



A Day in the Life of a Bird Breeder

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“The Farm”

Klink's Bird Haven, Inc., is located on a plot of ten acres, which has been landscaped to create a tropical environment for the breeding of primarily larger species of birds. The tropical landscape consists of canopies of oak trees, false mulberry trees and bamboo. Tropical plants surround the breeding areas to give the birds a sense of their natural environment. The cages are suspended and the natural foliage provides shade from the summer sun. The false mulberry trees are excellent foliage, as the large leaves fall during the autumn months, allowing for natural sunshine to warm the birds in the winter.

The cages are suspended and provide the birds with ample room for flight. The macaws are housed in cages approximately 4' x 4' x 8'. It is important for the larger birds to have sufficient space to take flight from their nest boxes to the end of the cage. The sizes of the cages are commensurate with the size and breed of each particular species. Each cage has a drop feeder to prevent the escape of the birds. With the exception of the lorries, all cages are in a natural, outside environment. The lorries are housed in a 100' building, as they require more protection of the elements. The front section of this building is my Vet room and the back section is the feed room. In an effort to prevent harm and disease caused by wild animals, five Chow dogs have been trained to protect the farm and provide security. While electronic security devices are mandatory to prevent intruders, they are not effective in warding off wild animals such as raccoons and possums.

The farm consists of macaws, mini-macaws, cockatoos, amazons, pionus, congo greys, timnehs, hornbills, kookaburras, hawkheads, lorries, twenty-three different species of conures and marmoset monkeys.

All macaws and cockatoos eggs are incubated in Grumbach incubators and the chicks are hand-reared. It is important to have your incubators in a separate room from your nursery because of the dander and viruses from the babies that is being handled. Dumping dirty baby tubs in the nursery can also send the viruses airborne. Take the extra few minutes, replace the dirty tubs with clean tubs and clean bedding. By taking the dirty tubs outside will save a lot of heartache



down the road.

The remaining bird species are “parent fed” until the age of 2 ½ to 3 weeks and I pull them for handfeeding. I use Kaytee handfeeding formula on all babies birds except the macaws and mini macaws and they are fed Kaytee’s macaw formula. The formula is fed at a temperature of 105 degrees and is kept warm while handfeeding in a large wide-mouth thermos. The baby birds are kept in a nursery room and are hand fed with only Kaytee and nothing else added to the diet. Some people feel they have to add human baby cereals and baby food in the jars and all sorts of vitamins, but this is not something that is done here. I feel Kaytee has done years of research and trials on their diet and adding other additives just throws the diet off.

Organizing your nursery can save you so much time. I bought a reasonable priced white bookcase and filled each shelf with clear plastic shoeboxes and labeled each box. Organizing your nursery is handy with every boxed labeled and filled with your syringes, medical supplies, and anything else around the nursery.

Saving chicks back for future-breeding stock is usually done on a pair’s last clutch and the parents feed the chicks completely out. Since all chicks are banded, this makes it easy to keep track of each family for when it is time to start pairing up for breeders. Getting your chicks in the nest banded and returned quickly, the parents usually won’t even notice the band. I normally band chicks that I pull for handfeeding with a silver colored band but when I band the chicks in the nest I use a red colored band. Some parent birds see the shinny silver band and will start picking at the leg or foot on the chick.

“The Diet”

Throughout the years, I have tried various colored pellet diets; however, the most success has been found with an uncolored pellet in combination with small amounts of seed. The pellet diet of choice is “Kaytee Original,” which is a small brown pellet. The colored pellet diet was unsuccessful, as the birds were selecting only a specific color and leaving the rest. This created waste and unnecessary expense. Experience has shown that breeders are often hesitant to change from a seed diet to a pellet diet; however, it is necessary to experiment with different diets in order to find the diet that is successful for all birds and creates the least amount of waste. I have noticed on the larger pelleted diets the birds will bite the large pellet and the other half ends up on the ground, but with the smaller size pellet the bird eats the whole pellet and there is little amount of waste. The lory diet consists of “Lory Life” powder and “Kaytee Lory” pellets. The lories are also provided with fresh fruit daily. The lories will not eat the pellets straight and therefore the pellets are ground in a blender and mixed with the powder. The mixture of the ground pellet and powder has proven absolutely successful. The Lories like the mixture so well it is hard to get them to



eat only the powder. The mixture is provided to the lorries in the morning hours and fresh fruit is provided in the afternoon. Apples, oranges, bananas and papaya are always their favorite fruit. Some of the larger lorries also like spinach and broccoli. The hornbills and kookaburras are provided a diet consisting of “Kaytee Softbill” pellets, some fruit and vegetables and “Bird of Prey” meat. On occasion, they are also provided with mice, crickets and grasshoppers. We use no chemicals on the foliage so any “bug” is considered food.

