



**FINCHES '11,
FOURTH INTERNATIONAL FINCH
CONVENTION
BRISBANE 29 APRIL - 1 MAY 2011**

By Brian Preece

The convention was held at the Bardon Conference Centre, located approximately 6kms from the city of Brisbane and was organised by the Queensland Finch Society Inc. Usually convention delegates are accommodated on site however the hotel group which runs the conference centre closed the accommodation several months prior to the convention and offered alternative accommodation in two of their other locations in the city. Delegates then were transported by bus each morning to the conference centre for breakfast and returned to the accommodation at the end of each day.

Prior to the convention commencing the option of attending an Aviary Tour/Bus Trip on Friday, 29th April was available to delegates. Our bus group started at Gary Fitt's home at Pullenvale, west of Brisbane. His home was located on the banks of a creek in a lovely setting. Gary has a large main aviary complex divided into numerous separate aviaries of varying sizes with open, well planted flights and a covered area at the rear for nesting and feeding. The aviary has a long narrow room running across the entire back of the complex from which Gary is able to access each individual aviary. This area is also his workroom in which he breeds live food and prepares food trays for each aviary daily. Gary had set out a display of the different types of food he feeds his birds each day in this room. The aviaries housed a wide variety of finches including Peters' Twinspots, Cut-throats, Orange-fronted Emblemata, Gouldians, Star Finches, Parsons, Grenadiers, Tri-coloured Parrotfinches, and Diamond Fire-tails to name a few!

Gary also had several smaller aviaries located on the other side of the property, some of which were set up for photography, with white background and perches.



While at the property the bus group enjoyed a lovely morning tea while watching wild Double-bar and Red-browed finches feeding from a dish located nearby.

The second stop of the day was at John Ellis's aviary located at Fernvale. This was a spacious property with many very

large aviaries. John mainly focuses on cockatoos, parrots and macaws, but also has a very large aviary with a waterfall at one end which flows through the aviary and apparently housed a dozen different finch species. However, these were hard to spot due to the size of the aviary and the many hiding places available. This aviary was surrounded by a number of smaller aviaries used for breeding parrots, mostly Indian Ringnecks.



COCKATOO & MACAW AVIARIES
AT JOHN ELLIS' PROPERTY



LARGE FINCH AVIARY SURROUNDED BY
PARROT AVIARIES AT JOHN ELLIS' PROPERTY



INSIDE JOHN'S FINCH AVIARY

The third stop for the day was to Ray and Wendy Lowe's at Lowood Aviary which was also the lunch stop for the tour. This property had numerous large aviary complexes, divided internally into very many smaller cages, most of which were completely undercover. The aviaries took up more than a third of the property. These contained a wide variety of finches including Peters Twinspots, Tri-coloured Parrotfinches, Pied Parrotfinches, Grenadiers and Strawberry Finches. One building was

divided into smaller breeding aviaries with cage divisions made from lightweight plastic sheeting rather than wire. Watering was all done with an automatic watering system. The gardens to the front of the property were lovely with a large water feature, gazebo area, attractive gardens and very luxurious chook enclosure!

When getting back on to the bus there was much interest in the paddock next door to Ray and Wendys' which, after the very wet weather over summer in Queensland, was full of a variety of seeding grasses and delegates had to be reluctantly dragged away leaving it all behind.



A LARGE AVIARY AT THE LOWES'

The final stop was at John Albert's property at Laidley, which was our afternoon tea stop as well. This was a large rural block with several enormous aviary complexes. John, who is in his 70's, gets up at 4.30am each morning to do the rounds of the aviaries - that's dedication. Most of the aviaries are set out with a rear access room across the complex, with each individual cage comprised of a covered rear nesting/feeding area and open, planted, flights with gravel floors. The room at the back of one of the aviaries was laid out ready to set up prepared trays for the birds. The aviaries were set up with the welfare of the birds first and foremost and he treats all the birds as precious, whether worth \$2.00 or \$2,000.00. He was in the process of building on to the existing aviaries and had bricked half-walls and was growing native plants in these areas prior to putting up the frame and wire. John had an automated watering system and a low wattage light in each aviary which was left on at night to allow the birds to settle easily in the event of a night fright and to allow them to see to feed during the night.



INTERIOR OF ONE OF JOHN'S INDIVIDUAL AVIARY COMPARTMENTS

All the aviaries visited were very interesting to see and the colour and health of the birds was excellent. Everyone enjoyed the day and the opportunity to see how other people set up their aviaries.

Next month Brian will outline the actual convention programme for us.



EXTERIOR OF ONE OF THE LARGE AVIARY COMPLEXES AT JOHN ALBERT'S, WITH PARTLY COMPLETED EXTENSION

All photos by the author