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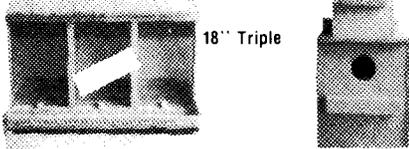
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Canary Culture

by Tony Bucci
San Pedro, California

Practical Suggestions for Beginners

By the end of October, all canaries are finished molting and are ready for the show season. By this time, canary fanciers have selected their prospective show contenders and breeders for their next breeding season.

The breeder is now ready to dispose of his surplus canaries, and this is the appropriate time to approach him to purchase his canaries. This proper time to purchase canaries can extend into November and December. January could be too late; however, you may try and be lucky enough to find some.

Assuming you have purchased one or more pairs of canaries, here are some suggestions to help you to succeed in breeding them. The first and most important point to consider is the birds' new climate. If the birds you purchased were kept in an unheated bird-room, do NOT, I repeat, DO NOT place them in a warm or heated room. They will go into a soft molt (partial molt), and they will not breed for you the following season.

Conversely, if the birds were kept in a warm place, do not place them outside where the temperature will drop a great deal. Try to duplicate the approximate climate that they were used to.

Secondly, do NOT place the birds in a room where lights are on until late evening. A lot of beginners will keep their recently purchased canaries in the living room where they can admire them. Well, living rooms are normally *lived* in and until late hours of the evening, and are therefore bad places to keep the canaries. The sudden "long daylight" could cause them to go into the soft molt. Again, this is not good if you want them to breed the next season.

If lights are kept on long enough to create 12 to 14 hours of daylight, canaries can be stimulated to breed early (November and December). Unfortunately, this can be detrimental. If the birds have not matured yet (10 to 12 months of age), they will produce infertile eggs. Or if fertile eggs are produced, the parents will not feed the babies, etc.

All of these negative events can be

prevented by placing your birds in a room where they can experience normal daylight or simulated normal daylight. The length of day can be altered with simulated daylight, but I would suggest this to the more experienced breeder. If normal daylight is used, the breeding season should start some time in February or March.

Thirdly, if you purchased your birds from a reliable source, the seller should provide you with instructions for their general diet and their nestling egg food, and some breeders might go as far as giving you a gallon of their water! A sudden change in environment plus a drastic change in diet can cause birds great stress. Many perfectly healthy birds have died from stress.

If the seller did not supply you with information of his canaries' basic diet, then ask him to give it to you. If you judge his diet to be inadequate for your approval, it can be gradually changed. This change should occur prior to the breeding season.

Fourthly, please don't house your canaries in an outdoor flight. Mosquitoes will get them! Mosquitoes are very fond of canaries' feet and legs. Their bites end up in infected sores and can cause death to the canary. To raise canaries, a bird room is necessary. A spare bedroom, garage, back porch, etc., will do, provided that the windows are screened. During the period prior to the breeding season, canaries should be housed in small flights. I consider a good small flight to be 4 feet long, 3 feet high and 2 feet wide. They can be made very economically with 1/2 inch by one inch wire mesh. You can construct one yourself for about \$20.

October, November, December and January are the months when canaries need rest and exercise. Ample room to fly and a good diet will get them ready for breeding season.

The basic diet consists of good, wholesome seeds. There are many commercial seed mixtures on the market. Some brands have "painted" seeds.

Some claim they have vitamins added to them. But they all have something in common: they are all very expensive.

My method of providing the basic diet economically is as follows. I purchase plain seeds: canary, rape, oats and niger. Then I make my own mixture, as follows:

- 7 parts Canary seeds
- 2 parts Rape seeds
- ½ part oats (groats)
- ½ part Niger seeds

If I am in doubt of my purchased seeds being old, I simply soak some of them for 24 hours, drain the water and let them sprout. If the seeds do not sprout within 3 days, the seeds are old and not fit for my birds.

