

FOREIGN BIRDS

THE MAGAZINE OF THE
FOREIGN BIRD LEAGUE
www.foreignbirdleague.com

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**THE PREMIER FOREIGN BIRD
KEEPING SOCIETY IN THE UK**

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A big thanks to all those who contributed to this magazine—Darren

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Cover illustration : Yellow White-eye *Zosterops poliogaster* photographed in a Bottle-brush Tree in the Masai Mara National Park, Kenya.

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Volume 90 No 1

Spring 2024

The magazine of the
Foreign Bird League
The Premier Foreign Bird Keeping Society

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As with any correspondence a S.A.E. would be greatly appreciated.

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Editor's Page **Darren Sefton**

The 2024 breeding season will soon be upon us, indeed some of you may even be underway. I have included the breeding awards scheme form for any birds bred in 2023. Although we are still looking for a Breeding Records Officer (BRO) to volunteer, we ask that all members submit their records as soon as is convenient.

If you wish to volunteer to be the new BRO then please get in touch with Bryan.

Some of you may have noticed that the FBL website has recently changed its look. The company that hosted the website decided not to continue with this part of their business, so I have had to choose another. As part of the move I decided to give it a bit of a facelift at the same time. You can still use the website to renew your subscriptions via Paypal, although the hosting company require you to create a logon and password to use this function. This is not used for anything else. The rates have been kept the same for the past 13 years. If you notice any errors or wish to recommend any changes then please get in touch with me.

I'm afraid that if anyone does not renew then this edition of "Foreign Birds" will be the last one you will receive, so if you have not already done so, we urge you to renew at your earliest convenience. Bryan will still accept cheques if you choose not to use Paypal.

At the time of going to press (mid-March) we have been in communication with several other birdkeeping societies and Cage and Aviary Birds editor Rob Innes, about changes to the regulations regarding the registration of birdkeepers and changes to the rules about "bird gatherings" (mainly shows and sales days).

Things are still unclear, but we have tried to put together what we believe are the main points and these can be seen on page 40. In due course these may be proven wrong, so I recommend that you keep an eye on future editions of Cage and Aviary Birds for clarification and confirmation.

Regards and best wishes to you all
Darren

Bali Mynah Conservation Society

The Bali Starling is known by several common names, Bali Starling, Bali Mynah and Rothschild's Mynah just to name a few. As its' name suggests the natural habitat of this bird is on Bali, an island in Indonesia. Bali is a popular tourist destination, but these resorts are mainly found on the east and south coasts. The Mynah is now restricted to the West Bali National Park and a small island off the coast – Nusa Penida.

The Mynah is a stunningly beautiful bird and consequently is widely held in both public and private collections and although listed on Appendix 1 of CITES, is regularly legally traded in Europe and the USA. It is critically endangered in its home range. Despite the habitat for this bird being protected the main threat has always been the supply to the bird trade. Thankfully this trade in the west is now stopped and demand is fulfilled by captive-bred birds. However, there has still been demand for wild-caught birds within the bird keeping fraternity in Indonesia and elsewhere in south-east Asia.



A Bali Starling in West Bali NP – photo by Francesco Veronesi (Wikipedia)

In the Autumn 2010 (Page 93) I wrote about a visit to a bird market at Denpasar on Bali. We did not see any Bali Starlings on display, but our guide Dewa said that this was not always the case. Clearly, other species were wild-caught, so I was interested to read an article on a similar visit made by a Danish birdkeeper in April this year. I have tried to translate the article and include extracts here, but my Danish is not in any way good, so any mistakes or mistranslations are down to me.

In the 1990s a reasonably large number of captive-bred birds were sent to Bali for a re-introduction project. Many were released in West Bali NP, but either died or were simply trapped again by local poachers and traded. The population continued to shrink until in 2015 the whole wild population was less than 100 individuals. Clearly, the project was failing.

Some of the captive-bred birds went to the Bagawan Foundation in Payangan in the centre of Bali near the town of Ubud (a town that many tourists visit each year). These founding birds came from the UK and eventually numbers increased until there were enough to release onto Nusa Penida. Here a partnership was struck up with the local villagers and a no poaching agreement was struck up so that an unofficial nature reserve was created. Initially this was successful and the population increased and was supplemented with further captive-bred birds sourced from different breeders to maintain the genetic diversity. Sadly, this project faltered too and poaching was the main cause. At one point the numbers on Nusa Penida were below 10.

