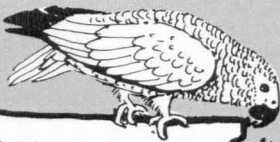




THE FEED BAG

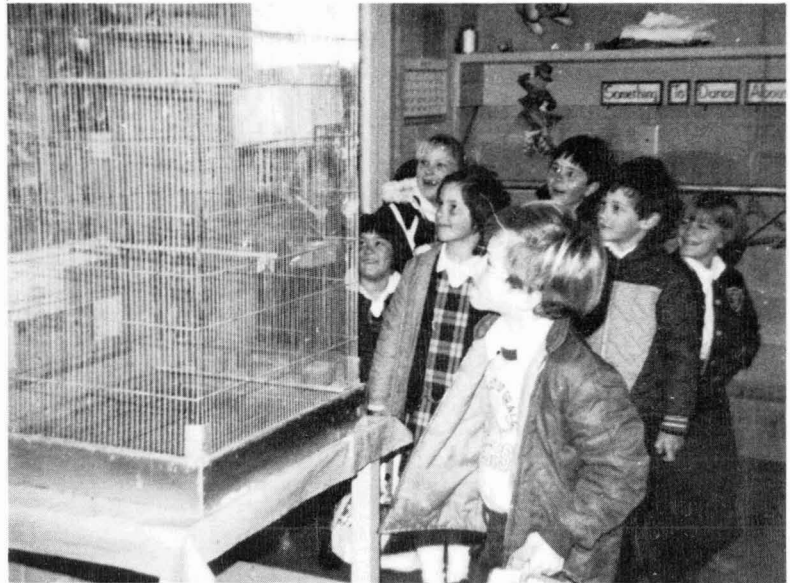


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Children enter classroom on "Surprise Day".

the spirit of education

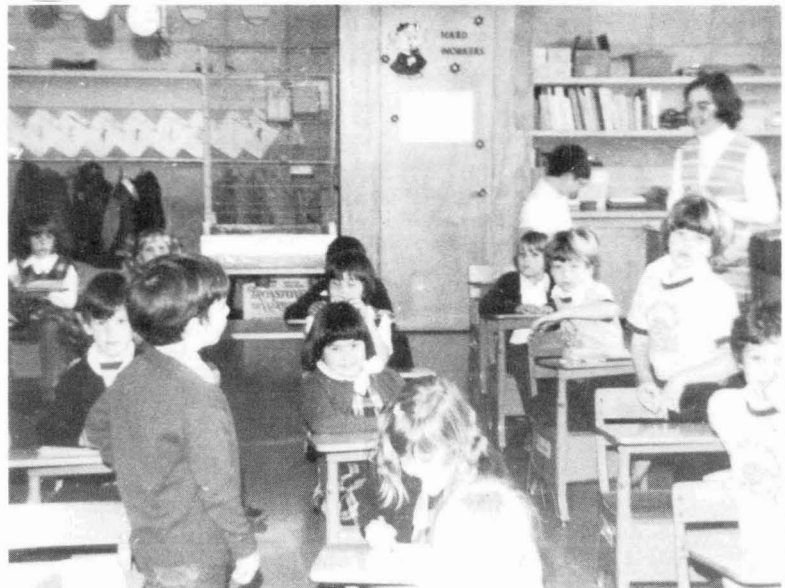
by Roland Dubuc

Since the A.F.A. was first organized, I have felt an extreme need for the education of young people regarding the bird world. Last summer, during my sister's visit here, an excellent plan developed to put an educational program into effect. She suggested that it might be fun to set

up her classroom with a breeding pair of finches. She also agreed to record her reactions so that we could anticipate what would occur in other classroom situations where the teacher was a true novice regarding birds.

Plans were made and I finally arrived

The class with their skillful teacher.



Photos by Roland Dubuc

at my sister's classroom with the cage, birds, seed, and supplies. I was surprised at the amount of thought and preparation she had put into the project. She decided that with six year old students a full day on birds should take place. By the end of the day the students would be saturated with the subject. During the subsequent weeks of the school year just one period a day would be devoted to the birds. To arouse the student's interest, Claire, my sister, had told her class that there was a "surprise" day coming. She gave no hint of what the surprise would be.

Long before the school day started we set up the large cage and the two pairs of Zebra Finches. When the children arrived they found the classroom door locked so no one could peek in. The bird cage was covered so that the more clever students could not discover the surprise through the classroom windows.

