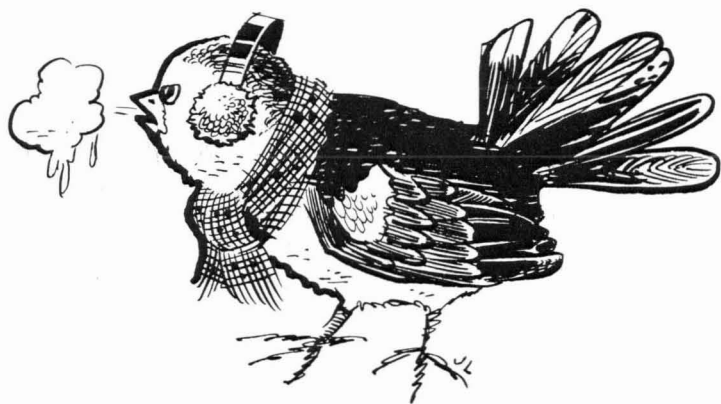


Wintering Your Birds

by Richard Moroz
Saskatoon, Canada



Today is September 12. I don't really start thinking about closing up my outside flight until the end of October, usually just before Halloween. The birds in my outside flights are very acclimatized to our weather. The building that they live in is kept at about 40 °F in the winter months. They are usually locked up right after the first snow and let out in the spring when the weather turns fairly nice. Sometimes there is still snow on the ground.

This morning I awoke to the sound of the twenty-eights and the princesses making their usual noise. I did the usual things I do when I first awaken. After I had shaved and gotten dressed, I went to check the birds and let the dogs out. Well, this morning I got the surprise of my life! I opened the door to about 1½ inches of slushy, cold snow. Visions of freezing birds ran through my head. Then I remembered hearing them this morning and dashed to the aviary.

There they were! It was minus two degrees! The male twenty-eight was doing his usual dashing around the flight but the hen was sitting there with a cap of snow on her head as if she enjoyed it there. The rock pebbles were on the ground, as usual, but instead of digging in the dirt, they were playing in the snow. The princesses were sitting like kings on their perches outside admiring the snow and trying to catch it as the larger flakes went by. I was really worried

about the splendids and the Bourke's. There was one pair of each still outside. The rest had already been moved in for the winter. I went inside to check on them as both pairs had laid late clutches and I was worried. They were not inside the flight. I checked the nest boxes. Both hens were there but the cocks could not be seen. I went outside and checked their flight and there they were—playing, so it seemed, under the large sunflowers that had been planted in their flights. They were really enjoying themselves. I figured that no one was really bothered by the snow or the cold so I left them, but made a note to make sure that I went home at noon to check on them again.

Noon arrived. I got home shortly after 12:00 and all the birds were still outside. The cockatiels had their wings spread and so did the rock pebbles. They were literally taking a bath in the rain. One pair of the rocks could not be seen on the outside so I went in and checked on them. I was particularly worried about this pair as I had just acquired them and they had not been around for long. They were inside, as wet as could be, preening themselves as if it was sunny and warm. They seemed offended, and I felt as if they thought that I was intruding on their privacy.

Everyone seemed to be faring the awful cold weather and slushy snow except me. I was freezing! I put a heater on in the building and set it for 60° think-

ing that the cold was just too sudden and I was afraid that they would get sick. The twenty-eights seem to like the cold and I have let them out in the dead of winter to take a flight when they are sitting by the closed up exit trying to get out, but never any of the others.

I went home again at three o'clock to see how they were. The building was at 61° and all the birds including the splendid and Bourke cocks were outside seemingly enjoying the cold. I unplugged the heater and by six o'clock the temperature had dropped to 31° inside the building. The birds were scattered with some outside and some inside.

Who am I to judge what they really like? Until it gets to the point where it is sub-freezing, I will leave them out this year with the exception of the grass keets. They might like it but I know from experience that they can't take really cold weather for extended periods of time.

As for myself, I will sit in the warmth and comfort of my home and watch them from the kitchen window. The lawn chairs that are firmly placed in front of the flight each year will be put away a little earlier this year. Maybe the birds will be locked up early this year, and then again, maybe not. They seem to enjoy it! If I could only train them to stay inside and go out for short periods of time, I would consider leaving the exit holes open year around. ●

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