

FINCH BIZZ



June 2014

Finch Bizz—June 2014

The Hawkesbury Finch Club.
A branch of The Finch Society of Australia
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Next Meeting: 23rd July 2014

Editorial

Well I must say that things are really going along at our club quite smoothly. Last month we had about five visitors and a good turn up of diehard members, considering it was "State of Origin" night. It also helps when you have quality speakers as we did.

The position of lecture steward has still not been filled, so it's fallen onto the other committee members. So far it hasn't been a problem with members stepping up to give talks, so thanks to all who have done this as it is a tremendous help.

Thanks also to Neville, in calling on favours from many contacts. So don't be shy, if you wish to give a small talk, show some pictures or anything about Aviculture, you will be most welcomed.

Last Month's Entertainment

What a good night it was last month, with our special guest speakers, all the way from Brisbane; Gary Fitt and Cheryl Mares. Gary is the current Vice President of The Queensland Finch Society.

The talk and power point presentation started off with Cheryl talking about how her love of photography and finches started her finch keeping hobby. The talk centred on her experiences in keeping and breeding Crimson Finches. She was very familiar with the personalities of each of her birds and this gave a very personal insight into her knowledge of the day to day activities of each bird. Cheryl was very successful in her breeding of Crimson's. This was quite evident in the many young birds she photographed in her aviary.

The second part of the talk was given by Gary Fitt, who talked and showed pictures of his experiences in keeping finches. The photos showed Gary's earlier career in Sydney when he was only very young. He got started by, his bird keeping Grandmother. Later in life he moved to Narrabri and built a large collection and was very successful in breeding his finches. He then moved to Brisbane and showed his current extremely well built set up. This part of how he put his aviaries together and the materials used were extremely interesting and full of great tips on what to do if you are thinking of building new aviaries.

He went through the day to day feeding routine, the nesting receptacles and the use of Bracken Fern in his cylinders. The breeding of his recently built temperature and humidity controlled live food breeding room.

This part of the talk was backed up by some beautiful photos of the finches he keeps; most of the photos taken by Cheryl. The last part of his talk was on his favourite finch, Diamond Firetails.

Everyone enjoyed the talk and appreciated the distance they travelled to give us their time. Many thanks to Neville and his wife for supplying the accommodation and for all the organising.

Raffle

1 st	Pr Boarder Fancy Canaries	dnt	Glenn Johnson	wn	Debbie Thompson
2 nd	Pr Black Headed Nuns	dnt	Glenn Johnson	wn	Geoff Robards
3 rd	Clifton Finch Seed 5kg	dnt	Sacha Adin	wn	Robyn Schmid
4 th	Bird Seed 10kg	dnt	Ellenbee	wn	Terry Whiteman
5 th	Carry Box	dnt	Sacha Adin	wn	Ron James
6 th	Bag of Feathers	dnt	Debbie Thompson	wn	Roslynn Davidson
7 th	Flowering Plant	dnt	Geoff Robards	wn	Neil Lawler
8 th	Bromeliad	dnt	Peter Barry	wn	Glenn Johnson
9 th	Bromeliad	dnt	Peter Barry	wn	Glenn Johnson
10 th	Red Wine	dnt	Roslynn Davidson	wn	Peter Baldry
11 th	Book – Australian Finches	dnt	Roslynn Davidson	wn	Peter Baldry
12 th	DVD – Only You	dnt	Neville Simmons	wn	Scott Bailey
13 th	Thermo Flask	dnt	Neville Simmons	wn	Brian Chisholm

Great attendance and support for the raffle this month. Just a reminder – **Remember to wear your badges.** If you get called for the badge draw you will receive 5 free tickets in the raffle!

Red Browed Finch – By Glenn Johnson – Taken from Finch News – September, 1991

Red Brows or Red-Heads as they are more commonly called are a fairly common finch being found in many suburban backyards. They are therefore well recognised and quite inexpensive. This fact usually deters many breeders from keeping these lively little gems.

