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by Sheldon Dingle
Norco, California

Parrot Production and Pionus Parrots

This book review is timed so as to be read in mid-winter and give you a few ideas about preparing for the spring breeding season. But if you happen to pick up the magazine in August or September, not to worry. Use the ideas to prepare for the following spring.

When baby psittacines begin arriving they bring a few problems with them and everything you can learn about them will be helpful. Experience is probably the best teacher but it is often very expensive. If you can learn from someone else's experience it is to your advantage. Books, of course, are a tap into the experience of others. A lot of reading and talking to other aviculturists, combined with hands-on experiences lead to a well seasoned aviculturist who will have a higher rate of avicultural success than the fellow who has to re-invent the wheel every time he needs one.

If you have psittacines two of the most important books you can have are *Parrot Production incorporating incubation* and its companion volume *Pionus Parrots* both by John and Pat Stoodley. There is some overlap but I recommend both books as they supplement one another very well. Each book can, however, stand alone on its own merits. The only thing better than one good bird book, however, is two good bird books.

Both books contain excellent chapters on aviary design with many handy tips that can be of much help to a newcomer building his or her first aviaries. There are also several recommendations and how-tos that can be

employed by even the old-timers whose aviaries have stood for years. Let's face it — none of our aviaries are perfect. A touch up here and an improvement there always helps. The aviaries described range from the "Noegel" cage suitable for very mild weather to the Stoodley's own design that has double brick-skinned walls filled with insulation. All in all, I don't think I've ever read better chapters on aviaries.

Both books also dwell considerably on nutrition and diet. Keep in mind, however, that the Stoodleys specialize in South American psittacines, mainly Pionus, Amazons, and macaws. These groups of birds have done very well on the Stoodley diet of pulses (beans/legumes) vegetables, fruits, nuts, grain, and a little animal protein. The beans are cooked soft, wheat is sprouted and the vegetables, fruits etc. are diced, shredded and chopped. The end result is a basically soft diet that seems to work well for the Stoodley's birds but involves a bit more time and labor than more conventional diets. If your birds are dry land seed-eaters you might want to experiment a bit before a wholesale change over. In fact, Stoodleys have the honest and good sense to say that all the things suggested in their books are things that have worked for the Stoodleys, in England, with the specific types of birds they keep. The same things may or may not work under your circumstances in your location.

One area of aviculture, though, that doesn't vary as widely as aviaries or diet is the incubation and hatching of parrot eggs. The Stoodley books deal very strongly with the reason for and methods of incubating parrots eggs, hatching them, and hand feeding the chicks. The Stoodleys, to my relief, agree that, "Parent birds that successfully rear their young should be encouraged to do so for they will make a far better job of it than will most keepers." If, for any number of reasons, the parent birds fail then the keeper has the option of taking the eggs or babies and trying to raise them.

I don't know of any other books that treat the subject of incubation and hand-rearing parrot eggs. Indeed, the study of Stoodley was forced upon my wife and me by two recalcitrant pairs of cockatoos who were good at laying eggs but lousy at raising babies. In a panic we wound up with cockatoo eggs in an incubator and didn't know what to do next. Out came the Stoodley books. They discuss prin-

ciples of incubation, types of incubators, temperatures, the humidity factor, the sorts of equipment (thermometers, hygrometers, etc.) needed, and the various problems one is likely to encounter. If you are handy there is even a plan for building your own incubator.

Incubation is one thing and, if you didn't know it, hatching is another. The Stoodley's devote a full chapter to the act of hatching an egg when its period of incubation is up. There are excellent diagrams and photos that show the egg in various stages of development. You are told what to look for at each stage and the common pitfalls are explained with solutions given. You are told how the air space changes shape and size. You are told how to recognize problems and how to preclude some and take corrective action on others. Actually, my wife should evaluate this section of the books as she has gained a great deal of first hand experience incubating and hatching cockatoos and is an old hand at it now. She says the Stoodley books give an excellent background and provide many details. For a more complete literature on incubation and hatching she also recommends *The Incubation Book* by Dr. F. Anderson Brown, and *Falcon Propagation* edited by James D. Weaver and Tom J. Cade.

Once the baby parrot is hatched, blind and naked, your dedication is put to the test. You are obligated to feed and care for the tiny creature. Fortunately, the Stoodleys have an excellent chapter on hand raising. It outlines everything you'll need and describes in detail the technique used successfully at the Stoodleys' sanctuary. There are hundreds of ways to hand raise parrots but I've never read a better account than is found in *Parrot Production*.

Leaving aviaries, diets, incubation, hatching, and hand rearing aside you more casual aviculturists will be glad to know that *Parrot Production* and *Pionus Parrots* are two of the finest coffee table bird books around. You don't even have to read them to get more than your money's worth. The photographs are of the very highest professional quality and show the birds in the most exquisite detail. All but two of the photos were taken by John Stoodley himself which goes to show how serious the fellow is about his birds and his books.

