NEWSLETTER December 2010

Presidents Report

Coinciding with the United Bird Societies of South Australia (UBSSA) conference, state delegates and members of the National Finch and Softbill Association (NFSA) met to discuss various issues affecting aviculture, in particular those affecting finch and softbill keepers.

National Census of Finches and Softbill Populations
From this meeting the NFSA has launched the second national finch census, this time targeting both exotic and Australian finch species. The original census conducted in 2008, provided important founding data on the status of our exotic seedeaters. By replicating the census on a regular basis, we hope to be able to highlight population trends over the coming years. Being armed with this information will allow aviculturists to ensure that we are able to maintain viable stocks of the species we currently have.

To date we have received data from 165 individual aviculturists totalling 17,840 birds. This is more birds than the 2008 census, but this time we have data for both exotics and natives. In 2008 we got data for 16,500 exotics! So hopefully many more returns are still to come. The birds to date are 5,877 exotics and 11,963 natives. 6,100 of the natives are Gouldians and nearly 73% of respondents have Gouldians.

We urge all clubs to promote the census, which is completely anonymous, so that the results can be presented at the Finches 11 conference on 29th April 2011. The more participants we get, the more accurate the data will be. I have included within this newsletter data obtained from the Victorian Department highlighting populations of licensed species. This data spans 15 years and clearly indicates the population of these species. We really are aiming to create a national data base and this can only be accomplished with the cooperation of as many finch breeders as possible. The census forms and contact details are included within this newsletter.

Attracting People to Aviculture
Another key issue discussed was the importance of attracting new members, both the young and mature, to our hobby. I recently gave a talk at an Avicultural Society in capital city and asked the 80 members present to raise their hand if they had kept birds longer than 10 years. 95% of those present raised their hands. I then asked for those that kept birds between 5 and 10 years. A handful of hands went up. Then I asked the key question, ‘How many had kept birds for fewer than 5 years?’ No hands were raised! The writing is on the wall for all clubs and our hobby in general – we must attract new members or there will be no one at our meetings in the future as our memberships certainly are not getting younger.

Various clubs around the country have adopted some pro-active means of promoting the hobby. The QFS’s aviary at the ABC Garden Expo and subsidising juniors to attend Finches 11 are a step in the right direction. The Geelong branch of the ASA in Victoria,
regularly advertises it’s meetings in local papers and the South Australian Avicultural Society has a sensation display at their annual sale, promoting the society using preserved specimens and audio visual displays.

Other initiatives such the ‘Aviaries in School’ program, as conducted by Torquay College in Victoria (see NFSA newsletter 1 April 2010 and below), through to making club meetings more friendly and relevant to new comers. Focusing club meetings on important aspects of birds and their husbandry, rather than the business operations of the club, could go a long way so as not to alienate the new comer. Business operations of any club are important, but it may be worthwhile scheduling these before the meeting time.

**Other News**
The National Finch and Softbill Association (NFSA) would like to thank the support of all 30 of our member bird clubs and societies from around the country. By representing such a large part of the avicultural sector, we are placed in a stronger position to lobby with various government organisations when the need arises. It also provides a large cross section of finch and softbill breeders that can provide vital information on the status of both exotic and native species held in captivity.

NFSA would like to welcome onto the committee Ian Brown as the new Queensland representative. Ian has many years experience keeping a breeding a wide range of species and has a particular interest in finches and softbills. We look forward to working with Ian. I would like to take this opportunity to thank out going Queensland representative, Barry Pollock, for his services to the NFSA and trust we will still have contact with him over the coming years.

Finally, the NFSA would like to once again congratulate Russell Kingston on his outstanding achievements this year. As many would realise, Russell was honoured in the Australia Day Honours for his services to aviculture. July 2010 also saw the release of his new book that was many years in the making. (See review below for more detail.)