Description: Olive brown on the back, bright crimson above tail, tail brown, underside grey to washed out buff. The crimson streak from base of beak over eye to the side of the head is often used to determine the sex. Some aviculturists believe the sex can be told by this; many do not. The belief is that the streak is larger, brighter and extends further around the head on the cocks.

Distribution: Red Brows are found right down the Eastern Coast from North Queensland, down to Victoria and South East South Australia. Apparently Red Brows were introduced into Tahiti; however I have not been able to find out how they are

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surviving there. These birds can be found from blackberry studded grasslands, rivers, creeks and waterholes to thickly covered forests. They can be observed in quite large flocks moving around the ground in search of grass seeds, and when disturbed, they all rise as one, often landing in nearby trees, only to settle back on the ground when the danger has passed.

Aviculture: Red Brows and Double Bars are usually the next step up from Zebra Finches for many younger breeders. However many breeders become disappointed with them, tagging them as short lived and hard to keep. Even more experienced breeders find them hard to breed with many giving up on them and using the reason that they are only beginners' birds anyway. I found that if

they are only given a small and often cramped aviary, breeding success is usually limited. However if housed in a large planted flight aviary, with shrubs such as melaleuca tea trees, golden pines, lillypillys and such, the birds feel more secure and natural, thus breeding improves greatly.

Feeding: Red Brows take the standard type finch mix. I like to add a little more plain canary seed. Shellgrit is supplied in a mix comprised of crushed eggshells, cuttlefish, charcoal and fine bird grit. A compost heap is turned and watered regularly. The Red Brows almost live in this, picking up sprouted seeds and insects. Live food is not taken in large amounts; mine take whatever they can gather from the compost heap, however I found they do like the fruit fly jar. Green food in the shape of Johnson grass, millet sprays and chickweed will be taken as much as you can supply.

Breeding: My Red Brows almost always nest in growing shrubs mainly in the tea trees or pines planted in the flight. I have had the odd pair nest in tea tree branches lining the shelter walls and wire cylinders. They make a rather large untidy nest of coarse grass. Finer materials are added when the nest is constructed, usually being white feathers and coconut fibre. Egg laying commences when the nest constructing is completely finished. Red Brows lay between four and six white eggs. Incubation commences when the second or third egg is laid and incubation duties are carried out by both parents. Incubation takes twelve days. When the chicks fledge, the parents gather their young at night and place them into a camping nest until they can find their own roosting site. When the young are independent, removing them from the parents is a good idea, as the young will disturb further nesting attempts. Breeding results are far better when two or three pairs are set up in a colony than if only one pair is tried, as they naturally are a colony bird in the wild.

Summary: Although Red Browns are reasonably common birds, and not very expensive, the wealth of pleasure and satisfaction you gain from keeping and breeding these little Australians, make them a delightful addition to anyone's aviary.

An Encounter with Bird Lice – By Bruce McIntosh

– Taken from Finch News – August, 1988

While observing my birds in January of this year, I noticed that a pair of Gouldian's had deserted their eggs. On closer inspection it became apparent that three 10 day old Gouldian's had also been abandoned from a nest box nearby. They uttered weak calls to the parent birds but to no avail. I removed the nest boxes from the wall and quickly identified the problem. Both nests contained bird lice. The small brownish parasites were just visible to the naked eye. Their presence in the nest had made it uncomfortable for the parent birds and hence they chose to desert the chicks and eggs.

Three questions needed answering. Firstly, where did they come from; secondly, how could I get rid of them safely and thirdly, what was the most effective way of keeping the aviary free of this pest?

The aviary has been established for 5 years and few birds have been introduced over the last 12 months. All introduced birds are quarantined for one week in a small box cage during which time they are treated for internal parasites, medicated to reduce the risk of introducing new bacteria into the aviary and closely inspected for clinical signs of disease. Therefore, the most logical source of contamination was the sparrows nesting in the house next door. At the time they were frequenting the aviary in search of seed for their own young. Prompt treatment was required to minimise the effect of these external parasites. Malathion is frequently used in the poultry industry to treat similar parasitic diseases. It provides good control, has a residual effect, but if not applied carefully is toxic to small finches. In the aviary at the time, I had Gouldian's, Cordon's, Painted Firetails, Longtails and Bengalese Finches. Amongst a number of preparations I had for use in the garden was a bottle of Pyrethrum. It is a natural insect spray derived from the pyrethrum flower and is effective in killing insects on contact. It has low residual properties and is much less toxic to small birds than Malathion.

