

Finch Bizz



*The monthly magazine of the
Hawkesbury Finch Club
A Branch of the Finch Society
of Australia Inc.*

May 2023

Finch Bizz May 2023

The Hawkesbury Finch Club

A branch of The Finch Society of Australia

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Next Meeting 1930hrs May 24th, 2023:

***HAWKESBURY FINCH CLUB A BRANCH OF
THE FINCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC***

DATES FOR MEETINGS 2023

**25th JANUARY 2023 ANNUAL MEETING
SUBSCRIPTION DUE**

22nd FEBRUARY 2023

22nd MARCH 2023 * 5 Wed this month

26th APRIL 2023

24th MAY 2023 * 5 Wed this month

28th JUNE 2023

26th JULY 2023

23rd AUGUST 2023 _ * 5 Wed this month

27th SEPTEMBER 2023

25th OCTOBER 2023

**22nd NOVEMBER 2023 CHRISTMAS MEETING
* 5 Wed this month**

NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

April Minutes:

FINCH SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA INC
HAWKESBURY FINCH CLUB

MONTHLY MEETING..... APRIL2023
Meeting held in the Castlereagh Community Hall Castlereagh commencing at approximately pm
The Chairperson Mr. P. FERGUSON occupied the Chair, their being 21 members in attendance
The minutes of the MARCH meeting were read and adopted on a motion moved
by JAMES O'CONNOR and Seconded by PETER BEARY

CORRESPONDENCE. BIRTH COUNCIL HIRE OF HALL MARCH

.....

Moved by PHIL FERGUSON Seconded by JAMES O'CONNOR
that the correspondence be received.

NEW MEMBERS.....

VISITOR TED BARR

Moved by..... Seconded by.....
that the new members be accepted

APOLOGIES. ROS DAVIDSON BOB CLIFE

.....

Moved by PHIL FERGUSON Seconded PETER BEARY
that the apologies be accepted

ACCOUNTS..... PENRITH COUNCIL HIRE OF HALL MARCH \$36.00

.....

Moved by PHIL FERGUSON Seconded by PETER BEARY
that the accounts be accepted

REPORTS..... PETER BEARY & GOLF ROBARBS REPORTED NORWA BIRD SALE
JAMES & JEANETTE O'CONNOR ON EASTER SHOW GREAT SUCCESS

GENERAL BUSINESS..... MOVED BY BARRY DUKES SECONDED BY PETER BEARY
THAT DENIS COOK TO ORGANISE WITH BUNNING A B-B-Q WITH
TIME HELP WITH A LEAST 12 MEMBER AT A DATE TO BE FIXED ALL
THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION FOR NIGHT
GENERAL DISCUSSION FOR REST OF MEETING MANY ITEMS.
FUTURE PRESENTATION, SAVING FUNDS BESSONING SEASON.

RAFFLE \$85
SUPPER \$20
MEMBERSHIP \$20

MEETING CLOSED
9.30 PM

March Forsale / Wanted

WANTED	APRIL 23	FOR SALE
Phill Fossard 0247580149 3 x Hood Gouldfinches 2 x Red Star Cuckoo (Graft Robards)		
1 Hen Canary Hugh McLeod		
1 Hen Canary Peter Chapman		
EXCHANGE		

Excellent numbers at our April Meeting:



Possible New Members discussing Birding Issues:



**Excellent donations from members for our raffle table.
Birds, Feeders, Books, Chocolates and Plants all on offer.**





A warm AAH page hello to the Hawkesbury Finch Society, NSW

Whilst recording video of the recent EZFSQ Young bird show , I spotted a solitary Melba Finch on the judging stand and was quite taken by its plumage ; having never seen a Melba up close and personal , my natural curiosity took hold and I checked it out with the help of my best friend “Geoffrey Google”..

Whilst viewing items in the search, the 2nd entry was Pytilias in Australia-the Hawkesbury Finch club... on entering their club page, it was good value perusing their extensive finch gallery and their page and club activities indicates it is a well-organized and dynamic finch club; such a shame Castlereagh is almost 1000 km from Minden as their club meeting is held at the Castlereagh Community Hall monthly and it would be good to attend as an interstate visitor...

