

# **MY BIRD UPDATE**

By Gareth Oerman

I have been interested in birds for as long as I can remember and started to keep and breed them when I was eight years old. I started with a pair of Scarlet-chested Parrots and two pairs of Zebra Finches. Since starting with birds I have kept Scarlet-chested Parrots, Princess Parrots, Rock Parrots, Golden-shouldered Parrots, Green-cheeked Conures, Maroon-bellied Conures, Zebra Finches, Star Finches, Emblema Finches and Gouldian Finches.

## **Aviaries & Birds Kept**

At the moment I have 7 aviaries. My first aviary measured 3.6 metres long by 1.8 wide and 2.1 high. This is now my finch aviary and home to a colony of Gouldian Finches.

I also have a bank of two aviaries measuring 4.1 metres long 0.9 wide and 2.1 high. In the first one of these aviaries I have a pair of Princess Parrots. The second aviary is a holding aviary which also includes a hand-reared Princess Parrot and a few Zebra Finches.

I have another bank of 3 aviaries each measuring 2.4 long, 0.9 wide and 2.4 high. In these aviaries I have Rock Parrots and Green-cheek Conures.

My suspended aviary is 4.1 long 1.2 wide and 2.1 high. This aviary is home to a pair of Maroon-bellied Conures.

All of my aviaries have a river sand base with cement edges to help prevent the mice getting in. To get a better view of the birds we have painted the wire meshing black. They also have safety cages to save losing my birds. It has come in very handy on several occasions especially with the Green-cheek Conures who like flying out to see what food I have for them each day.

## **Feeding**

Every day after school I feed all my birds soaked seed which is made up of equal parts of sunflower, safflower, hulled oats, mung beans, corn and cracked maize. With this I add egg and biscuit mix or finch mix made by

**Passwell.** Since I added these mixes my birds have breed quite a lot better.

I feed all the birds fruit and vegetables each day with their soaked seed. The fruit and vegetables I regularly feed my birds are sweet corn, peas, apple, beetroot, pear, cucumber, capsicum, silver beet, spinach, carrot, broccoli, celery and orange. Fruit and Vegetables that are also fed every now and then are strawberries, sweet potato, pumpkin and palm fruit.

I feed all my parrots small parrot seed and with the conures I add some pellets as well. I give all my finches normal finch seed. When available I put seeding grasses in with the finches. In the finch aviary I also provide egg shells and charcoal.

To provide the birds with extras I supply every aviary with fresh native branches weekly. We have tubing on the aviary walls to hold the branches. Most of the branches I get are from our garden or from Council trees that have dropped limbs.

### **Health and Aviary Systems**

My dad has installed a watering system in each of the aviaries to wash out any unclean water and replace it with fresh water. The watering systems run twice a day. A misting system does also.

We worm the birds every six months. I had a bad experience with red mites killing chicks so I also spray the aviaries with Insect Liquidator to get rid of insects and mites, so they don't get in the nesting boxes.

### **Breeding successes**

Birds that I'm breeding and trying to breed at the moment are Gouldian's, Rock Parrots, Green-cheeked Conures, Maroon-bellied Conures, Gouldian's and Zebra Finches.

I breed my Princess Parrots in a hollow log measuring approximately 50 centimetres in length and 20 centimetres in diameter. My nest box substrate is made up of equal amounts of wood shavings and peat moss which is what I use in all my nesting boxes. I usually get 4 chicks from either 6 or 7 eggs in a clutch. Two years ago a Princess chick was dumped out of the nest at about two weeks old so I decided to hand rear the chick. I used a bent spoon and **Passwell** hand rearing mix. Although 'Plummet' is a little small he is quite tame and sits happily on me. Me

and my dad recently had to hand rear a fledged princess due to having its tendon coming off the bone and lying on the ground. My dad used a crop needle to stick down its throat to give it a few good feeds.

I have bred Gouldian's with great success in a colony. My Gouldian's breed in small finch boxes of different sizes. I usually get 3 to 5 chicks from each clutch. Egg shell is provided along with seeding grass during breeding season to get them going.

I have had a lot of success turned to failure with my Rock Parrots so far. I have 2 pair at the moment. Last breeding season one pair produced infertile eggs. The other pair produced one chick for a few eggs in their first clutch. When this chick fledged it seemed to have weak legs and died a few days later. I think this was due to having no support of other chicks in the nest box as there was no shortage of calcium supply. In the second clutch things were looking great when 3 chicks hatched. They were growing up strongly until extreme weather came. The nest box roof was lifted but this wasn't enough and all chicks died. Since then the sprayer system has been put up.

My Green-cheek Conures produced 4 infertile eggs in their first season.

I haven't had a breeding season yet with the Maroon-bellied Conures.

### **Future birds**

Hopefully next year with a bit of help from the birds with money I will be able to buy a pair of Black-capped or Chattering Lories.

I'm hopefully going to get some Softbills soon to put in my main aviary. I'm hoping I will be able to get a pair of Crimson Chats.

Other birds I would like to keep in the next few years include Pearly Conures, Yellow-crowned Amazons, African Grey's or Hahn's Macaws and also Fig Parrots.