

# A.F.A. visits...

## Hawley's Bird Haven

### the Aviaries of Jim and Marilyn Hawley

by Sheldon Dingle  
Los Angeles, California

Many aviculturists have entered the bird fancy in the last 10 or 15 years and are now among the "middle-timers" and hold positions of importance in various avicultural organizations. Ask around at your next club meeting. How many folks will you find who have had birds for over 20 years? Next, ask the "old-timers" in your area how long they've been in birds. I think you'll be surprised at how many have less than 15 years experience and really qualify as "middle-timers". Don't get me wrong, these folks are doing an excellent job in aviculture and form the bulk of our leadership and energy. Indeed, it was only about 15 or 20 years ago that American aviculture really took off and became the strong and popular fancy that it is today.

Scattered among this huge matrix

of veterans with 15 to 20 years in aviculture you'll occasionally find a *true* old-timer who still has the energy to feed a few birds and can get to the club meetings on his or her own power. Such a one is Jim "Bean Counter" Hawley.

Although Hawley looks like a young man and his wife, Marilyn, looks like a beautiful college girl, it is my belief that he has been working with birds for over 40 years. The fact that he has children in college (and one grandchild) should put him in the 40 year plus category and he has been fooling with birds from the day he could crawl. It all adds up to me. When I first visited the Hawleys in 1994 I was hugely impressed by the great variety of birds I saw at their place. There's a story behind this, thought I, so I asked a few questions.

It all began near Phoenix, Arizona

where Hawley became an infant volunteer for his grandmother. She raised Budgies, Cockatiels, Canaries and finches. Young Hawley started "doing" her birds as soon as he could spill seed and water. With Granny's collection in his resume, Hawley began hanging out at the bird farm of Bernard Roer, one of the most experienced aviculturists in the States. One could scarcely find a better mentor. As Hawley romped in the heaps of feathers and chased chickens, Roer would snatch him by the ear and instill some avian responsibility. By the age of six, Hawley had absorbed enough bird sense to have his very own bird, a beautiful Budgie.

As most of you know, when the "bird bug" bites it is absolutely necessary to increase the number of birds in your care. Even at this tender age, Hawley was bitten. He soon felt the irresistible urge to lay in a number of common alley pigeons. These were quickly upgraded to fancy pigeons such as fantails, rollers, tumblers and pouters and Hawley was on his way. He has never looked back.

Then disaster struck. Hawley's little brother developed a serious allergy that didn't permit any birds on the property. This had an effect on Hawley that is evident to this day—he became a creative, crafty finagler of deals designed to let him keep his birds. According to his wife, he is still a master at it. Whereas she has the class and style that should have her eating bonbons and having her nails done, Hawley has somehow finagled her into feeding birds, cleaning cages and all the other chores attendant to bird keeping. Indeed, she is the real overseer who keeps the kids and hired help on their toes at the bird farm. And this finagling trait carries over into other parts of Hawley's life which may partly explain why he is such a good Chief Financial Officer for the AFA.

But back to the brother's allergies. Hawley managed to finagle "buddy" deals with various neighborhood kids to relocate his bird cages where he could still make the rounds and take care of his beloved birds. Most of the deals worked out. But in one case he had about 15 pheasants in a friend's backyard. Returning from a weekend outing with his family, Hawley learned that the folks who had his pheasants also had a weekend affair and invited enough folks over to eat 14 pheasants under glass. There was one bird left—in the freezer. A number of other birds were

Photo by Sheldon Dingle



Jim and Marilyn Hawley examine some of their aviaries. Note the overhead framework that provides support for shade cloth in the summer. The white PVC pipes are topped with mister beads that can fill the air with cooling fogs of water.

lost over the years but mostly just to the "possession is nine tenths of the law" rule where other kids just kept the birds they liked.