Hoping to see you all at Finches 11, April 29th in Brisbane. This is one conference not to be missed! The next NFSA committee meeting will be held during the conference. Delegates are all welcome to attend and will be notified of the meeting time during the conference. Happy finch and softbill keeping
David Pace
President NFSA

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*The South Australian Avicultural Society has a sensation display at their annual sale, promoting the society using preserved specimens and audio visual displays. Pictured here is Matt Russell South Australian delegate for NFSA.*
News from Queensland (Gary Fitt)

Concern about impacts of changing Council laws on birdkeeping
Queensland has seen a trend of local government amalgamations over the last year and with it a revision of local laws that impinge on the keeping of animals and birds. Some councils, such as Ipswich City Council, already have laws which greatly restrict the keeping of birds and Logan City Council has drafted some new subordinate laws which have the potential to put significant and unjustified restrictions on aviculture. As a result QFS has worked closely with the Queensland Council of Bird Societies to make submissions pointing out the implications of the new draft laws. We have identified numerous anomalies and errors in their interpretations and offered some alternatives. The main changes involve restrictions on the numbers of birds which can be kept on suburban blocks, requirement for a permit to keep more than 40 birds, and most critically a proposed limit on the distance between aviaries and houses (at least 30 metres separation) which would effectively mean it was impossible to have an aviary on a standard house block. Many of the problems occur because birds are classified very coarsely – 40 zebra finches are classified in the same way as 40 galahs! We are still waiting for a response and need to remain vigilant to such proposal elsewhere.

QFS meetings go regional
Queensland Finch Society has continued a new initiative of regional meetings with two in the last year – one in Toowoomba (March) and one in Townsville (October)

QFS members gather in Toowoomba
March 20 was the date for the third QFS “Out-of-Brisbane meeting” – this one at the Toowoomba Educational Centre in Toowoomba, up on the range west of Brisbane. The meeting was held on a Saturday afternoon/evening to be convenient for as many of our regional members as possible. Overall it was a great success with some 38 attendees, including members from Kingaroy and Wondai to the north, Gatton and Laidley to the east, Warwick and Inverell to the south and from Pittsworth to the west. The meeting featured some general QFS items, an overview of the NFSA, and two talks – one by Ian Brown on the “Challenges and rewards of a mixed collection” and one by Gary Fitt on “Re-establishing a finch collection”. We also ran our popular “What finch is that?” competition which was enjoyed by all and we put on a great dinner of chicken and salad together with some great desserts for all those who came.

QFS goes north to Townsville for regional meeting
The next instalment in our program of “out of Brisbane” meetings occurred on October 16, when a highly successful QFS meeting was held in Townsville. Some 39 attendees come along, most from the Townsville/Charters Towers area, but we had two intrepid travellers from Cairns, 350 km north of Townsville and two from Mackay, some 390 kms to the south. That’s dedication! This time we had three talks - Ian Brown on Keeping Softbills, an informative short talk by Tony Grice, Chair of the Blackthroat Recovery Group, on their activities around Townsville, and a talk by Gary Fitt on finch aviculture.
Other features included “What Finch is That?”, an overview of the NFSA, a DVD on “Wildlife of the Kimberley”, and plenty of publicity about the Finches ’11 Convention. Ross Davey (Townsville) summarised opinions by commenting “The whole night was just brilliant and I would like to thank you all for the time and effort by you all. The presentations and meal was superb and I certainly learned many new ideas. I will definitely look at going to the Finch convention”.

Extending the Softbill List for Queensland
QFS has been active with the Queensland government seeking to extend the list of softbills which can be legally kept in this state. Queensland allows only a very limited range of species (about 13 species), many fewer than just across the border in NSW where another 55 species are allowed. We provided sound arguments for the government to consider reviewing the current legislation to increase the approved list. So far we have hit a brick wall. The government response was that this might be considered when the legislation is next reviewed, but that is six years away! We will continue to argue on this one.

QFS at the ABC Garden Show
It is important for aviculture that we expose our hobby to the general public and emphasise the high standards that should be applied in finch aviculture. This year QFS has staged displays at the Brisbane Show in August and for the first time we participated in the 3 day ABC Garden Show in April. Our display aviary gave a perfect opportunity to put finches on display to a significant cross-section of the public. The display looked great with plants donated by Bunnings. Some said it was the best display at the Garden show and emphasised how well a small aviary would compliment a garden. It was amazing how many visitors said they had kept finches as children and they might get back into them, or else “dad always had finches, perhaps I will try them”. Our “I luv finches” stickers proved popular with the kids. Hopefully we will get some new members out of this effort.

Getting Junior finchkeepers to the Finches ’11 Convention
Don’t forget that the Finches ’11 convention is coming up in April 2011.

An added feature for this convention is that some generous QFS members have donated sufficient funds to allow us to sponsor the registration
fees for 5 junior finch keepers to attend and NFSA will sponsor a sixth. This is an effort to encourage and support young aviculturists. Juniors don’t need to be members of QFS but we do require a written submission explaining why we should support a nominee. These submissions are needed by January 25 at the latest. We also require that a guardian attend Finches ’11 with the junior.

