



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

By Brian Preece

Continued from the August edition

The actual convention kicked off on the Friday night with light dinner and drinks followed by a video presentation and the Official Opening, then a presentation by Gary Fitt on “Diamonds and Other Gems”.

Saturday, 30th April

The day started with the bus transfer and breakfast at the conference centre. There were many speakers both from Australia and overseas, including: Ernst Kruger from South Africa, Gary McCrae from W.A., Graham Bull from N.S.W., Mike Fidler from N.S.W., Dr. Bob Doneley from Queensland, Dr. Sarah Pryke from N.S.W., Peter Karsten from Canada and Peter Rindom from Denmark.

The first speaker of the day was Gary McCrae speaking about “Specialised Breeding of the Red-eared Fire-tail”. All the speakers provided very detailed information about their topics which included: “Success with Pekin Robins and European Finches”, “Finch Nutrition”, “Avian Health”, “Breeding Finches for Quality and Improvement” and “Structured Approach to Success with Crimson Finches”. The day included a Conservation Forum chaired by Tim Neilsen from South Australia and included short updates on the Black-throat Recovery Group, Save the Gouldian Fund, Rare Finch Conservation Group, NFSA Finch Census Results, Sustainable Aviculture Network and a discussion on the Conservation of Species and Strains in Aviculture.

During the breaks for morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea, there was the opportunity to view the Trade Display Area which included many stalls offering a wide variety of products such as: DVDs, Books, Art Work, Bird Boxes, Seed, Wire *etc*,...virtually anything you might want for birds.

On Saturday evening there was a dinner held at the conference centre with a video presentation, speaker and drawing of the raffle. There was also an auction of several original bird paintings. It was a great opportunity to chat to new acquaintances over dinner.

Sunday, 1st May

Peter Karsten from Canada kicked off the morning with Techniques for Live-food Production. Other topics covered during the day were: “Aviculture

for Diverse Species - Touracos and Crimson-wings”, “Management of Finch Health with Special Reference to Parasites”, “Softbill Keeping in Queensland”, “Parrotfinches - the Value of Specialising”, “The Ecology of Field Populations of the Gouldian Finch”.

There was also a Bird Sale in the Trade Display Area with the opportunity to purchase a variety of finches at very good prices. Birds on offer were Cordons, Blue-caps, Zebras, Star Finches, Emblemas and many others. Shame I couldn't bring some of them home!

The final speaker was Dr. Sarah Pryke from N.S.W. who has been heavily involved in research relating to the Gouldian Finch in the wild. Sarah had, in fact, only arrived back in Australia from England on the Saturday afternoon after receiving an award in recognition of her work. She spoke on using artificial nest boxes to save wild Gouldian Finches.

The convention wrapped up with a “Question and Answer Panel” session with the Presenters.

All in all, the convention was a great opportunity to hear a variety of interesting speakers on a wide range of topics relating specifically to finches, and to also meet other people from around Australia and the world with a similar interest. I certainly found it very informative and hope to put some of the ideas I picked up into practice in my own aviaries. There was a vast amount of information and thankfully all the speakers' presentations were included in the handouts from the conference, so I can refer back to the notes if necessary.

The next Finch Convention will be held in 2014 and I would urge anyone who can to attend as it was a very worthwhile experience.

