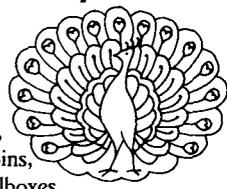




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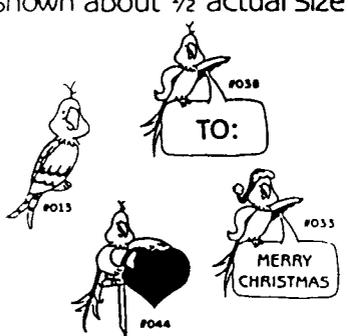
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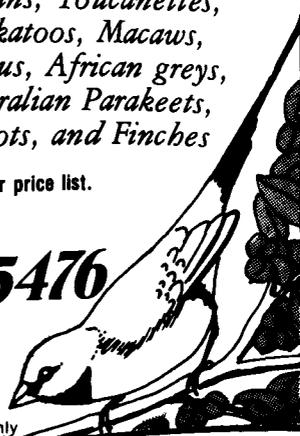
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Exotic Bird Classes

by Kayla Snyder
Kulpsville, Pennsylvania

Several years ago, as I was beginning to breed exotic foreign birds, my oldest daughter came home from school begging me to bring some birds to her Kingergarten class and talk to the children about the birds. They were doing a little study of our area's wild birds and this hobby of mine seemed to fit in. Little did I know this would become a tradition and each year I would bring more birds, books, slides, charts, posters, etc. to the classroom. I really enjoyed preparing and presenting the material.

Well, as time went on, more teachers and schools heard about The Bird Lady! So, every spring I would travel around and share my "hobby" with hundreds of boys and girls in pre-school, elementary, junior and senior high schools and convalescent hospitals. This was very enjoyable for me and always very challenging. Besides, I was getting paid for something that was fun for me!

I basically had two programs: a short, twenty-minute slide talk or a forty-minute slide presentation with time for questions, stories from the class and comments or answers from yours truly. The presentations were designed to give the novice bird owner or potential bird owner an overview of bird types, cage selection, general care, good nutrition, and breeding of exotics in captivity, all of which most pet bird owners know very little about.

Last August, when we moved from our native California to Pennsylvania, after birds set up and house in order, I began to think of ways to do my talks here on the east coast, but in a more concentrated effort. I wanted a chance to go into depth with a group of people who had a desire to learn more about exotic bird care. As I was having these thoughts, we received a very impressive community education program

brochure in the mail from our North Penn School District office located in Lansdale, Pennsylvania. We discovered a huge variety of interesting classes to take in the evening or Saturdays. I promptly signed myself up for a landscaping class, the kids for swimming, and my husband for vegetable gardening. All the classes turned out to be a positive experience for all of us and it gave me a chance to see that this could be a way for me to do a series on exotic bird care.

After applying to teach and upon being enthusiastically accepted (the school had never been approached with such a class) I began to beef up my quality and selection of slides. The classes were to be six weekly sessions one and a half hours long. I also began to write to several bird related companies I do business with or have heard good things about for free literature or supplies. I put together a portfolio of articles dealing with the appropriate class for each session and categorized my books to take to each session.

All of these things took time and I could not wait until the last minute to do any of them. I had to plan ahead, even though there was a chance my class may not make it. I had to reach a minimum of 15 students in order for the class not to be cancelled, so I took one more precaution in assuring bird people would hear about the classes. I put together my own flyer to advertise the classes and mailed multiple copies to pet shops and veterinarians in our area.

The flyer stated the six classes as follows:

- Choosing a Bird — how to decide what's best for you, selecting a cage and play area, nutrition, hygiene, general taming and training.
- Aviary Construction — a look at many types of aviaries and making the right

decisions for the number and kinds of birds.

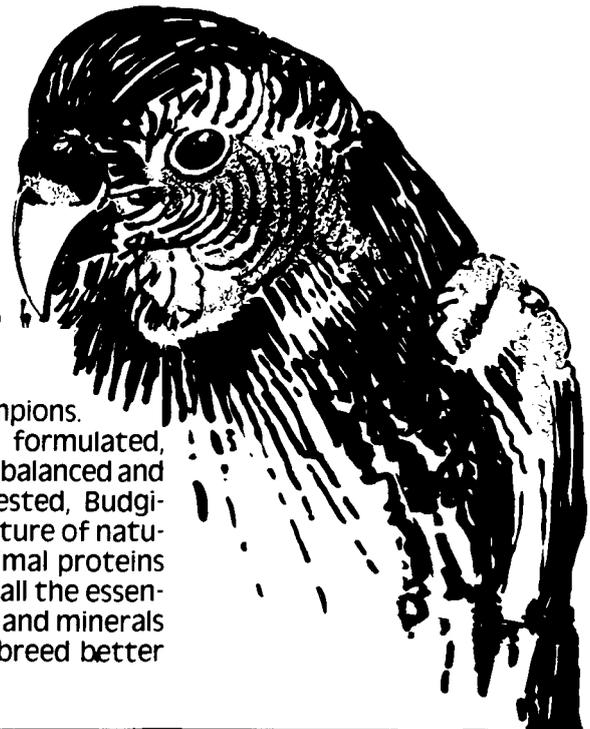
- Breeding, Incubation and Hatching — of Budgies, Cockatiels, Cockatoos, Conures, Doves, Finches, Lovebirds, Ringnecks or Rosellas. Any combination or overview of all species is possible.
- Hookbill Care, Taming and Training — teaching a bird to talk and do tricks.
- Handfeeding of Psittacines — a look at various formulas and techniques in the handrearing of parrots. Preparation, problems and solutions and weaning will also be covered.
- The Sick Bird — how to spot a sick bird, emergency care and finding a veterinarian.

Nearly two thirds of the class registered because of these flyers. In one week's time I exceeded my minimum and a total of thirty signed up for the class. Wow, was I excited and so was the school district office.

From the very beginning, the attendance, enthusiasm and interest of each session was very high. When the classes began, one fourth of the students were beginner breeders, three fourths being pet bird owners. By the end of the class about half of the students were breeders. There was one lady who attended all six sessions out of pure interest. She was pet bird and cage hunting by the end of the sessions!

I began and ended most sessions on time, with class permission we went over on the breeding class; however, that doesn't mean we all left or wanted to leave, there was always much bird talk after each session. In fact, I plan on extending the sessions to two hours next time I teach the series which will be in the fall of 1986, to, I hope, even more than thirty people. Already people are wondering when and how to register for the next series.

It is my feeling that a class of this nature could be taught in every state and in every community education program by people who enjoy speaking and have had years of experience in the keeping and rearing of exotic birds. Some folks are reluctant to share their failures and triumphs or their secrets. This is very sad and really inexcusable. We need to hear and learn from each other, our communities need to hear from us and so does our government. We all need to do more in order that we may keep our birds and continue to raise babies for future generations of people to enjoy. Educating the public through classes is just one of dozens of ways to reach this goal. How about giving it a try? ●



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