Full details for Finches ’11 are available on the QFS website – www.qfs.org.au or from Gary Fitt 07 32026779, gary.fitt@bigpond.com
News from NSW (Bob Barnes)

The RSPCA are threatening to make life difficult, particularly for dealers and pet shops with their new cage and husbandry requirements. I understand the ABA and Federation are looking at supporting the dealers. More details when they are available.

There seems to be a growing interest in clubs targeting different species to ensure continuation of pure stock. The NFSA fully supports this cause and is happy to make committee members available to speak on the importance of maintaining ‘normal’ stocks of birds.

The clubs that targeting species are:

- Australian Finch Society (main branch) - Jacaranis
- Australian Finch Society (Hawkesbury) - Melbas and Auroras
- Riverina Finch Society – Silver-headed Nuns
- Manly Warringah Avicultural Society – Red-faced Parrot Finches

Finches at the Hunter Finch Club Bird Sale (Mark Jolly)

Last year we conducted a survey of all finches at our Hunter Finch Club sale. In 2009 we had 768 finches out of 2126 birds. At the recent 2010 sale we had 2380 birds of which 1519 were finches! With most finch breeders reporting almost total clearances.

These included:

- 54 red-face parrot finches and 34 mutations,
- 134 Stars,
- 46 Diamond Firetails,
- 22 Grenadier Weavers
- 46 Cubans,
- 13 Bluecaps,
- 15 Green singers,
- 145 Ruddies,
- 116 Orangebreasts,
- 88 Red Cheek Cordons.

Unfortunately there were several notable omissions, these included black-throated finches (Diggles), crimson finches and black-rumped doulebars. There were two lone melbas, one red siskin, four yellow-rumps and six pictorellas.

Floods in Queensland
The following email was received from Russell Kingston:

“Thank you all for your concerns about our recent excess of precipitation. Everything is fine here. We were isolated for a short time. The main highway was cut north and south
of us as were all roads to the coast and inland. The local bridge over the Burrum River was at least a metre underwater. My enquiries about bird keepers in Bundaberg, Childers and Rockhampton have so far shown no breeders to be in serious trouble. It is unclear if this is the case in more isolated townships. We understand that an area roughly the size of New South Wales or greater than France and Germany combined have been flood affected. One couple from near Rockhampton tell us that crocs have been spotted in waters around their area. With a bit of luck some of those bloody cats that have scrambled up trees will get tired and drop out.

On a brighter note, we are well pleased with the aviaries. No water in any of the flights. The gravel and drainage system worked a treat even at the height of the deluge when we were receiving 130mm a day. No bird losses and somehow fledglings managed to scrape through. On the down side, work on the new rain forest aviary has come to a standstill. No self-respecting earth mover will attempt to move his equipment - everywhere the ground is spongy.

Hope you are all well and having a Happy New Year.”

Russell.

**News from Victoria (David Pace and Glenn McCarthy)**

The following extracts were written by Year 3 and 4 students (8 and 9 year olds) Torquay College, Torquay, Victoria about their walk in aviary and highlight the possibilities of promoting aviculture in local communities.

**Our New Walk In Bush Aviary at School**

*We think our aviary at Torquay Collage is awesome. It was completed in January 2010. There are so many birds such as lorikeets, finches and doves. We like watching the birds eat and seeing the baby birds leave their nests. We have over one hundred birds in the aviary. Our aviary is cool because it’s so big. Our favourite birds are the Purple-crown lorikeets, the Rainbow lorikeets and the Spinifex pigeon. Leo Filer and Jai Collier*

**What we think of the aviary**

*I think having an aviary at school is a good thing because it interests more parents to send their kids to school here. It is also great having an aviary at school because it is fun for lots of kids to watch them at snack and lunch time. After we do our animal keeping jobs, it is fun to sit on the deck and watch the birds.*

As a consequence of the above mentioned aviary, one student, Shaun Vigor-Smith, recently obtained birds at home and wrote the following for Australian Birdkeeper magazine:
Shaun’s Day with His Birds

Every day before I go to school I feed my birds. We feed them Cockatiel and Budgie mix. I change the water every day and I check that their food is dry. I change their leaves once a week, change their hay once every two weeks and I rake once a week.

I like listening to their whistling every afternoon.

Shaun (pictured right in his own aviary) has since set up a second aviary to house red-rump parrots. We will hopefully get him into finches in the future!

