

The Lütolf stud: birdroom and flights

Writing exclusively for *Cage & Aviary Birds*, Fred Wright begins a major series on the new birdroom and latest-bred birds of Switzerland's master breeder **DANIEL LÜTOLF**

BUDGERIGARS

BEFORE we talk about Daniel's birdroom, we need to think about why he is probably the top budgie breeder, not just in Europe but the world. Think about it – if you want to get to the top, and stay there, nothing can be left to chance. You need the best birds, you need a top birdroom to breed and keep them and you cannot take your eye off the ball – for as long as you want to stay at the top.

Now let's look at Daniel's birdroom where he breeds those wonderful budgies. The room is only three years old. It's built at the side of his house and probably covers the same floor space as the house. However, enter the birdroom and you see a staircase that leads you down to a same-size basement. So that doubles the floor space. The whole birdroom is block-built and timber-clad, with plenty of opening windows, so ventilation is superb.

Upstairs

In the main room there are two huge half-flights of square-section aluminium frame construction, with a mesh covering. There are three breeding units and everything is on wheels so the cages and flights can be easily moved forward and it's simple to sweep and clean behind. So, both cages and flights are mobile. When you see it in

action, it all makes such a lot of sense! Everything is for easy cleaning.

There are 96 breeding cages with outside nest-boxes attached to the front of the cages. All the flights, cages and boxes are made by the German breeder and cage manufacturer Siegbert Oestringer, who is a great friend of Daniel's.

There is a kitchen area built into the birdroom. This is designed as a central "island" and has everything constructed of

stainless steel. It has hot and cold water, a large deep sink, work surfaces, a refrigerator and an industrial dishwasher. This enables Daniel to wash all of his equipment and prepare feeding, such as softfood, in the birdroom and not in the house. Many fanciers and their partners will know how much that is appreciated by everyone! Within the kitchen area there are cupboards and deep drawers which all the spare drinkers and feeders are kept, so nothing is unnecessarily lying around about in the birdroom.

Downstairs

In the basement there is another huge L-shaped flight. It runs the length of the room and across the full width of the room at one end. This is a half-flight with storage underneath, which seems to have room for a year's supply of boxes of French red millet sprays.

I have seen a separate toilet in a birdroom before, but this birdroom comes with a toilet – and a quality shower. Daniel says it's perfect for when he finishes the day in the birdroom because his wife is

allergic to the budgie-dust. Seeing the shower was a first for me in a birdroom!

Off the main basement room there are a couple of storage rooms, all fitted out with shelving. One room contains a restaurant-quality air-conditioning unit coupled with a heating unit. The air is literally filtered from the whole of the birdroom at both levels. Most birdrooms are full of dust – even the cleanest examples – but this one seems to have

eliminated the dust problem.

In the basement are two more banks of breeding cages, of the same design and with the same nest-boxes as upstairs. Again, all are mounted on wheels for easy moving and cleaning.

There are lots of things about the birdroom that are impressive: the food-preparation area, the cages, and the layout itself. But it's such a large space. To manage it, Daniel uses a lovely trolley that carries everything he needs when he is feeding and checking nest-boxes. It must save him walking miles and miles while he



Daniel Lütolf: in England at the Club Show and (right) assessing his stock at home



L for Large: a giant L-shaped flight with storage space underneath Photo: Fred Wright

“ Everything is on wheels, so both cages and flights are mobile



A different flight design: note the wheels for easy mobility These three photos: Fred Wright



External view of the birdroom



Here's why the premises are dust-free!

is working in the birdroom. Everything is to hand.

When I first went into the birdroom I was bowled over by the quality of the birds, but it did not take me long to wonder why so many kitchen knives were attached to the boxes by the magnets that kept the nest-box doors in position. Eventually I had to ask what the knives were all about. Daniel told me he had bought a lot of the knives and uses them to attach to the boxes when he needs to remember it's a nest-box to be checked a

bit later. It's actually a great way of marking a box that needs special attention: chick hatched but not fed, chick hatching that might need a bit of help very soon, and so on. Experienced breeders will know all about going back to a nest-box that needs attention and marking the box is a great idea. Perhaps not the best solution if children are about but there are none in this birdroom.

Some readers might be thinking that this setup sounds a bit "over-the-top" but Daniel has a professional attitude to budgies and spends many hours every day with his birds. If you are going to work full-time with the birds, it's vital that the room is well organised, comfortable and suitable for keeping a large stud of budgerigars.

● The January 29 issue will include the first of two exclusive major articles about Daniel Lütolf's 2019-bred birds.

Fred Wright maintains a champion stud in Wallington, Surrey.

Serious cleaning

THE birdroom equipment includes an industrial-size cylinder vacuum cleaner. I did not see it being used, but I would guess it's for major cleans and certainly for when the breeding cages are cleaned out.