

# Setting up an Apartment Bird Room

by Debra Spitz  
Northridge, California

Keeping birds for breeding in an apartment can be fun, educational and exciting. It can also become a burden if done incorrectly. I have learned a great deal in the ten years that I have kept birds in my apartment. The following are a few pointers you might find helpful.

Before anything else, get written permission from your landlord to keep birds. Inform yourself regarding state and local laws that may affect you. Know what changes in the birdroom will be needed such as a different floor or removing curtains. Do not expect your landlord to pay for major changes.

Choose the species you wish to breed carefully, macaws and cockatoos make wonderful pets but a breeding pair will make enemies of your neighbors. Some of the species that will do well include finches, canaries, budgies, lovebirds, and cocka-

tiels. Some small conures are also suitable. I do not recommend Nandays, Goldcaps, Bluecrowns, or Sun Conures. My personal collection includes Cockatiels, Pyrrhura Conures, a few small Aratingas, and Poicephalus.

Before placing a single cage in your room, consider what will be needed to keep it clean. Keeping the floor respectable will be your biggest problem. The typical apartment carpet simply will not do. You will never be able to clean up all the mess and frequent shampooing is out of the question. I have tried plastic sheeting under the cages. It was fair but tore easily and could not be mopped without leaving a scummy residue visible. Plywood sheets placed over wall-to-wall plastic were not suitable either. Here again it was impossible to clean and it also produced splinters.

The best plan is to remove the car-

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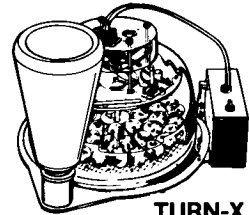


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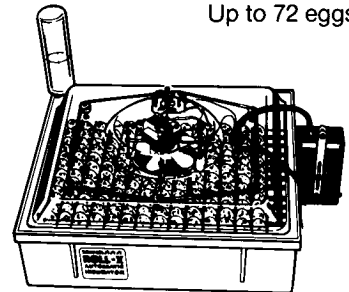
With the Florida Keys, Everglades and Miami Metrozoo nearby, it will not only be a "learning" experience but the vacation of a lifetime. With "perch space" limited, you'll need to make your reservations early. For additional information, telephone the AFA Business Office (602) 484-0931 or write AFA, P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218.

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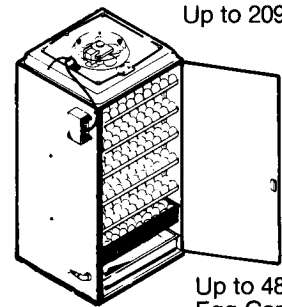
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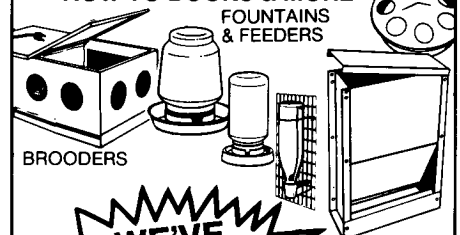
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pet and padding and install linoleum. Instead of gluing the linoleum in place, secure it with peel-and-stick vinyl trim. This floor is a major project but well worth the effort. Before installing the new floor, consider painting and repairing the walls. Replace draw curtains with a mini-blind. These will be less accessible to chewers and are also far easier to clean.