Their club president and magazine editor Phil Ferguson is on this page and he regularly sends me their club magazine, Finch Bizz...

The Hawkesbury Finch club has been in existence for 37 years and they are members of the Finch Society of Australia...

Thank you Phil for supporting the AAH and any of your club members are welcome to join the page..

On perusing the Aviculture Hub facebook page , it mentions that the Melba (green-winged pytilia) is not an easy finch to breed and should be avoided by finch beginners... Brian

Discussions took place on the night amongst members regarding the promotion of the Hawkesbury Finch Club

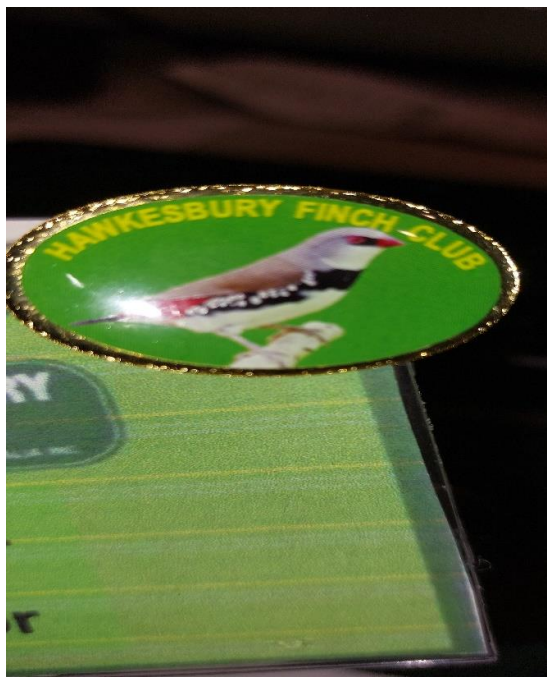
It was suggested by members that the Club investigate the purchase of arranged badges that could be handed out to children at arranged functions.

Report back by James O'Connor:

Hi Members

Last night at the aviculture society meeting I asked Sam Davis about the stickers he had made up for the Finch Society to hand out to kids at the Easter Show. He said he'd be happy to help with another finch club so I'm wondering is there a PDF file of this club badge that he could turn into a sticker? At the next meeting I expect to report back about how much the Finch Society paid for stickers and what quantity.

Regards James



PUTTING FINCH EGGS UNDER FOSTER PARENTS

(Peter Berry)

The practice of swapping finch eggs to the nests of more reliable sitters and parents has been a long-standing practice despite the risk of ^imprinting^ behaviour etc. on the adopted chicks. Finch breeders have wrestled with this issue for generations as can be seen by an article I came across in a 1937 edition of ^Australian Cage Birds^. Even though the item was written so long ago, I think it is worth reading to see how the finch breeders of old tackled the problem. An enthusiast wrote to the magazine asking whether it would be advisable to take the eggs from a Gouldian finch nest and place them in the nest of a Zebra finch for hatching and rearing the young. The following is the response.

This is an experiment worthy of a trial, but it must be done carefully and in the correct way. On several occasions I have taken eggs from Zebra nests in the aviary and replaced them with the eggs of other finches. In each case the Zebras have either deserted the nest or built another layer of nesting material over the eggs and then laid again. I am sure however, that it can be done successfully by keeping Zebras in small breeding cages with the nests on the outside, similar to budgie breeding cabinets. The nest box has a hinged lid and is fashioned on the outside of the cage, with an entrance hole opposite a similar hole in the back or end of the cage. Should the hen be sitting, the nest box can be gently tapped, the hen flies into the cage and the lid can be raised and the eggs changed quickly.

With, say 3 such cages, each containing a pair of Zebras, you could watch nesting operations and as soon as one pair had

eggs, have a look over your aviary and select a Gouldian nest with eggs. Do not handle the eggs – remove them with a teaspoon and place in the Zebra nest after removing the Zebra's eggs.

It would be advisable to put in the same number of eggs as the nest originally contained. I have heard it said that birds cannot count but I have repeatedly seen birds desert their nests after removal of portion of their clutch. Individual pairs will differ and some may not settle down after the changing of eggs.

