

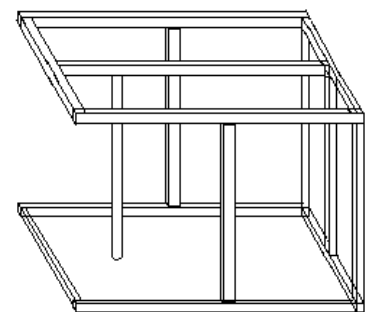
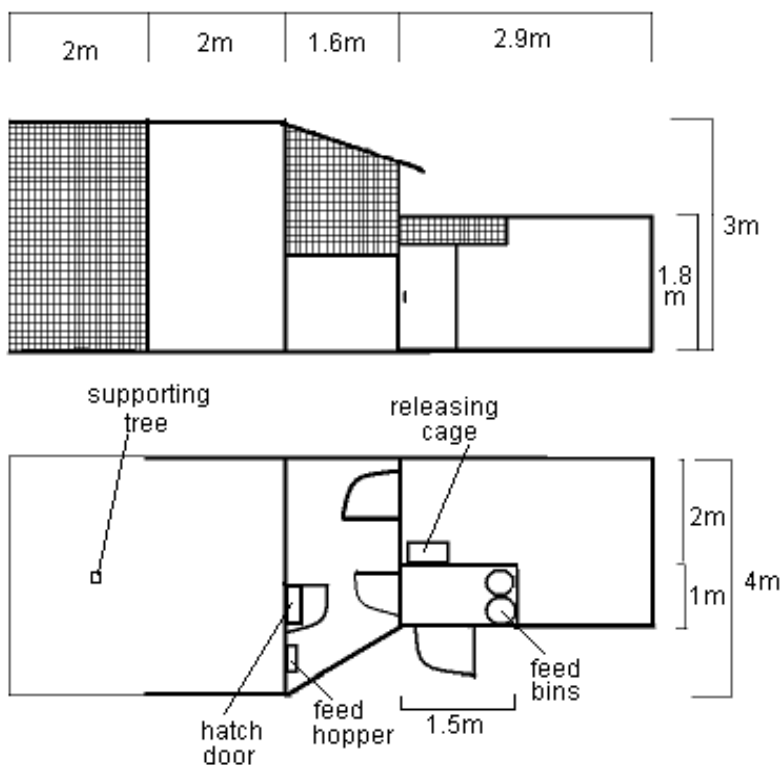
MY AVIARY

Hi, my name is Matthew Russell and this is my avicultural story.

It all started around four years ago when I met my girlfriend and her cockatiel Hank. You know how the story goes... boy meets girl, boy likes girl, girl wants to leave home and move in with boy. Before boy knows it he's building a cage for girls cockatiel because he is sick of it flying around the house leaving its calling card.

Now Hank the cockatiel needs a friend for his new aviary, so we started going around to all the bird dealers to find friends for Hank. This is where I was exposed to all these lovely birds. I soon had a passion for finches and softbills. The 1800mm x 1200mm aviary soon became too small for our flock of seven cockatiels and four Californian Quail, and because I was dying to have some finches of my own it was time to upgrade. Due to the fact I am still living at home with my parents it took a lot of negotiation to get approval for my first aviary. In the end I was given a small strip of land under some trees where I started to build.

The aviary I came up with is inspired by the "Jewels of Asia" aviary at the Adelaide Zoo, it is a unique design and I hope you like it. The free hanging mesh is a real feature.



A view of how the frame works for the front section





What birds do I keep?

I keep a variety of birds, I have one aviary for small birds (see photos) and another aviary for my larger birds. In larger birds I keep Mandarin Ducks, a Masked Plover and Bush Thick Knees. In the smaller birds I keep Superb Blue Wrens, Silver Eye, Cut-throat Finches, Jacarinis, Painted Finches, Blue-faced Parrotfinches, Red-brows, Black-headed Nuns, Madagascar Weavers, Cockatiels and both Stubble and King Quail.

What birds have I had the best luck breeding?

The birds I have had the best luck with are the Madagascar Weavers. I don't know why this

is, they have always bred well for me. I breed lots of Jacarinis too, but the chicks never see out their first winter, it is probably too cold for them in the Adelaide Hills.

If I could have any three birds what would I choose?

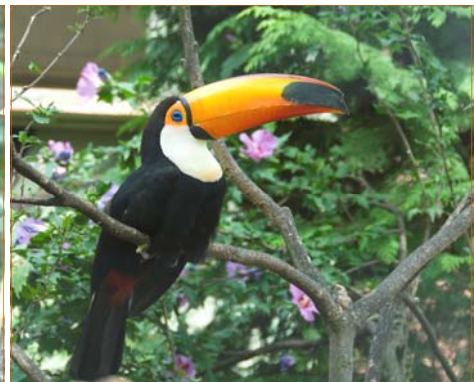
Well, that's a hard one. I would probably choose three species we don't have in Australia because I would love to see more exotic birds available to aviculturists here. So my choices would be: Red Cardinal, any of the Toucan species would be great, and Touracos of any sort.



NORTHERN CARDINAL
Cardinalis cardinalis



White-cheeked Touraco
Tauraco leucotis



TOCO TOUCAN
Ramphastos toco

What are my favourite species? My favourite species....there is something about the Red-headed [Aberdeen] Finch I just love! It is a real shame that only five years ago they were readily available and now they are as rare as hens' teeth.

What would I do different in an aviary setup? I would do lots of things different, but this was my first aviary and I learnt so much for when I build my next one. The main thing that comes to mind is that I would rodent and snake proof it. I have removed two snakes from it and hundreds of mice.

What are my plans for the future? I have big plans for the future. I have bought 90 acres and have started to build a massive aviary complex dedicated to breeding exotic finches to help make sure we can hold on to what we have left. The complex when finished will cover 4000m² and have about 60 aviaries, a cabinet room, kitchen and live-food breeding room. Well that's the dream. I have started the foundation and hope to have some preliminary frames down by January 2009.

So this is my aviary it's made out of junk and looks a bit rough but I love it. Now I have shown you mine, you can show me yours. It takes little time and effort, and is lots of fun writing a simple article for the magazine.



THE WISE OWL SAYS...it pays to remove nest boxes and logs from parrot aviaries at the end of the breeding season. This not only allows for cleaning and mite eradication, but by not having their nesting receptacles in the aviary all year round the birds will show more interest in the boxes, or logs, when they are reintroduced for the next breeding season. After all, absence makes the heart grow fonder!

Many finches line their nests with feathers. White is the preferred colour, but any light colour suffices if white are not available. However, it is important to ensure any feathers used are disease free, as the use of unsterilized feathers may have disastrous consequences. (*Sterilized white feathers are available from the Services Officer— see inside-front cover*). If you have unsterilized feathers, scald them well with boiling water and dry thoroughly before use.



Minnie the Mynah says: "You just can't be too careful with cats"



"OK cat, go near the aviary one more time and you're dead!"



"Watch it, pussy cat! I may be endangered, but I aint dead yet"

Bird Keeping In Australia
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2008