



## **FROM MATT'S PERCH**

**By Matthew Russel**

I hear time and time again how someone is going to get a pair of what seems to be “the must have bird of the season” and then breed them up to make some money.

This behavior I refer to as “fad breeding”. I think of it as the avicultural version of a pyramid scam. Let’s just think on it for a minute, the bird of the season these days seems to be mutations or hybrids due to the ban on the importation of aviary birds. So by some freak of nature and careful inbreeding or hybridization an aviculturists come up with a new take on some species we already have in our aviaries, then goes onto breed these birds up until they have a sustainable colony. They then sell these mutations/hybrids at a premium price because they are the only one with them. They can generally ask what they want too. Generation after generation are bred and with each new generation the price falls until they are worthless and corrupting the genetics of the breed from which they originated.

To back up my claims I have the Price Guide for birds put out by the Avicultural Society of South Australia for 1986/87, 1989/90, 1990/91, 1992/93. Let’s look at cockatiels from those issues. The most valuable cockatiels in the 1986/87 guide is the cinnamon mutation valued at a staggering \$1500.00. In the 1989/90 guide they can be found for \$400.00, then we find they are missing from the 1990/91 guide. In the 1992/93 guide they can be found for \$320.00. So in the first four years of listing the birds have dropped 73.3% of their value and then in 1993 they’re down to \$320.00. Therefore, they’re now only worth 26.7% of their original value and that’s in just seven years, about half the life span of a cockatiel. Now you can purchase cinnamon cockatiels for as little as \$35.00 from a pet store.

Now let’s look on the flip side, the African Silverbill finch is now almost unattainable in Australia. In the 1986/87 guide they were worth \$45.00, 1989/90 and 1990/91 they were worth \$35.00 then down to \$20.00 in the 1992/93 guide. The fall in price suggests strong numbers, or a fall in interest in keeping these birds. I would say both. If you had bought these birds in 1993 and bred them in a sustainable manner over the ensuing years, you would be responsible for saving the species. You wouldn’t have made massive money on an individual sale, but because you would have been able to supply the market you would have made a massive profit over this time. One thing is for sure, you would definitely not have lost almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the value of you original stock.

Please let me have your thoughts on this matter, to share with all the members. You can e-mail me at: [tara\\_matt@hotmail.com](mailto:tara_matt@hotmail.com).

Cheers,

*Matt*