So what does everyone think about this old-fashioned approach to fostering? Has anyone tried a method like this? Are Bengalese finches a better option if the Gouldian parents are bad sitters? Is there any lasting effect from fostering of this type.

Lastly, CAN BIRDS COUNT? Do they know if they have less or more eggs than they should have?

A Huge Thankyou to Mr Peter Berry:



Avian Chlamydiosis:

Avian Chlamydiosis- chatting with Drew Heat – finch breeder from Adelaide , S Australia

Just finished an interesting chat with finch breeder from Adelaide , Drew Heat on the subject of Avian Chlamydiosis... I am not an avian vet and would never encroach on avian matters normally associated with qualified veterinarians but what I can do is report on avian subjects that are freely accessible for all to peruse on the world wide web..

This subject was covered some time back when a number of finch breeders I know personally were having unusual fertility issues with their finch flocks and they suspected avian chlamydiosis... avian chlamydiosis is a disease caused by the bacteria Chlamydia Psittaci.. This avian related bacteria can be spread by dust particulates containing dried saliva , feather debris , mucous and droppings from infected birds . Direct contact with contaminated feathers, bird droppings , saliva , mucous and contaminated food can also result in avian chlamydiosis ... signs of this disease may vary depending on the species of bird involved and the specific strain of C. psittaci involved. Birds with an AC infection may not even appear to be infected and can be infected with the AC disease for long periods without displaying any apparent symptoms of sickness.. Physical signs of AC infection can include:-

- mucous or pus from the nostrils and eyes
- a cough

- diarrhoea or darkish green droppings
- poor feeding
- difficulty with mobility
- sudden death

Stress brought on by transport, a new environment, overcrowding or low hygiene practices may see birds succumb to the unexpected presence of a Chlamydial strain; treatment of Avian Chlamydiosis involves a long course of antibiotics (Doxycycline is the AB of choice) and the AC can return after treatment as the bird can be re-infected with a different strain of Chlamydia psittaci (C psittaci can exist as eight separate and different biotypes and nine separate immunotypes)..

Whilst perusing an article "Chlamydial Infections in Bird and Animals" from the School of Life Sciences, QUT Qld, I found two references/comments on the association of Chlamydiosis with avian infertility. (see below)

Practice preventive husbandry

- Position cages so droppings, feathers, food, and other materials can't spread from one cage to another. Do not stack cages and use solid-sided cages or barriers if cages are adjoining.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and light in the room.
- Use litter that will not produce dust (e.g. newspaper).
- Clean all cages, food bowls, and water bowls daily.
- Use a disinfectant solution when cleaning. All surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned of organic debris (e.g. litter or faeces) before disinfection. Appropriate disinfectants are quaternary ammonium compounds such as benzalkonium chloride, 3% hydrogen peroxide, alcoholic iodine solutions or 70% ethanol. Hospital grade disinfectants based on sodium hypochlorite are also suitable. A 1:100 dilution (10mL/L) should be prepared immediately before use, and discarded at the end of each disinfection session.

- Empty soiled bowls, clean with soap and water, rinse, disinfect, and rinse again before reuse.
- Scrub cages with soap and water, disinfect and rinse in clean running water between use by different birds.
- Isolate sick birds and disinfect their cages under veterinary supervision. Recommend not to sell sick birds due to human health risk.

Taxonomy and nomenclature : The family Chlamydiaceae consists of a diverse group of obligate intracellular bacterial pathogens that infect a wide range of birds and animals, as well as humans.¹ Chlamydiae have been through several nomenclature changes over the last 40 years and are currently in a state of uncertainty. Chlamydial strains were originally classified into two species: (i) *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which infects humans, causing diseases such as conjunctivitis leading to trachoma and sexually transmitted disease leading to **infertility**, and (ii) *Chlamydia psittaci*, which infects birds and animals, resulting in conditions such as psittacosis, abortion, arthritis, conjunctivitis, **infertility** and respiratory conditions.² The development of DNA-based analysis in the 1980s led to the recognition of two additional species, (a) *Chlamydia pneumoniae*, which primarily infects humans³ and (b) *Chlamydia pecorum*, which infects ruminants.⁴

Chlamydia and respiratory disease

- *Chlamydophila psittaci* causes Psittacosis
 - previously called *Chlamydia psittaci*
 - uncommon, sporadic zoonosis
 - caught from pet birds
 - parrots, budgies, cockatiels
 - psittacosis usually presents as pneumonia



Avian chlamydiosis factsheet for bird carers and suppliers

Avian chlamydiosis is a bacterial disease caused by *Chlamydia psittaci*, which is carried commonly by birds. Humans can catch the disease by breathing in dust containing dried saliva, feathers, mucous and droppings from infected birds. Infection in humans is called psittacosis.

