

FINCH BIZZ



May 2014

Finch Bizz—May 2014

The Hawkesbury Finch Club.

A branch of The Finch Society of Australia

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Next Meeting: 25th June 2014

Editorial

Just a timely reminder now that the weather is starting to cool down, as we rapidly head into winter. It's time to get those mouse traps and baiting stations out and prepare for those unwelcome mice seeking warmer shelters and food in our aviaries.

We have been getting some response from our new up to date website that Roy has put so much work into. In recent weeks I have received emails and phone calls about birds and our club, some saying they definitely intend to come along to our meetings.

We have had some great entertainment at our last few meetings, with more promises of talks by our own members as well as guest speakers, so keep up the good work. If anyone has suggestions or ideas for guest speakers please come forward.

Last Month's Entertainment

Last month we were thoroughly entertained by Mick Grix with photos and talks from his recent bird tour to South Africa. Both the talk and photos were of great quality and kept everyone entertained.

It was quite funny at times as well, especially when Mick apologises for the quality of one of his photos, as he said they were too far away to get a detailed photo. Some bright spark in the audience asked why didn't you get in a bit closer, only to be shown in the next photo, a fully grown lion eating a freshly killed young buffalo only metres off the car track, Mick quickly said that's why.

Another funny story was when they were paddling in a small canoe amongst high growing reeds with the threat of hippo's and crocodiles in the water, only to come across bikini wearing young German tourists swimming amongst the reed's. "Mick we didn't get any photos of those birds, your slipping mate".

Everyone agreed it was one of the best talks we have had at the club. Well done Mick, Thanks.

Raffle

1 st	pr Yellow Star's	dnt Glenn Johnson	wn Andrew Brouwer
2 nd	Mystery (pr Nun's)	dnt Ken Smith	wn Amelia Thompson
3 rd	Auction (pr Longtails)	dnt Ken Smith	wn Leonard Finn

4 th Maple Tree	dnt Rosslynn Davidson	wn Mick Grixi
5 th Field Guide to Birds	dnt Rosslynn Davidson	wn Mick Grixi
6 th Hand Towel	dnt Neville Simmons	wn Amelia Thompson
7 th Iris – toiletries	dnt ?	wn Sue Bailey
8 th DVD	dnt Neville Simmons	wn Rita Finn
9 th Water/Bird Feeder	dnt Rita Finn	wn Geoff Robards
10 th Bromeliad	dnt Peter Berry	wn Neville Simmons
11 th Mug	dnt Neville Simmons	wn Peter Chapman
12 th Thermos	dnt Neville Simmons	wn Glenn Johnson
13 th Containers	dnt Neville Simmons	wn Neil Lawler
14 th Dozen Eggs	dnt ?	wn Mikayla Smith

The Auction was a wonderful success. Ken Smith donated the Mystery Birds and the auction raised \$50 for the club with the birds going to Leonard Finn. Thanks to all who participated and to Ken for his ongoing support of the club.

The raffle is a wonderful way to finish a great club night and \$1 a ticket is a bargain with all proceeds going to the club.

Don't forget to wear your badge and be part of the badge draw. The lucky winner with their badge on the night receives 10 free raffle tickets.

Thanks to those who are able to get behind the raffle by donating prizes and purchasing tickets.



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Aviculture Doing the Basics Correctly! – By Donald Goulter – Taken from Avi News – February 2014

My practice (on a day to day basis) in Aviculture are to have a simple operation with the basics of good management adhered to. The following has to date, been my guiding principles and practices.

The Basics:

1. Good housing: draught proof; vermin controlled or proofed; and clean; warm when needed and cool when needed; e.g. some degree of insulation.

2. Balanced diet: Various nutritious foods given on a regimen that is easily adhered to and offers visually stimulating and nutritious foods for the birds is essential and not difficult to provide. Greens, Carotenoids, fruits, vegetables plus quality seed mix. Fresh water daily. Sprouted seeds in my opinion are absolutely necessary. Calcium available at all times.

3. Worming programme: Have One! Crop needle, quarterly. Stick to it....It saves lives.

4. New birds: check the vent, is it clean? Does the bird move well? Perch well? Nasal discharge? Feather condition..... Check all of these. Is the bird thin/fat? Just use common sense. When the birds arrive to your property make sure you quarantine.

5. Records: keep records... it is worth it and makes your hobby more satisfying.

6. Use vets: if you have a bird in trouble and you the owner don't feel confident to "handle" the problem... don't hesitate to get the bird to a vet.

7. Environmental enrichment: is in my opinion a specific issue. I believe all cockatoos; lorries etc. benefit more from having fresh branches, cones, etc. than some other species of parrot. In saying that, all birds do benefit to some degree with environmental enrichment. .. It is common sense.

