



*Ignacio Perea checks on the progress of a pair of Satinet Canaries and their three youngsters in his aviary, which includes double screens on the doors to prevent any of his charges going AWOL, a thermostatically controlled air conditioning system, extractors to move the air and keep it fresh, and sunlight-simulating Vita-Lite fluorescent lights. It also includes piped-in music "to keep the birds from getting bored."*

## OPTIMUM QUARTERS FOR EXOTIC BIRDS

by Ignacio Perea

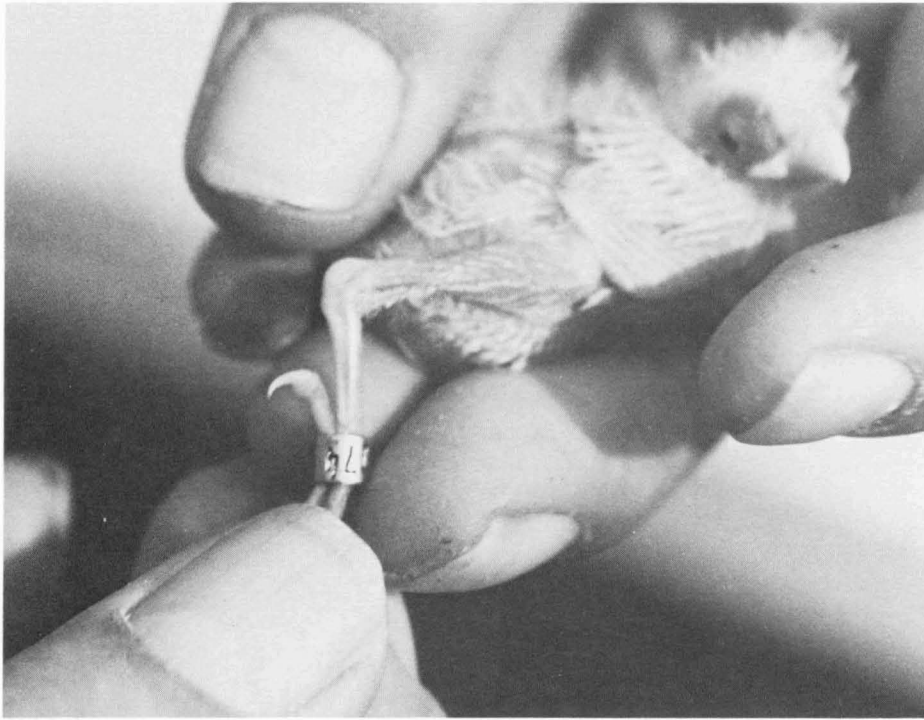
Providing a healthy environment for a collection of exotic birds is like playing tennis, twirling a baton or riding a skateboard; it looks easy until you've tried it.

I started my own aviary soon after I came to the United States from Cuba in 1954. I wasn't exactly a novice with birds because in Cuba my father raised macaws, parrotlets and conures. Having my own aviary, my own birds, I thought was going to be an exciting adventure. I was going to have lots of fun and few problems.

Well, I have had fun. After a good deal of study, I can identify several hundred species and sub-species of bird varieties; I have become a national pet bird show judge. One of my biggest thrills in a bird event occurred last year when I discovered that in a show I was judging there were SEVEN Grand Eclectus "lorius roratos roratus", birds of which both female and male have a peculiar body feather structure which resembles fur freshly groomed.

I have a wonderful aviary of close to 400 birds including some of the endan-

gered species like the Black Hooded Red Siskins "Spinus cucullatos" which I'm trying to help perpetuate. I also have newer mutation canaries like the Satine Canaries (sex-link character); Ino Canaries; Recessive Character Albino, Pastel and Ivories all in the tree ground colors; yellow, orange and white, pure white recessive canaries, and Deep Red Factor Canaries. This last one was obtained through descendants of progeny of the first-cross males from the mating of the Black Hooded Red Siskin and female

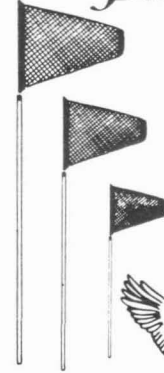


Ignacio Perea of Miami, Fla., bands a baby, one of more than 350 rare birds in his collection representing some of the most exotic breeds in the United States. Among them are Lady Gouldian Finches, Black Hooded Red Siskins, Recessive White Canaries, Satine Canaries, Pure Yorkshire Canaries and the Pastel Canaries "for which," he says, "I'm probably best known."