Last updated: 13 May 2016



Download as PDF

What is avian chlamydiosis?

Avian chlamydiosis (AC) is a disease of birds caused by the bacteria *Chlamydia psittaci*. AC is common in wild, caged and aviary birds. All birds can be infected by AC, but pet birds, especially parrots (e.g. budgies, lorikeets and cockatiels) most commonly pass infection to humans. Infection in humans causes psittacosis, which is frequently a mild flu-like illness that can sometimes result in a severe pneumonia.

How is it spread?

Spread between birds (and to people) occurs mainly through breathing in dust containing dried saliva, feathers, mucous and droppings from infected birds. Direct contact with feathers, bird droppings and litter, saliva and mucous, and contaminated food or water can also result in disease. The organism is resistant to drying

and can remain infectious for several months if protected by organic debris (e.g. litter or faeces).

What are the signs of AC in birds?

The signs of AC vary depending on the species of bird and the strain of *C. psittaci* involved. Birds with an AC infection may not look sick and so can carry the disease for long periods. If they are sick (usually young birds), the signs can include:

- mucous or pus coming from the nostrils and eyes
- cough
- diarrhoea or dark green droppings
- poor feeding
- difficulty moving or flying
- death, which can sometimes be sudden with no warning signs.

Stress (e.g., from transport, or a new environment) may cause the appearance of clinical signs in birds that otherwise carry the organism without symptoms.

How is AC diagnosed and treated?

Several tests are available to confirm AC infection. These need to be discussed with your veterinarian. Testing can be done either when the bird is alive or when it is recently deceased. Infected birds need to be isolated, receive a long course of antibiotics and have their cages disinfected. Treatment is not always 100% effective at clearing the infection so AC can return after treatment is finished and the same bird can be re-infected with a different strain of *C. psittaci*. Treatment and control measures should be supervised by a veterinarian.

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/>

How can I prevent transmission and infection?

Educate persons at risk

- All people in contact with birds or bird-contaminated materials should be aware of the potential health risks.
- Bird caretakers with respiratory or influenza-like symptoms should seek prompt medical attention and inform their health care provider about bird contact.

Be alert for symptoms

- Avoid purchasing or selling birds that have any clinical signs or appear unwell.
- Maintain accurate records of all bird-related transactions for at least one year to aid in identifying sources of infected birds and potentially exposed persons.
- Where possible, quarantine newly acquired birds for 30 days or test/treat them before adding to a group. Birds that have been to shows, exhibitions, fairs and other events should also be quarantined.

Practice preventive husbandry

- Position cages so droppings, feathers, food, and other materials can't spread from one cage to another.
- Do not stack cages and use solid-sided cages or barriers if cages are adjoining.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and light in the room.
- Use litter that will not produce dust (e.g. newspaper).
- Clean all cages, food bowls, and water bowls daily.
- Use a disinfectant solution when cleaning. All surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned of organic debris (e.g. litter or faeces) before disinfection. Appropriate disinfectants are quaternary ammonium compounds such as benzalkonium chloride, 3% hydrogen peroxide, alcoholic iodine solutions or 70% ethanol. Hospital grade disinfectants based on sodium hypochlorite are also suitable. A 1:100 dilution (10mL/L) should be prepared immediately

before use, and discarded at the end of each disinfection session.

- Empty soiled bowls, clean with soap and water, rinse, disinfect, and rinse again before reuse.
- Scrub cages with soap and water, disinfect and rinse in clean running water between use by different birds.
- Isolate sick birds and disinfect their cages under veterinary supervision. Recommend not to sell sick birds due to human health risk.

