**

will present its  
**Annual Open Show**  
at the  
Holiday Inn Lakeside  
8144 State Road 808  
Boca Raton, Florida  
(Florida's turnpike exit 28)  
Contact show chairman:  
Jim Stewart  
1321 N.E. 43rd Street  
Pompano Beach, FL 33064

**October 2, 3, 1981**

**Mid American Cage Bird Society**  
presents their  
**6th Annual Show**  
at Howard Johnson—North  
Des Moines, Iowa  
Judges:  
Color canaries—Mark Whiteaker  
Type canaries—Bill Reichert  
Budgies—Don Powers  
Foreign and hook bills—Robert Ziegler  
Show manager:  
Dorward Horrell, 3941 29th  
Des Moines, Iowa 50310

**September 20th, 1981**

**5th Annual Bird Fair**  
presented by  
**Missouri Cage Bird Association**  
at the  
Kolping House  
4035 Keokuk, St. Louis  
Contact:  
Dennis Karius  
1111 Dover Place  
St. Louis, MO 63111  
(314) 351-2580

**December 12th, 1981**

**2nd Annual All-American Gloster Show**  
to be held in  
St. Louis, Missouri  
Judge: Mr. John Knipp  
St. Louis Harley Hotel  
Earth City, Missouri  
Contact show secretary:  
Eileen Karius, 1111 Dover Place  
St. Louis, MO 63111

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