A different approach had to be taken. This involved taking captive-bred Mynahs and putting them out on loan to private breeders. According to Wikipedia the "breeding loan" involves 12 breeders who each received 15 male and 15 female myna birds from the Association of Starling Conservationists in Bogor, West Java. As collateral every breeder must put up a cow in case all the birds died. The breeders are obliged to return 10 percent of the brood to the project for release into West Bali National Park and the rest can be sold off privately – these sales will still be subject to the CITES rules and the hope being that local demand can be met by the 90 percent retained by the breeders. I understand that many purchasers of the Mynahs are then en-

couraged to become involved in the project and voluntarily donate 10% of any chicks bred back for release as well. This should relieve the demand for the wild-caught birds, although sceptics have stated that this gives a route for poached birds to be passed off as legally bred birds and sold. The latest report is that 25 private breeders are now taking part.

Alongside this breed and release scheme a number of other measures have been made :-

The control of illegal birds has been tightened with the penalty being given for possessing these illegal birds has been increased.

Some of the release sites have been moved to more public places, this allows for better supervision. Bird poachers were able to go undetected where releases were made deep in the forests or on sparsely populated islands.

These release sites are put where supervision can be made and poachers are likely to be noticed.

These release sites have had larger populations of birds to allow a better chance of establishing a viable population. This has been described as “carpet-bombing”.

Breeding techniques have been shared between the private breeders to optimise the numbers bred. This has involved raising the quality of food stuffs given and using more professional methods, including the use of out-crosses from other participants in the scheme, which will give long-lasting success.

A Danish correspondent to Dansk Fuglehold magazine, Claus Nielsen, reported that he stayed at a lodge at Labuna Lalang, which is just outside the West Bali park boundary near to a release site. He was not hopeful of seeing any Mynahs, but “it was a huge surprise to see a very large number of starlings flying around the area” He continued “the area consisted of large trees, with virtually no undergrowth, only grass and it was relatively open, almost park-like. On the lawn stood a large square aviary of about 4m x 4m x 4m tall. This was the site of the release.



Bali Safari Park breeding centre

The aviary was open, but there were about 10 birds flying around inside it. Supplemental feeding was done in the area to help newly-exposed birds and also to make it easier to keep an eye on the birds. Feeding places were set up all around between the trees. Each area was surrounded by metal sheets to keep the wild monkeys away from the food. In addition a large number of nest boxes were set up in the surrounding trees. On the logs underneath the nest there were similar metal screens. Screens above the nest boxes stopped monkeys from leaping across and attempting to access the boxes from above. There was a permanent supervisor on site, who in addition to observing the birds, was also responsible for feeding mealworms, grasshoppers, banana and papaya to the starlings.





A Starling release aviary at Bali Barat NP – photo courtesy of Sachi Kondo

Claus visited the Bali Barat NP breeding centre where “the centre clearly shows that the Bali Starling is extremely valuable and required extra protection. The entire area was surrounded by a 3m high fence, where barbed wire sat in tight rows every 5cm. After the fence was a 6m wide running yard where guard dogs patrolled. There was then another fence after a few meters. There were also watchtowers in the corners. The whole thing looked like a prison than a breeding centre for birds. A further fence of metal sheets with an inclined overhang made it impossible to climb over (probably to keep monkeys out). There were 3 release aviaries inside this enclosure. A small one of about 6 x 6m and 8m high. This was situated between 2 larger aviaries of about 8m x 8m and each being 13m high.

The smaller aviary was for the young birds. Here they are housed for 3 months, after which they are moved into the larger aviaries. The birds lived in the larger flights until they reach 1 year old, after which they are released into the wild direct from the aviary”.

Claus saw the breeding aviaries – “there were 47 aviaries each containing a pair of Starlings. The aviaries were built with three fixed walls on the sides and back. The front was only partially covered with netting, in slightly varying amounts, depending on the model of aviary. In some the access was via the front. There was a net door of approx. 2/3rds on the remaining front. These aviaries had access from the rear. Nestboxes were located approx. 120-150cm above the ground so that they could be accessed without ladders. The aviaries had varying planting with some being completely bare as they had a solid roof, all the others having a net roof to allow the rain in. Each flight had the names of the birds labelled and this included the ring numbers.

“ The aviaries contained birds other than Bali Starlings. A pair of Black-winged Starlings were seen in one flight – these had been confiscated. Through an interpreter Claus chatted with the keepers and was told that the problem of illegal capture of Bali Starlings had been virtually eliminated within the past 5 years. This was primarily due to the new breeding projects and the cracking down on those who keep birds illegally”

The final comment by Claus on the project was “things are moving forward for the Bali Starling and the people who work with it at the Bali Safari Park and Bali Burat NP and they seem to have a good handle on it. The measures to protect the Bali Starling and other species are well on their way to success”

Sources – Wikipedia, Dansk Fuglehold, Nowbali.co.id, Bali Safari Park and Foreign Birds.