Records are an important part of a successful hobby like breeding birds. Ignacio Perea records the newly hatched and banded babies into his daily record book.

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*Ignacio Perea spends about an hour and a half to two hours a day – three hours in breeding season – working with his birds at chores like this hand-feeding of three babies. His collection includes 350 birds representing some of the most exotic breeds in the United States.*



*Ignacio Perea, ornithologist and bird show judge, checks progress of breeding canaries in a windowless building where they thrive under the simulated sunshine of Duro-Lite's Vita-Lite fluorescents. A timer switches the lights on for 10 hours each day. As day's end approaches, it turns off all except two of the lights. After two more hours, these too are extinguished. Only an incandescent bulb remains on through the night to provide "moonlight" for the birds to regain their sleeping perches should they be frightened from them.*



canaries, and produced fertile first-cross hybrids and started a new ground color in the Serinus Serinus Canarius which is a passerine bird of the Fringillidae family.

However, I can't say raising birds has been without problems. There have been diseases and pests, disappointments and near-disasters. I'll never forget the day a few years ago when I was feeding canaries in an outdoor walk-in cage. Suddenly a rainbow of silver, red and yellow swooped past me. I nearly fainted. Almost a quarter of my collection had escaped. They flew up to the trees, decorated the telephone pole and the rooftop. They were gorgeous. I was speechless with the beauty of it and at my loss. Fortunately, most of the loss was temporary. By putting seed in the cage I attracted all except five birds back within four hours. I just hope that the five found good homes.

This brings us to an interesting point: Just what is a good home for caged birds so pampered and protected they can not compete for food and shelter against their natural predators in the wild. I think at last I have found the answer, which is so obvious it sounds trite and that is to recreate their natural habitats as closely as possible indoors. Shortly after the Big Jail Break, I vowed to build my dream house, not for myself, but for my birds. Because the U.S. Department of Agriculture keeps track of endangered species, I built my new quarantine quarters to its specifications.

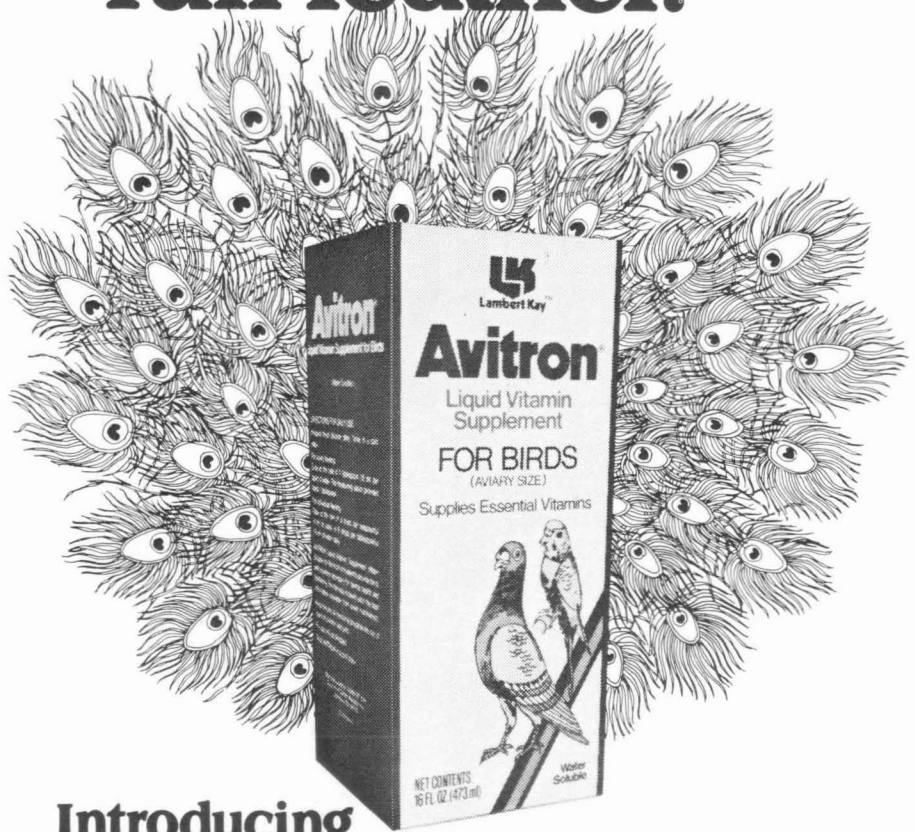
My dream house has only one window. It's air-conditioned and the walk-in flight cages have all the comforts of life outdoors — and then some — but none of the hazards. For example, they are supplied with piped-in music. Maybe this sounds strange to you, but my birds don't seem to think it is strange. They actually seem to enjoy the music and enjoyment of life seems to improve their stamina. Stamina improves my breeding program.