Monitoring Numbers of Australian Finches in Captivity

(David Pace)

With the legal trapping of Australian native finches during the 1980’s, aviculturists in Australia have been faced with the challenge of maintaining viable captive bred stocks. I remember clearly during the 1970’s and early 80’s, purchasing legally wild caught pictorellas, uncoloured Gouldian finches and many other species that were crammed in small cages from the ‘Rubble and Riches’ market in Brooklyn, an outer western suburb of Melbourne and various pet shops throughout Melbourne. During these days there was no urgency to breed the birds as there seemed to be a steady supply.

The early 80’s saw the introduction of a private wildlife licensing system in Victoria that was frowned upon by many, as being a waste of time and requiring excessive paper work. Over the years many species have been removed from the system as the enormous numbers held literally clogged the system. In Victoria today the following native finch species can be held without a licence: Gouldian, painted, chestnut, star, long-tail, double-bar and zebra finches. No licence is required for blue-faced parrot finches with the assumption being that all our captive stocks are not the native form but originate from the New Guinea sub species.

The Victorian licence system has been in place for just on 30 years and one of the key advantageous for all aviculturists is that it can provide us with a guide to the numbers of the rarer species held and allow us as individuals or as organised groups, to target species whose numbers are in decline before they literally vanish. I first approached the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) Victoria, then known as the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) in 1995. This was some 15 years after the introduction of the scheme and requested data on the finch species held at that time. Bruce Theodore from the DNRE, was very cooperative and provided the data, not only for finches, but for quail, parrots, cockatoos and softbills. This data was then published in Australian Aviculture, within a series of articles, to inform aviculturists for the first time, on the status of our captive populations in Victoria.
The whole process was then repeated nine years later in 2004. At this time there were some concerning figures for most of our native finch species. Almost all species showed a marked decline. Species such as diamond firetails and red-browed finches dropped in population by one third and species such as crimson finches were down to 190 individuals, while yellow-rumps were down to a mere 74 birds! Market forces often reflect scarcity and it was not long before the humble yellow-rump was commanding $400 per pair!

It had been six years since the last figures were obtained and I was eager to see if numbers of our finch species had continued the downward slide. Figures released in late 2010 indicate that most species, except for plum-heads and red-broweds have increased in number from the 2004 figures but are still below the 1995 figures. The rarer finches of 1995 have increased slightly over the past 15 years. These species include the pictorella, crimson, yellow-rump, mask and beautiful firetail. These are all still held in very low numbers.

The data maintained by DSE does not differentiate between sub species, hence mask finches and white-eared mask finches are all lumped together, as are black-throated finches which would consist of both Parson and Diggles together.

The DSE licensing system works on a system in which each April, all holders of licensed species fill in a return form to the department. This return form has a summary of licensed species held, numbers bred, sold, deaths and total remaining for the year. Licences are only renewed by the department if they receive the annual return with figures. As a consequence, the compliance rate for the 2009 figures was 82.5%, a marked improvement on the compliance rates in 1995 and 2004, in which the figures are based on a low compliance rate of between 40% and 60%. Until recent years, aviculturists were requested to fill in two returns per year (March and September). Even if returns were not received, licences were renewed. The newer system of ‘No return No licence’ has improved the figures and reduced paper work by 50%.

Unfortunately, data from other states is not readily available and so while we have a reasonable idea of what is happening in Victoria, we are completely in the dark when it comes to the whole of the country. In 2009, The National Finch and Softbill Association (NFSA) coordinated a censes on the numbers of exotic finch species held in Australian aviaries. This highlighted species requiring attention and will provided the foundation to a continued monitoring program to ensure aviculturists are, at the very least, aware of any species requiring urgent attention. Armed with this information, individuals and coordinated groups can make informed decisions as to how best maintain viable stocks of a particular species. Future censes conducted by the NFSA, will more likely cover both exotic and native species and be done regularly so that trends can be monitored throughout the country.

