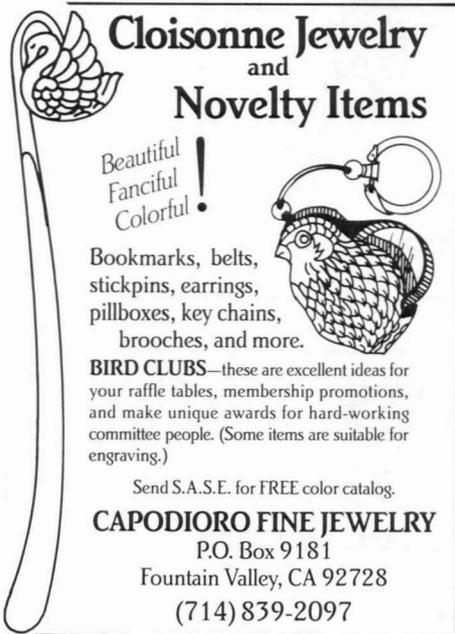




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# Adventures in Moving With Birds

by Kayla Snyder  
Kulpsville, Pennsylvania

Who would have thought that two budgies would have led to a breeding collection of: budgies, cockatiels, finches, lovebirds, doves, rosellas, Indian ringnecks, conures and cockatoos. Not me.

When my husband and I married, part of the merger was a parakeet (budgie) at his house and one at my house. Naturally, we wanted to consolidate two cages into one. Little did we know that one was a male and the other a female. Actually, we didn't find that out for sure until two years later when we decided to build our first patio aviary in San Jose, California. What a joke! The idea was to put a few colorful birds together in one large aviary, with no safety door mind you, that was 15' x 16' x 7' high. The main purpose was to sit and enjoy the birds and let them do their thing. The collection consisted of: one pair of budgies, a pair of canaries (the female flew the coop shortly after acquiring her), 16 ringneck doves, and a male cockatiel.

At the time, I knew nothing of bird keeping, clubs or magazines. I owned two bird books, neither of which dealt with aviaries, so I began to check out books from the library. Most of the books were written in the early part of the twentieth century. They were helpful, but I kept thinking there must be more up-to-date information. I knew I needed help, but didn't know where to turn. The reason why I knew help was needed was the fact that eggs were laid,

babies hatched, babies were being killed or born deformed. However, believe it or not, I did not become discouraged.

We decided (actually, the neighbors decided for us) that we should get rid of the doves. They cooed morning, noon and night. Instead, we bought a pair of diamond doves and their sound pleased everyone.

Just when we got things settled down, my husband's company moved us to the San Joaquin Valley in California. At this point I was seven months pregnant and wanted to move the bird collection as well as our household items. I had traveled all over town searching for more books, finally acquired a few to give us some good guidelines for building aviaries, diets and what should or should not be kept together.

After the big move, we began to plan our landscaping around the outdoor aviaries, both of which would have safety doors! One aviary would be off the kitchen, 4' x 8' x 8', divided for colony breeding of budgies *alone* and the other half for four pair of zebra finches and a pair of diamond doves.

Another aviary was constructed behind the diving board of our pool, measuring 3' x 12' x 6', with a section for two pair of cockatiels and another for two pair of peachface lovebirds. The busy summer months of daily use of the pool did not phase the birds in the least. All went about their business of laying and rearing their young. I might add at

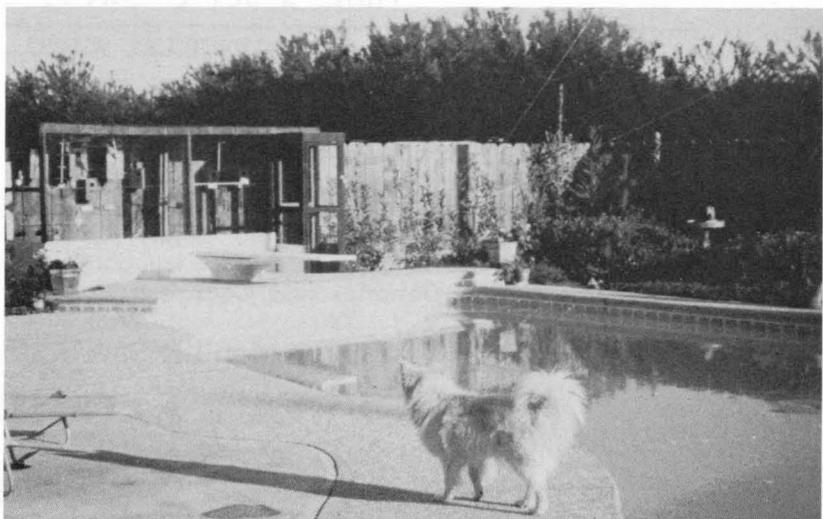


Photo by Kayla Snyder

This two-section aviary was constructed for two pairs of cockatiels and two pairs of peachfaced lovebirds in the San Joaquin Valley in California.

