

## The Best of the NFSS Bird Forum: The Way I Lost Birds... Learning from Mishap

*Below you will find a collection of comments, advice, and tips previously posted on the NFSS Forum. We hope you find the opinions of value. They represent the views of various members, participants in aviculture. If you would like to learn more about the wonderful and interesting world of finches... [become an NFSS Member](#) and join our Forum or, if you find this article of use and would like to make a contribution to our society, [donations are welcome](#).*

I just wanted to share a few ways I lost birds. They could have been avoided and that's the sad thing. I have a 2" gap at the end of the foster cages. I found 3 cream Shafftails that got stuck there. They were all dead.

I left the bird net in the large aviary. I found a normal Shafftail dead in it.

And today when I let 5 Societies loose into the small aviary I didn't ever expect one to go down to the ground. As I walked out I noticed a bird on the cage bottom. A few moments prior I had it in my hand so I didn't even realize that I had stepped on it. Please learn from my terrible mistakes.

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I've been raising finches for 20 years and it never occurred to me that Black Widow Spiders would colonize a bird net. Or that those metal-tipped spouts on the glass drinking bottles would freeze solid. That's why I posted – by sharing these things, maybe we can prevent similar mishaps with others' birds.

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Bored birds have an infinite amount of time to creatively find ways of injuring or killing himself or herself. I found goldfish the same.

I once had a recently fledged chick hitch a ride out of the aviary hanging on my back. I did not feel or see the chick until I noticed my little dog chasing it across the yard. The chick was caught unharmed and returned to the aviary. Richard

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I squashed my favorite Red-breasted BQ hen one morning – I stepped back, not realizing that she had found something delicious and irresistible on the sole of my shoe and was snacking on it....

And I had an "almost" – could have been really bad for myself AND the birds. I keep my nets tucked between the wiring and walls, in my aviary. As I was preparing to catch juveniles one day, I saw something moving in the net. Black widow spider – evidently decided that particular net would make a perfect home (I believe she had second thoughts after I shook her out and squished her).

Now, I shake out my nets BEFORE I start using them!

Oh, and then there's the winter we had temps down into the 20's and the metal

nozzles on the drinkers froze solid in the Parrotlet cages...they didn't cope well with no water for several days until Dummy (me) realized the problem. If you use drinkers with metal fittings...just beware.

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I used to have ropes and silk plants not just decorating the cage but also making it more interesting. HAH. The birds eventually chewed on everything leaving fibers that birds would get caught in. Would find them hanging from threads. The birds weren't in the same room with me. Nowadays Since I removed all the plants and ropes I don't have that problem unless it is long toenails. I also had problems with nests that trapped mostly feet. I now use one of those clear hamster balls the large one so all the birds can get in without sitting on top of each other.

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I had a juvenile society drowner in a hanging waterer - one of those with holes in cover and a circular perch around the outside. The bird apparently could get through one of the holes and not out of another. There was barely room for the bird in the water tray but it forced its way in.

I also lost 7 birds out of a flight of 9 when my hired bird sitter put two waterers in one flight and none in that one. It was three days without water and 7 birds died. Needless to say I have found another bird sitter.

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I have walk thru flights that allow walking from one into the next and I decapitated two diamond firetails in one swing of the door.

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The most common way we have lost birds is water related, we use water bottles and sometimes the little ball at the end gets stuck, we see a full bottle and don't realize they can't get any. Now I walk by and shake each bottle to see water come out.

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I knew an NFSS judge who put sprays of millet in the bird seed planix jars along with the birdseed. Did this thinking the birds would get a little treat now and then. Went away for several days to come back to dead birds littering several of the cage floors. The millet sprays blocked passage of seed. So many birds starved to death with jars full of seed.

I have forgotten water bottles too and now I always turn around and look at each cage individually before I leave each morning and say out loud "they have water, they have water, they have water". I rarely miss a cage now but this double check has saved me several times.

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Watch for and learn to notice and react to squinting. Thirsty birds squint. I've likely saved more birds repeating this than by anything else I've ever said. My source, Robert Black. Good advice pays off over and over.

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I have had a bird either stuck on the cage floor for the night.. for whatever reason, or unable to fly to get up to the water jar. Watch those birds on the

floor.. perhaps they lost some flight feathers, and not hanging out on the floor of their own accord. And, John, you are right, they squint when they are dehydrated. Now, that I watch for this, I have saved two birds by putting them into a warm cage with water on ground level.

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My fiancé not as "intuitive" as I am.. wed be sitting watching TV and Id say >OH NO THOSE BIRDS CANT GET THE WATER" and Id jump up and fix it, we had lost a whole clutch of babies that way once.. any, it was the birds..they were trying to TELL me they needed water, jumping from the water bottle to my side of the cage... the birds in the bird room.. well we don't sit and watch them, so they are the ones that are sometimes noticed too late.. so yes I now also look at each cage , shake each bottle, before leaving the room.

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While inside my small aviary cleaning once, I noticed my female buttonquail was missing. She had popped up, as buttonquail do, and landed in a bucket of diluted bleach-vinegar water and was floating and limp when I found her. I held her upside down and stroked her chest toward her mouth. A little water came out of her mouth and I noticed her flinch a bit. I laid her in the sun in some Tupperware and she slowly came around. Months later she was literally blown out of the aviary during a freak storm. The doors all have spring closers and latches. The latch to one door wasn't fastened and blew open during the storm. I found her two days later walking around in the yard. She lived an un-eventful life after that. And yes I realize this story is a little odd.

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