To the above basic seed diet I supplement nestling egg food 3 times per week. A portion of egg food should be just large enough to be consumed within one to two hours. Here is my own nestling formula:

- 2 cups bread crumbs
- 1 cup Gerber "High Protein" cereal for baby
- ½ cup soya flour
- ½ cup corn meal
- ¼ cup wheat germ (regular)
- ½ tablespoon bone meal (find at health food store)
- 2 tablespoons yeast powder (find at health food store)
- 2 teaspoons Vionate vitamin-minerael powder (find in pet shops)

Mix above ingredients thoroughly and keep in a dry place.

Add the above mixture in the proportion of 3 heaping tablespoons to one hard boiled egg (boil egg 5 minutes, let cool, then grate or mash yolk and white). Keep this mixture in refrigerator.

In addition to nestling food, feed soaked sprouted mixed seeds separately, also 3 times per week. Mix 2 parts wheat, 2 parts rape, 2 parts canary, 2 parts millet and one part niger. Soak the seeds 24 hours, strain in a fine strainer and wash under a running faucet. Strain again and store the seeds in a glass jar, allowing them to begin to sprout. Refrigerate to keep them from sprouting any further.

In addition to the above, give the canaries fresh greens once daily which should include dandelion, spinach, chickory and kale. Also, keep mineral grit in the cages at all times.

You may ask, why am I feeding the nestling food at this time? The nestling food provides a good vehicle to supply all of the supplemental foods not found in seeds, such as vitamins, minerals, etc. Soaked sprouted seeds provide additional vitamins. Greens provide further



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Some canary flights in the author's birdroom.

nutrients to stimulate appetite and good health.

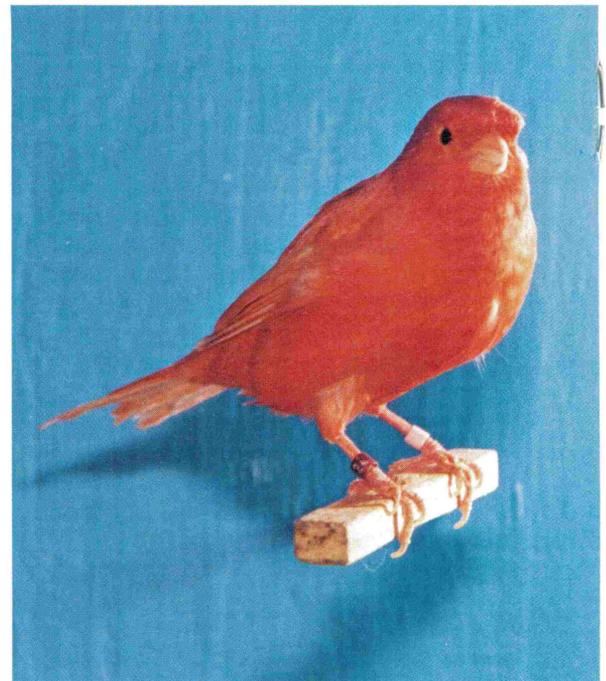
In addition to the benefit the birds receive from supplemental food during the rest and conditioning period, the prospective breeders are getting used to eating this essential rearing food. Once your birds are used to eating this food, when the rearing period comes they will feed their babies properly. I feel it is better not to change the nestling formula once accepted by your birds.

I failed to mention that during the period of rest and conditioning, the hens ought to be separated from the males. The males have a tendency to fight other males as the breeding season approaches. Use either two flights, or just one flight

