

Electrics in the Birdroom

I think that most of us nowadays are fortunate enough to have a suitable power supply to our birdrooms to cope with the general lighting and power needed to keep both our birds and us in reasonable comfort. I have recently added a water supply, sink and water heater to mine, which means no more walking from the kitchen to the birdroom with endless buckets of water and of course there is now tea and coffee on tap, so to speak.

When I first fitted out my birdroom I made sure I had plenty of light, which at the time was by standard fluorescent fitting complete with suitably placed tungsten fittings for dimming purposes. I don't use the light to bring the birds into condition early, merely to mimic the natural daylight and give uniform illumination throughout the day, regardless of the weather conditions outside. A good few years ago I was pricing an electrical job at work (I am an electrician by trade) that was for the local health trust, to refit a centre for people suffering from depression and other related illnesses and "Full Spectrum" tubes were specified to help ease the symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder. These tubes are the closest you can get to natural sunlight, giving high colour rendering and having a beneficial Ultra Violet output.

Being so beneficial for human use, I could see a place for them in the birdroom and when talking one day to Alan Harper, he pointed my way to a book that I think most of us are now conversant with, being Canary Tales by Linda Hogan and sure enough in her book she talk of the benefit of Full Spectrum lighting. Needless to say it was not long before my birds were benefitting from them as well.

Another "catch up" call with Alan resulted in another addition to the lighting in my birdroom, a Blacklight tube. Both Alan and I had been having reasonable breeding seasons but both of us had always bred far more cock than hens, infact one year I bred 33 youngsters of which 27 were cocks. Alan, never being one to let the grass grow, read in a Poultry magazine how the commercial breeders of poultry managed to breed predominantly hens rather than cockerels and several phone calls later, he came up with the "Black tube" answer. For those of you that can remember those dark dinghy disco's of the late 60's early 70's, these are the tubes they had which made anything white that you were wearing, glow like a beacon, especially the dandruff and flick on your new trendy Carnaby Street threads. I digress.

I was able to get hold of some of these tubes and Alan and I both used them and they were an instant success, with us both breeding a far greater percentage of hens over cocks. These tubes are only beneficial to use when the hens are going through the egg producing stage and once the eggs are laid they are of no further use.

I have always had heating in my birdroom, initially from a couple of mobile tubular heaters and now with a couple of one kilowatt, thermostatic/timer controlled convector heaters, which are set to a few degrees above freezing to ensure that, if we have a prolonged cold snap, as we are experiencing at the moment, the birds water does not freeze. I do not use the heating to help bring the birds on as I think this is only achieved through lengthening daylight and increased feeding of conditioning food. Another must for me is a dehumidifier over the winter and early spring months. I reckon on average I draw about a litre of water from the atmosphere every other day, which can only be good for the health of the birds at this time of year.

Everybody is aware of the need for good ventilation in the birdroom and this is most efficiently achieved with extractor fans. One of the main requirements for ventilation, which is invariably overlooked, is having suitably sized air replacement louvers fitted to enable the stale air that is being extracted by the fan to be replaced with the same volume of fresh air from outdoors. The fans are best sited as high as possible and the input louvers at low level, ideally diagonally opposite. Gone are the days when you could leave windows ajar to let in a bit of fresh air, especially in these security conscious days.

Which brings me nicely onto my final item, (thank goodness for that I hear some of you say) the security of our birds and birdrooms. There are many ways of securing our birdrooms, from good strong locks to door and windows, or the rabid Rottweiler prowling the back garden, to elaborate all signing all dancing alarm systems. Any form of deterrent is better than nothing, from the basic dummy bell box and CCTV camera, a PIR controlled security light, or a simple alarm system with sensors on the doors and windows. Alarm systems incorporating movement sensor are also good but they are prone to false alarms unless you are able to site them away from the birds. For anybody without any electrical experience the new wireless systems are very good, all you need is a drill and screw driver and the jobs a "good un". With no wiring between all the devices and the control panel, within reason you can have as many sensor as you like, where ever you like, with the advantage of being able to have a remote sounder in your house, without having to install "miles " of wiring. These wireless systems are a bit more expensive than the conventional wired type but are far easier to install.

You have all paid good hard earned money for your birds and equipment so why not protect them.

I will not bother you with the pros and cons of Fire Alarms or Emergency Lighting as this is a completely different ball game and throws up many awkward issues.

Happy sparking

Alan