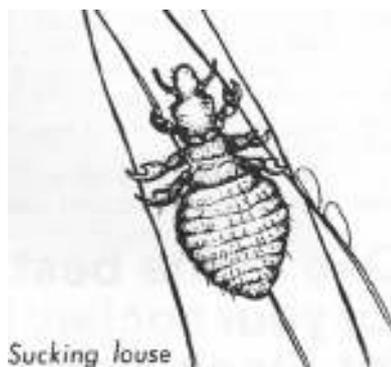
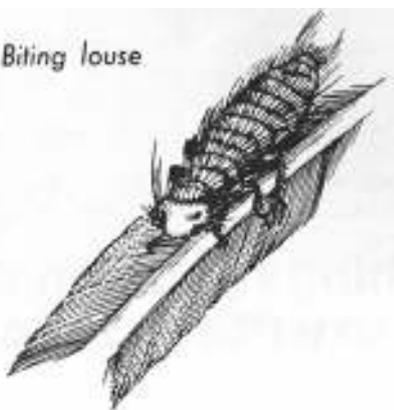
All feeding and drinking utensils were removed from the aviary and 15mls Pyrethrum (Hortico Pyrethrum - 6.5 g/1 Pyrethrin) was added to 1 litre of water in a small hand sprayer. The least expensive birds in the collection were Bengalese Finches. I singled out these to test the Pyrethrum spray for toxic effects. While still in the aviary, I saturated them with the solution until they could hardly fly. Because lice will seek protection under the wings, it is important to also spray the birds while in flight. No harmful effects were obvious over the following few hours. All birds were then sprayed; including the three young Gouldian's in the nest box. The box with young was left in the sun to maintain the body heat of the birds. When disturbed the three starving youngsters made pleas for food. Gruel of warm milk and weetbix was offered to them in the hope that it would maintain their energy

needs until the parent birds returned. The food was readily accepted but when placed back in the aviary their calls for food were not answered. The Bengalese had just hatched out 5 young and these I removed from the nest and humanely killed. They were replaced by the relatively large Gouldian's and within hours the new parents commenced feeding them. About 12 days later three healthy birds left the nest. I caught them out for ringing and to thoroughly examine them for signs of lice. They were free of any sign of lice but all birds were sprayed again. This would ensure that any lice not killed initially or which had hatched from eggs over the 12 days would be exposed to pyrethrum and hopefully be eradicated.

Prevention is better than cure and so the third question I had to answer was how best I could keep the aviary free of external parasites. Because I have had few problems with disease I was of the opinion that I did not need to use insecticides in the aviary environment. However, my insurance policy against disease was inadequate as I failed to recognise that even though I treated and quarantined incoming birds, wild birds also offered a threat to the health status of the aviary. All nest boxes are now dusted with Derris Dust and Shelltox Pest Strips are hung in strategic zones in the aviary.

Derris Dust (Rotenone) is a natural insecticide derived from the Derris plant and is relatively safe in the aviary if used correctly. Shelltox Pest Strips are widely used by aviculturists and are only dangerous if birds have direct contact with the strips or an excess of the dichloroves vapour saturates the air within a small air space. The strips should be enclosed in a wire frame to prevent the birds pecking at them. After 2 months use it is recommended they be replaced. Hopefully these preventative measures will keep the aviary relatively free of external parasites.

