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Taiwanese Lifestyle Through the Eyes of CC

Chapter 6. Maximizing Spaces and Resources - Natural Habitat Aviary

"The true secret of happiness lies in taking a genuine interest in all details of daily life." - William Morris



Dr. Chang's orthodontic journey began 36 years ago. Along the way, there has been excitement, a sense of fulfillment, and contentment; however, not until the last couple of years has he learned to slow down and step a little off track to appreciate ordinary happiness that occurs while he goes about his daily life.

Bird-keeping has recently become Dr. Chang's newfound passion. Throughout this lifestyle series, his efforts and determination to create a close-to-nature shelter for his feathered companions is apparent and unquestionable. Even so, sometimes it still takes painful experience to develop a fully protected home for the birds so that neither natural hazards nor careless human actions endanger them.

SAFETY is the first and foremost foundation to secure. An interlocking door system design is crucial for keeping birds in an outdoor aviary. When used properly, the space between the two doors serves as a buffer, providing time and space to check for any birds that could have accidentally got past the inner door, and prevents them from actually flying away. If they did, with their splendid plumage that does not fit in with the wilderness in Taiwan, these pet birds would not have a very high chance of survival on their own. To create a more hospitable living environment, the lower part of the aviary is built with waist-high glass walls which act as windshields, whereas the upper part is surrounded with stainless steel mesh (Fig. 1). The mesh walls and ceiling are primarily for ventilation, but also serve for climber plants to provide natural shade, under which the birds can hide from the intense summer sunlight.



Fig. 1: Mesh walls and ceiling allow extended application of the vertical space in the aviary. In a practical sense, ventilation and shading can be created naturally. Attachment of auxiliary perches and climber plants is also made relatively easy, which enhances not only the functionality, but the playfulness and esthetics of the aviary.



Fig. 2: The mesh wires allow the birds to grab directly onto them. For the more fun-loving birds like this rainbow lorikeet, access to the vertical dimension of the aviary is open for them to dance to their heart's content.

In addition to practicality, the use of mesh also offers opportunities for fun! The wires are by themselves perfect for bird claws to grab onto (Fig. 2), and they also make auxiliary perches easy to attach, allowing its feathered residents to explore the vertical dimension of the aviary (Fig. 3). While the quiet, philosophical ones simply hang up high immersed in the surrounding mountain views, those with moves and rhythm enjoy an extensive stage to dance around on. Even though their excessive enthusiasm literally ruffles the feathers of some of their companions, they elicit entertaining and therapeutic energy to their human friends.

This brings us onto the second key to an aviary that inspires - PLAYFULNESS. Recalling the rooftop garden for quail in chapter 2 and the first version of the rooftop aviary in chapter 3, Dr. Chang realized that not much had been done to the ground area, where, aside from plants, bare soil had been left as it was. This greatly reduced the fun for the ground-dwellers, namely, the quail and the ducks. As a consequence, in this upgraded aviary, flat rocks have been laid and stacked up to create low barriers for the non-flying birds to explore (Fig. 4). The gaps and shadows formed between overlapping rocks trigger the quail and the ducks' curiosity, luring them to hop up and down while playfully pecking around looking for potential snacks. Bird seed is purposefully scattered on top of the barriers so that, instead of feeding them like farmed poultry, natural foraging behavior is stimulated, keeping the birds active and adventurous.

In the higher parts of the aviary, fallen tree branches and wires have been hung for the flying birds to perch on. The perches have been so positioned to avoid where the Chang family have planned to accommodate themselves on the aviary



Fig. 3: A higher compartment was reserved at the entrance of the aviary. Not only does it balance out the oppressing sensation for people in an enclosed room with low ceiling, vertical space is also created for the birds to enjoy.



Fig. 4: Low barriers were created out of stacked flat rocks for the non-flying birds to explore. Scattering feeds on top of the uneven terrain stimulates natural foraging behavior, keeping the birds active and adventurous.

floor, so that walkways and seats won't be constantly covered with bird droppings. In other words, both parties are entitled to get the most out of the space, while the effort to accommodate or, in a less preferred scenario, to tolerate - each other's differences can be minimized.

Finally, to elevate the experience of keeping an aviary to the next level, esthetics and shared enjoyment are essential. The purpose of a walk-in aviary should not be for maintenance only. Instead, being able to actually appreciate spending time in it among the birds is what Dr. Chang is aiming for. With the first two foundations - safety and playfulness - established for the feathered residents, this last key is relatively easy to attain. Plants - leafy or with flowers - are always a good idea, providing privacy and security for the timid inhabitants like the quail, and beauty and serenity for people to enjoy. Currently, one of Dr. Chang's favorite places to be is in his designated corner of the aviary (Fig. 5). Bringing along his laptop and guitar, he can spend a good few hours there, letting his fingers and mind soar either on the keys of his laptop or on the strings of his guitar. With a simple tilt of head, a panoramic view of the aviary is readily in sight whenever he wishes to stop for a break. This may be a perfect depiction of how work-life balance should look like. It is not always all about efficiency and results, but about appreciating those curious little things in daily life and indulging in the joys hidden in the process.

Fig. 5: Dr. Chang enjoys practicing the guitar in the aviary. To his amazement, he noticed the quail and the ducks' tendency to adjust the pace in which they move and walk according to his music. Finding curious little things as such in ordinary daily life might be the true essence of work-life balance.



Desk editor of JDO & a wildlife enthusiast* Annie Chen

*Title bestowed by Dr. Chris Chang Special thanks to Mr. Paul Head for refining this article