After about five years, brother's allergies disappeared and Hawley was able to bring his birds back home. When they crowded the family out of the house, Hawley's dad very understandingly arranged to have some nice aviaries built. At the same time, Hawley expanded his interests to include falcons, mammals, reptiles and even taxidermy for those critters that expired. He also expanded his list of bird keeper friends to include Mickey Ollsen and John Kendall. Through them and Bernard Roer he met other folks in the bird and animal fancies and joined the American Gamebird Breeders Cooperative Federation which expanded his contacts even more.

Finishing high school at the age of 17 Hawley sold most of his birds to Mickey Ollsen and headed off on an extended vacation. He got as far as Hawaii where Jack Throp offered him a curators job at the Honolulu Zoo. This was a boost to the ego but, alas, Hawley ran out of spending money before the job became available and returned home rather

than starve. Back at home there was still the matter of a college education so he eventually took a job at Ollsen's Rare Bird Farm and entered college. He married, moved the wife in at Ollsen's and began a family. This arrangement lasted several years during which Hawley began a focus on accounting and financial management in his spare time. Eventually Hawley left Ollsen's to start his own accounting business.

All the while, although living in apartments or mobile homes, the Hawleys kept alive a dream of one day owning a large breeding farm where they could raise birds and other animals. The dream finally came true and today they are situated on a beautiful 10 acre farm—Hawley's Bird Haven—in their old home town of Queen Creek, Arizona where it all started so many years ago.

Hawley's Bird Haven is not your ordinary little backyard operation. And it is not just a bird factory producing parrots for the pet market (although there are lots of parrots breeding at the farm). It is more in the tradition of the large estate collections once kept by the likes of Jean Delacour or the Duke of

Bedford. True, Duke and Duchess Hawley have not the great castle and huge staff of servants of the European counterparts but they do have a beautiful big house and nearly-grown children and that is almost as good. After all, one needn't pay the kids.

Perhaps the single word that best describes the bird collection is "eclectic". There are about 160 species on the farm ranging from Cockatiels, love-birds, macaws, cockatoos, conures, Amazons, pionus, lorries, eclecticus and some Australian parakeets in the parrot family to 20 species of pheasants representing the gallinacious birds. There are ducks, geese and swans. Seven species of partridge and five species of quail are among the residents. There are cranes, tinamou, doves, finches, cracids and ratites thriving on the farm and, of course, my favorite, the Australian Brush-turkey. Or is the White-tailed Jay my favorite? I almost overlooked the 14 species of soft billed birds. The number and variety of birds presented more than my modest mind could grasp on the first visit.

