

A.F.A. visits...the aviaries of Jean Reynolds

by Nancy Vigran
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Despite urban development closing in and earthquake rumblings, many of our avian friends continue to find sanctuary in small, tree-shaded havens in the San Fernando Valley of Southern California. And even with the continual bombardment of "Mother Earth's" aftershocks, the birds have settled in after the January, 1994 jolt to raise more babies.

One such aviary is that of Jean Reynolds. In her small and well-organized avian oasis, lovebirds, *Neophemas* and Zebra Finches breed steadily under her care. Her aviaries were designed in the early 1980s by her late husband, Merrill. Together the Reynolds picked up a bad case of bird-hobbyist fever after purchasing their first lovebird in 1979. Their indoor avian family continued to grow until feathers began landing in Mr. Reynolds' salad at the dinner table and the birds had to move outside.

Employed in the carpentry trade, Mr. Reynolds built some aviaries. The Reynolds visited many aviculturists in Southern California seeking advice for design and set up as well as proper care and feeding of the feathered friends. The main lovebird house is divided into 12 cubicles, each measuring approximately 30 in. by 40 in. and the house stands 7 ft. tall. Up to four pairs of birds share each section, where four or five boxes are offered for nesting near the top on a shelf. The boxes measure 6 in. wide by 7 in. long by 6 in. deep with a 2½ in. wide entrance which the birds often enlarge on

their own by chewing. The boxes can easily be removed from the shelf for inspection. Palm fronds are offered for nesting material. Peachface and masked lovebirds are kept apart and are only housed with others of their own species.

The lovebirds are offered a diet

which the Reynolds fashioned from one created by longtime lovebird breeder John Biggs. Three parts dried corn are mixed with one part red wheat and one part milo. The mixture is cooked in the slow cooker (Crockpot) over night, rinsed and kept in the



Photo by Nancy Vigran

*Jean Reynolds
inspects a Blue-
masked Lovebird
nest box
containing
young almost
ready to fledge.*



Hookbills are offered a cooked grain mix, celery, spray millet and a varied seed diet on a daily basis.

refrigerator until fed. One heaping teaspoon is given to every two pairs of birds and more is offered when babies are being reared. Mrs. Reynolds also offers parakeet and finch mix to her lovebirds.

Normal, pied and lutino Peachface are bred in Mrs. Reynolds' aviaries along with Blue-masked Lovebirds. The "normal" bird blood lines are important to keep, Mrs. Reynolds says, and she breeds back her mutation stock to normal birds for size and strength in her birds.

The *Neophema* flights measure 30 in. wide by 6 ft. long by 7 ft. high. One or two pair of *Neophemas* are housed together, but they are of different species. Bourkes might be housed with Turquosines or with Elegants. An English budgie-style nest box is used for the *Neophemas* with an entry area in front of the actual nesting chamber. Pine shavings are replaced after each clutch and Mrs. Reynolds leaves her nest boxes up year round. They are taken down for cleaning and she lets her birds choose their own rest cycle in between rearing babies. The *Neophemas* are fed similarly to the lovebirds with the grain mix and seed. Fresh celery

stalks are also offered to all of the hookbills.

Zebra finches are raised in two, 4 ft. by 4 ft. aviaries made of 1/2 in. x 1/2 in. hardware cloth. Twenty to 30 pair are kept in each colony and nest boxes line the back wall of the flight. Mrs. Reynolds keeps a variety of Zebra

mutations together and they mate up however they choose to produce a wide variety of offspring. The Zebras are her "bread and butter" birds. The sale of young Zebras pretty much covers the feed bill for the whole flock on an annual basis. The Zebras are fed a finch mix and spray millet. They are offered peat moss and dryer lint for nesting materials and each box is lined with a few pine shavings.

Handfeeding is kept to a minimum at the Reynolds aviary. But, when babies are in trouble in the nest (not being fed or being feather picked) Mrs. Reynolds doesn't hesitate to pull them and feed them herself. Some of the lovebird babies are then sold as tame pets, but most are returned to the aviaries and sold with other young birds. Mrs. Reynolds won't sell any birds until they are well-developed teenagers and able to accommodate the changes in their environment.

Retired, Mrs. Reynolds is taking college computer classes. There are days, she says, that she'd like to cut out all of the breeding birds and just keep a few pets. And maybe some day she will, but for now she continues to care for her more than 100 bird flock.

Photos continue on next page.



*The late Merrill Reynolds stands in front of the *Neophema* flights which he designed.*



Mrs. Reynolds raises a lot of Bourkes, housing two pairs together or with other Neophemas.



These Turquoise babies represent the many grass parakeets which Mrs. Reynolds raises.

Photos by Nancy Vigran



The Reynolds' Peachface Lovebirds are offered one more nest box than there are pairs in a flight. The next boxes sit on a shelf and can easily be removed for inspection.

Review

by Stash Buckley
and Carol Anne Calvin

This new book, published in 1993 by Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, is on the whole a very complete, useful guide for identification and background information on all 290 species in the families Fringillidae, Estrildidae, and Passeridae. Its 73 color plates include, in addition to the usual illustration of males of each nominate subspecies, renderings of the previously neglected females, juveniles, and subspecies which should prove very useful in the field and in aviculture. Range maps and basic species information accompanying the plates are further enhanced by a detailed text which is easily located by page numbers given with each species in the plate section. The scientific name is also given in both plate and text sections which is very helpful in identifying a particular species since common names can so often be misleading.

A complete table of contents facilitates the location of a particular species, giving the bird's reference number, common name, scientific name, and text page number. The addition of plate numbers would have been desirable to save time and avoid confusion, as one might think the number given was the plate number when indeed it was the arbitrarily assigned reference number. Preliminary notes and labeled diagrams of avian anatomical features as well as the glossary of terms, bibliography, and index (by scientific and common name) add to the book's usefulness as a reference tool.

Being familiar mostly with estrildid finches, we must limit our following critique to the section on this group. Our comments reflect mostly our experiences as aviculturists rather than field investigators.

Having worked closely and