

Avicultural Management — Part II

Consultation for the Distant Aviculturist

by Robert Clipsham, D.V.M. &
Dale R. Thompson
Simi Valley, California

It seems as though, in our push to investigate and share new concepts and discoveries on every front of aviculture, we tend to overlook what projects may be currently underway. Such is the case with the avicultural consultation program which we initiated over a year ago with great expectations. We would like to share the results of this non-traditional concept to demonstrate to other interested aviculturists what one pioneer has to show for a bit of effort.

We originally reported our interactions with a Canadian aviculturist in British Columbia who had requested assistance in several areas involving cage arrangements, hand feeding babies, and basic baby production and rearing. Our commu-

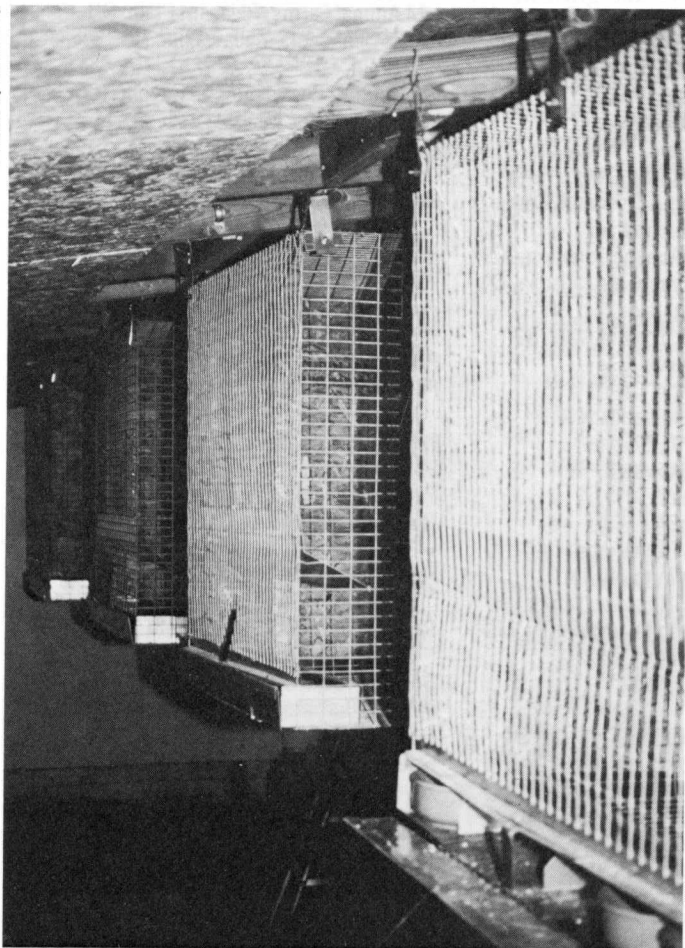
nications and exchange of electronically generated correspondence seemed to be a blessing for us both in the form of excellent communication and a great time saver. The episode was presented in the *Watchbird* as an example of how verbal communications had failed to be effective in getting the ongoing problems of the aviary owner understood and properly addressed by ourselves down in the lower 48 states. The aviculturist was hugely satisfied, we were tremendously pleased and the comments made to us in subsequent months regarding the article's content indicated a great deal of interest among other breeders about this timely concept. The only segment of this blissful story that seems to have been left out are the birds.

We have had the distinct pleasure of becoming fast friends and cohorts in future planning with this Canadian aviculturist. After reviewing the tape sent to him, we mutually decided that the only fitting step to be taken next was for him to visit the abundance of aviaries which we had access to in southern California, as the nature of the problems in his aviary would require a massive overhaul in management, physical facilities and philosophy.