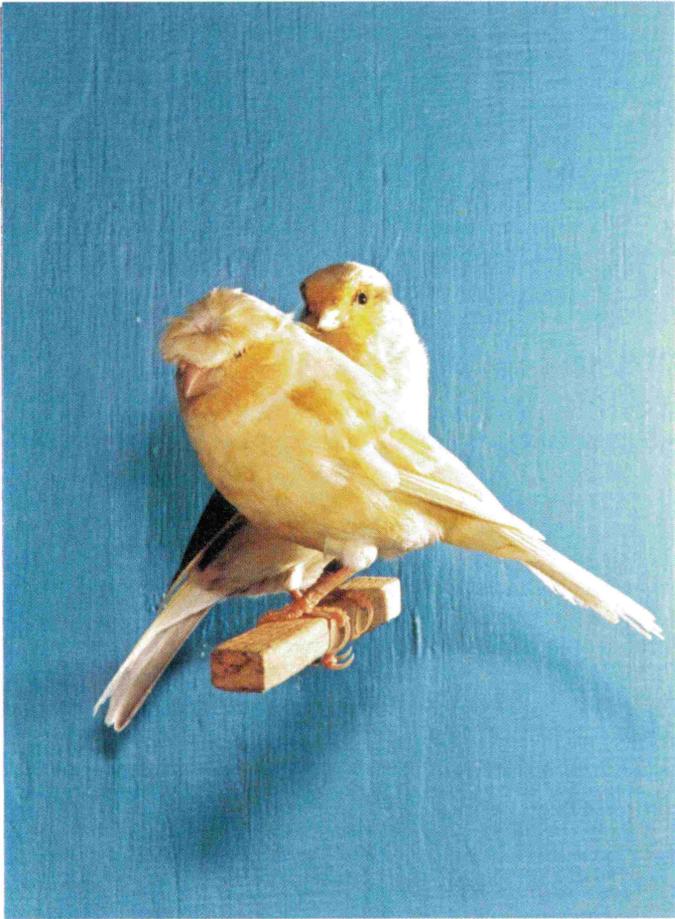
for the females and separate cages for the males. The old saying, "Distance makes the heart grow fonder" can be applied in this case.

To conclude this article I would like to suggest that you refer to the column elsewhere in this magazine entitled "Bird Shows." Find the shows you can attend and make every effort to be there. You can learn a great deal about canaries and other birds by participating in the show or just visiting. The fellowship and sharing of a common interest will enrich your life. Take some time off from the pursuit of material things and you will live longer! ●

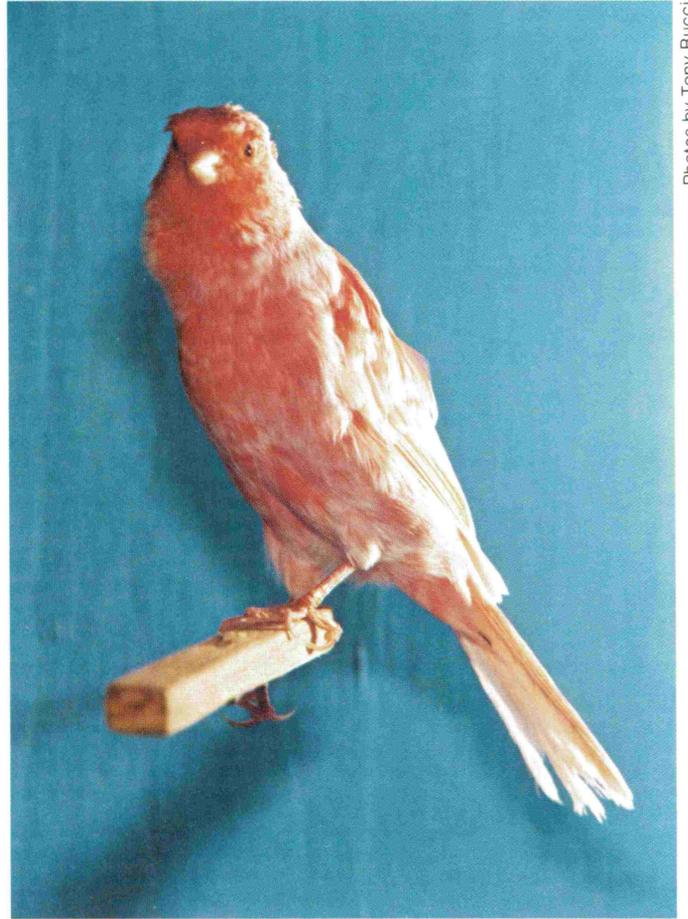
See Bird Show listings on pages 38, 39.



