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Canary Culture

by Toni Bucci,
San Pedro, California

Practical Suggestions For Beginners

The month of January ends the show season, and preparation for the next breeding season is the next major project. Assuming you have acquired your breeding canaries, the remaining time until breeding season is to be enjoyed with not much to do. Giving your canaries ample room to fly and a good diet are the priorities to be observed.

In my last article, I wrote about my way of providing the basic diet needed during the time of rest. The same diet should continue until breeding season. I also mentioned small flights (48" x 23" x 23"). This size will suffice in giving canaries enough space to exercise. If room and budget will permit, a larger flight such as one 8' long, 4' wide, and 8' high would be the largest you might consider. Keeping canaries in large flights offers less work. A greater number can be serviced at one time, and there is more room for them to exercise their wings.

On the other hand, canaries kept in large flights have the tendency to become obese. The opportunity for more exercise gives them a larger appetite, and competition adds to the problem. Canaries are very aggressive and competitive. They will compete for food: the greater the number, the greater the competition. In a large flight, canaries become more aggressive. They fight and damage their feathers. Also, large flights offer a great opportunity for spreading infectious diseases among greater numbers of birds.

SMALL FLIGHTS

The smaller flights (48" x 23" x 23")

are easier to construct because they don't require frame-work. Also, they are more readily available already made. I used to be a proponent of larger flights, but my attitude has changed and I now favor smaller flights.

Small flights will lessen all the disadvantages of the large flights except in the area of time for maintenance. Using small flights, I can now house more canaries in the same room. Recently, I have constructed several small flights. I would like to share this experience with you and provide you with some guide lines on how to build them.

GALVANIZED WELDED FABRIC

Galvanized welded fabric is the material used to make small flights. A four foot wide and 100 feet long roll is available from several outlets advertised in *Watchbird*. One inch by half inch (1 x 1/2) is the most convenient and practical mesh to house canaries and finches.

SPECIAL PLIERS

Flush-ground cutting pliers (Figure 1) are necessary to cut wire. The pliers are flush ground on one side to cut wires smoothly, a necessity to eliminate the sharp wire ends.

CLIP PLIERS, OR RING PLIERS

To fasten the wire fabric cages together, clip or ring pliers are necessary to apply clips or ring fasteners. I have used both. The rings are more convenient because they are easily removed in case of a mistake. The rings and ring-pliers are available from the same place where you purchase your wire fabric.

To construct the small flight, you



The author's wife, Stella, is shown stitching the cage together with rings using ring pliers.

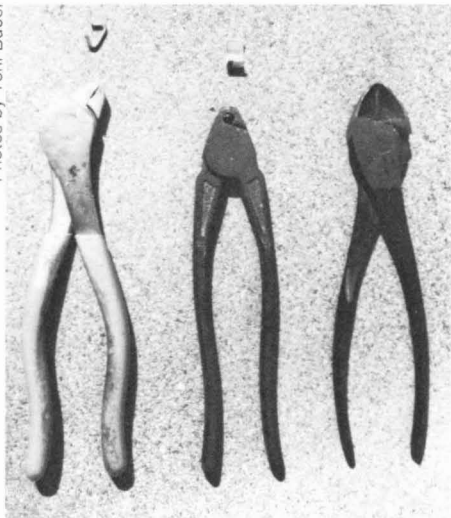


Figure 1 - starting from the top: a) Yellow handle ring pliers, and ring b) Clip pliers and clip c) Flush-ground cutting pliers



Figure 3 - Hamster drinker, hygienic and convenient.

simply begin by cutting the panels to proper size. I have chosen a size that will give the least amount of waste. Galvanized welded wire is expensive, and careful planning will give you maximum economy. If you follow my plan carefully, you will save time and have less waste.

You begin by unrolling the 4 feet wide roll long enough to cut the panels. To make one flight, you need five 48 x 23 inch panels. The 4 foot length (48 inches) is the width of the wire roll. All you need to do is cut 23 inches from the end of the roll for each panel. Each consecutive panel will have a half inch of waste which must be trimmed to make the edge smooth. After the panel is