All things considered, *Parrot Production* and *Pionus Parrots* by John and Pat Stoodley are a pair of

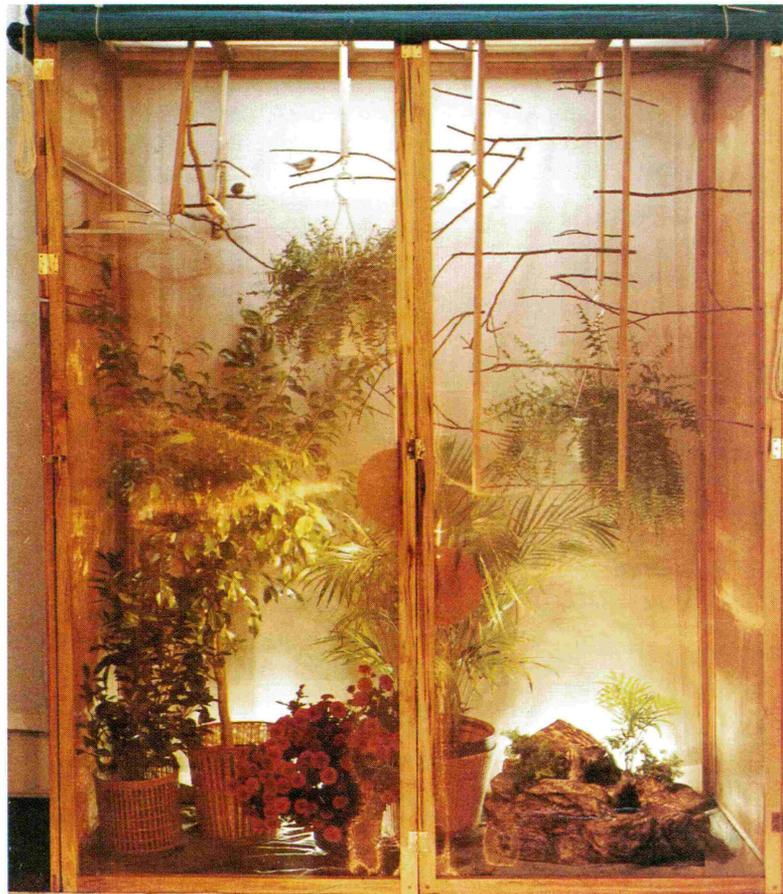
books that are unbeatable at their price. They will delight the newest aviculturist as well as the oldest. The books contain a plethora of good photos, maps, and diagrams that can be casually enjoyed. They also contain much detailed information that will profit the most advanced aviculturist. It's hard to beat books like these. I recommend getting them as soon as possible. Your next parrot breeding season will be enhanced.

The books can be gotten by mail order from Dale Thompson, 29156 Sand Canyon Rd., Canyon Country, Ca., 91351 or R & L Exotic Birds, RR #1, Box 340-C, Hwy. 484, Dunnellon, Florida 32630. The price for each book is \$29.95. Include sales tax if you live in California or Florida and add \$2.50 for shipping. ●

At the Stoodleys' Broadhalfpenny Down Conservation Sanctuary parrot production really works.



Photo by John Stoodley



The Avian Theatre Company

presents

The Aviary Story

After months of working with nine finches in five separate cages in our dining room, we decided to design and build an aviary for our birds. We wanted simplicity, beauty, some portability and as natural an environment as possible. The result of that design is the walk-in handcrafted hardwood aviary shown.

This "Beverly Hills" model is equipped with tropical plants, a waterfall that the birds bathe in and drink from, and numerous natural wood perches. We have provided a nesting area for our birds that wish to breed; two handsome porcelain food dishes have replaced the original nine, and our birds fly and sing all day long.

The aviary exceeded our expectations in reducing the maintenance problem to an easily managed level. In addition, it is even more beautiful than we expected. We were so pleased with the design we have created smaller versions with expandability options for you.

Our unique design allows two people to set up our largest aviary quickly and easily. We will ship complete with options such as a waterfall and all the instructions and advice you will need to set up and maintain your tropical rainforest environment.

Walk-in models:

7 1/2' high x 6' long x 2 1/2' wide

5' high x 6' long x 2 1/2' wide

7 1/2' high x 3' long x 2 1/2' wide

5' high x 3' long x 2 1/2' wide

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All models are shipped unassembled. Also ask us about our parrot playground. It will be available soon. Send SASE (business size) for complete information or call

(813) 746-7434

The Avian Theatre Company

1714 Sixth Avenue West

Bradenton, Florida 33505