8. Observation: Attempt to have a schedule each day when you check that "all is well" in each aviary. Be prudent with the level of intrusion and be mindful of their "territory".

To summarise: Keep your birds well fed/watered and healthy in as good an environment as possible and you the aviculturist should receive good results. Most of all! Enjoy your hobby.

Originally from Foreign Birds.

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Finch Diets – A Natural Approach –

By Graham Bull,
Coffs Harbour – Taken from Hunter Finch Fancier – December 2008

In deciding what is the best diet for breeding finches, I believe we need to look no further than what are the dietary triggers for breeding in wild finches. The obvious answer for most finches is green seed and live insects. Our captive finches are just as responsive to these triggers, so in my view a diet with an overwhelming emphasis placed on providing consistent quantities of the best green seed and livefood available does not require artificial supplements and protein substitutes in the vast array of products and recipes that are available and often promoted as necessities. If many finch breeders put as much effort and expense into providing more green seed and livefood as they put into obtaining or making many of the softfood supplements, I firmly believe they would achieve better breeding results. I also believe that many of the softfood recipes are far more likely to cause obesity rather than the livefood which is often blamed. I should clarify that I am assuming that the basic dry seeds, grits, etc. are available to the birds at all times.

While the dietary choices in aviculture seem to be rapidly expanding with commercialisation and innovation it seems all too easy to become caught up with trends and hype surrounding the next "best thing" available to us as consumers and bird breeders. Some new products or recipes are marketed or promoted with such zest that we can feel as if we are irresponsible if we deprive our bird's access to them. A few of the recent trends in finch diets and commercially available products are proving themselves to be outstanding improvements to the diets of our finches. The best of these, I believe, are the one's which provide more of the best natural foods to our finches. Frozen green seed and "Greens 'n' Grains" are a fantastic way to provide consistent quantities and quality of soft and dry green seed to our finches at any time of the year irrespective of the local availability of wild or cultivated seeding grasses. The commercial availability of these products allow us to provide our breeding birds with consistency of supply of green seed from one day to the next even throughout the cooler months when fresh seeding grasses are very scarce. This consistency of supply with the crucial breeding foods is of massive importance to breeding success.

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The basics which are available to my birds at all times are a dry seed mix (comprising 2 parts red panicum and 1 part each of white-French, plain canary, and jap millet), fine shellgrit, crushed eggshells, cuttlebone & charcoal and fresh tank water. I feed the birds their "breeding foods" 3 times a day. Breakfast feed is live termites, green seed heads, sprouted seed and Lebanese cucumber. Midday feed is live termites, live mealworms and tonic seed. Afternoon feed is live termites and frozen green seed. My breeding aviaries are planted with various perennial seeding grasses which provide small quantities of additional green seed to the birds. This diet is based on my rock solid conviction that termites and seeding grasses are by far the best breeding foods obtainable for the overwhelming majority of finch species. So I've structured the diet so that in each breeding aviary the birds have access to live termites and green seed at all times during the breeding season.

I use a tumbling machine to extract the termites so that no lumps of nest are left into which they could hide. Shaking and tapping them out gives a similar result. This allows the birds to fill up quickly on the termites without having to hunt around for them. It also means that any that aren't eaten within a couple of hours can quickly desiccate on a warm day, hence the 3 feeds a day as I want them to be constantly available to the breeding birds. These are the staple live food given and by far the best livefood in my view for most insectivorous species. Mealworms are limited to only about a dozen a day to each mixed species breeding aviary. These are only given primarily to provide a bit of variety in the diet and to stimulate those species which like them. I breed my own mealworms using pollard rather than bran due to the higher Protein content.

When fresh seeding grasses are provided, these are pegged up near the door at the front of the aviary. When seeding grasses are just thrown onto the floor of the aviary they can quickly become a disease hazard to the birds as they become fouled by droppings or simply coming into direct contact with a wider range of bacterial or fungal sources which can proliferate on aviary floors. If I can't provide fresh seeding grasses for the green seed component I use frozen green seed. This is simply spooned out onto a clean dish on the feed tray at the back of each aviary. The frozen seeds I use are a mix of 50% commercially available millet (mostly white-French) and 50% green panic. These two are among the best seedheads available. If you are contemplating growing any of the commercial birdseeds during the warmer months, I highly recommend white-French millet - it is accepted eagerly by most finch species and can be very productive if fertilised and watered well. I pick large quantities of green panic when it is plentiful in early summer and my wife and I tediously strip the green seed off the heads and freeze it. The stripped heads are then packed loosely into feed bags to dry and used throughout the breeding season as nesting material. A reasonable amount of seed (about 20%) remains on the dried seedheads as it is very difficult to efficiently strip large quantities without leaving some behind. When this is put into the aviaries as nesting

grass this seed is eagerly eaten by most finches. The green seed is taken by every species of finch in my aviaries. I have previously experimented with mixing various softfood mixtures with the green seed. Each time this simply resulted in less species eating the green seed.