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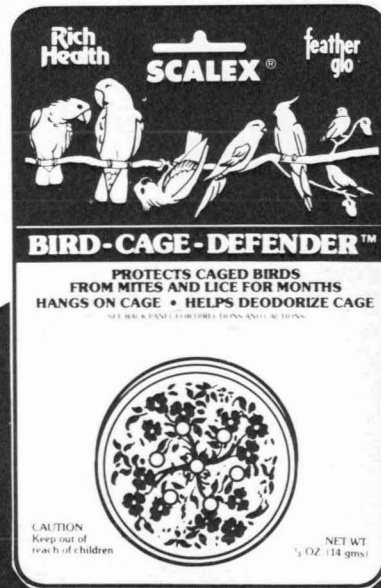
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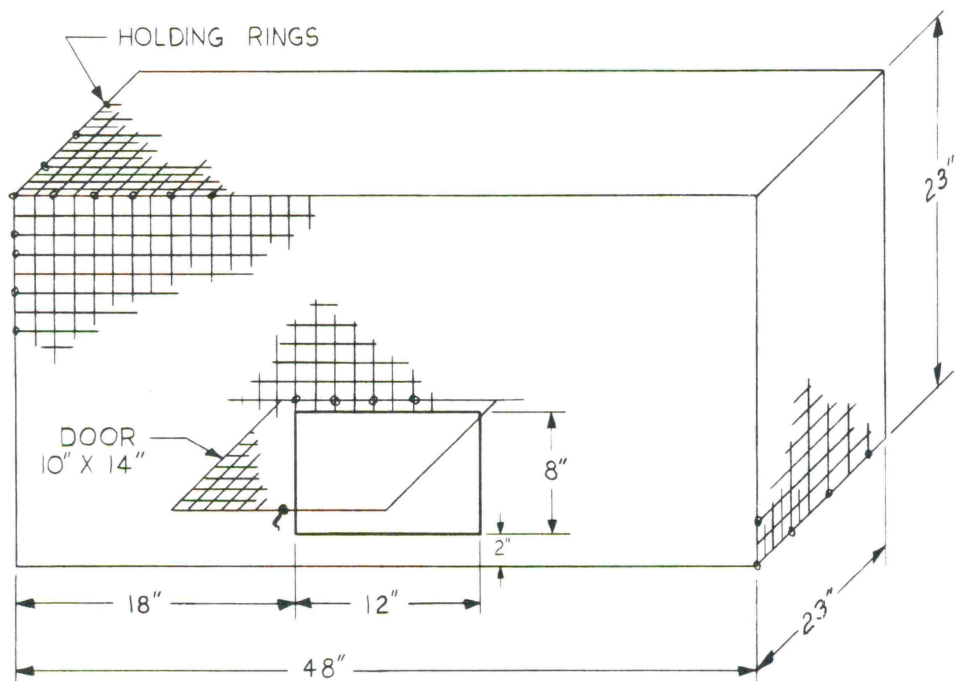


Figure 2 - completed cage - Drawn by J. Casto and C. Lever, students at Harbor Occupational Center, Los Angeles City School District.

trimmed, it must remain 23 inches wide. The panels will remain slightly concave and will require some straightening by placing them on the floor and stepping on them. After you have cut the final panels and have stepped on them, cut one panel into two to make the ends of the flight. The two end panels must be 23 x 23 inches, and this is the place where we waste two inches of wire.

Once the panels are cut, you simply stitch the cage with the rings or clips using the proper pliers. Space the rings 3 to 4 inches apart. Try to place the front and

back panels to curve inward. This inward curvature will give tension to keep the perches in place.

After you have stitched the cage on all the edges, you can now cut the door. The door opening is 12 x 8 inches and is placed in the center of the cage with a larger space left above it. (Figure 2)

The door flap is made slightly larger than the opening and is hinged on the top. The hinge is simply four rings at the top of the door flap. To keep the door closed, use a clothes pin.

This type of cage does not have a

Sturdy but light weight cages can be hung by two nails.





Silver brown satinett



Red-orange-ivory Isabel satinett. Both birds were raised in the author's aviaries.

metal pan on the bottom. You simply place folded newspaper through the door and then unfold it. The door is large enough to accomplish folding and unfolding of the newspaper. The newspaper is 23 inches wide so it fits exactly on the bottom of the cage.

Make perches 24 inches long with a half inch slot on each end. Dowels make good perches and are available at any hardware store. Dowels are very smooth and should be made rough. Use a steak knife to scrape grooves length-wise. Use at least two different diameters of dowels to make perches for each flight. Perches of different diameters give the birds a choice of where to rest and a welcome change to exercise their feet.

Water can be supplied by a variety of drinkers available on the market. I prefer the glass bottle with a rubber stopper and glass spout (hamster drinker). This type of drinker I consider the most hygienic and convenient. (See Figure 3) All you need is a seed dispenser and you are in business. Don't throw away those empty tuna cans; they make good seed dispensers.

After your initial expense, which is really an investment, for cutting pliers, rings, and ring pliers, the cost for each flight should not exceed \$15.00 The cost is based on 10 linear feet of galvanized welded fabric.

My next article will cover preparations for breeding and breeding techniques. ●





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