

by Suzi "Bird" Howse, Fort Pierce, FL

You CAN Breed Mynahs Indoors

Details of the food ledge
and access door
on the Mynah cage.



Photo by Suzi Howse

My three-year search for a female Java Hill Mynah *Gracula religiosa religiosa* has finally been successful. Linda Leger, a well known mynah breeder, offered one to me and the answer, of course, was YES!, I'll take the bird.

Inside or Out? That is the Question.

We had a few weeks to prepare for the bird's arrival. During the wait we picked "Xena" as her name. Now our black-clad warrior princess needed a place to live. Inside or out was the question.

Our first thoughts were "bigger is better." The only pair of Javas that I know of first hand belongs to Linda Scott, are very prolific breeders and have a large outdoor aviary. These birds are very wild and flighty and not suited to a life indoors. To this day, when Scott goes out to feed them they fly off their eggs.

On the other hand, several pairs of Hill Mynahs *Gracula religiosa intermedia* have done just great and have raised their young indoors in the living



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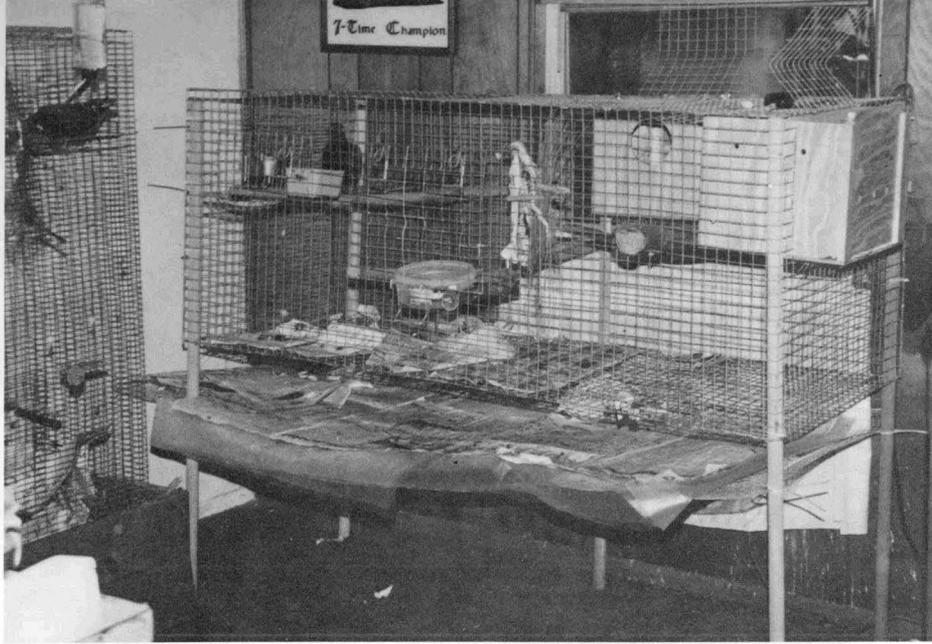
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Sunny (left) watches Xena in her new home in our dining room.

• **Security.** There are lots of birds in Florida and lots of bird thieves who routinely steal birds from unsecured back yards. One's home is more secure than one's yard.

• **Temperament.** Bottom line, the temperament of the birds was the determining factor. If they had been wild and crazy they could not have done well in the house in close and constant proximity to all of the action. Because they were tame and not spooked by human activity they were comfortable in the dining room.

Xena had never had a nest box before so she slept on the newspaper on the floor. Within the month, though, she built a nest and laid eggs.

areas of their owners' homes. The two species differ only in size with the Java being larger and louder.

Our male, "Sunshine," finished handfeeding in our dining room and has been there ever since. He would be scared and miserable in an outdoor aviary away from the rock and roll of the radio and the Nascar Races of the television — and he would miss *me*.

Xena was reportedly semi-tame.

Pluses for Indoors

• **Predator Security.** In our wooded south central florida location there are squirrels, snakes, 'possums, rodents, and spiders. And there is no easy way to keep fire ants away from the tasty mynah morsels.

• **Weather Stability.** We have a six-month hurricane season plus days of extreme heat or cold.

• **Lighting and Ventilation Control.** This is much easier indoors. We use two four-foot full spectrum lights above the cage in addition to the two large windows that provide natural light. Exhaust and ceiling fans control air flow.

• **Observation.** In an indoor setting one can more easily monitor the pairs' behavior and intervene if necessary. One also has the blessing (or curse) of the birds' awesome chatter.



Side by side homes with Sunny to the left. They are both out to meet each other.

Pluses for Outdoors

The only plus we could think of for the outdoor aviary was more room, i.e., a larger flight.

The Flight Begins

I built the new home out of 1 x 1 inch 14 gauge double galvanized wire folded into a square cage 2 feet x 2 feet x 5 feet long. Wooden legs elevate it four feet above the floor.

The main access door is in the middle of the cage with several smaller doors cut near the ends for food and water service.

There is a built-in 8-inch wire feeding ledge with a curled up lip to hold whole fruits, bread, and goodies. The birds love this ledge.

Six natural perches of varying thicknesses are placed at various heights throughout the cage to encourage activity and exercise.

There are two 12-inch square wooden nest boxes (with 3-inch diameter entrance holes) hung at one end of the cage. This gives the pair a choice of boxes and also provides separate sleeping quarters or defense posts if necessary.

Very importantly, under the cage floor is a wire dropping guard covered with plastic with newspapers on top of that. It works well and catches 98% of whatever drops.

Enter Xena

The new home was built and waiting when Xena arrived June 10th, 1997. She was in beautiful condition, very glossy and has two unique yellow wattle skin spots on the right side of her head. She will eat from my fingers but will not sit on my arm.

When Sunny, the male, first saw her he let out a deafening wolf whistle and shouted, "I'm a mynah bird!"

She replied, "Ek, Ek," meaning, I believe, "Big deal. So What?"

The cages of the two are side by side to help them become acquainted. When I first put the male in with the female he got a little rough with her but after a few sessions together they worked out a truce and seem to get along rather well at this point.

While they were in side by side cages, both birds began nest building. Her nest was perfect. She used news-

paper, pine needles, and paper towels. Just one month after her arrival, she laid two eggs, two days apart, *in* her box which was, of course, *in* our house.

She tossed the first egg out and sat on the second for five days before she threw it out. I was gratified to know that Xena felt secure enough to get that far in her first effort at egg laying — after all, these were her first eggs and probably surprised the heck out of her. And it was all done between a fish tank and a picture window.

I believe that indoor breeding of hill mynahs is a very viable choice — especially for breeders who live in climates of extremes. If such breeders have mynahs set up in outdoor aviaries but have had very poor success, perhaps moving the birds indoors to a comfortable, constant climate will be just what the fertility doctor ordered.

We are looking forward to when Xena and Sunny have their first babies. What a wonder of nature that will be — the breeding of the Java Hill Mynah. 



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