I find that the use of half-ripe green seed has several major advantages over soaked or sprouted seeds. The main advantage is its nutritional content and palatability to all finch species. Also significant is that the soaking and sprouting processes are fraught with bacterial and fungal infection possibilities. I know that there are chemicals used to address this problem, however I don't believe it is possible to regularly feed over long periods such highly absorbent foods treated with anti-bacterial solutions without it having detrimental effects on the beneficial microbial populations within the bird's gut. Recently I have been persuaded to use sprouted seed using a disinfectant called Virkon-S. Most species have taken readily to the sprouted seed; however I still provide two feeds of green seed per day so the sprouted seeds are given to add variety to the diet rather than substituting other important rearing foods.

The feeding of Lebanese cucumber is a recent trend which is now very popular and I must admit to initially being very pleasantly surprised by the eagerness with which most species take to eating it. I've only fairly recently been feeding cucumber (since 2005) and now regard it as a very important part of my birds' breeding diet. I don't know whether it is a particularly valuable feed nutritionally, but its high palatability with a large range of species in addition to its value as a constant source of something green and moist for the birds to pick at throughout the day make it invaluable. I have seen Bluecaps with young go to the termites for a couple of minutes then straight to the Lebanese cucumber to top-up their crop and then directly to the nest to feed the young - I see this often. When I started to feed cucumber, its acceptance by many species you would not generally associate with eating fruit or vegetables was impressive. Fairly recently a friend delivered a cock Bluecap to me & we released it into an aviary which had a piece of cucumber hanging up. Just as I was saying to him about how many species liked it, this bird flew up to the cucumber and started feeding freely on it. He said that bird had never even seen cucumber before. The likes of Parrot Finches and Singers absolutely demolish it, but this is not surprising given their liking of fruits and greens.

The tonic seed I feed is a mixture of 50% Greens 'n' Grains (primarily half-ripe barnyard grass plus various other seeds) and 50% of my own mixture I make up comprising numerous pasture, lawn and oilseeds. I use the tonic seed to provide my birds with a greater range of choice in their dry seed diet and to give them access to the wider range of nutrients available in such a diverse seed mixture. Any small seed type I could obtain from a produce store that wasn't chemically treated went into this mix. The seeds currently in this brew are: phalaris, rye, fescue, cocksfoot, green panic, bambatsi panic, carpet grass, Kentucky bluegrass, purple

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pigeon, blue couch, sabi grass, gattan panic, broadleaf paspalum, signal grass, linseed, chicory, black lettuce, white lettuce, maw, niger, Siberian millet, and rapeseed. All dry seed fed including the basic dry seed and the tonic seed is mixed using an oil-based product called "Breeding Aid" (Vetafarm). This is used as an eggbinding preventative and to prevent the dust rising while I mix and later use the seed as this can set off my hayfever.

I find it beneficial to regularly provide fresh grit ingredients even if the birds have sufficient quantities already in the aviary. Provision of fresh crushed cuttlebone and charcoal particularly stimulates my Pictorellas and White-Eared Masks. Similarly fresh eggshells seem to stimulate Gouldian's, Bluecaps and others. As with all food types it really should come as no surprise to us that our

birds prefer the freshest foods - we do as well and for exactly the same reasons. It tastes better, is cleaner and better for us nutritionally.

Some people will try to imply that to feed a wholly natural diet to finches is a hit and miss approach, or that it isn't scientifically based or that you really should use "such and such" powder, crumbles or liquid in a truly balanced diet. This is what the marketing would have us believe. As long as we give our birds consistency, freshness, quality and choice using the best natural foods our breeding birds' diet will want for nothing.



Victorian Proposal to Ban Exotics – Submitted By Both Roy Peake and Neville Simmons

Posted by [Which Hat](#) (Victoria - but potentially across Australia) on 30-Apr-14

I apologise that this is off-topic/not involving the sale of birds but I believe it is an important message that needs to be shared. I post this for the benefit of those who own or trade in exotics.

The Victorian Government's Department of Primary Industry is contemplating changes to the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (Vic) which will potentially regulate (and prohibit) the keeping of certain exotic birds. Blue and Gold Macaws, various Amazons, Quakers, Nandays, Indian Ringnecks, Alexandrines, and many finches are just some examples of exotics included in that list.

Similar laws prohibiting the keeping, breeding, trade and sale of exotic animals (including birds) have been adopted on a state-by-state basis in the USA over the past 2 years.

This could well be the start of something similar in Australia which may extend to other states. The list of prohibited birds may also expand to include exotics not currently listed. These laws WILL affect all of us.