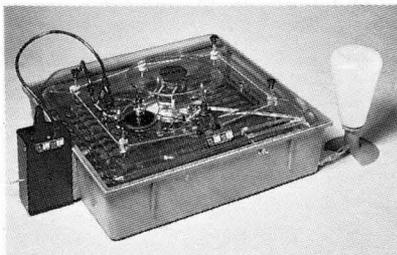
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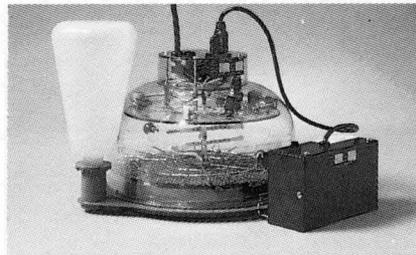
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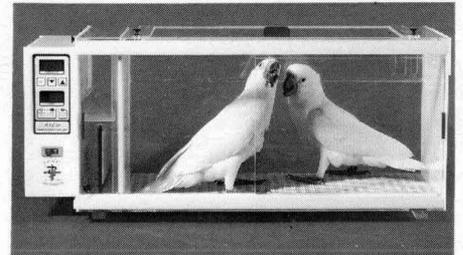
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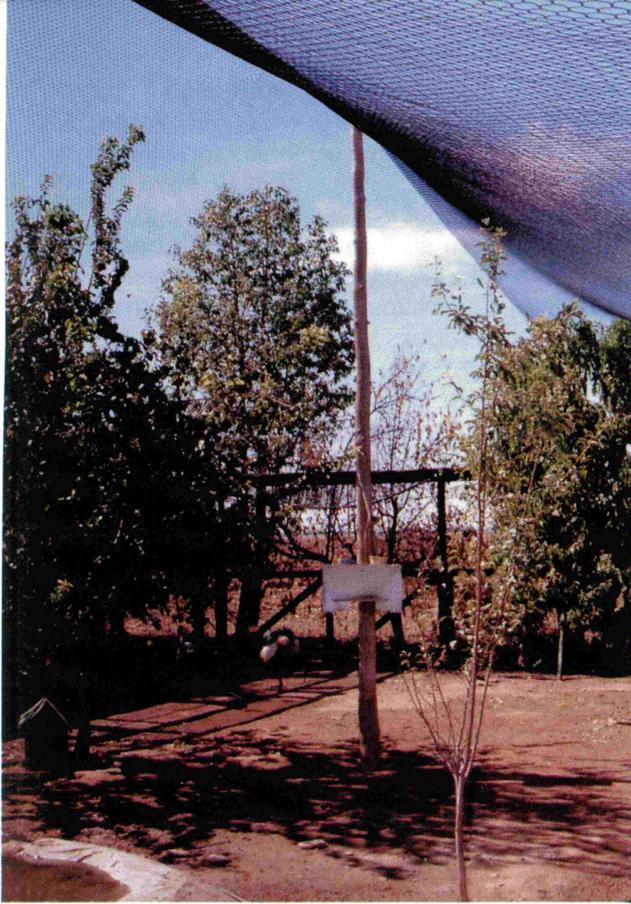
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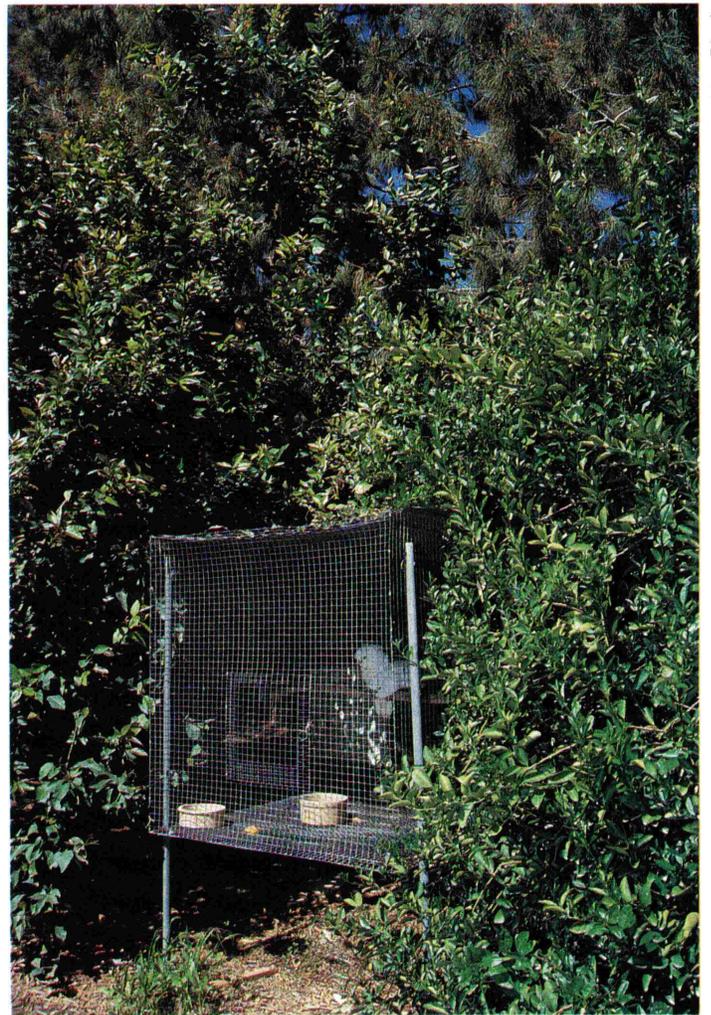
*This enclosure is 12 or 14 feet high, allowing rather large trees and shrubs to grow inside. The birds are in a very comfortable environment.*