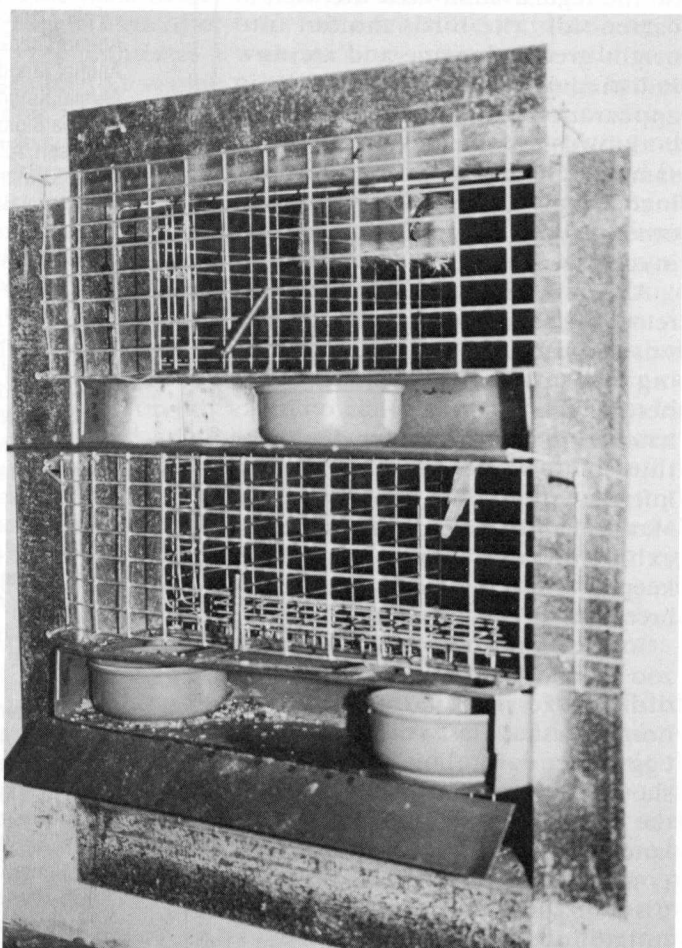
So the day arrived in August 1988 that we found ourselves standing in the airport in beautiful downtown Burbank, California (according to Johnny Carson, we're told) waiting for a fateful meeting with John Day.

John had traveled over several thousand miles, on several airlines, only to arrive in the clutches of two slightly rabid avicomaniacs. He has not forgotten his indoctrination into avian medical management yet. I think John was allotted less sleep in four days than is legally permissible for federal inmates between the two of us taking him on tour and holding

Photos by John Day



Newly designed cage fronts for breeding pairs. Feed and water dishes are placed to keep hands out of birds' space and to expedite feeding and cleaning.



View of service isle cage back. This excellent design ensures easy access for cleaning and feeding as well as providing maximum security for birds. It also eliminates the destruction of bowls and feed dishes by the large hookbills.

his eyelids up with "just one more carton of kodachromes."

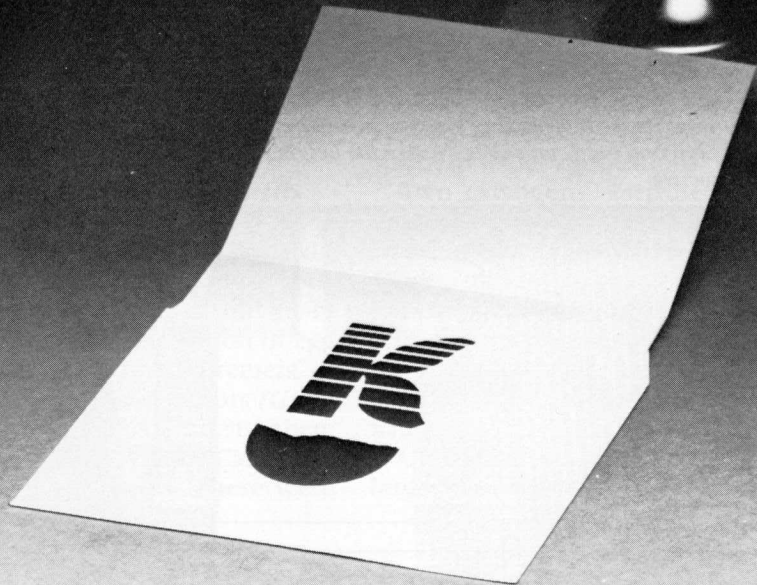
John left us for the island of British Columbia, but has not left us alone. We continue to hear from him regularly and are absolutely impressed with his devotion to his birds, an unfailing commitment to aviculture and a burning zeal to do everything more perfectly all the time. His personal energy is only surpassed by his ingenuity, and eye for new methods to assist his birds' care and future production.

All of these great accolades were personally witnessed by us when John proudly presented us this winter with a follow-up video tape of his newly redesigned and reconditioned aviary. John's efforts have included a total revamping of the basic flight design for his African greys, cockatoos and macaws so that the principles of seclusion and security were incorporated into the pairs' living quarters. Cage to cage visual contact was minimized or eliminated so that pairs could concentrate on breeding and laying in nesting territories that were psychologically secure and highly "defensible." Intruding hands were entirely eliminated by creating frontal access service doors for feed and water trays. Blue and gold macaw pairs who had previously abandoned fertile eggs or damaged embryos early in their development when scrambling out of the nest box to attack hands and serving spoons are now raising chicks in dark, undisturbed boxes in the upper front of the flights with the nest box entrance hidden from sight. All of the African greys are isolated, as per our suggestion, away from the more raucous South American breeds where they are currently laying and producing young.