Protect yourself

- Wash your hands with soap and running water for 10 seconds before and after handling birds.
- When cleaning cages or handling potentially infected birds, caretakers should wear appropriate protection to reduce exposure to dust without appropriate protection.
- Avoid very close contact with potentially infected birds or take appropriate measures to reduce the risk, such as gloves, protective eyewear, and a properly fitted P2 respirator (available from most pharmacies and hardware stores). Surgical masks are not effective in preventing transmission. See [How to fit a P2 mask](#).
- Wetting the litter before cleaning reduces the risk of disease.
- Always use disinfectants in a well-ventilated area as they can irritate the nasal passages and lungs of both humans and bird.

Black Throated Finch:

Alternate Names

Parson Finch, Black-rumped Grassfinch, Black-throat, Diggles' Finch, Black-rumped Finch. The Black-throated Finch (*Poephila cincta*) is the correct common name for this species. The white rumped race is commonly called the Parson Finch, *Poephila cincta*, whereas the black rumped form is known as the Diggles

Parson, *Poephila cincta atropygialis*. There is also what is known as the Chocolate Parson, *Poephila cincta nigrotecta* where the overall colour of the bird is much darker and this is seen in both the nominate races – Parson Finch and the Diggles Parsons.

Availability

The Parson is a common bird in Australian aviaries and they are available at most times of the year. However, finding the various mutations and chocolate forms can be difficult. Many darker coloured birds are passed off as chocolates – both Diggles and Parson finches – so one needs to be familiar with the true type before purchasing these birds.

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Finch Fact File

**Black-throated
Grassfinch**

Scientific name:
Poephila cincta

Other commonly used names:

- Banded Grassfinch
- Black-rumped Finch
- Black-rumped Grassfinch
- Black-rumped Parson Finch
- Black-tailed Finch
- Black-throat
- Diggles' Finch
- Parson Finch

Country of origin:

- Australia

Geographic distribution:

- Extending from the southern tip of Cape York, down to northern inland New South Wales.

Sexing

One of the best sexing methods for the Parsons, in our opinion, is across the top of the head. The male is broader than the hen and has a light grey colouration whereas the hen tends to be a darker brownish/grey. Other sexing methods you can use are; the trouser stripe tends to be wider in the male and the throat patch is smaller and pear shaped in the hen while the males' bib is much broader.



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Mutations

We have seen Pied, Fawn, Cream and White Parsons. One can at times, see the White and Fawn forms in specialty bird stores. The Fawn, Cream and White mutations are all sex linked recessive. This means that only males can be 'carriers' of the trait and females are either 'normal' or show the mutation. For this reason males showing these three mutations are rarer than hens and command a higher price.

Compatibility

The Parson is a bird that we will not keep with the smaller waxbills as we have found that they tend to get aggressive towards anything smaller than themselves or with larger quieter species. If they are put with larger seedeaters they will settle into their niche in the aviary. We have kept them in mixed collections of 'tougher' birds such as Diamond sparrows, Blue-face

parrotfinches, Rufous-backed manikins and any of the larger cup nesters or weavers. We have also found that the Parson will pry into other bird's nests hopping in and out of them with scant regard for the actual owners! It pays to ensure that you have plenty of nesting material so that the Parsons will not be tempted by the contents of other bird's nests. Other than these problems we have found that they are a relatively peaceful bird – as long as they are kept as single pairs in an aviary and all the other inhabitants know that they are the Boss! If you intend to colony breed them then you will have real problems with the nesting success of other less 'dynamic' species in the same aviary. As a rule we have found that the Parson Finch appears more disruptive than the Diggles Parson.

Ease of breeding (1 easy-10 difficult)

I have never found a problem with the Parson as regards breeding if given the right diet and copious amounts of seeding grasses. I would rate them 5/10, not a bird for the beginner but one for the more experienced bird breeder owing to the need to control their inquisitive and somewhat disruptive tendencies.

Purchasing your bird

You can purchase Parsons just about anywhere where there is a good bird outlet. If you are set on obtaining any sort of mutation then we suggest that you find where there is a breeder of these

birds in your area and try to purchase them from there. This way you can ensure you find out the maximum amount of information about the way they were bred, housed and fed. There is, at least in parts of Australia, a tendency for some people to raise the mutations using Bengalese Mannikins in small breeding cabinets. The attempts to true breed from such birds tends to be 'variable' so check your proposed stock out carefully!