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Raspberry Cordial – Taken from Finch News – July 1988

From a write up in the Australian Post and from other sources, we have learned that cordial makers, Anchor Foods in South Australia discovered an untapped market of four million new customers a year. It all started as a result of a chance discovery by a Perth-based team of scientists led by Michael Gracey, Associate Professor of Child Health at the University of Western Australia. Prof. Gracey and his team had been looking for a simple, cheap and effective way of providing drinking water that was safe from bacterial contamination. Suspecting that cordial might be implicated in intestinal infections, they set out to see if they could grow the dangerous bacteria in various cordials. They were amazed; to discover that exactly the opposite was true. All the cordials they tried, but particularly Anchor & Cottees low calorie, made short work of salmonella and even the dreaded vibrio-cholerae, killing the bacteria in a matter of seconds.

Anchor had not considered using cordial to combat diarrhoea in animals until February 1985 when W.A. farmer Keith Davey got in touch with their office in Western Australia to tell them he wanted to buy raspberry cordial in bulk to feed his piglets. He had seen the initial publicity about Prof. Gracey's findings and reasoned that cordial could work with pigs as well, because their digestive system is very similar to that of humans. Apparently gastric problems are very common in young pigs, with high mortality rates. After experimenting with various flavours, Davey asked Anchor to settle on raspberry because all the others contained fruit particles which clogged up the teats of his piglets' feeding equipment. The result he claimed to have obtained could not have been more impressive. The mortality rate amongst his piglets dropped from around 4% to virtually nothing and his feed bill was halved. Eventually Anchor developed a dry powder that could be added to water and this concentrated raspberry drink powder called "A.W.S.111" which has now been released on the market.

Silly as it may sound farmer K. Davey has been feeding his piglet's raspberry cordial three times a day. Pig farmers and others too, all round Australia are following his lead. In future his unusual application could be extended to include chickens, horses, cattle, greyhounds etc. Here in Brisbane and also in Sydney and Melbourne, a number of canary breeders are getting on the band wagon in the belief that A.W.S.111 raspberry solution will help them reduce the mortality in their baby canaries. And there is every reason to believe that A.W.S.111 added to the drinking water will do just that. The theory advanced is that any bacteria received into the water from the parent's beak, will be killed within seconds, so the adult birds and the chicks are drinking bacteria free water at all times.

Recently a very prominent Norwich Canary breeder had his best year since 1981 with eighty odd youngsters and he gives full credit for this success to the use of raspberry cordial in the drinking water. He is completely sold on it and many others are following his lead.

A.W.S.111 has a significant energy value and is therefore capable of stimulating growth rate on its own account. It comes in 800gm sachets and mixes and

dissolved will give you a final volume of 20 litres when made up according to instructions, 1 litre of A.W.S.111 flavoured water contains 625kj of energy value. It has no significant protein, fat or mineral content.

The manufacturers say it is important to note that the use of A.W.S.111 is not a replacement for good management practices especially hygiene. It is not a magic panacea, as it will not clean up a dirty operation. Most of the local produce merchants can obtain A.W.S.111 for you. The ingredients are sucrose, food acid, preservative, flavour and colour.

Bird of the Month – Cordon Bleu – Taken from Hunter Finch Fancier – October 2010

(*Uraeginthus bengalus*)

Species: Cordon Bleu, Red cheeks: Visual Sexing: Cordon Bleu are very striking African birds. The male's head, body and tail are deep sky blue in colour with the wings, underbelly and back being fawn/beige. Male has red cheeks, female's lack red cheeks, the sky blue colouring covering the whole head instead, the top of the hen's head is the same colour as the wings. The face, breast and tail of the female species are sky blue like the male but appear much duller, young males resemble hens:

Size: These small African waxbills range from 4-5 inches (10- 12.5cm).

Origin: Red-Cheeked and the common Cordon Bleus all originate from Africa. Red-Cheeked Cordon Bleu (*Uraeginthus Bengalus*) - Red cheek patches present on males only!

Diet: A good Cordon Bleu diet must include a small seed mix such as Finch which includes a mixture of millets and seeding grasses. This waxbill is highly insectivorous and will require live food. Ant eggs, small mealworms, wax worms and fruit fly larva can be mixed in with soft food and offered daily. Fresh water, cuttlebone and grit should also be supplied at all times. Lettuce, Spinach, Chickweed, Spray Millet, Egg food, Broccoli tops and Carrot tops can also be offered on a regular basis.