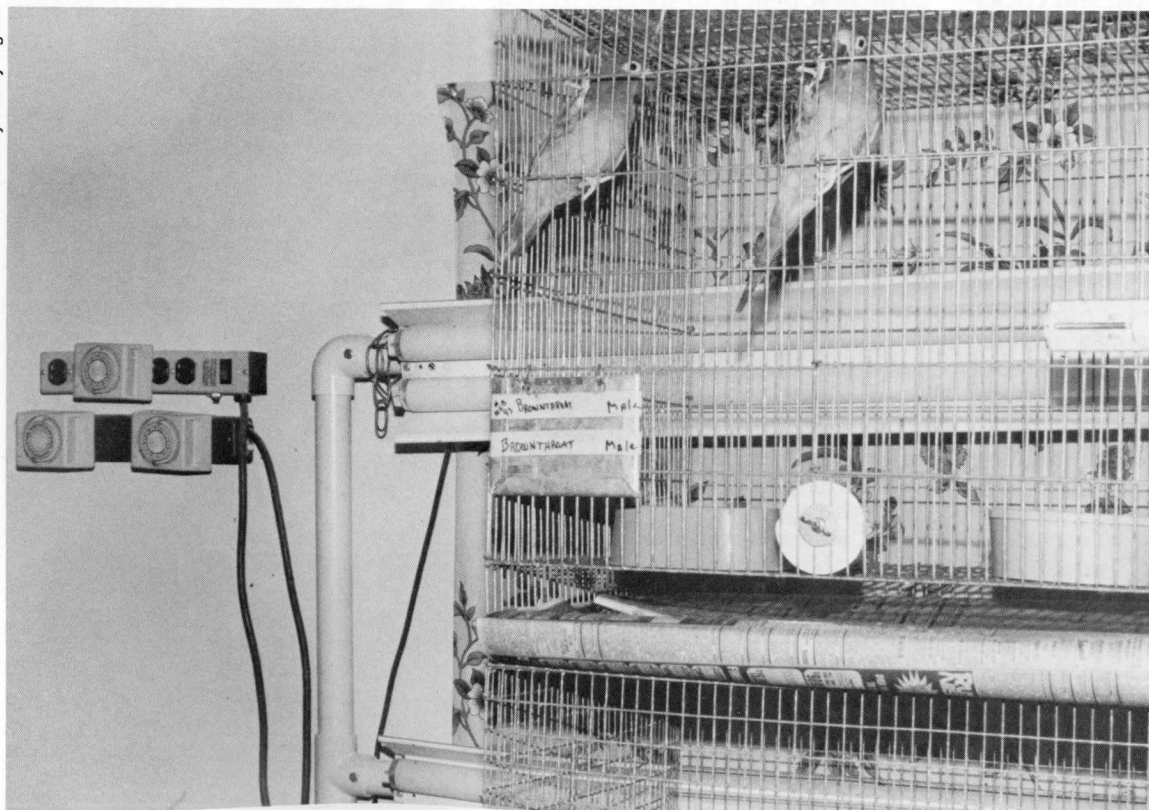
Once the paint dries, hang washable fabric panels from nails behind all the cages. Each panel should extend from the floor trim to the top of the highest cage. Use heavier fabric which will take a lot of washings. Grommets along the edges make hanging over the nails easier.

Providing adequate light is another area of concern. If cages are stacked, ceiling fixtures alone are not adequate. Wall mounted fixtures for the lower cages seem too permanent. Special stands using PVC pipe and standard fluorescent shoplights were built to match spacing of the cages.

*A partially wired door was hung to help provide ample ventilation to the birdroom.*



Photos by Nancy Vigran



*Lamp timers are attached to the light units to control length of day according to the seasons.*



PVC pipe light stands are designed to provide proper lighting to each cage.

These stands are light weight, collapsible and easily cleaned. Simple lamp timers control length of operation each day and are changed with the seasons. Vita-lites are the best choice for light bulbs. Gro-lux Wide Spectrum do fairly well also.

Be sure to provide proper ventilation. The one window in my room is open almost all year. It is closed only when the outside temperature is consistently below 55°F at night or when the cooler is on because the temperature is above 90°F. The original door was replaced by a specially made one to accommodate one curious kitten. The bottom half is solid while the top half is 1/2 x 1/2 wire with a mini-blind over it. This allows me to check on my birds without disturbing them and they have no "cat worries."

Now you are ready for cages. Be sure to choose sizes with adequate room for exercise. Know what kind of nesting facilities your birds require. Keep in mind that wood frames are easily chewed and will provide a good place for insects to live and breed. Choose wire that is safe and of the appropriate size. Chicken wire may be inexpensive but it works best with chickens.

Finally, before making any final decisions, play around with different designs and ideas on paper. Plan carefully and slowly. Listen to the advice of other breeders. Bird keeping is a serious responsibility that requires your best effort. If you expect your birds to do well you must provide the very best environment every day.

Once all of the above is accom-

plished, your birdroom will be ready. Choose your birds carefully. Put them in their cages, give an appropriate diet, and keep their room and cages clean. With a little patience, there will soon be babies. Then another chapter in your education begins. ●

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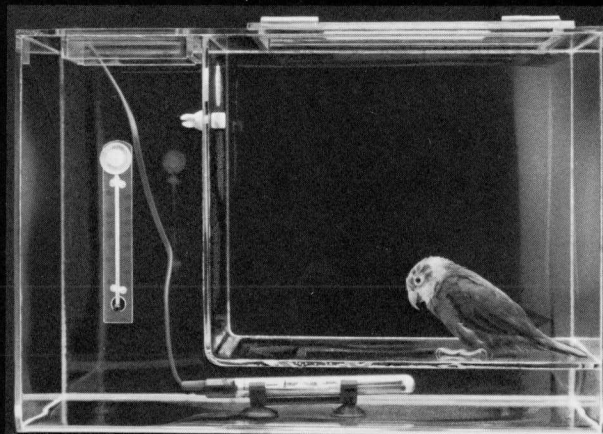
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