“The Daily Routine”

The *philosophy* of Klink’s Bird Haven is that cleanliness is of utmost importance; therefore, each day begins with fresh water and fresh food.

A typical morning begins before the sun rises and the various diets are freshly prepared. There are various stations of birds on the farm and the routine is followed precisely each day. The lorry barn is the first to be cleaned and fed. The lorries are probably the most time consuming, as each cage has three bowls in each drop feeder; fruit bowl, powder bowl, and water. Everyday they receive clean bowls. With having forty pair of lorries, they make quite a mess out of their bowls as they take the powder in their mouth, go to the water bowl and they virually make there own nectar. Once the lorries are fed and cleaned, the routine of feeding pellet food to all the other birds begins. Approximately 40 pounds of pellets are fed on a daily basis, as well as a small amount of seed. All the conures receive a small amount of fortified cockatiel seed on the top of their scoop of pellets. Two or three days a week the birds are also given fruit and veggies.

I do all the feeding of the birds myself as I feel this is the only way to stay in control of your farm. If you pay attention, the feed station will tell you a lot about your birds; empty bowls usually means the babies have hatched or if a bird is sick the food is still there the next day. Plus feeding yourself you are able to physically look at every bird as you go along.

At least twice a week, all feed and water bowls are washed with a combination of bleach and dish soap. There are twelve freestanding wash tubs throughout the farm, which leaves no excuse for unclean bowls. Home Depot sells hard plastic freestanding wash tubs for about twenty-five dollars and they work great outside. At each wash station there is bleach and dish soap. The cages are cleaned with a power sprayer every other day, in order to maintain cleanliness and control disease. The process of feeding and cleaning is approximately 4 hours for two people.

The remainder of the day is focused upon hand feeding baby birds, which is often demanding and set on a strict schedule. Aside from feeding the breeding pairs on the farm and hand



feeding the baby birds, many coordination's are conducted throughout the day with local breeders, vendors and others in the avian community. There is also maintenance that must be conducted on the farm, which is primarily done by Mike. He builds all of the cages, nest boxes and stands, and maintains the farm property. Sharing the responsibility of a business of this magnitude with a spouse, can be the most rewarding and fulfilling.

“The Vet”

First and foremost in owning a bird farm, is the establishment of a working relationship with your Avian Veterinarian. Kristine Kuchinski, D.V.M, Gainesville, FL is my veterinarian. Dr. Kris is a traveling vet and she comes to the farm about every six weeks or so. Every new bird that comes to the farm is surgically sexed and examined by her. I like the breeder birds to be surgically sexed because I want to know if there are any problems with their productive organs before they are paired up for breeding. I think having your breeder birds checked out by your Vet before pairing save you from sitting on the birds for years and no production. Dr. Kuchinski not only tends to the needs of Klink's Bird Haven, but also offers her services to those of the local avian community. On any given visit, Dr. Kuchinski will surgically sex the birds, obtains cultures and renders avian medical treatment as needed. Dr. Kuchinski also provides guidance and knowledge of the latest in avian research.

“A Final Note”

At the farm, I always try to follow my own seven steps to successful breeding and they have always seem to work for me:

1. Make sure you have a true pair
2. Compatibility
3. Proper cage size
4. Proper nest box size
5. Diet
6. Environment
7. Cleanliness



One of the greatest pleasures in life is to live your dream. It was my dream years ago to own and operate a bird farm and to be a member of the avicultural community. I find great joy in sharing the business of Klink's Bird Haven with my husband, Mike. Together, we have created one of the most rewarding ventures of our lives. We not only generate income from our business, but we enjoy giving back to the avicultural community and sharing our knowledge and experiences with others.