Breeding the Purple-Crowned Fairy Wren

*Malurus coronatus*

By Barry Davies

I purchased my first pair of Purple-crowned in 2010 just before winter. The South Australian area I live in had some good cold fronts come through early that year and I lost the cock bird. It took another year to get a replacement, this was a young cock bird bred the year before. The hen went straight down and the nest was built next to the feed station, just a little higher than eye level. As these birds are rather rare every time I went in to feed them, I would start to worry if I didn’t see mum, and would look in the nest, which in turn scared her off.

She didn’t go down again that year. So when I saw them carrying grass a couple of months ago I made sure I didn’t look in the nest. If I didn’t see mum, I would go down at different times, either early in the morning or late in the day to check them. This worked a lot better as I now have two young flying. They are in an aviary 8m x 8m x 3m high. The shelter area is 2 x 2 x 3 and has tea tree branches in it, in which she nested, but a little higher up than the previous time.

The aviary is planted out with grasses and one bottlebrush bush. I have a pair of Striated Grasswrens, *Amytornis striatus*, with one young, and a sitting pair of White-bellied Crimson Finches, *Neochmia phaeton evangelinae*, in the aviary with the Purple-crowned Fairy Wrens.

I feed a combination of mealworms, crickets and maggots and a mixture of Wombaroo Lori and Honeyeater Food with Insectivore Mix mixed in. Both pairs of softbills eat this mixture, and both pairs pick at the finch mix supplied for the Crimsons. When the aviary is overrun with weeds a lot of other live-food comes in e.g; moths, aphids etc.

Purple-crowned Wrens are a lot larger than the other fairy wrens, but not as aggressive. They have a beautiful song and the male is quite stunning with his cream chest and purple crown.

I have to thank my wife, and congratulate her as well, as she looks after the birds when I’m not home, and when your wife breeds maggots for your hobby you’ve got a good one!

An article on Barry’s Striated Grasswrens will be published in the near future. Ed.