Avicultural Management — Part II
Consultation for the Distant Aviculturist
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It seems as though, in our push to investigate and share new concepts and discoveries on every front of aviculture, we tend to overlook what projects may be currently underway. Such is the case with the avicultural consultation program which we initiated over a year ago with great expectations. We would like to share the results of this non-traditional concept to demonstrate to other interested aviculturists what one pioneer has to show for a bit of effort.

We originally reported our interactions with a Canadian aviculturist in British Columbia who had requested assistance in several areas involving cage arrangements, hand feeding babies, and basic baby production and rearing. Our communications and exchange of electronically generated correspondence seemed to be a blessing for us both in the form of excellent communication and a great time saver. The episode was presented in the Watchbird as an example of how verbal communications had failed to be effective in getting the ongoing problems of the aviary owner understood and properly addressed by ourselves down in the lower 48 states. The aviculturist was hugely satisfied, we were tremendously pleased and the comments made to us in subsequent months regarding the article’s content indicated a great deal of interest among other breeders about this timely concept. The only segment of this blissful story that seems to have been left out are the birds.

We have had the distinct pleasure of becoming fast friends and cohorts in future planning with this Canadian aviculturist. After reviewing the tape sent to him, we mutually decided that the only fitting step to be taken next was for him to visit the abundance of aviaries which we had access to in southern California, as the nature of the problems in his aviary would require a massive overhaul in management, physical facilities and philosophy.

So the day arrived in August 1988 that we found ourselves standing in the airport in beautiful downtown Burbank, California (according to Johnny Carson, we’re told) waiting for a fateful meeting with John Day. John had traveled over several thousand miles, on several airlines, only to arrive in the clutches of two slightly rabid avicomaniacs. He has not forgotten his indoctrination into avian medical management yet. I think John was allotted less sleep in four days than is legally permissible for federal inmates between the two of us taking him on tour and holding...
his eyelids up with 'just one more carton of kodachromes.'
John left us for the island of British Columbia, but has not left us alone.
We continue to hear from him regularly and are absolutely impressed
with his devotion to his birds, an
unfailing commitment to aviculture
and a burning zeal to do everything
more perfectly all the time. His
personal energy is only surpassed by
his ingenuity, and eye for new
methods to assist his birds' care and
future production.

All of these great accolades were
personally witnessed by us when
John proudly presented us this winter
with a follow-up video tape of his
newly redesigned and reconditioned
aviary. John's efforts have included a
total revamping of the basic flight
design for his African greys, cocka-
toos and macaws so that the prin-
ciples of seclusion and security were
incorporated into the pairs' living
quarters. Cage to cage visual contact
was minimized or eliminated so that
pairs could concentrate on breeding
and laying in nesting territories that
were psychologically secure and
highly 'defensible.' Intruding hands
were entirely eliminated by creating
frontal access service doors for feed
and water trays. Blue and gold macaw
pairs who had previously abandoned
fertile eggs or damaged embryos
early in their development when
scrambling out of the nest box to
attack hands and serving spoons are
now raising chicks in dark, undis-
turbed boxes in the upper front of the
flights with the nest box entrance
hidden from sight. All of the African
greys are isolated, as per our sugges-
tion, away from the more raucous
South American breeds where they
are currently laying and producing
young.

The greatest single item that struck
us both immediately upon reviewing
John's video tape was the tremen-
dous lack of noise. The first tape in
'88 was overloaded with alarm calls,
hisses and scrambling birds soaring
over the wire, either away from the
video camera or for a bit of finger
food. The '89 tape sound track was
completely quiet, save John's narra-
tive and the occasional soft whistle of
a grey. The only evidence of any birds
at all were the lengthy tails of several
macaws dropped in front of the flight
door, with the pairs sitting side by
side inside, noiselessly.

The inside structure of the aviary
was an engineering marvel. John had

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Visual contact between breeding pairs was minimized or eliminated by hanging panels of plywood between cages. Notice the height of the nest boxes, placed where birds feel secure.

Side view of the Days' "L" type aviaries for macaws and large parrots. Fairly indestructible, these aviaries integrated a convenient viewing and egg collection port in the metal nest boxes.

Adjustable glass panels allow sunlight, provide heat on cold days, and fresh air on warm days.

taken a steep roofed structure and lifted the entire roof several feet upward in order to raise the flight cage height to a level where nest box holes were at, or above eye level. He had simultaneously carved out the old dirt floor with its cedar shavings and replaced it with a smoothly poured concrete one, complete with a self contained drainage system. The open roof wire mesh section had been replaced with adjustable glass panels to provide sunlight and heat in this more polar-oriented geographic region. The cage support legs, which previously had plagued sanitation and disinfection efforts, were gone and entirely replaced by a suspension system which gives 100 percent access to the floors under the hanging wire cage floors. And to think this was all accomplished in about four months. Who says Rome can't be built in a day?

The best news is that after less than one year since we made contact, we have gained a great friend and a pioneer companion. John has gained a steady access to an information source not previously considered available to himself and, better yet, has an excellent baby crop started for 1989. John is living proof that anyone can turn a formidable situation around in less time than most people take to gripe about it, and blossom into someone who is well on his way toward becoming a self-sufficient aviculturist with an insurance policy against a future of less available birds at ever higher prices. It is just no longer true that one must live in Miami, Los Angeles or Dallas to be able to create a handsome aviary.

Our hats are off to John and his wife Sheila for taking the opportunity to pursue a dream into becoming a reality in an area of the world where aviculture has not made itself a household name. John has every reason to believe he may have well become a part of the forefront of aviculture in his own arena.

Again, we vigorously encourage aviculturists and their avian veterinarians to consider this method of electronic communications to assist one another. It works for us. Besides, the clients are happy, we're happy, the birds are happy, our suppliers, and accountants are happy. Are you?

Author's note: John and Sheila Day can be reached at 5207 Hammond Bay Rd., Nanaimo, BC, Box 35, Site 51, V9S5N7 for further comments about his experiences.