When the door opened and the twenty-one smiling faces came into the room, all of our efforts were paid for in full by the multitudinous smiles, Oos and Aahs, and "look at that". Once the students settled down, the five guests — four birds and myself — were introduced — and we held a question and answer period.

After this, the students were told that the whole day would be a fun day with the birds but that there would be some work included. The religious portion of the class (Claire teaches in a parochial school) involved reading from a book titled *New Friends* which dealt with things to be thankful for, e.g., the little creatures such as birds. Following this, their prayers and intentions dealt a great deal with the birds and in one student's

own words, "hope for fertility".

Math was the next point of interest. The class was divided into three groups — each with a different type of math related exercise. My group worked on a maze — a picture of a canary in a cage with only one trap door (see sketch). The maze was difficult for some but when it was solved the students were allowed to color the canary they had helped escape. They were then asked to name and to spell the name they wanted to give this bird. All of this was in preparation for finding names for the four finches. The childrens efforts at coloring gave us green and pink parrots, black and green owls, purple and blue canaries, and other marvelous combinations.

Reading was next on the agenda and we had on hand dozens of books that dealt with birds. With the help of teaching assistants the class was broken into four reading groups — each of which was read to out of the bird books. My group spent the time looking through pre-selected Zoonooz magazines, especially the love-bird issue since lovebirds happen to be my main interest. Every fifteen minutes the groups rotated so that each group was exposed to all four sections. In my section a great many things were discussed, especially the fact that many birds, including the Zebra Finches, were sexually dimorphic. The students were even able to figure out why most males were more colorful than the female birds.

After the reading session the mornings work was done and we dismissed for lunch. Most of the lunch period was spent entertaining visitors from other classes

Interest was keen as children got involved in various bird projects.



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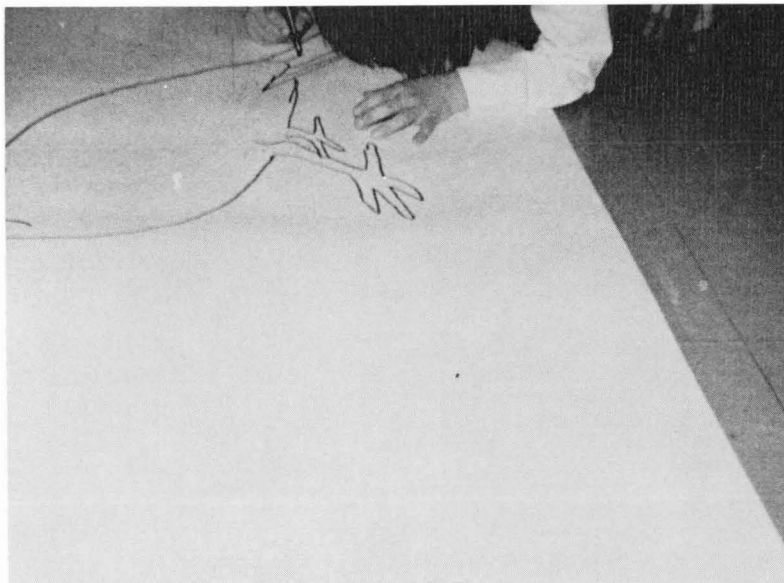
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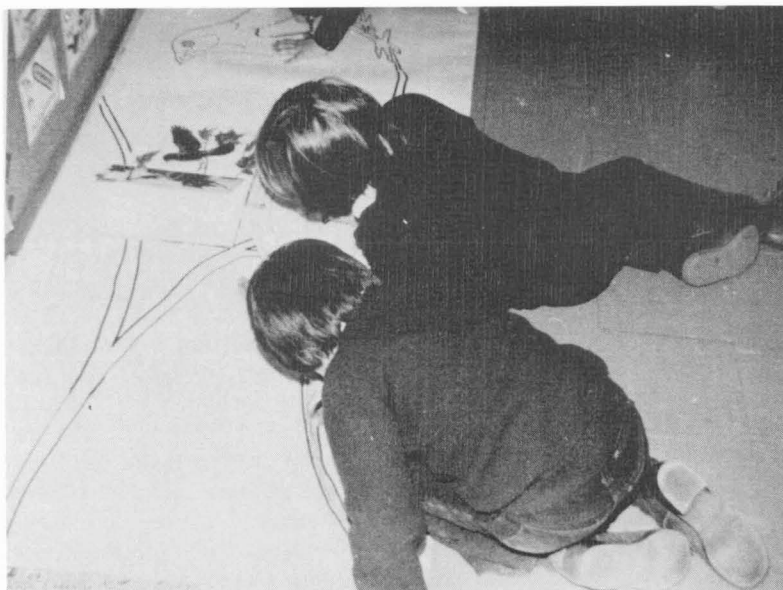
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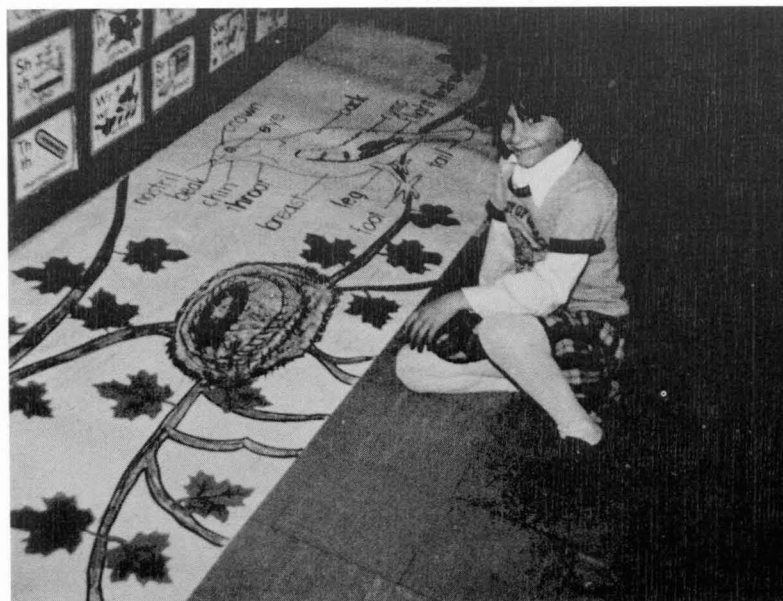
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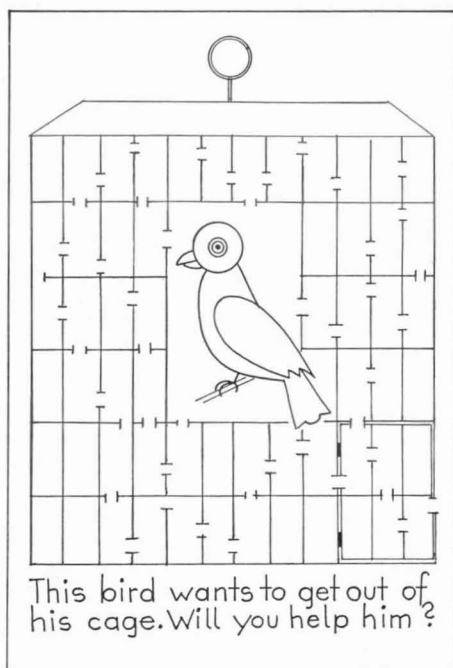
The Mural, an energetic project begins,