*Marilyn and Jim Hawley standing in the shade that covers one of their "California Breeder" style aviaries. Although the Arizona sun is probably the hottest this side of the Sahara, the Hawleys have planted enough trees and bushes that there is adequate shade for the birds' comfort.*



*There are about 15 species of lorries at the Hawley bird farm including this pair of Chattering.*



*The Hawleys have made the desert blossom like a rose. This cock- atoo is surrounded by citrus trees with tall pines in the background.*

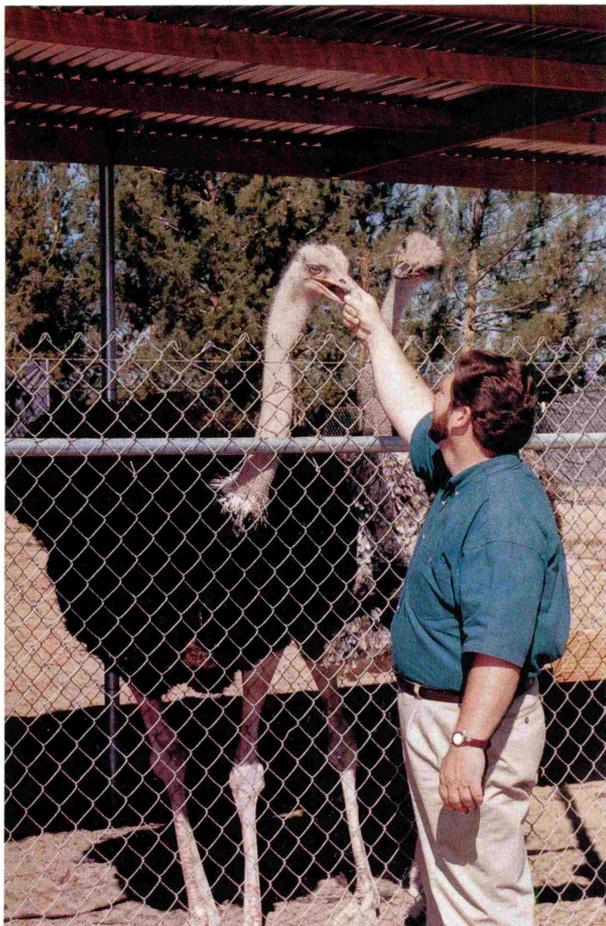
Photos by Sheldon Dingle



*One doesn't usually associate pine trees with the Arizona desert, but the Hawleys have five varieties planted for beauty and shade. The pines and eucalyptus provide shade and a natural setting for this bank of aviaries.*



*This beautiful Rose-breasted cockatoo luxuriates in its own eucalyptus forest in the heart of the Arizona desert. It may well think it is still in Australia (although it was handreared by Marilyn Hawley).*



*Jim Hawley is the president of the Arizona Ostrich Association. Many of his birds are larger than he is.*



*These raised cages contain various species of partridge and quail which do very well on wire.*

Photos by Sheldon Dingle



*African Crowned Cranes in one of the huge aviaries that are scattered about Hawley's Bird Haven. Of course this pen is shared with a number of other species.*

the hottest desert areas in the United States. Summer temperatures can stay above 110 degrees F. for many days on end. The way a place is planted makes the difference between birds living or dying. Fortunately, the farm is a well planted garden aviary not only with a large variety of eucalyptus for shade but with a number of very ornamental plants. Indeed, many bushes and trees are planted specifically to provide a sense of seclusion for groups of birds and to provide an apparently more natural habitat. In some sections of the prop-

erty there is a jungle like atmosphere that is interspersed with wire enclosures that seem to give the birds a sense of jungle freedom. In other sections where there are not as many trees and shrubs, shade cloth covers large areas of cages. Scattered about at need are sprinklers that can be turned on to simulate rain and provide a cooling mist for the birds.