this point that I nearly single-handedly built these aviaries. I knew nothing of carpentry, but had a great sense of determination. If the aviaries were to ever be built I knew I was the one to do them. So I began to check out carpentry books at the local library. I managed to learn to operate a circular saw, cut wire, drive nails, use a staple gun and put a roof on backwards. Ah, yes, mistakes were made, but those mistakes were never made again. I made new ones with each new aviary!

The raising of the budgies was most enjoyable. I never knew what color the babies would become and I loved watching their behavior. I bred mostly English males to commercial American hens. I was pleased with their size, color and stamina. The babies were always banded between the fifth and seventh day. Records were kept on all pairs. Most of the time the hens stayed with the same box year after year with little bickering and fighting. All budgies were observed and pairs and boxes were noted on 3 x 5 cards. Only once did I have a pair of budgies swap mates.

All of my birds were fed Topper's vitamin fortified seed mixes, fresh water daily, dark greens, fruits and vegetables, and soaked seed with nestling food added when babies were due to hatch and all through rearing. With the budgies, I averaged four to five babies per nest and I allowed them an average of three nests a year at which point the boxes came down and were disinfected, aired, sprayed with camicide, lysol and stored. My boxes went up in February and came down in November. All boxes were numbered and placed back in the same position each year.

After only two and a half years we were moving again. This time further south in the San Joaquin Valley and instead of a few birds we moved eighty! This figure included adults and babies, some of which were still in the nest. My one and only, at the time, experience at hand feeding was a fiasco, so I chose to put pairs and babies in small cages leaving the babies in the nest boxes and hoped for the best. I did not lose one baby! All finches and budgies continued to care for their young all through fledging.

At our new home, my brother-in-law worked 10 to 12 hours a day to build our new aviary. This aviary was to be our biggest (23' x 8' x 23') and, of course, our best aviary. Storage space and serve-through compartments were planned, safety doors, automatic drip water system, and *six* flights. What more could one ask for? You guessed it, not



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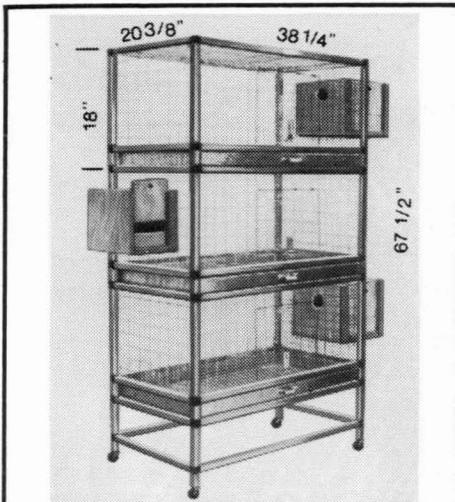


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enough space! We added ten more flights in other areas of our yard.

My brother-in-law had hoped to build the aviary in three days for half of what it ended up costing. I am sure many of you who are reading this article have had similar experiences. The aviary finally became two-thirds finished after ten days. Meanwhile, the birds were lined up on the patio in small cages or aviaries waiting for their new home. Needless to say, they were thrilled to be released in their new environment when we finished on the fifteenth day.

Ten pairs of budgies were released into one compartment measuring 3' x 10' x 6'. Nest boxes were placed in February and for three years I raised over 150 babies per year in that enclosure. Very few disease problems occurred, although, when they did, they were treated accordingly. Most of my measures were preventative and still are.

The aviary floor was sand; once a week I picked up droppings, once a month I raked over the sand and turned the soil. January I washed and disinfected everything in the flights, wormed my birds in January and October with Tramisol, and then waited and hoped for my best spring.

We were four years in Fresno and knew our days were numbered. . . sure enough, the call came for my husband to be transferred, this time it was to be clear across the United States.

