

# The Roller Coaster— Novices, Hang In There!

Part One

by Don Denny  
Visalia, California  
and  
Larry Day  
Bakersfield, California

Sitting around over lunch, trying to decide what novices would like to read, made us think about what novices need to hear.

Exhibition budgies — staying at the top is one of the hardest animal breeding hobbies around. The up and down roller coaster of good babies and bad problems is as challenging as in any animal species you choose to breed.

Sometimes a lot of money helps, but a lot of people haven't gotten very far or stayed at the top very long even with a lot of money. Fortunately, many good breeders are just plain working folk with only so much money to spend on a hobby. Time and patience equals money.

Disappointments come often, even for the best breeders. Large babies die for various reasons; their tails fall out, never to return; they get too flecked; or they will not breed.

To stay in the hobby, you need to love budgies. You can get irritated at losing; mad at bad judging; go berserk over politics; and start twitching over breeding problems. But, if you love the birds, you will stay.

We started thinking of a whole list of things that can go wrong and why we think they do go wrong.

More than a few hens are incredibly choosy about their mates. You try to "force" mate them by picking out their cock because, darn it, this pair is perfect. But there is no fertility the first round. Being a believer in your high quality mating, you try a second time — no fertility. We have even known people to try three times. But, we seldom try a second round with the same pair if the first round is infertile.

Throw the pair in the flight together. If they act like perfect strangers after having been together for a round or two — they are. It's better to let these hens pick a mate to get them going with fertility.

Some hens sight mate to cocks, but not to the ones you'd choose. They

like the one in the next cage or across the way. They will lay eggs, but are really mated to another cock, so the eggs are infertile. Just being in separate sections for 10 to 14 days does not always cure them.

Larry had one hen that he sent to a friend's house for two months and then brought her home, but to a different pen from her "true love." After four months of trying to remate, he gave up and put them together. Six young were produced in the first round; one as good a stock hen as most people ever own and the rest total duds.

Best-to-best or buff-to-buff matings often, even if fertile, will not produce youngsters. Dr. John Baker, a research veterinarian at the University of Liverpool, believes many of these embryos are weak and die within a few hours of development. If they go full term, they may die while hatching or never start pipping.

Jo Mannes of Germany (considered to be one of the finest budgie breeders in the world) says mate unlike birds — bigger to smaller, soft feather to hard feather. We say it, too.

Some hens are so big, buff and good looking they don't even bother to lay. Most of the time, the best breeders will be the slightly lesser quality, occasionally a lot lesser quality sisters of exceptional hens. We usually try these slightly lesser sisters to the best looking cocks. We do not waste the best cocks on low-percentage hens during the first part of the breeding season. There is always time for long shots later.

We don't know how many times people have looked at birds and said, "These \$150, \$200 or \$250 birds are not any better than the \$50 or \$75 birds I just bought from Joe Blow."

This is very true. As Larry once told a novice couple who asked for his advice, "This bird may not look any better than your birds at home, but I absolutely guarantee that its brothers, sisters and parents are far better." Several years later they thanked Larry for his advice.

Of course, they have also bought several birds that did not produce very good-looking birds. But it is the good breeding bird whose young make us look like we know what we're talking about. And, all things being relative, they did not pay that much for the whole bunch put together. ●



## Lima's Exotic Birds

specializing in:

**Caiques**

also

**Australian King  
Parrots  
and**

**Mutation Lady Gouldian Finches**

**(818) 703-1112**

Ralph Lima  
P.O. Box 6496  
Woodland Hills, CA 91365

OUR 48TH BIRDMART  
EVERYBODY'S

## BIRD MART March 13, 1994

L.A. County Fairplex Bldg. #4  
Pomona, California

9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Admission: \$4, Youths 5-15: \$1

*The Bird Mart has become the marketplace for buyers and sellers.*

BIRDS • CAGES • FEEDERS • NESTBOXES  
VITAMINS • SEED • PERCHES • GIFT ITEMS

PARKING \$3.00

Use White Ave. parking lot  
(Tram service from parking lot to building G)

a division of

J. Williams Financial Services Inc.  
P.O. Box 794, Acton, CA 93510

**(805) 269-0424**

The Original, The #1 Bird Mart

## The Avicultural Society of America, Inc.,

Welcomes new members.



Founded 1927

We publish a monthly bulletin on all aspects of aviculture. For membership information please contact: Helen Hanson, (714) 780-4102, ASA, Inc., P.O. Box 5516, Riverside, CA 92517. Yearly dues \$20. Foreign members please add \$5 to cover postage (U.S. funds only).