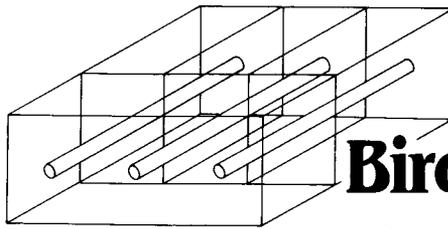


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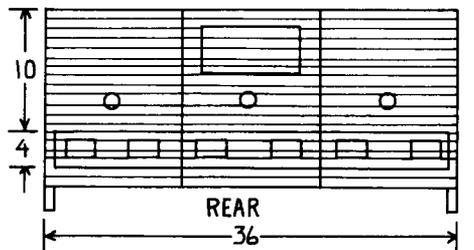
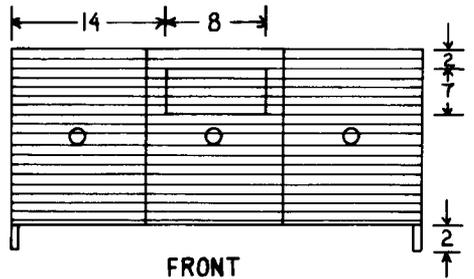
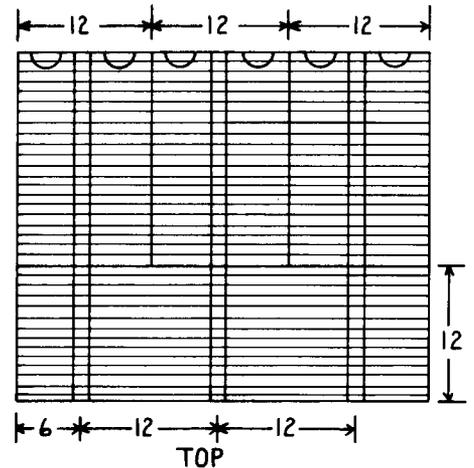
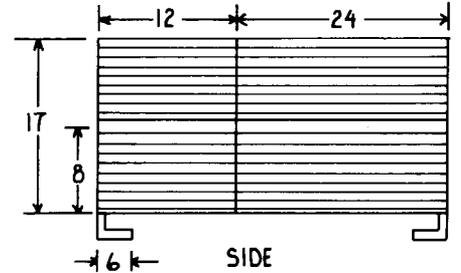
Bird Pairing Cage

by Ross Anderson and Jim Singleton
West Valley City, Utah

One age-old problem aviculturists have had to deal with was getting truly compatible pairs of birds. With the advent of surgical sexing, the problem of definitively determining the gender of a bird is solved. However, two birds of opposite sex do not always make a pair. Casual observations by the owner might mislead one to believe that just because the birds do not fight, they are indeed a pair.

Modern aviculture has taken a turn for the better. Responsible breeders no longer keep the postage stamp collection of the past. We are seeing a form of specialization; breeders are picking a species or group of species and are trying to obtain a large enough number of specimens to maintain a viable and diverse genetic base. This means that instead of keeping a pair of each species, they have a minimum of two or three pairs. The need to pay attention to the compatibility of individuals in a pair is minimal *if* you only have one pair. You have no alternatives in that the birds are either placed together or they are not. By increasing the number of birds from which to choose, you have increased your flexibility in which birds are placed together. Optimally, the birds should be able to choose their partners by themselves.

Past attempts to monitor the compatibility of birds have been by placing a number of them in a cage and seeing which birds prefer each other. This can be dangerous as it promotes fighting, putting the birds in a competitive environment and letting the best two win. It also necessitates close personal observation of the birds to determine who prefers whom. In many cases, this outside intervention alters the pairing process. One can get a skewed impression of aggression, submission and general compatibility. It also necessitates some means of marking which bird is which, for by putting the birds all together, one tends to lose track of their individual identity. It is almost impossible to determine how much food is being consumed by each bird, as well as



- A Material is 1 x 1 wire mesh with band clamps.
- B Doors are cut from wire panels and hinged with band clamps.
- C Vertical bars of the mesh are omitted for visual clarity.
- D Each view depicts only that view, panels behind were omitted for visual clarity.

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what each individual's droppings look like. This information is critical in assessing the health of the birds, especially in as stressful an environment as this tends to be.

We have devised a unique pairing cage which answers many of the above problems. This simple device can be constructed out of materials readily available to every aviculturist. This pairing cage allows the prospective pairs to have visual interaction while restricting their physical contact. One bird, either male or female, has the ability to move from perch to perch opposite a number of birds of the other sex. It is able to examine its prospective mates and choose from a number of prospects without endangering any of the other birds. This also enables the owner to monitor their preferences without potentially altering behavior by human presence. By noting the pattern of droppings on the paper under the cage, a person can determine the relative amount of time the bird spends at any one place. If the pattern shows that two birds are consistently standing next to each other while ignoring the other prospective mates, there is a better than average chance that the two are a compatible pair. If, however, the pattern is diverse, or the pattern would indicate more than one choice, the owner might need to do more detective work in order to determine the bird's preference. Perhaps switching the location of individuals in the cage, or moving the cage relative to the room might produce more meaningful results.

This method allows for individual feeding, monitoring of the number and nature of the stools, and positive identification of individuals while minimizing the potential for trauma from incompatibility or stress. It necessitates knowing the gender of each bird, placing a bird of one sex with two or more of the opposite sex in order to determine which is preferred. Certainly other individual observations are still necessary, but this is a good first step in safely ruling out those birds which are not compatible. ●



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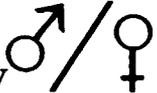
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