After the near-loss of my collection, I got smart. On the new quarters I put double screen doors. The building has a thermostatically controlled air-conditioning system, extractors to move the air and keep it fresh and I am especially proud of my lighting system, which I think largely responsible for my success in breeding and raising healthy show-winning birds.

The lighting is a very dramatic way in which I reproduce the birds' natural environment and one which I recommend to you. For this, I use sunlight-simulating Vita-Lite fluorescents which almost exactly reproduce the kind of daylight which nurtures all living things.

These are switched on normally for 10 hours each day. As day's end approaches

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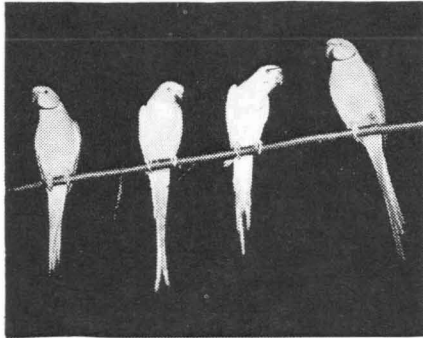
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The Indian Ringneck Parakeet  
"The Royal Court"



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In this striking composition, the four adult Ringneck Parakeets sit solemn and majestically side-by-side; the normal green, the lutino, the blue and the breathtakingly beautiful Albino, with less than 10 known to exist in the world. All the birds photographed were captured on one piece of film, as you see them in the photograph.

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Home for Ignacio Perea's 350 exotic birds is a windowless building about the size of a two-car garage. This view shows the kitchen where Perea prepares the morning feed. Air conditioning and sunlight-simulating Vita-Lite fluorescents are visible, as are the double screens on the doors to prevent a "jail break" as one occurred.

I have a timer which turns off all except two fluorescents to indicate the coming of nightfall. After two hours, these too are extinguished and only an incandescent bulb remains on through the night to provide "moonlight" so the birds can regain their perches should they be frightened from them. Otherwise, they might injure themselves fluttering around in the dark.

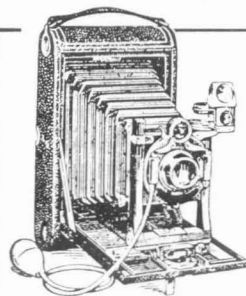
To bring up my birds for breeding or show condition, I extend the light period one hour every two weeks to 15 hours. I have found that under these particular fluorescents there is a marked increase in the birds' movements, appetite, singing, sexual interest and plumage color.

Needless of say, I also prefer Vita-Lite when I am judging as I feel this simulated sunshine allows me to see the entries in their true colors. If I am on the other

side of the fence and showing a beautiful bird, I certainly would request that the judging be done under these lights. Most artificial light can be very deceiving, but not this one and not natural sunlight.

My birds are granivorous. Their daily diet is simple. I use the Netherlands vitaminized seeds which are man-made and fortified by impregnation with vitamins, proteins and minerals not found in regular seeds. Also I give them table greens and fruits with daily fresh water to bathe and drink.

So there you have it: the results of 24 years of trying for optimum conditions for raising healthy exotic birds. These results please me a great deal; and if describing them points the way so others can increase their enjoyment as well as that of their beautiful charges — then it was time well spent.



## ANNOUNCEMENT

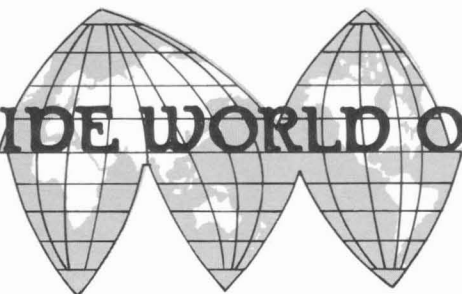
The *Watchbird* is pleased to announce that beginning with the next issue, a column on bird photography will be offered. This series of articles will be written by *Watchbird* staff photographer Steve Clause.

Each column will feature a different photographic technique or solution to problems posed by readers. Please direct your questions or suggestions to Steve Clause in care of the *Watchbird*, P.O. Box 1125, Garden Grove, CA. 92642.

The Oct./Nov. issue will feature the photographic box, its pros and cons.



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