Good points to look for

It is not hard to see a Parson that is in poor condition. They are a bird that are very smartly 'dressed' and appear that way just about all of the time. Check to see if the bib is large and dark on the cock bird and that the feathers are not at all ruffled. The feet and mandible must be clean and free of any type of scaling. The overall colour of the bird is strong. The size of the bird is an important factor. The eyes must be clear and bright with no weeping. The vent should be clean and well feathered as these birds, in common with most of the *Poephila* family, suffer from scours that, if left untreated, can develop into something far worse! So if you must get birds showing signs of scouring ensure that you place them on an electrolyte based feeding regime until the scours disappear.



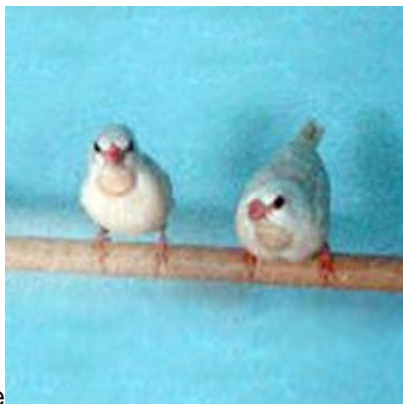
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“The Black-throated Grassfinch is a beautiful bird for an aviary, as long as you take into account their inquisitive nature and in-built need to ‘own’ whatever aviary that you put them into!”

Faults to look for

As mentioned earlier it is easy to see a Parson finch that is not in good condition! Do not look at a bird that is not in good tight feather. If the bird is at all fluffed up on the perch or floor leave it there! Scaly legs, beak and overgrown toenails are a definite no, no. Often a sign of age! Watery eyes and a soiled vent would also be a problem. A bird with its eyes closed, not bothering to open them when you touch the cage is best left alone!

Aviary or breeding cabinet

Parsons are an easy bird to breed in either large well-planted aviaries or in a small aviary or breeding cabinet. I have found the best results are when we have had them in an aviary measuring 3.5m x 2m x 2m and as a single pair in the aviary. As they are partial to plain canary they may tend to suffer from obesity if kept in breeding cabinets for lengthy periods.

Breeding season

Although we have had them breed all of the year round we have found their best breeding time is in the Spring and into early summer. I generally separated the pairs over the winter months giving them both a well deserved break from breeding and put them together again at the end of winter, about 2 weeks into September here in Sydney, and we found that they almost immediately went to nest. In cooler climes you can safely leave the pairs together as they appear to have enough sense to not attempt breeding in the depths of winter – which is more than can be said for some waxbill species!

Off-season feeding

This is a bird prone to obesity if too rich a diet is fed to them. I have always fed a diet that is not quite as rich in fats (as I do in my other aviaries) in aviaries that contain Parsons.



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Should I feed soft foods?

Parsons will readily take to egg and biscuit mix as a soft food supplement. We have also fed Parsons with Madeira cake. But please remember the tendency for obesity previously mentioned and limit their intake of both these items. Some birds tend to consume plain cake to the exclusion of most other 'nutritious' food stuffs. Also the over consumption of cake could point to a gizzard worm infection – the birds crop is too sore to breakdown hard seeds so the bird tries to compensate for this by eating any soft foods available, usually cake, green and live foods.

What green feed?

Fresh seeding grasses, these are the key to great breeding results when it comes to the Parson finch. We have always fed huge amounts of fresh half ripe seeding grasses when breeding the Parson, as they tend to feed large amounts to the young in the nest. Some of the seeding grasses that we use are: AfricanVeldt panic grass & oats, summer & winter grass, clover, barnyard grass, Guinea grass, Newcastle grass, milk thistle and shepherds purse. We also feed bok choy, endive, chickweed, spinach, kale and Lebanese cucumbers - as some of these are usually available at any time of the year. Kale is particularly good in colder climates as it grows during the winter!

What live food?

