

# **NOT ONLY BIRDS FALL OFF THE PERCH**

By Martin Hilton

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 two long-time friends of mine passed away. One was homeless, the other had a wife, grown up family, a house, dog, cat and fifty aviaries of birds. It was only two days before I was asked to help. But due to the long heat wave a lot of birds, mainly finches, had died.

## **PLANNING AHEAD**

Losing a loved one is of course a very stressful time without the hassle of looking after birds. This is not always the case as some couples both enjoy the hobby of bird-keeping.

However, if the partner is not really interested in birds they can be a real problem. Having a friend, or even better several members of your local bird club, know your routine with the birds is a good short term plan. Even a short stay in hospital can be a real problem. A couple of aviaries of cockatiels and budgies are fairly simple to get someone to feed and water. Large mixed collections often need live-food, fruit, soaked seed, lorikeet mix, *ect.* A lot of people admire my frogmouths but not many offer to kill mice to feed them when I'm away. As this is a bird magazine I won't mention the extra problems with marsupials and reptiles. My wife's plan for my collection, when I on go that permanent fishing trip, was to call our good friends who ran the local fauna park to come and take the lot. Unfortunately the fauna park closed down several years ago.

## **SELLING THE BIRDS**

I keep writing the word friend. A widow or widower needs a really good friend to sell a bird collection. It is a very hard complicated thing to do.

## **LEGALLY**

The National Parks and Wildlife Service have been very helpful to me. Problems such as lost record books, permission to sell someone else's birds, buyers wanting birds straight away but not having a permit are some of the problems I've had. As long as you are honest and keep the N.P.W.S informed they are very helpful.

## **PRICES**

I hate putting a price on my own birds. It is much worse to put a price on a deceased friend's birds.

Most bird owners understand that the Yellow Princess they bought a year ago for \$1000 will not sell for \$1000 today. Its hard to explain to a lot of non-bird person that the price paid for a bird from a bird dealer is not the same as you could expect to get from a bird-keeper. Bird dealers have a lot of overhead expense, as well as having to make a living.

Bird Price Guides from avicultural societies are just that price guides. Prices in Adelaide are higher than country areas. When selling large numbers of more common birds the price goes down. The same thing happens when you want to sell in a hurry. The best thing to do is to keep a record book of everything you buy and sell. It is then easy to check on the price your partner got for say the young Yellow Princess. Making your own personal price guide would also be a good idea, and I'm sure the bird societies would like a copy.

### **BIRD DEALERS**

I rang a bird dealer and gave him a complete list of birds, carry boxes and nesting logs. He travelled 400 kilometres to pick up the birds, caught them himself (I was on day shift) then drove back to Adelaide. He did charge for expenses which was reasonable. A list of bird prices and expenses was given. He was very courteous as the widow was upset at seeing her late husband's pride and joys being caught up; but she no longer had the stress and worry of the birds. She did keep a couple of pet birds.

### **WHAT TO DO**

Have a plan worked out between you and your partner. Discuss this with friends and your local bird society. Have your National Park and personal bird records up to date. Make a list up of what you do with your birds and how you feed them.

### **CONCLUSION**

OneSteel, where I work, recently asked everyone how long they plan to keep working. The reason for their concern is the average age for their workers is forty-eight. At least I'm above average for something! I wonder what the average age is for aviculturists?

The good news is that people who are active, have an interesting hobby and are socially involved are reported to live longer healthier lives. As this describes most aviculturists we should be able to keep breeding birds for many years to come.

### **NEW LEG RING STEWARD**

After some time as the Society's Leg Ring Steward, Steve Voight has decided to call it a day. Thanks are extended to Steve for his sterling effort during the time the rings have been in his care.

Harry Cailles has kindly offered to take on Leg Ring sales, he can be contacted on (08) 8351 1191.

We thank Harry for taking on the task at short notice.