

# Aviary for the Novice

by T. George Clymire

Most fanciers reach a point when cages alone are no longer adequate as a means of housing their birds. It is at this time that an aviary or aviaries become optimum for the sheltering of pets and breeders. It is important to create an environment conducive to the natural life processes of all your birds and the aviary has attributes that should not be overlooked. Among these are: room for nesting, plenty of fresh air, adequate sunlight, and most important, space for flight.

Once the decision to build an aviary has been reached, there are some questions that should be considered. How much space is available? Where will it be located? Does that location provide sun, shade, as well as protection from extreme climatic conditions? Last but not least, how does the estimated cost fit into your budget?

If you live in an area with a mild climate, your aviary can be more open, with the emphasis on more exposure and less protection. In more severe environments, it is necessary to have some way of closing off part of the aviary. This requires a more sophisticated type of construction which will usually be reflected in the cost of the unit.

Before you proceed, it is a good idea to investigate building codes in your area. When conversing with the building authorities use the term "bird pen" instead of "aviary". The latter term is generally reserved for commercial endeavor and this distinction will prevent you from getting tangled up with the coding regulations in the area.

There are two basic types of aviaries, permanent and temporary or "knock-down". Permanent structures fall under building codes, while knockdown or bolt-together units are movable and do not.

Aviaries can be built of either wood or metal, with metal being more resistant to weather and wear and tear. As metal aviaries require special tools and are too difficult and costly for the novice builder, I have chosen to discuss the bolt-together, wooden aviary, which is comprised of modular, interchangeable units, that can be expanded to a larger structure when and if the need arises.

The type of birds to be housed is another determining factor in construction costs. Larger birds, especially hook-bills, require a heavier grade of wire. Because of the annoying tendency of regular aviary wire to stretch out of shape, I recommend the use of hardware cloth.

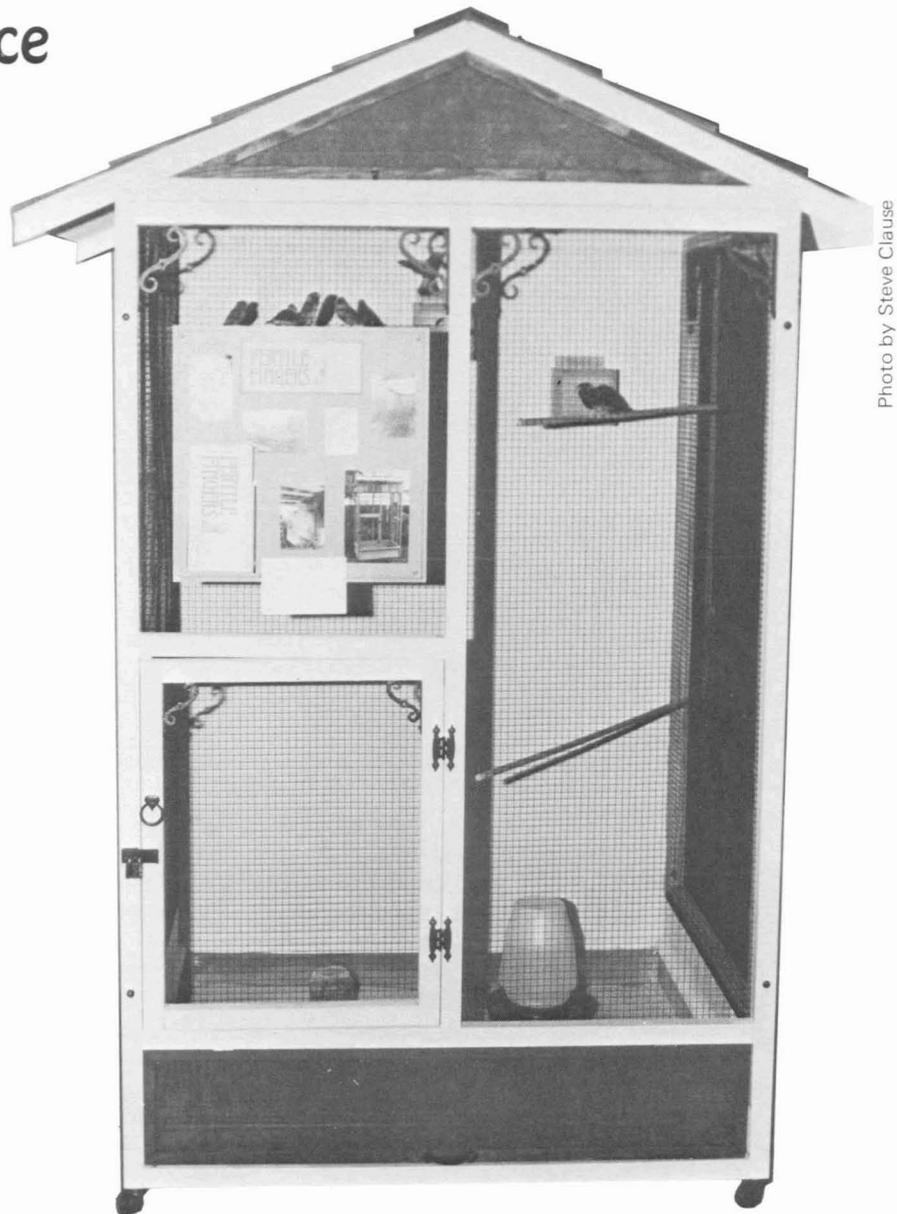


Photo by Steve Clause

*This sample of the author's handiwork was on display at one of the AFA's conventions. A perfect size for patios, small back yards, or even an enclosed porch. Notice the bottom drawer for storage, and castors for movability.*

