



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

# **A Bird Has Escaped Do Not Panic**

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**By Eric Baxter**

Recently I have had several phone calls and listening to the voice coming over the wire in each instance it almost seemed as if the callers had experienced the landing of a spaceship on their aviaries and the panic was on. What had happened to them has happened to others, to me, and probably will happen again to many others. A bird had escaped, and the first thought in mind was to get it back into the aviary as quickly as possible, and inside five minutes if there was a way to do it. This is the first thought of all who experience the escape of a bird, and just how soon it is recaptured depends on the behaviour of the bird and the method employed to achieve the recapture. To assist in this regard, perhaps the following information will serve to solve the problem.

## **What to avoid**

Do not attempt to catch the bird with a hand net unless it is a tame bird and you are able to walk up to within a few feet of it. If it flies away from your place and across to the other side of the road, or into your neighbour's place do not attempt to drive it back into your own yard. If you have a cat or dog play safe and lock them up; remember the bird is on the outside and not inside behind the wire netting. Do not drive your finches or parrots out into the flight - having in mind that a flutter of birds will encourage the escapee back when it sees them flying around in a panic; in all probability it will take off also in a panic.

Do not think that the hose is the solution and that with this it will be possible to wet it enough so it cannot fly; in all probability attempting to accomplish this will only frighten it more. This method could be alright with a canary as they can be approached a little easier.

Should the bird decide to camp in a tree for the night do not try to catch it; to pull this one off you really need to be smart, it will be much easier to catch next morning when the bird is hungry.

Other than flying out through the door, escape may be through a hole in the wire netting. However, once it is discovered that the bird is outside do not panic but just take things quietly. From a safe distance keep an eye on the bird and give it every chance to settle down and get used to its new surroundings.

After a while they usually start to have a look around and not being sure of the new surroundings they become a little timid and are easily frightened. Any quick movement or strange noise can be instrumental in causing an escaped bird to make a hasty retreat from its new surroundings. Provided they are not subjected to a continual chase in an endeavour to catch or trap them it is possible they will try and get back into the aviary for a feed. If the escaped bird has a mate, all the better, because chances are that it will not be very far away.

Should the escaped bird be a finch then an ordinary drop-door trap cage is alright to use and it is possible to induce the birds to enter these by putting some seed in the trap cage; if seeding grasses are available these may bring about the desired result. Place the trap cage in a position on the aviary near where the bird has been observed mostly, or even hang it on the side of the aviary. There may be a perch in the aviary that is used a lot by its mate, particularly in an instance such as this when it may sit on this and call continually. If so, then hang or place the trap nearby.

It may even be a wise move to put a perch close to the wire to encourage its mate to sit on it so that they can see each other. However, if after three or four hours things start to look grim and providing it is easy to catch up its mate, do so and put this in the trap cage as a decoy. Only attempt to do this if it does not cause too much disturbance, or if the bird being used as a decoy is settled and does not become agitated; should the bird being used as a decoy show signs of stress and act frustratingly then discontinue the method or it may result in the loss of the decoy.

The simplest method of all to use, and one that has been used by many, is a wooden frame with a piece of wire netting on it, or a frame with fly wire on it. Probably nine out of ten fanciers have one in the tool shed, one they have for sieving dirt, or one that has been made to sieve the dirt out of seed. If not, it is little trouble to make one, which should be about 20" x 16", with boards about 1/2" thick for the frame, and these about 5" wide and this covered with 1/2" wire netting. To make it effective and operative, prop this up with a piece of dowelling 6" long and attach to this a piece of string or cord and you will have something just as good as all the fancy trap cages, nets, etc.

To induce the escaped birds to go under this, place some seed or seeding grass on a flat piece of material about 6" square, and then put this under the frame well towards the back of it. Use flat material or a very shallow receptacle for the seed or seeding grass, this makes it easier for the birds to see. When the bird eventually goes in under the wire frame trap do not be too anxious to pull the string because if it is missed it is going to be much more wary and this will make it harder to catch. If it should move in under the trap and it appears to be a little scared just wait and allow the bird to settle down to feeding and when it is busy and contentedly feeding then pull the string.

In regard to parrots, if this is confined to one pair and one of these should escape, try using a small cage (open type) and in this place the other bird, leaving the cage with the bird in it in the aviary and in a prominent position for the escaped bird to see. Having done this, open the door of the aviary and quite often this will pay off. Provided the escaped bird is not unduly disturbed it will hang around the aviary, find the open door, and if it is hungry or anxious to get back to its mate, will lose little time going through this back into the aviary.

Remember, a little patience will lend greatly towards regaining escaped birds and there must be no panic, because if the birds sense they are being hotly pursued they certainly will make every endeavour to keep well away. Unfortunately, sparrows can be a nuisance and they are the worst offenders for driving away an escaped bird; they are most persistent in their attention towards them and this eventually aggravates them and they take off for areas well beyond the aviaries to escape. No doubt this persistent attention has also been responsible for driving away a lot of the native birds that once were a common sight in urban gardens around shrubs and fruit trees.

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