Health Problems: Do not forget to trim your cordons toe nails on occasion and provide bath water daily, worm twice a year.

Compatibility: This bird is a good specimen for a mixed aviary provided there is plenty of room and other birds outnumber the Cordon Bleus. During the breeding season or when you have Cordon Bleu males housed together they will become aggressive towards the same species in the presence of females.

Aviary Size/Construction: These birds do best in a large planted aviary with mixed species. If you want them to breed you can try separating them by pairs into large flights. Do not confine them to small breeding cages or they will become bored and feather plucking/aggression will become a problem. Some heat will be required during winter months so these birds are best suited for large indoor aviaries.

Cordon Bleus have a wonderful melodious call. Both sexes of these birds will call and dance. The males song or call is slightly different then the hens but unlike most bird species both sexes will sing!

Breeding: In the usual courtship display you will see the male carry a blade of grass or nesting material in his mouth and begin to dance on the perch. He will bounce from perch to perch if possible with the hen following him and responding by singing.

Clutch Size & Incubation Time: Cordon Bleus lay around 4-6 eggs which are incubated for about 12- 14 days. While they can't be considered easy to breed they will breed in captivity providing they are supplied with large planted flights with nests and care is taken with their diet. My Cordon Bleus prefer to nest in round grass huts with a small hole in the upper centre. I must say while my pairs have laid eggs and incubated well they seem to stop feeding or toss the babies for no apparent reason. When this happens try to relocate the baby Bleus with society foster parents. This works fairly well in most cases.

Soaked & Sprouted Seed – By Graham Thouard – Taken from Finch News – February 1993

I would like to outline the method I use for preparing one of the most valuable food sources available to our birds, that being, soaked and sprouted seeds.

I have a thermostatically controlled heating cabinet which I have made from a discarded refrigerator. It is heated by a light bulb and is controlled at 30 degrees Celsius. I use it for breeding mealworms, and it also serves as a heated hospital cabinet whenever the need arises. I also use it to speed the sprouting process of my soaked seed.

The soaked seed is supplied every day of the year irrespective of whether I supply other greens. The quantity may decrease according to the birds' demands, but nevertheless it is always offered.

The following process is continuous and is repeated every day:

Step 1: Dry seed mix is placed in a sieve and flushed under running water to remove any dust etc., which may assist in the promotion of fungal and other growths as the seed is soaking.

Step 2: This washed seed is placed in a glass bottle or dish.

Step 3: A mixture of 20 millilitres of bleach, from the supermarket (do not get too concerned with the concentrations on the label), this 20ml of bleach is mixed with 2 litres of water and stored for use each day.

Step 4: The diluted bleach is poured into the washed seed in the bottle or container. Fill so that there is a generous level of solution above the seed, as the seed expands as it absorbs moisture and germinates.

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Step 5: This seed is left to soak for 24 hours. In my situation I have the advantage of a heated cabinet which speeds up the process. Nevertheless let it soak for 24 hours irrespective of your setup.

Step 6: After 24 hours place the seed in a sieve and flush it well under running water.

Step 7: Shake the sieve up and down to remove the excess water, and then tip the seed into a dish, preferably glass or stainless steel.

Step 8: Allow the seed to sit until tiny white shoots begin to appear. At this stage the seed has maximum nutritional value. The longer the shoots the lower the nutritional value.

In a heated environment at a constant 30 degrees Celsius, the process of shooting takes 12 hours. Under normal conditions the sprouting time is dependent on the ambient temperature.

By experimentation you will discover the time required to get the shoots. Bear in mind that it will take longer in winter than in summer. The germination of the seed can be observed at an early stage by the use of a magnifying glass. It is the chemical change that leads up to the germination process that produces the high nutritional food value. The value is in the seed not in the shoot.

In the majority of circumstances the birds eat the seed not the sprout.

Step 9: Place the sprouted seed in a sieve and flush with water.

Step 10: Take the sieve and seed outside and swing it around to force the excess water out of the seed.

Step 11: Place the seed in a container and cover with diluted bleach and soak for 15 minutes.