and progresses nice with all participating.



A fantastic completed project with much pride in accomplishment.



who came to see the new feathered first graders. When our class reconvened we decided to take a nature walk. Our Lady of Grace School is fortunate enough to be situated in the midst of ten acres so we had many places to walk and look for birds. The class enthusiasm was great and each child looked everywhere for birds. One student remembered where he had once seen a hawk so off we went to search for the hawk. We found the tree in question but the hawk was gone. Under the tree, however, we found the remains of a small bird that had been a meal for something. This was another good lesson.



A nature walk sharpened the powers of observation and senses.

When the walk ended we returned to the classroom and the class worked on a large mural. We had prepared a blown up sketch of a finch, a nest, and numerous branches and leaves of a tree. The very basic parts of the bird were to be identified with a magic marker. Each child had certain letters to trace. One student traced the outline of the bird and others colored in the branches. While this was going on each of the remaining students traced and cut out a green construction paper leaf. Eventually all of the tracing and coloring was done and the leaves were pasted on. The completed mural was hung and was beautiful.

The last project for the day was music appreciation. I had come across a record adapted for the first grade that had on it the "Ballet of the Unhatched Chick" by Moussorgsky-Ravel. We played the record and the class tried to guess what was happening. The guessing fell immediately into the bird area. After several playings and a little coaching one little girl realized that the sound was that of an unhatched chick. We then sang two songs and school let out.

We departed that day with many hugs and goodbyes. I was more than pleased with the whole project and if another such opportunity comes up I'll not hesitate to do it all over again.


The classroom educational program on birds is still in full swing. By phone Claire told me that the birds have since been named. The two males are called Roland and Happy. The females are Angel Face and Tweedy Bird. Roland and Tweedy have nested and laid six eggs. At this writing Happy and Angel have one egg.



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