

CHANGING TIMES

By Steve Hanel

I always look forward to reading the society magazine 'Bird Keeping In Australia', even though I breed canaries. My wife is a member of the Avicultural Society of South Australia and has written articles for your magazine before. I thought I might put pen to paper (fingers to the keyboard these days) in support of Richard Chilton's plea for more members to write on their experiences of keeping birds.

I first kept birds at the tender age of eight when I was given a white Zebra Finch that was taken by a friend's cat. I nursed the bird back to health and after my father made a cage to keep it in I bought a partner for my lonely finch. That started my life association with keeping birds. I am now in my sixties and both my wife and I still enjoy this fascinating hobby.

Looking back on my teenage years I kept many types of birds, finches, quail, canaries, budgies, lovebirds and parrots to name just a few. I had taken over my parent's backyard with aviaries. I can remember when there were only two fruit trees left in the garden. Then early one Sunday morning, before my parents had got out of bed, I armed myself with a bow-saw and axe and cut down both trees to make way for more aviaries. Back then I kept so many birds one would think I was stocking the Ark.

They were happy times, weekends were busy looking after the birds and meeting people who would come to look and sometimes buy. When I had birds to sell I would place an advert in one of the papers. Unlike today, there was no thought of people coming back to steal my birds. Strangers were welcome as long as they loved and talked about birds.

Sadly the days of placing adverts in newspapers to sell birds with your address and phone number are gone. We now live in different times. One has to be so careful about handing out information about our birds to avoid the heartache of having birds stolen. I feel keeping birds nowadays is something like being a member of a secret society. But now and then, especially in Spring the sound of fifty to sixty singing canaries gives the game away.

It is now more important than ever to belong to a club. Birds can be sold to club members, advertised in the club newsletter or sold at special sales organized by the club, just like the Avicultural Society of South Australia's annual Bird Sale.

I love reading information from people who keep and breed birds. I can't get enough. I have even swapped canary clubs to one that sends out a monthly newsletter. I buy magazines on keeping birds from local newsagents. I even buy a magazine printed in the UK that has articles from

fellow bird-keepers overseas.

Another way of getting information about your birds is by using the Internet. Here too, the Avicultural Society of South Australia has a site to help fellow members. There is just so much free information available on the Internet. One can go online and read, see photos of birds, aviaries and bird-rooms and gather information about the birds we keep.

I too would make a plea for members and non-members to share their knowledge with fellow bird enthusiasts by way of writing an article or two to help Richard with his magnificent effort of getting a monthly magazine out to members. Help to make the magazine even better. If I can do it, anybody can.



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