In other parts of the farm, ornamental and often rare plants are planted to good affect. There are five varieties of pine trees, 28 varieties of palms including Queen, Mediterranean Fan, Japanese Windmill, Mexican Fan, and Date Palms. Around the cockatoo section there are several kinds of citrus trees and inside the huge pheasant pen are found a variety of fruit trees including plum, apricot, peach, apple and nectarine. Although Hawley told me that these fruits are fed to the birds, I believe the White-tailed Jays get most of it. The other birds and even the humans take back seat to the Jays when it comes to harvesting fruit.

The Hawleys, though, working in harmony, seem to have mastered the task of running a great bird farm. The whole family helps with the construction (the Hawley boys are very sturdy), doctoring, feeding, watering and all the other chores of a farm. There are two full time employees also. The pheasants, cranes and waterfowl are fed a commerical gamebird crumble mixed with milo every other day. The exact formula is monitored for protein and fed according to the protein needs of the season and the species. Most of the pheasant pens have automatic waterers. The waterfowl, naturally, have cement ponds. The parrots get fresh water every day and every other day are fed a seed mixture low in sunflower seed and blended with pellets. On alternate days they receive a ration of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Great care is taken with the soft billed diets as much of their food is subject to spoiling quickly in the great heat. Pelletized food is always available but care is taken to ensure it does not become moist. Only in a super dry climate can this be done. Once a day the soft billed birds get a mixture of fruit, mixed vegetables, boiled rice, whole wheat bread, boiled eggs and meal worms. Some species (hornbills, for instance) get extra meal worms along with pinkie mice and the occasional sparrow foolish enough to enter the cage

(everyone loves these tidbits except the worms, mice and sparrows). The lorries are fed twice a day a customized nectar diet and an assortment of fruits. All the soft food crocks are removed after a couple of hours to prevent spoilage and bacteria build up. The utensils are sterilized continuously.

With such a large variety of birds, of course, the dietary needs are rather complex and are customized to fit the needs of each species. I can guarantee, however, that the training Hawley got from Mickey Ollsen will assure that everything is done with the maximum efficiency and with the most economy—the very way a farm should be run.

You'd think that with a booming accounting business, a large bird farm and a growing family that Hawley would have his hands full. Well, maybe he does but that doesn't stop him from becoming involved in many other activities. You know, of course, that he is the Chief Financial Officer for the AFA. He is also a delegate from the Arizona Seed Crackers, served on the local school board, served on the Advisory Board of the College of Science and Medicine of the University of Arizona, is president of the Ostrich Association of Arizona, is on the advisory board of the National Ostrich Association and holds a few other positions as well. Even Marilyn, his lovely wife, is active in the local bird clubs and is currently vice president of the Arizona Seed Crackers. She does most of the handfeeding of baby birds and also monitors the incubation rooms which contain three large incubators and hatchers. Daughter Traci Jo is Marilyn's right hand in the nursery and kitchen.

In these days of chicken farm-like aviaries and mentalities, it is very refreshing to find an aviculturist that is something of an avian Renaissance man. Hawley is a throwback to the old aristocratic class in Europe that collected large numbers of species because they were genuinely interested and could afford it. Don't mistake Hawley for a postage stamp type collector though. He is not trying to have one of everything. Indeed, he feels an obligation to have a minimum of three breeding pairs of each species that he keeps. He prefers to have six pairs but that is not always possible.

Jim and Marilyn Hawley and family represent true aviculture that is undertaken for the love of the birds. More power to them. May they live forever.

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