

YES...I'VE GOT THE DESEASE!!!

By David Wilson

I guess it's a familiar story, I started keeping birds when I was a kid. Pet budgies in the bedroom, chooks, a few fantail pigeons and then an old aviary someone didn't want. I started with finches then my father helped me build a bigger parrot aviary. I housed King Parrots, Crimson Rosellas, and a Twenty-eight Parrot all with limited success due to diet and lack of compatibility. From my late teens there were no birds for thirty years, but over the years I was always interested in going to zoos or seeing aviaries.

My younger son, Sam, showed some interest in birds, so I had a 3m X 3m X 1.8m (10ft x 6ft x 10ft) dome aviary made. After a year it was not big enough, so I doubled the size of the planned aviary. I dug a 900mm (3 ft) trench all the way around with cement sheeting to stop rats (some of which look the size of small cats) getting in, but I am always catching mice. I had a mixture of Australian finches with varied breeding success. Living in the Adelaide Hills it can get bitterly cold, but I'm getting Gouldians (red and black heads in different aviaries) to survive, and they're even starting to breed.

I had a windfall about a year ago, one beautifully made aviary in panels 3.6m X 3.6m (12ft x 12ft) in four compartments and another aviary 4.3m X 4.3m X 2.4 high (14ft x 14ft x 8ft) were going for scrap metal. So I said "I'll take those off your hands for you", and he was delighted (and so was I). I extended the 4.3 aviary to 6.1m (20ft), painted, paved and put half Perspex on the roof. Then for something a bit different I put clear Perspex along the back top half of the 3.6 x 3.6 aviary to let in as much light as possible. Visually it looks great and you can see the birds from both ends and you are not looking down into a dark shelter.

Recently I have had more success in colony breeding Diamond Fire-tails, the Scarlets in with them have had three young, and my Cockatiels are going berserk! All my birds are fed seeding grasses every day, some take silver beet and most other days meal worms too. I can hardly open the door before they are down on the seeding grasses, especially the Diamond Fire-tails and Double-bars. It may be more beneficial and easier in the future to feed soaked seed, but I seem to be able to get enough seeding grasses for the time being.

I now have seven aviaries housing Elegants, Bourkes, Budgies (all yellow) *etc.*, and I want to get Kings, Princess and Superbs. Expansion of the big finch aviary, and a 6.1m X 3.6m X 2.7m high (20ft x 12ft x 9ft) parrot aviary are on the drawing board. The garden and house are getting neglected but it's all worth it. Yes...I've got the disease!! But it's great therapy. Go for it!