

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE YEAR 2009

by D. Hanel

The year 2009 has gone by so quickly, call it Climate Change or whatever, but the weather conditions have caused us to work even harder to achieve a successful breeding season. The unrelenting heat of summer could be described as being nothing short of cruel to our native birds as well as our own small collection of birds. For the native birds we have made sure the three birds baths in our back garden are kept topped up. For the birds in our aviaries we have had to do much more.



All our aviaries have see-through fibreglass shutters during winter. We make sure they are covered well so wind and rain cannot affect the birds. But now with our ever increasing hot summers we have had to add shade cloth blinds to the aviaries. They are

rolled up and down to various positions during the heat of the day. We also lightly sprinkle the roof and sides of the aviaries when the temperature rises above 40°C, and the drinking water is changed every few hours to keep the birds stress free.



We also breed canaries and the hot weather caused our 2009 season to finish early. Our bird room is made of metal and when temperatures rise above 38° the birds have to be removed. The sight of dedicated hens sitting in hot hessian nests with

babies hanging over the side is too much to bear, so of course, they have to come inside the house where it is much cooler.

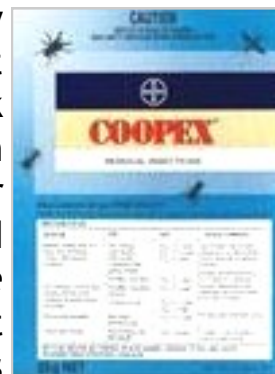


Just as well my husband and I are bird lovers, though sometimes my patience runs thin when seed and feathers are tossed around the kitchen floor. Cleaning is done twice a day, most times by me. Our canary breeding season has been reduced to one round instead of three due to the hot weather. Our predicted numbers are down, but the quality of the birds bred has been outstanding.

Living in suburbia every house seems to have a cat, or two, and most are allowed to roam free both day and night. To avoid cats attacking our birds during the night and early morning we drop blinds over the aviaries so the cats cannot startle and grab birds through the wire.

In our area we have had countless nights being awakened by loud exploding crackers. Just a few days ago we had some idiot fire a large rocket down the street. They not only startle us, but what about our birds! There always seems to be young just about to hatch at these times as well as birds sitting on eggs. Who knows how many young are lost due to these idiots.

This year we have had ants attack young birds in the nest again, so we try and keep a lookout every time we go past the aviaries. Recently when the thermometer reached 41° ants attacked four young parrotfinches just about to fledge. This happened last year as well. Luckily the ants had just started swarming over a broken egg that hadn't hatched and I was able to save the young. I took the young from the nest and checked them for ants, then removed the nest and sprayed it with Coopex* (a wonder powder to eradicate ants, recommended to me by Richard Chilton on a previous occasion). Not wanting to replace the young in the old nest I placed them in another nest that was built but not occupied at the time. This nest was placed in the same position as the old, and then it was all up to the adult parrotfinches, there was more nothing I could do.



The heat of the afternoon was unbearable and I kept my fingers crossed to see what would happen. I need not have worried as the parents flew straight to the nest and began feeding their young. What a great pair of birds they have turned out to be. A few days later these young sea-green parrotfinches were fighting for position

to leave the nest. It was such a joy to see their pretty little heads poking from the entrance hole.

A few days later three young Parrot finches flew from the nest. They looked a little strange with their full crops poking out from their neck, but they were healthy and within a week or so I knew they would be fully feathered.



*Coopex is available from the Services Officer. Ed.



I waited a few more days then placed rings on their legs so they could be identified. It was so satisfying to see all three young birds so healthy and full of life, just waiting to fly like the rest of the birds in the aviary. These scruffy little ones

will change into beautifully coloured birds within months, and there is every chance that they could end up being pied sea-green parrotfinches like the ones below.



The sense of achievement gained from raising birds like these is what makes breeding birds so satisfying.

All photos, except that of Coopex, supplied by the author.