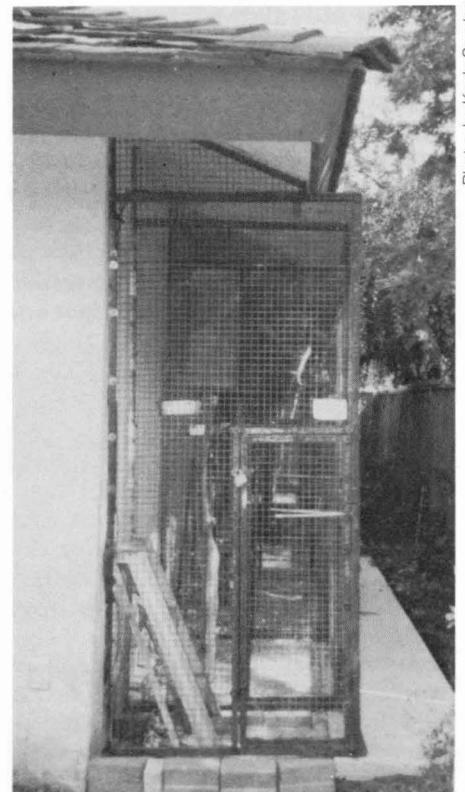
There was a tremendous amount of planning involved to move 130 birds (yes, our flock grew) across the U.S. I thought I understood all of it until I started doing it.

Back in the spring I made several long distant phone calls to folks who had

been through this and talked to them at great lengths. One party shipped some via airlines and drove others. She lost nearly all the ones she had driven and not a one that was shipped.

The other party shipped all 2,000 birds 3,000 miles via Flying Tigers. Not one loss. Others I spoke with had similar stories, so naturally shipping was my best choice.

Living in Fresno limited me to airline



*Ten pairs of budgies lived and bred for four years in this aviary in Fresno, California. The roof overhang provided good shelter.*

Photos by Kayla Snyder

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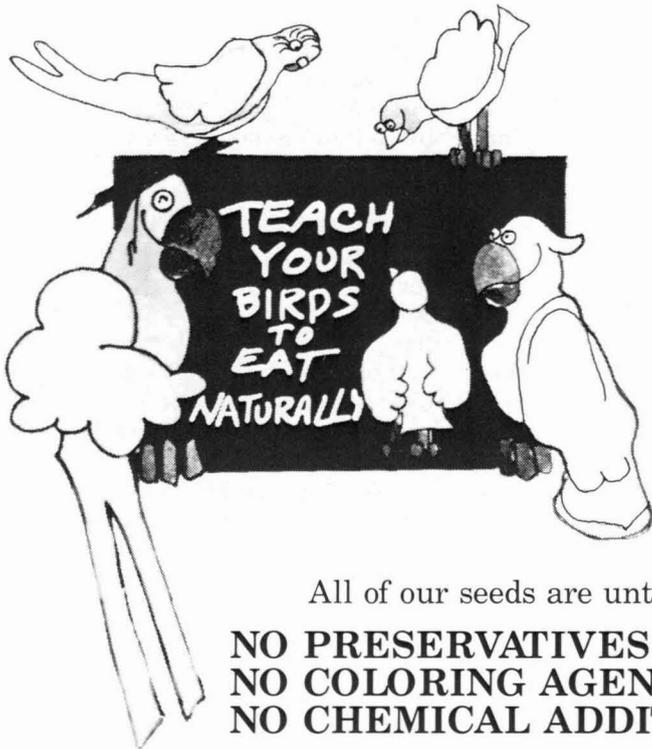
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choices. I had only one choice. . . United. All others didn't go any further than Chicago. So United it was. I was told I had to make reservations four days in advance, and *could not* ship if there was an embargo—mainly, weather conditions.

This caused many grey hairs because we had sold our house and aviaries and were moving. I had some backups, but really didn't want to impose. So, on faith I planned for all systems go.

My husband was busy building flights and we shipped all extra cages ahead to handle what wouldn't fit in the flights. Everything was coming together beautifully. . . so we thought.

My veterinarian, Dr. Daphne Hill, D.V.M., checked the birds five days ahead of our journey and issued the

health certificates. I put the birds on electrolites and vitamins for four days ahead of the flight and four after. This helped the birds have extra energy to deal with the stress of 14 hours in shipping boxes, and the new surroundings once in Pennsylvania. All the birds were shipped in wooden crates, except for the Umbrellas. We were advised to buy an airline dog kennel, because of the Umbrellas' strong chewing ability. Knowing the species that was very excellent advice. The other cockatoos and hookbills did some chewing, but there were no holes on arrival.

