

WE MIGHT LOOSE OUR BIRDS

As we all know, now more than ever, we are at risk of losing our exotic birds in Australia. If there was ever been a time to act it was ten years ago, but that has been and gone so we had better start now with what we have left!!!! Ignorance and greed is what has put us in this situation. People following the money, in the past when a bird dropped in value people dropped them like hot cakes. Look at the Red-headed Finch (Aberdeen) for example! There is no way as aviculturists we should leave a legacy of no exotic bird species for our children. As an individual you can make a difference, but as a team we can change the face of Australian aviculture.

I thank everyone who returned the Finch Phase-out Questionnaire. The information gained from those returned has been instrumental in planning the next step in saving our finches.

The Society is proposing a three year pilot selective breeding programme similar to that used by the zoos around the world. The reason we have chosen to use exotic finches is because we believe they are at the greatest risk of being lost in Australian aviculture due to their short life span, and the fact that there is little chance of them being imported into the country because of the perceived disease risk fear the quarantine authorities hold. We do not want people to clear out their parrots to make room for finches that would only be transferring the problem.

Feedback from the Finch Phase-out Questionnaire

We received replies from a good cross section of people involved in many different areas of aviculture. Some with one or two very large aviaries designed to watch their birds in a natural looking setting, to people who have just a small backyard aviary, and even people with large breeding complexes. Around 65% of people are planning to expand their aviaries in some form, some are planning just one more small aviary for now, and there are even plans for large breeding complexes. Any expansion is great news as far as I am concerned.

100% of those responding believe we are at risk of losing species. We had a number of great suggestions for what we can do to save our species.

The main things raised were:

1. Awareness of the problem.
2. Discourage mutations.
3. The most common suggestion was a breeding programme.
4. Support of research programmes.

There were a number of very constructive comments made. Things like getting more people interested in aviculture, after all a large number of us in the Society aren't spring chickens. Publishing lists of what is available in South Australia, and articles on each bird once a month. Promotion of aviculture outside of the aviculture community, *eg.* starting in schools. These are all good ideas and we will try and incorporate what we can.

What birds do we keep?

The following is the list of birds respondents have declared having, but as many aviculturists like to keep their cards close to their chest, and there were only a small number of returns compared to the number of members in the society, there well may be a more diverse collection of species out there.

Red Avadavats (Strawberries)	Orange-breasted Waxbills
Cubans Finches	African Fire Finches
Green Singing Finches	Goldfinches
Parrotfinches (Tricolour, Blue-faced, and Red-faced)	Black-headed Nuns
Cut-throat Finches	Tricoloured Nuns
Rufus-backed Manikins	Jacarini Finches
Cordon Bleu	Saint Helena Waxbill.

Some species people have kept in the past but don't appear in the list of birds people have today are Melba Finch, Redheaded (Aberdeen) Finch, Black-headed Yellow Siskin and Java Finch.

So again, a big **thank you** to those members who care about the future of our exotic finches, and took the time to fill in the questionnaire and return it to the society.

If you wish to participate in the breeding programme, or wish help out, please fill in the enclosed slip-in form.

Matthew Russell

Co-ordinator

Exotic Finch Recovery Programme

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