The greatest single item that struck us both immediately upon reviewing John's video tape was the tremendous *lack of noise*. The first tape in '88 was overloaded with alarm calls, hisses and scrambling birds soaring over the wire, either away from the video camera or for a bit of finger food. The '89 tape sound track was completely quiet, save John's narrative and the occasional soft whistle of a grey. The only evidence of any birds at all were the lengthy tails of several macaws dropped in front of the flight door, with the pairs sitting side by side inside, noiselessly.

The inside structure of the aviary was an engineering marvel. John had

AND THE WINNER IS...



Your birds need championship nutrition to develop and maintain their healthy winning edge.

Since 1948 Petamine has been the bird food of champions. Scientifically formulated, nutritionally balanced and university tested, Petamine is a mixture of natural seeds and includes all the essential vitamins and minerals to help you breed better birds.

Canaries, parakeets, finches, parrots, cockatiels and love birds will be healthier, stronger and more vigorous with a daily diet of Petamine.


Petamine's balanced formulation of vitamins, minerals and amino acids promotes brilliant, colorful plumage, stimulates song and makes moulting faster and easier. It will even help your adult birds produce more fertile, hatchable eggs. Petamine by Kellogg is available in 5 oz., 2 lb., 5 lb., 10 lb. and 25 lb. packages. Visit the dealer nearest you today or call, toll free, 1-800-792-3504 ext. 492 for additional information.

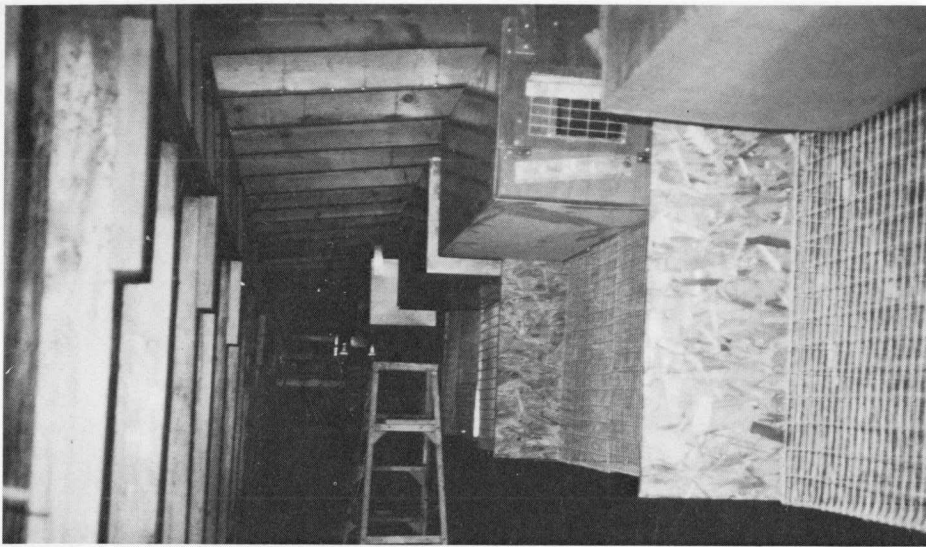


Kellogg Inc.

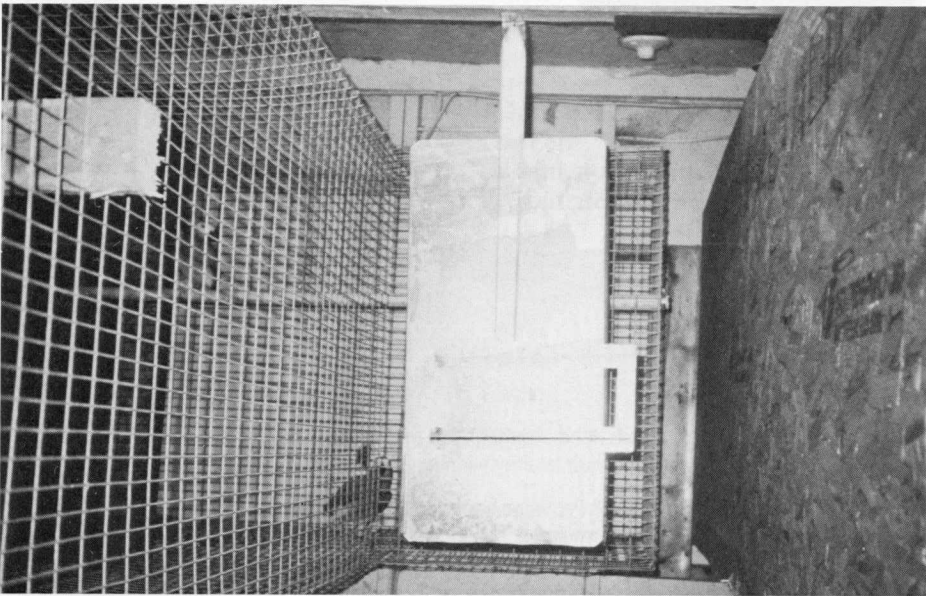
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201

For more information call toll free
1-800-792-3504 Ext. 492.