The Cockatiel

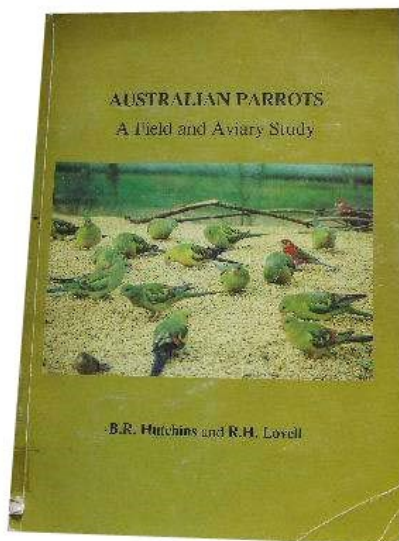
By Graeme Hyde OAM

Acknowledged world-wide as an ideal pet bird the Cockatiel (*Nymphicus hollandicus*) is also an excellent species for breeding in an aviary. It features a delicate crest, slender medium-sized body with a graduated tail and long pointed wings. The broad band of white on the wings is a special diagnostic feature, which is particularly evident when the bird is seen in flight.



The John Gould picture of a male conveys the elegance of the bird. The female (top) is a duller version of the male, lacking the bright yellow face and throat but features pronounced yellow-white barring on the under-tail feathers.

Although an inland species it is widely distributed across Australia. In their book, *Australian Parrots: A Field and Aviary Study* (1985) Barry Hutchins and Bob Lovell state, 'In the northern part of the continent they seem to be more nomadic, moving to areas of seeding grasses and water, whereas in the south they would appear to be migratory, generally arriving in the vicinity of Adelaide in late September.'



Cockatiels move about in pairs or flocks, bordering creeks, waterholes and rivers and inhabit timber areas: they are seldom found far from water. The dryness of a large portion of inland Australia, of which much is desert-type country, means that water is not easily found or in abundance. They are often very common in the proximity of grain crops.

As they are semi-migratory, inhabiting very fertile and high rainfall areas during their movements southwards and eastwards they are often found in mallee areas dominated by eucalyptus species. They like to sit fully exposed on dead branches at the top of trees where their grey colouration blends in so well with the dead branches that they are often almost invisible and frequently perch lengthwise on a branch.

In the wild Cockatiels feed on a variety of seeds taken from grasses, shrubs, trees and grain, fruits and berries when available.

The feeding ecology of the Cockatiel was studied in a grain-growing district near Moree, northern New South

Wales, between August 1980 and June 1982, using direct observations and monthly collections of birds in feeding flocks (i.e. extracting seed from their crops) to obtain the data. The project found that, "Of the birds studied there were pieces of charcoal in 29% of all crops, mineral items in 13% of all crops, plus dense *woody* material in many of the crops. It could be postulated that the intake of charcoal was to de-toxify other items the birds eat as part of their "normal" diet and that "They clearly demonstrated a preference for the "softer, immature seeds of grain-crops over the much harder, fully mature grains and they consumed 29 different types of seed in the research area."



In the same district some grain farmers devised a special method of preventing Cockatiels from devouring their sunflower crops. They sowed a strip of sorghum (pictured above) around the perimeter of the sunflower field so the ripening sorghum has a milky head just as the sunflower crop is at its peak. As the milky head of the sorghum is their favourite food, they devour the "sacrificial sorghum strip" - leaving the sunflower crop untouched!

When two Adelaide aviculturists travelled to the Northern Territory in the 1960s, they stopped at a waterhole 53 miles

north of Alice Springs where they recorded approximately 5,000 Cockatiels. Flocks of up to 100 would fly to the centre of the waterhole, settle on the water to drink, and then they'd would rise together and fly off while the next lot came in to repeat the performance. There were also 50,000 Zebra Finches at the waterhole, plus thousands of Budgerigars. When revisiting the waterhole exactly three years later not one cockatiel was present.

In an interview with Rosemary Low after her fourth visit to Australia in April 1999 I asked her what were the highlights of the native Australian birds she had sight-recorded in the wild. She replied: 'If I had to select a single memorable incident, I think it would be when I was with John Courtney [an experienced local ornithologist]. We observed a few cockatiels from the car, stopped to investigate and suddenly found ourselves in the midst of a flock which John estimated at 2,000 birds. What an experience!"

