



PSITTACULA SIGHTINGS

by Fred Perry, Norco, CA

Notes on Nest Boxes

Summer is the time of year we take our boxes down for cleaning and disinfection. The old nest material is dumped into the compost pile. The boxes are soaked in bleach-water in an old washtub for about thirty minutes, then they are set out into the sun to drain and dry out. When dry, any needed repairs are made to the boxes, ladders, entrance landings, access hole covers and hangers.

Our boxes all have ladders down the side wall rather than just below the entrance hole. It's easier for the birds to get in and out of the boxes in a hurry.

We are often asked what type of boxes should be used with the various species of *Psittacula*. The rule of thumb is "keep it simple." We use the grandfather clock style of box for all of our birds, in two sizes.

For all Indian Ringneck sized birds, our boxes measure 9 x 9 x 24 inches deep. The Alexandrine and Derbyan boxes measure 12 x 12 x 30 inches deep. All boxes are made out of solid wood planks, and not plywood. Plywood no longer contains toxic chemicals, so it's okay to use, but we prefer the planks because the solid wood insulates for heat, cold, and noise so much better.

The boxes may seem small, but the birds feel so much more secure in them, because they can defend the

smaller spaces better. Reluctant breeder pairs usually jump into the small boxes immediately, when they have previously sat on the perch just staring at a giant box.

Our boxes all have ladders down the side wall rather than just below the entrance hole. It's easier for the birds to get in and out of the boxes in a hurry. If the ladder is below the entrance hole, it can't be seen when the bird approaches. Some birds jump or fly in and may break eggs when they land. But if they can see and get to the ladder from the entrance hole, the problem is eliminated.

The access hole is cut on one of the side walls. The bottom edge of the access hole is six to seven inches from the bottom of the box, so the nest material won't spill out when the panel is opened. We fill our boxes with about 5-6 inches of nest material.

The boxes have hooks placed on the opposite side of the box from the access hole. The boxes are hung on a side wall of the aviary, facing the back wall. They are two feet from the back wall to allow for air-flow. Hang the boxes as high as possible to give the birds a sense of security, but where it's still easy for you to see and reach into the access hole.

After the boxes have been disinfected and repaired as necessary, fill them with nest material. We use a #3 ground wood fiber for nest material. It's not as course as shavings, and not as dusty as sawdust. The birds really seem to like it too.

In southern California, we hang the reconditioned boxes in the flights for the pairs as early as August. ➔

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