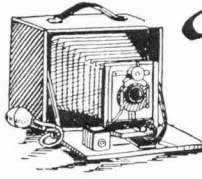


# avian photography

by Steve Clause  
Poway, California



## Chasing The One-Eyed Camera

Not long ago I received a call from an aspiring photographer complaining that at best it is difficult to purchase the proper photographic equipment. I of course had to agree since after many years of experience I still have trouble determining what I should purchase in terms of application, performance, and quality. I will say right up front that all the major brands are for the most part good and one will not get into too much trouble buying brand name equipment. There is a better way to purchase camera equipment however. I purchase all my equipment in terms of appropriate functions available on the equipment. I also settle on one brand and then purchase the components of this brand. In this way I am developing a photographic system that I can rely on which is completely interchangeable which in turn gives me versatility in my picture taking.

So, what functions and characteristics should a 35 mm SLR camera have? We will start with the camera since it is the heart of any photographic system. Simply put, I need a camera that has the shutter trigger, focus and aperture rings and shutter speed control positioned in such a way that I can adjust all these functions easily and quickly. You would be surprised at which well known brands require two hands and a nose in order to operate the camera. Another important feature of a camera is its weight. A light camera will feel much better at the end of a days shooting than a heavy one. Another very important consideration is lens variety and availability. Remember that your camera system is only as good as its optics. I prefer a system that makes its own optics. This way I am reasonably sure that all the lenses I purchase will be perfectly matched to the camera and that the all important meter coupling will be complete. Two companies that manufacture their own lens are Minolta and Nikon.

When I load film into my camera it has to load easily and quickly. There are some camera brands that have poor film take up spools. That is, the film leader does not positively lock into the spool and you have to play around with it. Sometimes you may think that it is locked into place only to find 36 exposures later and after you have re-wound your film leader back into the canister that the only thing that advanced was your film frame counter. Minolta and Canon have good film takeup mechanisms

while Nikkormat is not so good.

When I photograph I prefer to do it under natural light conditions. But there are times when one cannot utilize natural lighting. When this happens, we rely on flash lighting or studio lighting. For the purposes of avian photography studio lighting is impractical. This leaves us with flash lighting. Flash lighting can either be flashbulb source or power strobe source. I prefer strobe since in the long run this form of light is most economical. Strobes are also a faster and better quality form of lighting. They also offer a variety of ways to control light intensity by incorporating thyristor circuitry. Thyristors measure the available ambient light and allow the strobe to supply only the needed light. The strobe unit to purchase will have a guide number of 50 or more, and have at least one thyristor circuit.

Now lets build an actual photographic system that we use to take pictures of birds. The camera we will purchase will have a shutter speed capability of at least 1/1000 of a second. The normal lens that comes with camera will be at least an f 1.4. Self timers are not important. With our basic camera we will need one other lens. This lens will be a zoom lens that operates between 80 mm and 200 mm. This lens operates on the telephoto level and will produce good clear close up pictures. When purchasing a strobe I recommend either a Vivitar or a Sunpak.

Now that you have your basic photographic system, the big question to ask yourself would be just what you are going to do with your equipment. Many new photographers get frustrated and give up to early. Its true that not everyone is cut out to be a photographer but you must learn the basics before you can find out your talents. Don't be afraid to experiment and remember you learn more from your mistakes than from anything else. So go out and make your mistakes, no one will ever know except yourself.

In future articles I will discuss film types, subject composition and film processing. Also I will periodically include information from you, the reader. This will be in the form of problems you may experience and are willing to share with all of us as well as handy hints that you have found to aid your picture taking. Please drop me a line c/o Watchbird.



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**USAH, Exotic & Pet Bird Industry Problems**  
continued from page 23

Perhaps this and other proposed programs could come within the scope of consideration of the newly formed subcommittee on Cage and Aviary Bird Diseases of U.S.A.H.A.

Also of interest to aviculturists and included in this report on U.S.A.H.A., is the statement made at the Committee meeting by a representative of the American Association of Avian Pathologists that that body is on record before U.S.D.A. as being opposed to the new government quarantine program for the recovery of costs and services (User's Fees).

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**Zebra Finch  
Mutation  
Followup**



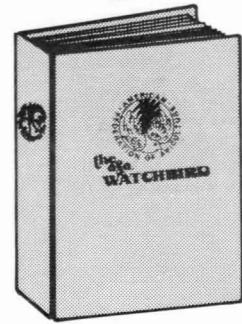
The Oct.-Nov. 1978 Watchbird article describing an apparently new Zebra Finch mutation in a Florida aviary elicited several comments. A Clearwater, Fl. breeder has produced the same mutation, though not in the white form from stock obtained in Sarasota, Fl.

A Ft. Worth, TX breeder says he got a pair, in the cream form, at last year's Dallas National, and raised young like the parents from that pair. He had planned to breed out to normals but found two more birds in September at the Austin (Texas) Show.

"Whatever this mutation is," he observes, "it is more common than you would first think."

The question remaining unanswered: What is it?

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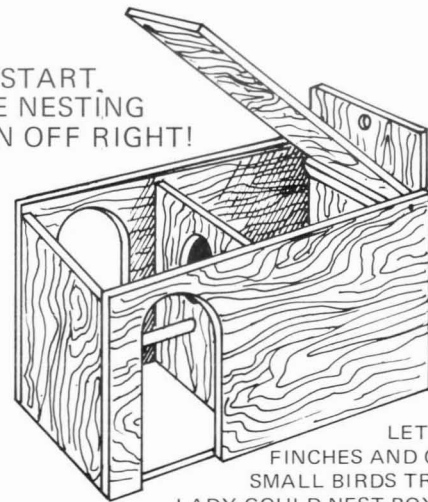
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