A New Look at Cages in Aviculture

by Rainer Erhart, Ph.D., Kalamazoo, MI

I don't really recall exactly when and how I chose birds as my lifelong, all-consuming hobby. My visits to my grandparents' farm surely contributed, so did my uncles many pigeons, and my first venture feeding young abandoned birds, my first visit to a large zoo, and my friendship with a unique individual who taught me much about nature and birds.

So many things and so many people come to mind, but all experiences

One of the author's bird rooms. As you can see, it is absolutely spotless and very orderly. It is very easy to maintain a large number of cages of this kind. If you look carefully, you'll notice a couple of Parrotlets

This bank of cages is specially designed for breeding Cockatiels. The nest boxes are attached to the outside to allow maximum room in the cage. Solid trays between tiers prevent debris dropping through to the lower cages.

This is the perfect cage for controlled breeding of mutation lovebirds. In this case, the nest box is inside the cage.
started out pretty much the same way: what kind of bird was I going to get, how would I house this bird, how would I feed it, and, last but not least, how would I convince my mother of yet another feathered friend around the house.

Over more than 50 years I have asked these same questions at least that many times, and, though the answers have become more complex, the birds more exotic, the housing requirements more sophisticated, I still feel I have to convince my spouse that those new birds would make a fine addition to my collection.

Over the years I have learned that in order to be very convincing, I had to take into consideration some of the things that bothered her and, to my surprise, I became a much better aviculturist by listening at least to some of her advice.

She likes things orderly and clean, and so do the birds. She likes feeding the birds a greater variety of a menu, and the birds love it. She likes cages and aviaries which are functional but also attractive, and so do the birds. Since this article is about cages and caging birds, let me share some of my experiences with you.

During my many travels I am at least as interested in how my friends have solved caging and breeding their birds as I am in the birds themselves. Accordingly, I have gone through an evolution of cage designs and have finally arrived at something that I feel is practical, easy to clean and service, and is appealing to the eye as well as the bird. I was not alone in putting together such a project but was greatly helped by my friend Jim Pestoor who had much experience with the engineering side of production.

Photo 1 shows one of my two bird rooms. A series of cages are linked together and each cage is individually lighted. It's stunning for the visitor to see everything so clearly, the birds, the food, the nests and the ease with which to look at the young. Let me give you a bit more detail.

I hate cages that are made of wire mesh, clipped together and stacked one on top of the other. They remind me of my early chicken coops and unsightly enclosures for pigeons. I still have scars from the many scratches that the unfinished wires have given me and I also remember the unfortunate accidents with birds who have gotten entangled in a loose piece of
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