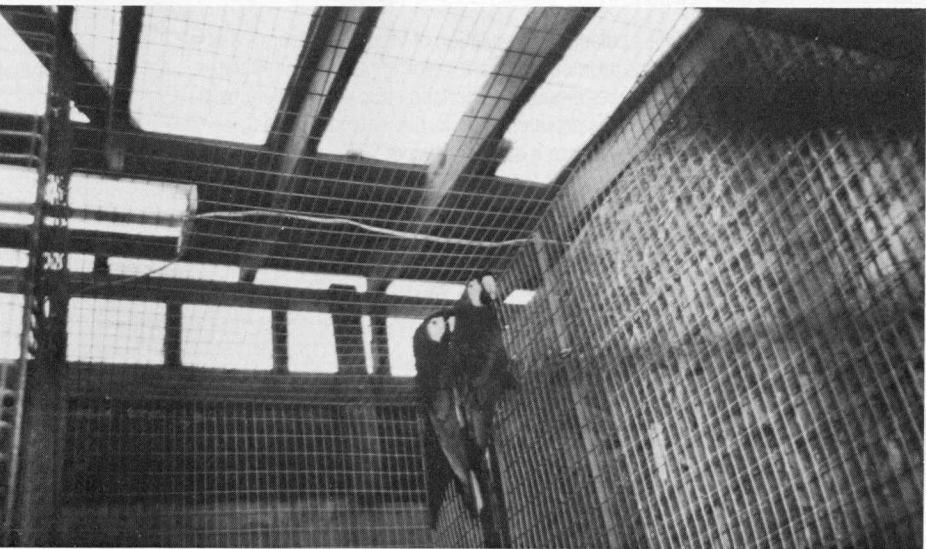
 is for Kellogg...the choice of champions



Visual contact between breeding pairs was minimized or eliminated by banging panels of plywood between cages. Notice the height of the nest boxes, placed where birds feel secure.



Side view of the Days' "L" type aviaries for macaws and large parrots. Fairly indestructible, these aviaries integrated a convenient viewing and egg collection port in the metal nest boxes.



Adjustable glass panels allow sunlight, provide heat on cold days, and fresh air on warm days.

taken a steep roofed structure and lifted the entire roof several feet upward in order to raise the flight cage height to a level where nest box holes were at, or above eye level. He had simultaneously carved out the old dirt floor with its cedar shavings and replaced it with a smoothly poured concrete one, complete with a self contained drainage system. The open roof wire mesh section had been replaced with adjustable glass panels to provide sunlight and heat in this more polar-oriented geographic region. The cage support legs, which previously had plagued sanitation and disinfection efforts, were gone and entirely replaced by a suspension system which gives 100 percent access to the floors under the hanging wire cage floors. And to think this was all accomplished in about four months. Who says Rome can't be built in a day?

The best news is that after less than one year since we made contact, we have gained a great friend and a pioneer companion. John has gained a steady access to an information source not previously considered available to himself and, better yet, has an excellent baby crop started for 1989. John is living proof that anyone can turn a formidable situation around in less time than most people take to gripe about it, and blossom into someone who is well on his way toward becoming a self-sufficient aviculturist with an insurance policy against a future of less available birds at ever higher prices. It is just no longer true that one must live in Miami, Los Angeles or Dallas to be able to create a handsome aviary.

Our hats are off to John and his wife Sheila for taking the opportunity to pursue a dream into becoming a reality in an area of the world where aviculture has not made itself a household name. John has every reason to believe he may have well become a part of the forefront of aviculture in his own arena.

Again, we vigorously encourage aviculturists and their avian veterinarians to consider this method of electronic communications to assist one another. It works for us. Besides, the clients are happy, we're happy, the birds are happy, our suppliers, and accountants are happy. Are you?

Author's note: John and Sheila Day can be reached at 5207 Hammond Bay Rd., Nanaimo, BC, Box 35, Site 51, V9S5N7 for further comments about his experiences. ●