My memorable Cockatiel sighting occurred when traveling to Griffith, central New South Wales, to judge at the Griffith Budgerigar and Cage Bird Society's annual show (1,380 kilometres round trip from my home in Victoria!). My companion and I sight-recorded 31 bird species; the highlight being an unbroken line of 200 Cockatiels perching on a drooping power-line. When disturbed by turbulence from a semi-trailer they took off, moving as one, briefly circled the area "twittering" in an almost conversational tone as they banked, changed direction and settled again. We were captivated by their beauty when in full flight: hard to describe - something to behold!

Footnote

Australian Parrots: A Field and Aviary Study was originally a series of articles that began in 1973, written by two South Australian aviculturists, Barry Hutchins and Bob Lovell of Adelaide. They were published monthly in the magazines of the Avicultural Society of South Australia and the Avicultural Society of Australia. The Avicultural Society of Australia accepted Barry and Bob's invitation, and challenge to publish the articles into book form with Graeme Hyde as editor. First published in 1985 it was a best seller.

Tumani Tenda & Farasuto Woods

Darren Sefton

We often hear about eco-tourism. In many cases this is just a “buzz word” tacked onto the description of a wildlife tour to boost sales. However, there are some genuine projects that both protect wildlife and greatly benefit the local population, so have an incentive to help protect it. These are the ones that we should try and use in preference. All income goes direct and no-one else takes their cut. In this way you get a great experience and usually at a lower cost.

On a recent visit to The Gambia we secured the services of a local bird guide called Tijan. Tijan suggested that as part of our 10 days birding we should visit several of these community-led wildlife hotspots. The first was Farasuto Woods Community Nature Reserve. This is a relatively small isolated patch of woodland and forest owned and run by the local village. Livestock is not allowed in the forest, nor is hunting. The reserve is manned by guides from village, who are both knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the wildlife they are showing you. A rather dark and thankfully shady “amphitheatre” has been built with seats of concrete and tiles. These were actually quite comfortable and cool to the touch. This seating provided views of several species including Red-eared (Black-rumped) Waxbills, Cordon Bleus, Firefinches and a Pygmy Kingfisher, who would dart down from a perch into the drinking water have a quick splash and then return to his perch to preen. He was much too quick to photograph, so we set down the camera and simply enjoyed his presence. The Waxbills were a bit more accommodating, so we could get shots of these. There were also a couple of Pied Crows by the building.

Farasuto Forest Community Nature Reserve





Cold drinks are also available at a very reasonable cost. There is a small entrance charge of about 50p per person, which goes direct to the village coffers and you can also purchase from a limited range of souvenirs (there were a couple of t-shirts and some coffee cups). After maintaining the reserve, which has a 5-year rolling management plan, any profits are spent on the village infra-structure and the school. Recent additions to the reserve include a couple of newly dug ponds that have already been occupied by crocodiles, and wading birds. Variable Sunbirds were also seen and as these ponds mature I'm sure that species numbers will increase.





A short distance from the main reserve is a small patch of woodland. This sits at a junction between two roads and provided a roosting place for a Greyish or Spotted Eagle Owl. Even though Tijan knew that this bird was in this area he required the help of a local guide to point it out. Photography was challenging, but eventually most of us got acceptable record shots. This lady guide accompanied us throughout the visit. There is no charge for this, but it is customary to tip the guides and she greatly enhanced our visit.



In addition to protecting the wildlife, most of the shrubs and many trees that remain are used for traditional medicine. Local knowledge in the village about herbal remedies goes back many years and this can continue to future generations.

The following day we set off for a 2-day overnight stay at Tumani Tenda near the town of Brikama. En-route to Tumani Tenda we visited a partially built resort overlooking a coastal lagoon. It would appear that the project finances for this wellness resort had run out and no work has been done there for years. The dry scrub and fields nearby are one of the few places where the Chestnut-bellied Starling can be seen. This looks like a drabber version of the Spreo Starling that most of us will be familiar with. Here we also had distant views of an

Abyssinian Roller with very long tail streamers, Black-shouldered Kite and also much better views of Little Bee-eaters actually eating bees !



Breeding Record Scheme for 2023

ANY OTHER INFORMATION ~ Sheet-2: **NAME:**

[illegible]

ANY OTHER INFORMATION for publication in the FBI magazine **FOREIGN BIRDS?**
(Please, if you wish, use the reverse of this form - insure all separate sheets carry your name - thank you.)