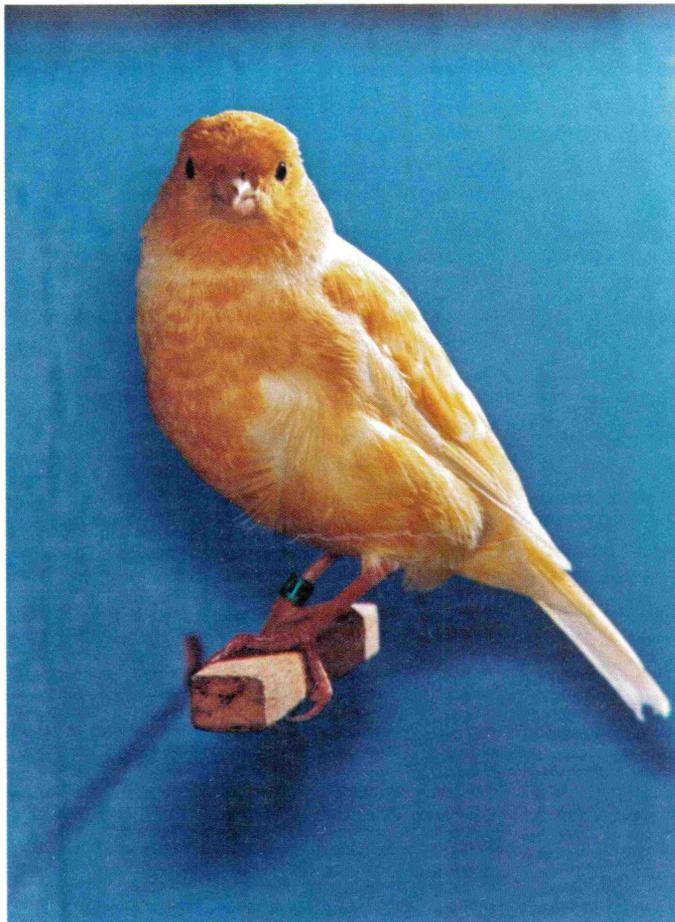
A red factor, non-frost canary



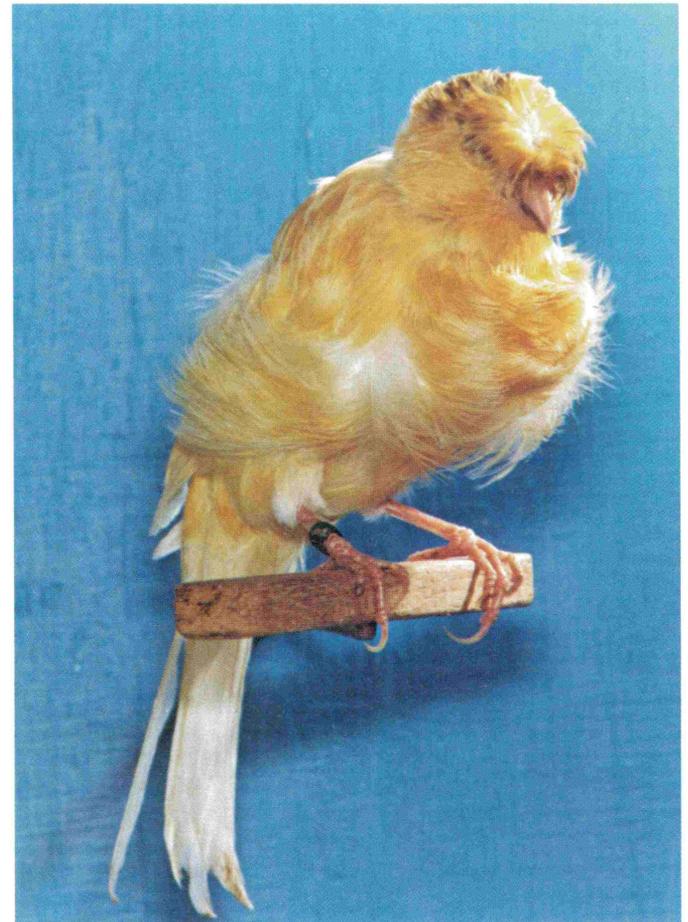
A Gloster corona and consort



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