

HIS AND HER BIRDS!

by D. Hanel

Just the other week one of our friends remarked: "I can't believe you have his and her birds". I have never thought of it that way but that is exactly what my husband and I have. We have got back into bird-keeping some five years ago. The kids were gone and we had plenty of time on our hands.

We had kept birds in the past, I kept and showed budgies and my husband had kept birds from the age of five. Starting up was a little expensive, we started with one small aviary attached to a garden shed that was to be used as a bird-room. Now some five years later we have five aviaries. Our latest addition fitted nicely in the back corner of our backyard.



I have three aviaries, one each for my Red faced and Sea-green Parrotfinches. The other is for housing the young I breed during the season. There is something about these pretty little birds; they remind me of

ornamental birds on a Christmas tree. I keep the red faced and the sea-greens separate, as I do not want to cross-breed the colours. In each aviary are a number of pids, I am amazed at the colouring of these beautiful little birds and even more fascinated when a few of them come out of the nest with a few spots and then over a short time develop into beautiful coloured pids.



JUST FLEDGED

ADULT

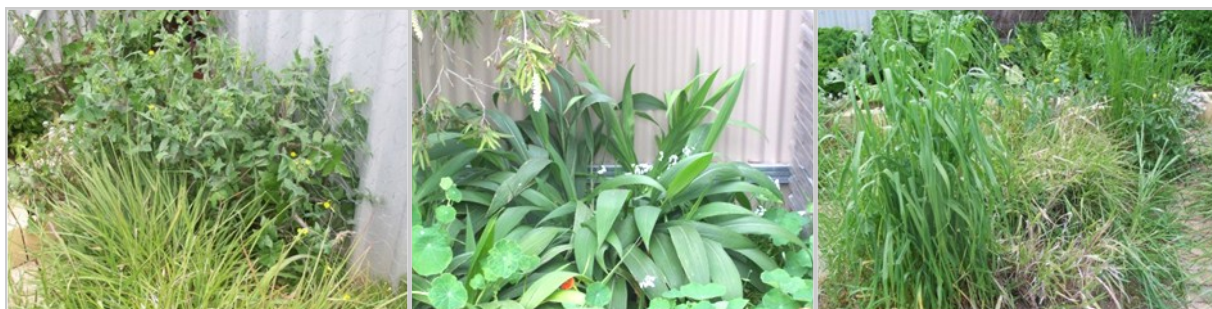
I have had been quite successful at breeding these birds. It all comes down to how much time and effort you put into them. I feed my young soaked seed as well as an egg-food mix that contains various minerals and special soft food finch mix which I buy from our local bird shop. I feed this mix twice, sometimes three times, a day when they have young. I inspect the nests every second day, I always wait to see that there are no sitting birds when I do this.

By checking the birds' nests regularly I can see if any eggs are broken or young have died. My birds do not mind this inspection and in fact are very tame, almost landing on me when I bring in extra treats.

When young are about to fledge I make sure there is plenty of shrubbery for them to shelter in on cold nights. It's always a real pleasure to find young fledglings huddled together in the brush. Young Parrotfinches grow

up fast and it is a wonder to see them fly from the nest looking like they should still be in it.

As well as our bird-keeping hobby my husband and I are keen gardeners, but keeping birds has even changed the way we do that. Once weeds were a curse, now we find ourselves nurturing and actually planting some weeds to help feed our young birds. Thistles are precious to my husband. His canaries devour large numbers of them in breeding time. We actually have quite a few areas in the garden devoted to them. Some this year, have grown nearly as tall as me. Magnificent specimens my husband now calls them.



SOME OF THE GRASSES WE NURTURE DURING THE BREEDING SEASON

Along with the wild thistles we have bought special grasses like Guinea Grass, Swamp-grass *etc.* Our birds like nothing better than eating the newly formed seed-heads as they mature. Special treats like this help our birds rear their young and contribute to the success of the breeding season.

Even the make-up of our garden has changed due to keeping birds. We plant less flowering roses *etc.* and grow a range of Grevilleas so the finches



A SELECTION OF THE GREVILLEAS WE GROW FOR OUR BIRDS

can have fresh blossoms as they flower. The birds just love them!

A fair bit of time goes into our hobby, time we enjoy. With the last few breeding seasons running into hot weather, we have tried to finish our breeding season earlier, especially for the canaries. This season the canaries will be finished breeding by the beginning of December. My finches don't seem too worried with the hot weather, but here again time

is needed to attend them in very hot weather. We have a number of bird baths for native birds in our garden. Last year we had trouble with Noisy Miners, they constantly bombarded the aviaries and tried to get through the wire. We rigged up a string of old CD's to try to frighten them off. We are not sure how successful that was as these troublesome birds still roam our garden. Just the other week we bought a plastic life-like Owl that was supposed to frighten away birds as well as possums. It looks good (maybe not) and time will tell if it is successful.



A LITTLE WIERD?
YES, BUT WORTH A GO.

My husband keeps canaries; he started off with Gloster Fancies, but is now concentrating on Border Fancies. His canaries are bred in a

garden shed, and he spends many hours in the shed tending to the birds, with the breeding season being the busiest time.



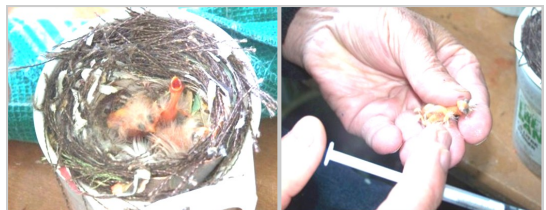
A CRESTED GLOSTER FANCY



A NICE BORDER HEN

Another hobby we share that involves the birds is photography, and as you can tell from the photos in this article our birds are quite used to having the flash of a camera going off at anytime. We photograph all aspects of our bird's behaviour. The photo below was taken of a young canary being topped up with food just before nightfall. It came from a nest of four and each evening, before dark, all nests of young are

checked to see if their crops are full. If not, they are topped up with a syringe containing a bird hand-rearing mix.



Our hobby of bird-keeping is a wonderful pastime shared and loved by us both. Yes. we do have "His and Her Birds"; it's a fascinating hobby and I hope this article might spur on someone to rekindle their interest in this great past-time, or even inspire someone to take up the hobby.

Come on, there must be room in your backyard for just one little aviary!
(Or two or four or more. Ed.)

All photos supplied by the author