Step 12: Place seed into sieve and flush with water and swing around again to remove excess water.

Step 13: Feed soaked seed to birds.

Step 14: If fed without any additives the seed can be left in the aviary for 24 hours. If any additives such as egg and biscuit or baby food is added, the leftover seed should be removed as close as possible to 4 hours after in summer and 8 hours in cold weather.

The routine that I use due to the advantage of a heated cabinet is as follows:

Step 1: Flush dry seed.

Step 2: Soak seed in bleach solution for 24 hours.

Step 3: Flush seed.

Step 4: Allow to germinate for 12 hours in the heated cabinet.

Step 5: Flush seed and soak in bleach solution for 12 hours.

Step 6: Flush seed and soak for 15 minutes.

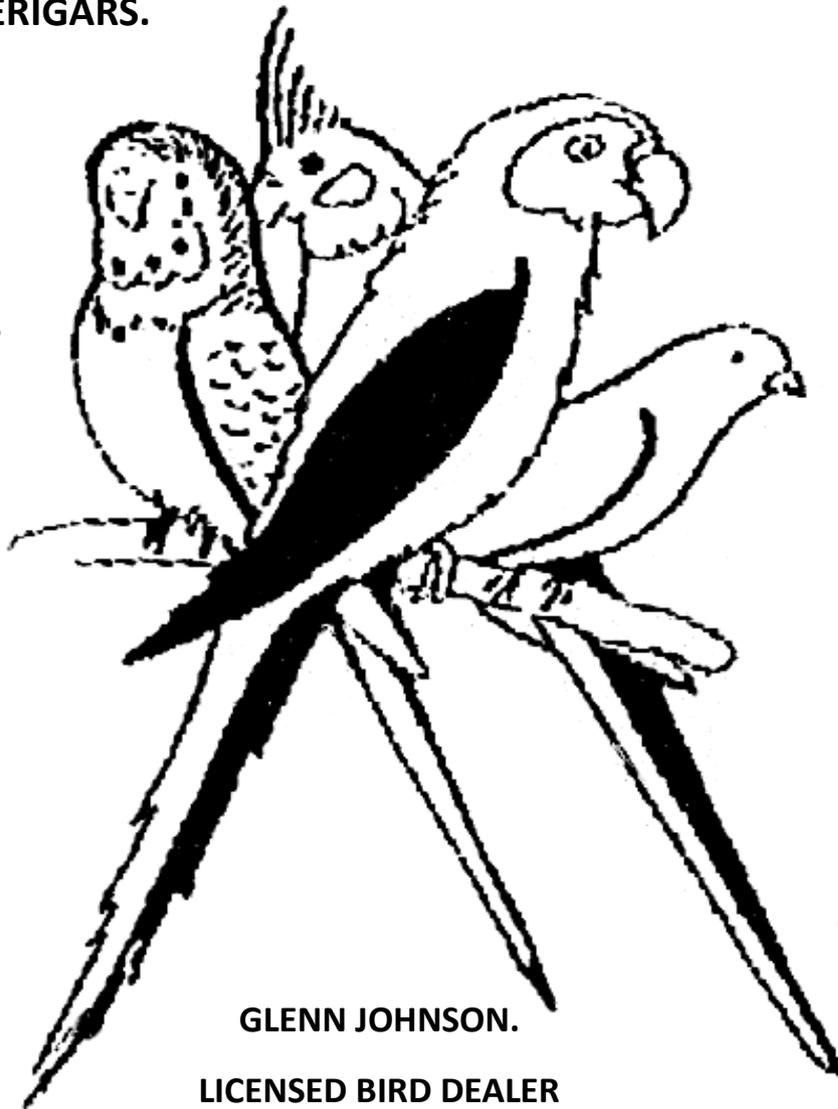
Step 7: Flush seed and feed to birds.

This time table is allowed by the fact that I have a heated cabinet and is also determined by the fact that, I need to do some preparation when I come home from work in the afternoon, in order to relieve the workload before I go to work in the morning.

The above outlined process is continuous, so as to have a supply available each morning for feeding to the birds.

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