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# Sometimes We Get Lucky

by Linda Haynie  
 Phoenix, Arizona

The community aviary I built to accent the beauty of water lily ponds in a tropical garden setting in a small back yard has been a source of ceaseless delights, and more than a few surprises.

Built 17' x 6' x 7' with an oriental-flavored shelter in back, right onto the fence, the aviary was meant to house larger birds, giving them plenty of flying room. However, since the cockatiels, plumheads, Bourke's and even the redrumps got along amicably in that much space, it was decided that a few smaller birds could share the quarters safely. First in was a pair of orange weavers, a pair of green singers and then a male gold-breasted waxbill. That was when the fun started.

Because these birds simply will not rest until all live vegetation has been defoliated, it turned out to be prettier and more convenient to entertain them all with live branches from whatever trees in the vicinity needed pruning. When larger branches were available they were stacked in a corner where the coturnix and button quail promptly made themselves at home. Ecstatically the birds chewed away at the upper pine and eucalyptus branches, leaving the lower ones intact where they dried and became a substitute for a forest floor carpeted with leaves and needles, making a haven for the quail's nests and hiding succulent insect treats.

Each species had its own idiosyncracies, revealed to us during the hours we spent lounging in the area, collecting our wits after busy days. Oblivious to the humans nearby the aviary occupants went on about their bug scavenging and preening. Lacking a mate, the gold-breasted waxbill spent most of his time on the ground with the quail. He sat with or almost under them, sharing their dust baths and their food, even preening their faces. He was an acrobatic flier, so nimble that when the redrump male tried to catch him on his first day of introduction he flew loop-de-loops and circles until the "red-faced" redrump gave up in disgusted humiliation. The head of the pecking order was not pleased to be shown up in this manner but he has since left all the smaller birds quite alone.

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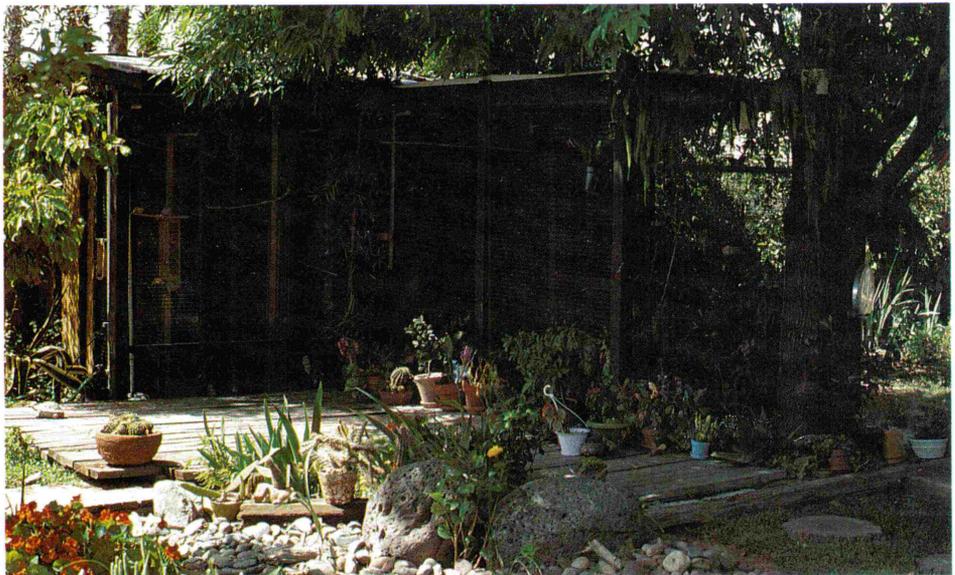
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*Author's aviary in her backyard garden setting is a fine example of beauty and function. With proper diet, places to nest, places to hide and take shelter, chances of breeding are greatly increased. This kind of careful planning gives one an edge on 'luck.'*

Such a mighty mite certainly deserved the companionship of a mate, and before long one was found. He loved her at first sight, and although she was reticent, he bravely and patiently pursued her. Within a few weeks the tiny beaks were seen to be carrying down feathers about.

Even though the orange weavers were out of color they had mysteriously built intriguing little hanging baskets of pine needles all over the aviary. Partially hidden by the branches, one by one the baskets appeared, none occupied, all within two feet of the ground. Into one of these pre-fab apartments the waxbills settled, lining the interior with the soft down. Feverishly they worked, spending a great deal of time inside. Five eggs soon appeared, and although both parents faithfully incubated during the requisite fourteen days, the eggs appeared infertile. Eventually a diamond dove dismantled the abandoned nest, having nothing better to do in his spare time. But within two weeks another site had been selected and work began again.