The night before our flight, my husband called with a major problem. The flights he built outside the garage would not stand up *in* the garage. The ceiling clearance was off six inches or so. An

engineer my husband is not, so all 14 flights had to be taken down and re-erected. It took him approximately 2½ hours to build each flight, so that meant birds had to stay behind and others would be in crowded conditions for one to two weeks. We would have built the flights in the garage, but the owners were still living there. We couldn't move the flights in until we took legal possession of the house. We decided to leave five pair of cockatoos behind. I brought 120 birds with me and left the cockatoos with a friend who had the flight space. They were shipped three weeks later. All but one cockatiel made the 14-hour journey. He died from a head injury sustained when he was caught in the net. Definitely not an airline casualty. In fact, the airlines were so gentle with the boxes, I couldn't believe my eyes. I watched from the terminal and plane. They were a crack-up in some cases because some of the tame birds were really showing off to get anyone's attention.

We are finally settled, 18 flights are in an insulated garage, two windows on each side for cross ventilation when the weather is nice, skylights for extra natural light. There are six shop lights with Vita-Lites for controlled lighting and an electric floor heater in case the temperature drops below 30 °F. We don't have the pretty backyard aviaries that we had in California, but the birds seem happy. Doves, goulds and cockatiels are already nesting!

I must admit, bird caring and raising is most enjoyable or I wouldn't still be working at it nine years later. The budgies and zebra finches were a stepping stone for me to move on to more difficult species. I am thankful for those years of experience and enjoyment they gave to me. I now own 40 volumes of books, I belong to A.F.A. and I'm planning to attend my third convention this August. I belong to several bird clubs; I subscribe to three other bird publications, and I have shown some of my birds in several shows. I have several close "bird buddies" who have supported me through problems and triumphs and who have been a terrific guide in this fascinating field of aviculture. I have a very supportive husband and a twelve-year-old daughter who offer help in times of need. Even though there is work involved as an aviculturist, there *is* much joy, excitement and challenge. Sure, there are ups and downs, but the high moments are really high. I am proud of my collection and I'm pleased to be a member of the exciting field of aviculture. ●



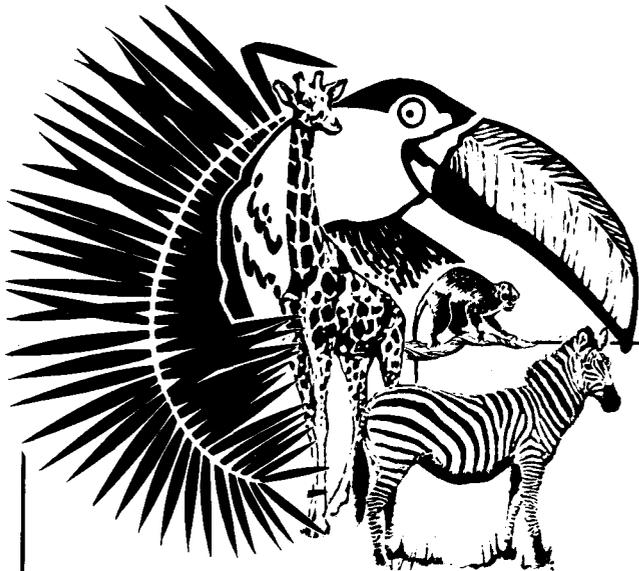
Photos by Kayla Snyder

*From California to Pennsylvania via shipping crates and airplanes.*

*The Pennsylvania aviaries are located in an insulated garage due to the cold winters. During mild weather the windows are opened for cross ventilation and natural light.*



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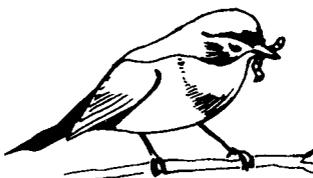
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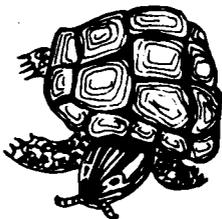
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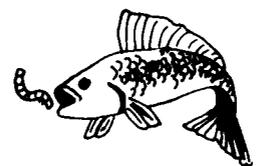


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