Please see the petition link at <http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/people-against-the-bird-law.html>

Please inform your bird clubs and other relevant bodies of these foreshadowed changes. Please also let your state politicians know your views on this issue.

Introducing New Birds into an Aviary – By Christine Hornsby – Taken from The Finch Breeders Review – January/February

As a precaution, new birds should first be quarantined for at least one week (the longer the better), whilst giving them a vitamin or anti-stress supplement for a few days, then dewormed with whichever is your preferred method, prior to releasing into the aviary. As this is a very stressful time for them, releasing is best done first thing in the morning to enable them to find shelter, food and water before nightfall. It's tempting to just get the birds home and want to put them in straight away, but many an injury or even death has occurred because of impatience, as new birds can easily panic and fly into the wire in unknown territory or die of starvation, plus diseases can easily be transmitted.

If you have lost the hen of a pair of birds and are fortunate enough to replace her,

then before she is released, the cock should be caught up and kept in a holding cage, (at least a couple of days and longer if possible), until the hen has become familiar with the surroundings i.e. places to feed, drink, bathe and - most important - shelter, otherwise she will most likely be harassed by the cock bird, especially if he has been on his own in the aviary for a while and considers it to be his territory or his priority to reproduce. In extreme circumstances he may even kill the hen bird with his vigorous advances.

It can also happen the other way round, in that if the hen is left on her own, then she may become possessive of the territory and chase a new cock bird around, although this is less likely to occur.

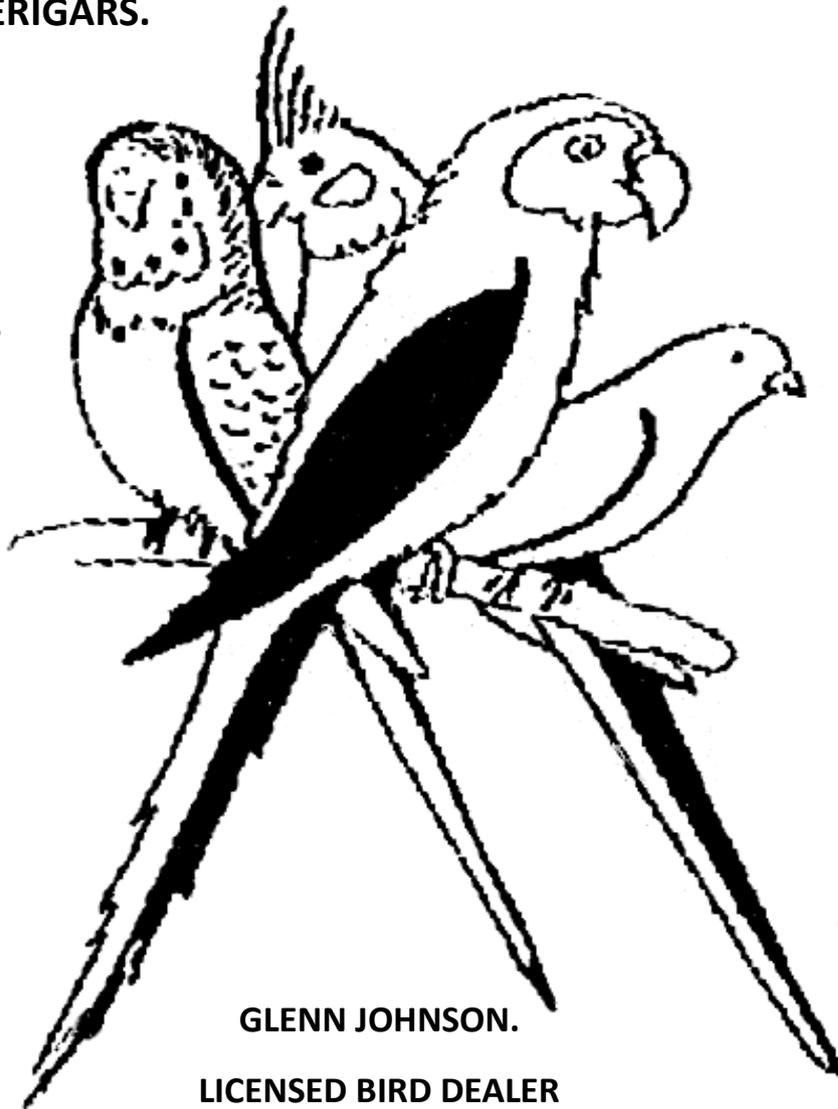
Another way to get the pair to bond is to put them both together into a different environment - such as a holding cage, so that, again, they can get used to it and each other at the same time, before transferring them into their new home. This may mean catching them up again, so you should consider which method suits both you and the birds.

Happy birding



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