By now the crabapple tree in the yard had begun to dump its booty on the ground, a tree that is not supposed to do well in the desert, incidentally. Because the wild birds seemed to find the fruit delectable, I gathered it and piled it in the aviary. In addition to being a fine in-season fruit supply, as it began to rot it became a smorgasbord of fruit flies and maggots.

Late July seemed unbearably hot, so I spent less and less time outside. In passing one day I noticed both parents off the nest and, assuming another effort had ended in futility, I plucked it away from the branches to take inside as a souvenir. Imagine my horror and delight when I

discovered two live babies two or three days old inside! Carefully I returned it as best I could to its former location, anxiously waiting to see if the parents would accept it. Undaunted, they returned without a pause. A little over a week later during a nest-check one terrified youngster flew panic-stricken from the nest to the aviary netting 8" away and tried to go through the wire, nearly succeeding. When I couldn't find his nest-mate I sadly realized where it had gone. That evening when I brought watermelon rinds out to the birds what should I see but the tiny fledgling trying desperately to get back *into* the aviary for his evening meal. After I put him back inside, the tiny mother went inside the nest and piped insistently until both struggling infants, no bigger than the end of my thumb, clambered back into the nest where they were ceremoniously tucked into bed and given a drink of water and ordered not to come out until morning.

As the days passed I was careful not to accidentally frighten them into trying another escape. One scruffy youngster is cream-breasted while the other is dull gold, so I am guessing the creamy one is a female, being the less brightly colored of the sexes. Usually sitting quietly together, they nonetheless occasionally exhibit the rapid tail-twitching mannerism of the parents.

The little parents have worked ceaselessly to fill the tiny mouths with insects and it has paid off. Although I have given them mealworms a few times, the more natural arrangement of fruit a la bugs seems to be their preference and it certainly is mine.

Sometimes we get lucky! ●

**American Federation of Aviculture**  
(EXCLUSIVE FOR MEMBERS)



## Insurance for Birds At Group Rates

The American Federation for Aviculture has put together a comprehensive insurance program that protects its insured members from loss as a direct result of the following perils:

- 1) Fire, Lightning, Explosion, Smoke, and Artificial Electricity
- 2) Windstorm, Cyclone, Tornado and Hail
- 3) Accidental Shooting (except by the Insured or Employee)
- 4) Earthquake, Flood, Drowning, and Collapse
- 5) Attack by Dogs, Cats, or Wild Animals not owned by Named Insured or Employees
- 6) Theft, Vandalism and Malicious Mischief

All Perils are subject to a \$100 deductible.

**The annual rates are:**

\$2.00 per \$100 of coverage for first \$10,000  
\$1.50 per \$100 of coverage for excess of \$10,000

Subject to a \$25.00 minimum.

**Extensions of Coverages:**

- 1) Transit up to \$5,000 coverage on birds while in transit
- 2) Newly hatched birds are automatically covered for thirty (30) days up to 50% of their parents' value
- 3) In the event a parent dies due to an insured peril which causes the offspring's death, the Company will pay up to 50% of the parent's value

The complete terms of the insurance coverage are set forth in the Group Insurance Policies issued by the Insurance Company. Each individual who becomes insured will receive a certificate outlining the benefits. While this explanatory material describes the group insurance, it is not to be considered a contract.



**George L. Brown  
Insurance Agency**



George L. Brown, Insurance Agency  
30131 Town Center Drive, Suite 275  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677

**APPLICATION ON REVERSE SIDE**



## American Federation of Aviculture APPLICATION

Application (coverage is not in effect until application is received by Company or its Authorized Representative).

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Birds (if different from mailing address): \_\_\_\_\_

If value for species is higher than normal because of markings, training or breeding, the insurance company must have appraisal to substantiate values.

1) Are you involved with birds?

- Personal Pets/Breeding Hobby
- Financially Sustaining Breeding Hobby
- Commercial

2) Are premises occupied day and night where birds are located?

- Yes
- No

3) If no, explain \_\_\_\_\_

4) Do you transport birds regularly?

- Yes
- No

5) If yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_

6) Have you had any losses in the past three years (whether covered by insurance or not)?

- Yes
- No

7) If yes, explain \_\_\_\_\_

8) Describe type of aviary and/or cage construction, location and general security: \_\_\_\_\_

cut on dotted line

### Bird descriptions and values. List all birds valued at \$300 or more. INDIVIDUAL & APPRAISED BIRDS

Species	Name or ID #	Sex if known	Description (color, character, talent, etc.)	Value

### GROUPS OR COLONIES

Species	Description (color, normal, mutation, etc.)	Individual Value Max \$300	Total Group Value

**MAIL TO:** George L. Brown, Insurance Agency, 30131 Town Center Drive, Suite 275, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677