

Article from “The Mickaboo Bird Rescue Companion”
Published July, 2016

Create Your Own Indoor Aviary By Lucy Macmillan

Designing and building an indoor aviary may be easier and less expensive than you think – think big!



One of the most effective ways to help your companion bird or birds live a happier and healthier life is to provide as large a cage as you can afford for the space in which your birds. As a cockatiel “parront” for the last nine years, I have always had an interest in making my birds’ space as natural and accommodating as possible, so that they get enough exercise and have room to play and roam and forage. After graduating to larger cages over the years, I finally decided what I really wanted was an indoor aviary.

I was particularly captivated by pet stores’ (not for sale) indoor aviaries for their in-house birds. It was nice to see birds of different species interacting in a larger, more natural environment where they had the opportunity to fly, climb ropes and perches, and forage on the ground. While there may have been as many as ten birds in a 10’ x 10’ x 10’ aviary, they were relatively quiet as they had things to do, space to play, and places to rest and eat. The aviary was clean. The whole environment just seemed “more natural” and after many visits I could tell the birds preferred it that way.

Once I had the aviary “bug” in my head, I spent hours looking online at a variety of commercial aviary designs, do-it-yourself designs, and YouTube videos on how to build them from scratch or use existing cages to create larger spaces. While spacious, many of the aviaries for sale seemed too cage-like in their appearance for my preference for a natural looking environment. And most were more expensive than designing and building my own.

After a lot of research I decided to create my own indoor aviary.

While I am not a contractor, I decided to design my own aviary with the assistance of Nyla Copp, an aviary designer, builder and contractor. I first learned of Nyla when I volunteered with Mickaboo. I contacted Nyla, who now lives in the Pacific Northwest, to see what it would take to design and build the aviary. I provided the approximate dimensions and “style” of the aviary I wanted. This was based on the size of coop I wanted for the location in the room I wanted. Factors critical for the design included:

1. Height – I didn’t want the aviary too high as I wanted the birds to be able to play on top but not have the top be higher than people, as this can encourage aggressive and territorial behavior in the bird.
2. Size of the doors and openings - how many doors or openings did I want and where they should be located? I also wanted to be able to reach into the “coop” so I could outfit the aviary with various perches and other natural materials for the birds to use and play with. I also wanted to be able to clean it easily.



Courtesy <http://www.windycityparrot.com/>
Black Walk In Indoor Aviary for Medium
to Large Parrots WI11062

3. Removable trays on the bottom – most bird cages have standard trays that pull out to facilitate cleaning. I wanted the aviary to have the same feature.
4. Wheels – In addition to the tray feature to allow for easy cleaning, I wanted the coop to be easily moveable so I could clean under and around it and roll it outdoors for a power wash on occasion.
5. Materials – I wanted bird-safe wood (fir, pine) and wire (stainless steel).
6. Size in general – could I get it through my front or side doors?

After a lot of measuring and penciled drafts, I sent Nyla a preliminary sketch of the new coop and she proceeded to prepare specific plans for it. Because she lives outside the Bay Area, she designed the specs so that any contractor could construct it. She also specified the grade of wire, wood types and options for “finish”, plastic for the trays, wheel size – all details specified to a T!

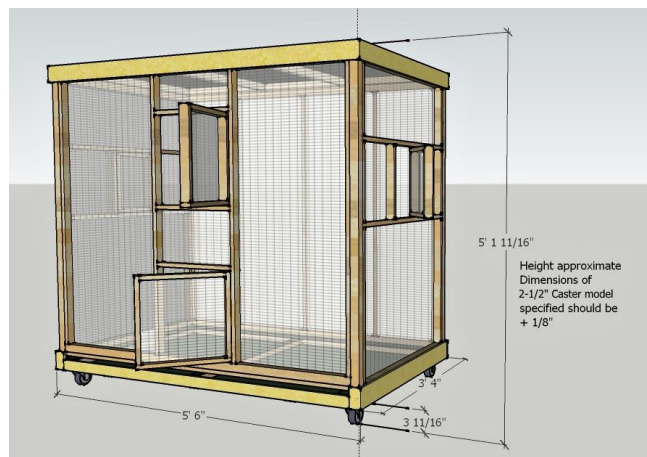
Nyla’s design creation was creatively called the Cockatiel Castle.

It looked just like I had pictured!! Now it was time to execute the plan.

I found a great North Bay general contractor Rick Tarantino to build the aviary. The building took about 4 weeks, including ordering and finding the materials and constructing it. My cockatiels were at first wary of the larger “cage” but within a day they became acclimated and immediately started exploring more. They seemingly never looked back!

One of the best parts about the aviary is the large ground level – the tiels can now chew on a variety of safe wood, bamboo shoots, and asparagus ferns in a more natural environment. They can climb Manzanita branches and sticks and even fly a short distance from perch to perch. They can hang out on the cage doors when open and can roam on top as they like. They can play safely in a large space with doors closed when company and dogs come to visit.

Creating the new coop has been one of the best things I have done for my birds. They get more exercise, play more, sleep better and in general just seem happier. While my birds have always been relatively well-behaved (every parront says that!) I have noticed so much more singing and whistling, less crying for out of cage time, and more “quiet time” during nap and rest periods. The bigger “coop” has made the whole household happier. So when considering things to help improve your bird’s life, consider cage size and if you have the room for and can afford to create a small coop, you and your birds will love it! The investment can be well worth it.



Cockatiel Castle's dimensions: 5' 6" wide, 5' 1-11/16" tall, 3' 4" deep.





Bochy climbing high to perch



Bochy and Luna nibbling on bamboo, asparagus fern, broccoli and cilantro.