The importance of maintaining our captive stocks cannot be overstated. None of our licensed finch species should be taken for granted as if their numbers plummet and they are lost, they cannot be legally taken from the wild and will be lost to aviculture. Utilising the data of our government agencies allows us to monitor the status of our finches, and through education and coordination, along with market forces, maintain viable captive populations for the next generation of aviculturists.
### Status of Licensed Australian Finches in Victorian Aviaries 1995 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diamond firetail</td>
<td>1617</td>
<td>1008</td>
<td>1402</td>
<td>Recovered markedly since 2004 and seems secure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-browed firetail</td>
<td>1217</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>One of two species that continues to decline. Literally over 50% fewer held when compared to 1995 figures. An alarming statistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plum-headed finch</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>Saw a small increase in 2004 but decreased recently when compared to 2004. In decline along with red-browed. Low numbers held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black-throated finch</td>
<td>731</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>Massive 47% decline in 2004, however slight increase in 2009. Low numbers held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masked finch</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>343</td>
<td>485</td>
<td>Slow and steady increase during past 15 years. Low numbers held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictorella</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>Slow and steady increase during past 15 years. Low numbers held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimson</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>Steady increase during past 15 years. Very low numbers held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-rumped finch</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>Large increase since 2004. Still very low numbers held.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beautiful firetail</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Slowing building numbers even though a high increase is noted from 1995. Rare in captivity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-eared firetail</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Loss of 50% since 2004. Very rare in captivity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These figures are based on information recorded in the Wildlife & Game Licensing System (WAGLS), as at Friday, 5 June 2009 1:34:00 PM. Special thanks to Alicia Houston and Bruce Theodore, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria, for making these figures available.*
Counting Gouldian Finches in Wyndham and Mornington Sanctuary (Glenn McCarthy)

During the first weeks of September 2010, several Victorian finch breeders, including NFSA Victorian representative Glenn McCarthy along with NFSA member Craig Smeelie, travelled to the remote north west of Western Australia to participate in the annual Gouldian finch count.

In Wyndham, located in the north east of Western Australia, approximately 20 counters recorded 650 Gouldian finches, although 90% were uncoloured and 10% coloured. There have been other sightings of coloured adults around Timber Creek. Along with Gouldians, other finches recorded were approximately 3000 stars, 3,000 long-tails, 100 pictorellas and 100 zebra finches. Many crimsons were sighted but only 40 yellow rumps and four chestnut-breasted finches were recorded.

At the same time, eight friends and I were at Mornington Sanctuary where we sighted only one male black-headed Gouldian. We did however discover a second Gouldian in a photograph we had taken earlier in day. This individual was amongst a flock of long-tail finches that had come into drink. We missed this bird at the time the photo was taken! Longtails were in huge numbers, as were crimson finches, double bars and zebra finches. We only saw one painted finch and one young yellow rump. Noted absent finches were pictorellas and chestnuts, compared to three years ago when they were both in great numbers. Gouldian finches were also seen in flocks of up to 30 at our last visit.

News from Western Australia (Christine Hornby)

Sales at the auction we held in September this year were a bit down, but were looking quite good for our next auction in December, (especially young Gouldians), which, due to a 36 degree temperature on the day of the auction, had to be cancelled at the last moment. This was a big disappointment to everyone concerned. We were planning on handing out the NFSA census forms at the auction, but this did not happen, so I emailed them to as many people as I had addresses for. I would like to think that Western Australian aviculturists have responded to this.

On the whole we appear to have had an average breeding year for most species, although some have done better than others and, of course, some breeders seem to be more successful than others. As mentioned in regard to the last auction, we had some extremely hot weather in November and December and this does affect the breeding cycles of some species, along with the fact that we had very little in the way of winter rain. Most of the native finches which we can keep in WA seem to be well represented, although a few species such as Black-throats, Diamond firetails, Red Brows, Pictorellas and Doublebars do not appear as often as Stars, Plumheads or Gouldians at auctions or sales. This maybe because they are not as easy to breed and there are people waiting for them, so very few spare ones are available. One species which goes in and out of demand is the Blue-faced Parrot finch. A while ago people kept them, but no-one seemed to want them, then, once they were getting scarce and the price went up, people suddenly wanted them again. This also happened with Yellow-rumps.
Attendances at our monthly meetings have also been down for most of the year, again it seems to go in cycles with some years having good attendance figures and some not so good.