A lot of breeders do not feed Parsons live food when breeding them. They use the green food mentioned above, but when they are fed both live food and fresh half ripe seeding grasses the breeding results are so much the better. We have used gentles (maggots), mealworms and termites with the better results when the termites were used. If like some of us you don't have the dreaded termite don't despair, as they will rear quite happily on maggots and mealworms. However, we do not advise feeding mealworms when the birds are not breeding, as they may tend to become overweight if their intake is not limited. Also watch that they don't hog the live food bowl to the detriment of other species in the aviary.

"I once saw a Parsons nest in the wild some 35 feet off the ground built in a eucalyptus tree just south from Mareeba in North Queensland. The aviary nest is usually a bulky structure with long trailing pieces of grass at the entrance."

Breeding season feeding

We do not feed my birds an austerity diet so they are on a similar diet throughout the year as every other bird that we have.

However, our only concession is to limit their access to mealworms during the non-breeding period. But, if you do have

your birds on an austerity diet September through to May is the time to have your birds on their breeding season diet. September is when you start to *slowly* give your birds some extra bits in their feed tray. If you feed live food, let the birds build up to the extra live food such as termites, mealworms and gentles. Scouring is a problem with these birds if you have not been feeding them greens and suddenly begin to.

Separating the pairs

I have separated the pairs when we thought that they have had enough in terms of nests in a season. We feel that 3 nests are certainly enough in a season for this prolific breeder. This ensures that your birds remain in good condition for next years breeding and that you don't exhaust the hen's egg laying capacity. Better to forgo that last nest and have your hen ready for next season!

What age do they breed

It is best to wait for the Parson to mature before breeding them. Wait until they are at least 12 months of age before breeding from them.

What if I lose a mate?

Although the bond between the pairs is strong, we have never had any sort of *real* problems when introducing a new mate to

any of our birds. However, there are times, especially in the middle of the breeding season, that the new partner may not be accepted at all. We feel that age and how long the pair had been together play a part in the acceptance of new mates.

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Nesting receptacles

I have had Parsons nest in just about every type of container that you could think of as well as building their own nest in the brush. Some of the nesting receptacles that they have used for us include; wire cylinders, cane nesting baskets – both large and small, logs, nest boxes – both open fronted and Gouldian type.

Nesting materials

Coarser type grasses are used for the outer part of the nest with a finer grass, such as the November grass, for the lining and then filled with copious amounts of white feathers.

The nest

The nest is your typical grassfinch type of nest being built with an entrance tunnel. By this we mean one that is built in the brush consisting mainly of dried stems of grass roughly 5-8 inches in length and where the nest has either a small entrance tunnel or without any type of tunnel, just a hole in the side or front of the nest. Some nests have a landing platform (such as the nest of the Parson finch) at the front of the nest and some, such as the Cordon Bleu, have a roof over the entrance of the nest. The nest usually consists of at least 2 types of grass stems and we have found up to 8 different types of grass used in the one nest. The main grasses that we have seen used for nesting purposes are, November grass, Couch runners and dried Couch leaves. Other grasses used are Barnyard grass, Kikuyu runners, both dried and green, African Veldt grass, both green and dried, and Clover. Usually this is enough different variety of grass for all of the finches, both native and foreign! Some birds like to use green grasses for their nests and some prefer to use dried grass for theirs. You must take into consideration what grasses you supply

for your finches needs. The nest height is only limited by the height of your aviary. I once saw a Parsons nest in the wild some 35 feet off the ground built in a eucalyptus tree just south from Mareeba in North Queensland. The aviary nest is usually a bulky structure with long trailing pieces of grass at the entrance. Parsons also build a roosting nest when not breeding but it is usually not filled with white feathers as the breeding nest is.

Mating behaviour

The courtship dance is commenced by a lot of bobbing of the head and some beak wiping on the perch. Sometimes the male will use a token such as a piece of grass in his beak when courting the female. With his throat patch fluffed out he dances towards the female all the time with his head bobbing and when the hen is ready to accept him she will show her willingness by crouching on the perch.

Eggs

One can expect anything from 4 to 8 eggs with this species with the parents being very devoted to the young whilst still in the nest. Nests of between 4 to 6 youngsters are to be expected from a good young breeding pair.