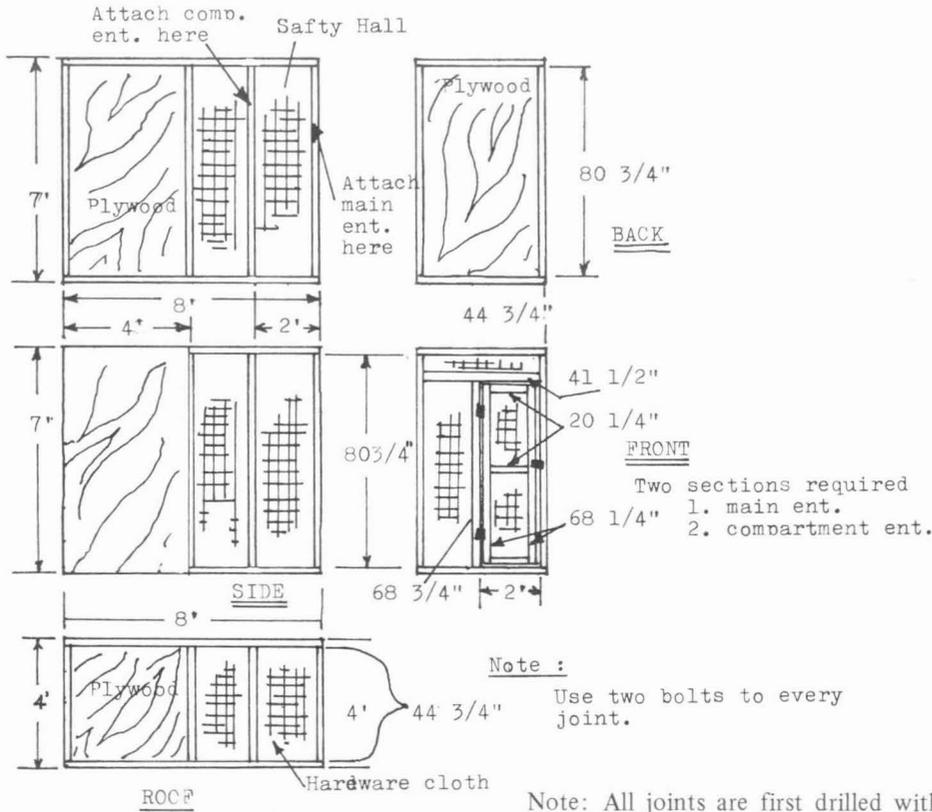
The size of the wire escalates in accordance with the size of the birds, the heaviness of the wire, and its cost. (For example: finches, parakeets, and cockatiels, use 1/2" x 1/2"; conures, lovebirds, 1/2" x 1"; parrots, cockatoos, 1" x 2".) If you have rodent, reptile, or wild bird problems, it is a must to use the smallest hardware cloth and a base board to prevent pests from digging into the unit.

All of the framing for the modules will be done in 2" x 2" lengths of douglas fir with a 1/2" plywood skin and hardware cloth. It includes a safety hall, to prevent bird losses and to provide storage space. The dimensions of the completed unit are: 4' W x 7' H x 8' L.

Tools required: measuring tape, pencil, square, hammer, saw (hand or power), drill (electric or hand), and drill bits of 5/16" and 1/8".

Materials:			
2" x 2"	12		each 8' L
	10		each 14' L
	3		each 12' L
1/2" x 1/2" hardware cloth			4' W x 32' L
1/2" plywood	3 sheets		4' x 8'
	1 sheet		4' x 4'
Hardware:			
nails	16d H.D.		5 lbs.
	4d H.D.		2 lbs.
bolts, wing nuts, washers	1/4" x 3 1/2"		16
hinges	3"		2 sets
staples			enough for attaching wire

The following diagram indicates the appearance of the aviary lying flat:



Note: All joints are first drilled with the 1/8" bit, perpendicular to the adjacent 2" x 2", then nails are hammered. This will prevent the wood from splitting in the process. In all cases, the wire is applied to the frame first, then the plywood is added. In this way, the plywood covers the wire and provides stronger seams.

To assemble: (1) stand the back up to one of the sides, (2) match up the top ends, (3) drill bolt holes, (4) install bolts.

Repeat this process with the compartment front, the aviary front, the side, and lastly, the roof.

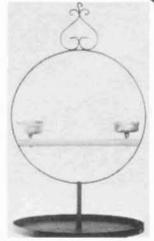
You may want the aviary to be placed directly on the ground or on a solid foundation (brick, concrete, or wood). The advantages of the fixed foundation are added height for better drainage, and the elimination of digging pests.

As a finishing touch, I highly recommend painting or weather proofing the exposed wood surfaces. Remember, use only non-toxic paints or preservatives (Thompson Wood Seal is perfect for this purpose). If weather is severe, you may need to add an asphalt roof for protection.

If the unit as presented here is not suitable for your needs, it can be easily modified to your specifications. The basic plan can assume any dimensions, and single units can be bolted together to create a multi-compartment structure. Enjoy your first aviary!.

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