**News from South Australia (Matt Russell and Tony Melbourne)**

The Sustainable Aviculture Network (SAN), developed by the Avicultural Society of South Australia, has completed its first year. To date, 17 parrot, 43 finch, two softbill and two quail species have been registered by 23 breeders. Breeders remain anonymous but provide a contact phone number. This is made available to other breeders in the program and allows breeders of particular species the ability to contact one another, swap information, ideas and bloodlines. The emphasis is pure ‘normal’ strains of each species. Matt Russell, the convenor of SAN, has made available the first contact lists and it will be matter of time to see how breeders utilise this information. SAN will be further discussed and promoted at the Finches 11 conference in Brisbane. SAN will evolve to have a cd sent to all registered breeders with details on how to recognise ‘pure’ strains. Anyone interested in registering should contact Matt on tara_matt@hotmail.com

Tony Melbourne, from the Avicultural Society of South Australia has indicated that South Australian aviculturists are watching ‘Biosecurity’, a Dept that was formed 4 years ago in S.A. very carefully. A paper on the need for biosecurity, particularly in the case of an outbreak of some exotic disease, sparked the interest. The focus was on avian influenza and the possible introduction of a new ‘Biosecurity Levy’. At this stage, bird keepers in South Australia are on alert. Stay tuned for more details.

**Adelaide in July – A Hive of Avicultural Activity (David Pace)**

Adelaide, during the first weekend of July, was a hive of avicultural activity, with the official launch of Russell Kingston's outstanding new book, ‘The Finch... a breeder’s Companion’. The book launch was part of the United Bird Societies of South Australia (UBSSA) annual conference. This conference consisted of aviary visits on the Saturday and three excellent speakers on the Sunday. The first speaker was Matt Baird (Vic) on ‘American Aviculture and Handrearing Techniques’. Ian Brown (Qld) presented two talks, one on ‘Keeping Softbills in Queensland’ and the second on ‘Breeding Gang Gang Cockatoos and Fig Parrots’. The third speaker was Tim Nielson (SA). He presented the ‘Sustainable Aviculture Network’. Russell Kingston (Qld) was the final speaker. His topic was ‘Birding in South America’. In all it was a well balanced, highly informative and superbly organised conference. Congratulations must go to the organisers Brian Reichelt, David Johncock and their army of helpers. I would thoroughly recommend this conference to aviculturists across Australia.

**Book Review: The Finch...... A Breeder’s Companion**

Russell Kingston OAM
Indruss Publications

Russell Kingston has released his latest and greatest work to date. Entitled, The Finch.... a Breeder's Companion, it has surpassed all his efforts to date and is, without doubt, the most comprehensive resource on captive seed eaters in Australia, if not the world. The A4 red hard cover, depicts Russell’s favourite finch, the European Gold finch. Unlike his previous books, the
intended audience includes finch breeders from around the world, in particular South Africa, Asia, Europe and of course Australia.

The Finch... a Breeder’s Companion takes the reader on a journey, covering 70 species, with the aid of 400 colour plates. Species that are closely related are treated separately but are group together in chapters. For example Chapter 21 is the Family Neochima and includes the crimson, star, red-browed and plum-headed finches. Each species has information on:

- Distribution and habitat in the wild
- Housing
- Sexing
- Management
- Diet
- Showing
- Behaviour
- Health Issues
- Availability
- Mutations/Hybrids

Besides specific species information, there are also comprehensive chapters on:

- Avian Health
- Housing
- Starting in Finches
- Nutrition
- Breeding Finches
- Conservation

What sets this 528 paged book apart from others is the personal treatment each bird group is given. Russell provides the reader with his own honest experiences with each bird, highlighting not only his successes, but also mistakes and set backs. This trait distinguishes The Finch... a Breeder’s Companion from many other books on aviculture that can sometimes be repetitive and generic in style.

This book is a must for both beginners to aviculture and those that have a great deal of experience. To the very experienced that feel they have read, seen and bred it all, The Finch... a Breeder’s Companion will re-ignite a new and brighter avicultural flame. In all, with a resource such as this now available, finch breeding and the birds we keep will be all the healthier in the future. The only short coming of The Finch... a Breeder’s Companion is that it weighs 2.4kg, making it a challenge to read in bed.

The Finch... a Breeder’s Companion is available from:

- Indruss Productions, 170 Burrum River Road, Torbanlea, Queensland. 4662
- Email: indrus@bigpond.com

Cost: $120.00 (Australian) plus $12.00 GST in Australia. Postage and packing in Australia $15.00

David Pace
NFSA COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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Vic-President – Dr Gary Fitt (Queensland)
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[Orana Avicultural Society (Dubbo)]
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Hawkesbury Finch Club
Hunter Finch Club
Wollongong Finch Club
Finch Society of Western Australia
Northern Rivers Finch Club Inc.
Queensland Finch Society
Riverina Finch Society
Taree & District Canary & Finch Society
Yass and District Bird Club Inc.
Zebra Finch Society of Australia
NSW Finch Exhibitors Society
Kempsey-Macleay Bird Club
North-West Bird Club