Brooding time

14 days is the usual brooding time for the Parson.

Fledging time

The young Parsons generally fledge at 21 days.

Independence from the parents

The young are usually independent of their parents after around 6 weeks. This may appear a long time but we have experienced that some pairs will feed their chick for up to **6 weeks** after they have left the nest! We have lost young by separating them after 5 weeks and finding all but one of the youngsters dead next morning. Upon placing the 2 survivors back into the aviary with their parents they were immediately fed. A very harsh way to find out!

How long do the young stay with the parents?

We do not leave the young with the parent's once they are independent, as they do tend to be a bit of a problem in the aviary by visiting other bird's nests and interrupting the routine of the other occupants of the aviary. Stick to the rule of one pair to an aviary!

What do I feed the fledged young?

The young can be fed the same diet as the parents.

When do I ring the young?

The young can be rung in the nest providing the nest is not built in the brush – in other words if you have to wreck the nest to ring them leave well enough alone! We have had no problems ringing the young in any type of nest box, but whenever a nest built in the shrubbery was touched invariably the young, on many occasions, were deserted. The best advice is a nest in the brush must not be touched!

Showing your bird

This bird, along with the Longtail, were designed for the show bench, with their smart and neat lines they are a bird that will take the notice of any judge! The bib must be of a good size and the overall colour of the bird is important. The bird must be in good feather and not show any pinfeathers. The bird must be alert and working in the show box. The mandible and legs must be free of any sign of flaking. The shape of the Parson plays a major part in their showing.

Gene pool

The gene pool in Australian aviaries is very secure. However, there is a tendency for some people to cross the Longtail, Parson and Mask finches. The resultant hybrids are, so I am told, fertile and this sort of indiscriminate crossing can only detract from the pure species. The hybrid between the Longtail and Parson usually has a tail that is longer than a true Parsons yet shorter

than a true Longtails. The beak tends to be black in youngsters (as for all 3 species) but often develops a tell tale yellow tinge as the bird matures. Crosses with the Mask finch tend to have tiny bibs and are far more obvious than the Longtail hybrid. Avoid these birds like the plague and never mix the three species together in the same aviary.

Life expectancy

One can expect that their Parson when kept in good conditions can attain an age of between 6 and 8 years.

[View fullsize](#)



Summary

A beautiful bird for an aviary as long as you take into account their inquisitive nature and in-built need to 'own' whatever aviary that you put them into! They will soon settle in and hop down to see what you are doing in their territory. Keep them as one pair to an aviary and all should be well and remember to keep an eye on their dietary intake as they can become a little obese in smaller flights when lots of supplements are fed. In common with their cousin the Longtail they have the same tame and confiding nature. My bet is that they will be the first birds down to check out the morning offerings when you arrive with food bowls in hand!

Hawkesbury Finch Club Club Membership Form:

Contact varrajames@bigpond.com.au

I wish to become / renewal a member of your Club as a:

* FULL MEMBER

* FAMILY MEMBER

* PENIONER

* JUNIOR MEMBER / STUDENT:

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ADDRESS:

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES

ADULTS \$ 20.00

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PENIONER \$ 15.00

JUNIOR (Student) \$ 5.00

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Annual meetings are held on the Fourth Wednesday of the month each year. In January each year subscriptions become due and are payable. Those people who join the Society at the January meeting or after are not required to pay the subscription until the following January.

We ask that you please try to attend our meetings and the various functions we have, to enable you to get to know your fellow members and enjoy your membership to the fullest.

Ron James Hon. Secretary

NOTE: * Delete which is not applicable

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Available each and every meeting from Rosslynn Davidson:

A list of what items I carry to each meeting

Cydectin plus 50/100ml jars \$7.50 /\$15.00

Baycox 50/100ml jars \$15 /\$30 both use separate or together to treat worms and coccid.

Coopex powder used as spray or a paint for crawling insects, ants' cockroaches. \$11.00 packet

Split plastic coloured bird rings small /large finch and small parrots \$4.50/\$4.50 \$5.00 a sleeve of 10 rings

Mouse season is quickly approaching I did my bate stations a week ago and found an adult mouse within 2 days.

Attention, Attention, Attention:

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