



FROM MATT'S PERCH

By Matthew Russel

When most of us hear the word aviary we generally think of it as a place where we can keep birds and for a lot of us this is the case. There are many other things we can keep in our aviaries, other than birds, like Blue-tongue Lizards. In South Australia we are very lucky that there is a wide range of native mammals we are able to keep under our permit system, and doubly lucky that most of the easy to obtain animals come under the basic category of the system. However, the needs of such animals vary greatly due to their individual natures and the behavior they display.

With a few modifications to a standard aviary it is easy for you to accommodate many animal species and add character to your complex. In most cases security will need to be beefed up. Both Squirrel and Sugar Gliders are easy to get and make a great night exhibit. But of course, they are not suitable to be kept in with birds. 12mm x 12mm mesh would be required. They can get out the smallest gap, so cover all gaps that you can get a finger through; and cover the ground in a coarse aggregate or some mesh to prevent dig-outs...and there you go, you have a glider cage. All that would be needed are plenty of perches, the more the better, and some hollow logs or nest boxes for cover during the day.

If you have a large aviary, for example more than 35m² of floor space, you could consider Bettongs or Potterroos. They are active at night and live primarily on the ground. They are much larger than gliders, so standard parrot mesh should hold them. Like many ground dwelling mammals they are good diggers, so again cover the ground in a mesh to prevent dig-outs and provide them with some hollow logs on the ground to hide in during the day.

It is also possible to keep many reptiles. There are some that are fine in with birds and some that are not. Sleepy, Blue-tongue and Bearded Dragons are some worth considering looking at putting in with the birds, things like Monitors are not worth considering due to there nature but are fine on their own. Also, in a well secured bird-free aviary there is always the possibility of a large python. I would suggest using a 6mm x 6mm snake and rodent mesh in this case. A heat source and draught-proof area will need to be provided, but this can be as simple as an acrylic/perspex or glass box.

I hope the above has made you think of aviaries in a different way.

As always, please let me know your thoughts on this matter. You can e-mail me at: tara_matt@hotmail.com.

Cheers,

Matt