

# Basement Breeding Moluccan Cockatoos

by  
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Temple Terrace, Florida

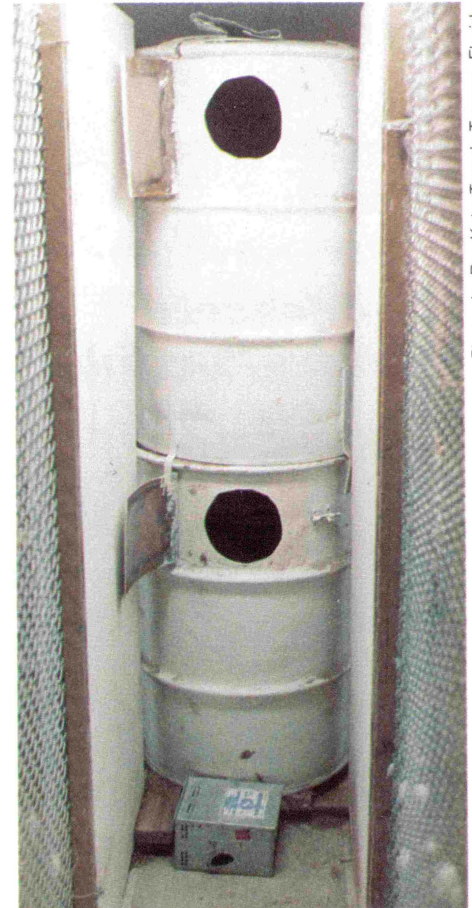
We who are unfortunate enough to live in a climate that prohibits year-round outdoor breeding accommodations for our birds are often confronted with a limited amount of space in which to house our birds. Such was the case in our aviary, a *disadvantage* that may have contributed to successful breeding of two pairs of newly introduced Moluccan cockatoos two successive years in a row.

The basement space available was long and narrow. After much discussion and discouragement from other aviculturists, two 14 x 8 x 6 flights were constructed in extreme close proximity. Two metal drums were installed as nest boxes in the rear of each enclosure, one barrel placed vertically on top of the other, "condominium style." One pair's

access to the box was high, the other entry low.

To provide security, a visual screen covered two thirds of each cage. To simulate communal feeding, dishes were placed in full view, cage to cage. Perches were placed to encourage flight, with additional 2 x 4s offered to fulfill instinctive destruction. The light cycle provides twelve hours of daylight, with one hour of dawn and one hour of dusk. A night light supplies continual moonlight. Humidity control during the two year time period fluctuated greatly during the cockatoo breeding season.

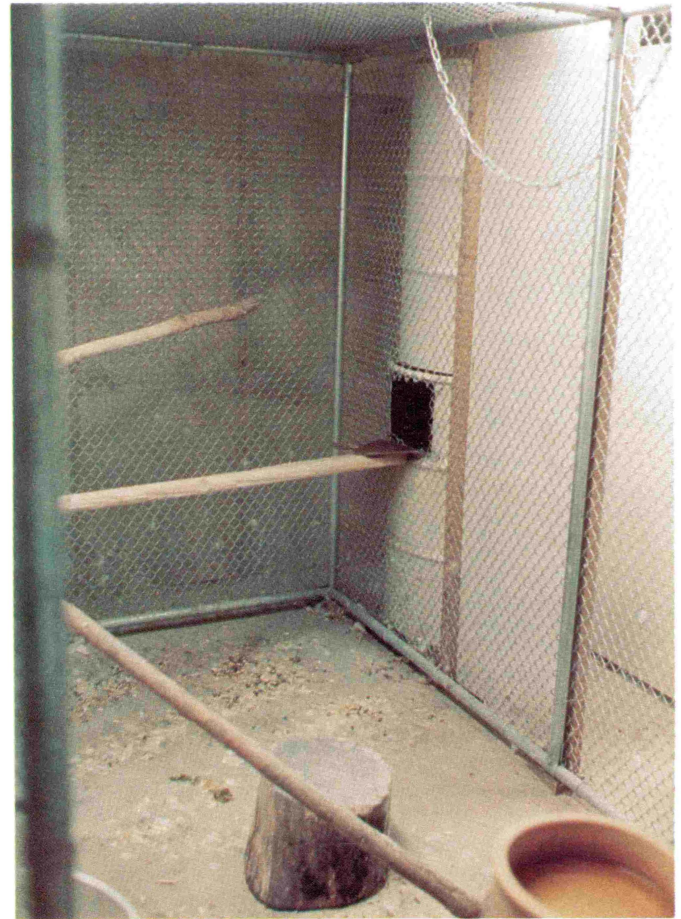
Our much disputed diet consists of Lafeber's Special Needs Diet in pelleted form and water. We add a few sunflower seeds each day as we change



*Condo style nest drums with inspection doors open.*



*The second story apartment.*



*The entrance to the downstairs nest barrel.*

Photos by Ray Kotz, Temple Terrace, Florida



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*The author's smile of success.*

water, mostly for our own psychological satisfaction. If you are interested in learning more about Lafeber's pelletized food, contact Dorothy Products, 7278 Milwaukee Avenue, Niles, Illinois 60648. In this short paper we are focusing on the housing of the birds rather than the diet.

The backgrounds of both pairs of birds were similar. Females were purchased from private parties, former pets, and the males were gotten directly from quarantine.

Without closed circuit cameras basement breeding inhibits observing behavior patterns in birds. A hurried scurry occurs at an initial sound of a foot upon the staircase and most birds dive into their nestboxes. Due to the commotion upon entering the basement we felt that only one trip to the basement would be made daily. During that time all feeding, watering and maintenance would be completed. A rare, undetected observation revealed what appeared to be a territorial display between males protecting their feed bins.

During breeding season blaring screams encompass the house during the middle of the night. What music to one's ears! Predictably, within the

month, eggs have been laid by pair number one. After hatching, the cries of the young chick(s) seemed to stimulate the other pair to follow suit. Within three weeks of the first clutch hatching, the second hen clutches.

The parents have been responsible for rearing their chicks up to the age of four weeks. We feel the lack of disturbance is helpful in the initial rearing of the chicks by their parents. The nestbox is never checked after an initial peek at the newly hatched cockatoos. Neither parent neglect nor chick devastation has been a problem. During the past two years each pair has successfully hatched and raised three chicks. Each pair hatched one chick their first clutch, and two each from their second clutches. Perhaps the calm nature of our cockatoos was a determining factor in such instant success.

I have reported in this article two relatively new concepts in psittacine bird breeding. The concept of a pelletized diet is one I strongly recommend. The arrangement of nest barrels "condominium style" to help conserve space is another concept that worked for us.

Hopefully the greatest asset gained from my writing will be to encourage you. Don't be afraid to try a different concept with your birds if you feel strongly about a new idea. We were very discouraged after all the hard work and long hours of preparing our facility when experienced breeders would tell us our set-up would never work. That anguish has totally dissipated today.



*Two basement beauties.*

### **Editor's Note:**

*Since this article was written, Ray and Dona Kotz have abandoned their Barrington, Illinois bird condo and moved to Florida to reestablish their aviaries, still condo style, but in the glorious open air rather than in a basement. ●*