FOREIGN BIRD LEAGUE

Breeding Record Scheme for 2023

Members of the Foreign Bird League (FBL) who bred birds in 2023 are invited to participate in the FBL Breeding Records Scheme.

TO BE CONSIDERED FOR AWARDS, RETURNS MUST BE MADE ON THIS FORM

[illegible]

[illegible]

MANY THANKS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM ~ YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE VERY
USEFUL SO THAT WE CAN GET AN IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE INTO CURRENT
BREEDING TRENDS WITHIN THE FBL.

Tumani Tenda is a community run eco-lodge built alongside a tributary of the main Gambia River. The project supports a number of families who run the lodge for the benefit of all. Each year they vote on what new facilities they will invest in from the income raised. There is a large open-sided main dining/meeting room and a small number of bungalows, both of which are pictured below. These rooms are simply furnished with twin beds, which are provided with mosquito nets. The rooms are spacious, clean, comfortable and each has en-suite facilities including a shower. Previously facilities were communal, but the community recently voted to upgrade. However at 6 am I found myself wishing that the community had voted for the showers to have warm water too. Maybe next time?



On arrival at the lodge we had a simple, but tasty, lunch of omelette and chips served with cold drinks from the honesty bar. I believe that this day was probably the hottest of the whole trip. It was decided to have a siesta and go for a short walk nearby at 4.30pm, which we missed completely having dozed for too long. However, about 5pm I wandered down to the lodge and spotted a small group of Yellow White-eyes (*Zosterops*) in the trees above the path (the same species as shown on the front cover). With no-one else around I sat on a log by the creek as the sun started to drop. Soon the skies were alive with 3 species of Bee-eater (mostly Blue-cheeked—opposite -, but I did pick out at least one European Bee-eater), who were all heading in the same direction. I assume that they have communal roosts in the same way as European Starlings. Just magical !





Before our evening meal, we went out with powerful torches to see if we could search out one or more of the local Senegal Bushbabies. This with a chance of Brown-necked Parrots the following morning, was the main draw for me. Sadly, neither would appear. This is the third time we have visited The Gambia and I have specifically looked for the parrots each time and I've been mightily unsuccessful on each occasion

The next morning we had a dawn walk through the mangroves and the local fields. No parrots, but we did see both Violet Turaco and Western Grey Plantain Eater, Bearded Barbet, more Waxbills and a Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher identified by the wings which were edged in black. I think another we saw later in the trip may have been a hybrid between the Red-bellied and African as it had the red on the belly and also the white wing bar of the African (see next page).





As we approached the lodge we could hear the familiar calls of the Yellow-crowned Gonolek. This is a spectacular species that all of us had tried in vain to photograph. It is both quick and has a tendency to hide in the undergrowth. However, much to our surprise he showed himself quite clearly although at a distance.



Further down the track a very smart looking Lavender Waxbill put in an appearance. These had also been briefly seen in the amphitheatre at Farasuto.

We had a nice breakfast, settled our surprisingly small bills and packed our things away and set off to our first destination of the day. Tijan was annoyed that the parrots had not put in an appearance, so we called in at a village with a large fruiting plum tree. The Brown-necked had been seen there previously, but predictably had already moved on. C'est la vie !!



Other community projects in the Gambia include Pirang forest and the nearby shrimp farm, Brufut woods (where we had amazing views of a Long-tailed Nightjar) and further afield there is the Tendaba Camp. This camp is recommended if you want to explore the inland areas of The Gambia. We stayed there on our second trip to The Gambia.





Kotu Creek is home to the Bird Watchers' Association of the Gambia (BWA). The BWA is a group of about 75 self-employed and highly knowledgeable bird guides, each being annually licenced by the Gambia Tourism Board and having served a multi-year apprenticeship under association mentors. The BWA have a small building by the bridge over the creek. This has a library and tea/coffee making facilities and a small seating area outside where you can spend time watching the Red-billed Firefinches, Cordon-bleus and Robin-chats feeding and drinking. It is from here that you can hire a guide for as little as a

half-day or for multi-day trips, including trips up river where a greater variety of species can be found. Boat trips up the creek can also be arranged here. Several species of Kingfishers, Bee-eaters, waders and Sacred Ibis can be seen on these trips.



At 10.30 each morning the BWA has a vulture feeding a short distance from the creek. This is free and you get to see Hooded Vultures and large numbers of Black Kites close up. You even have seats in the shade.

Our guide, Tijan Kanteh, who is pictured opposite, is one of the more experienced guides. You can contact him via email using the address Tijanthebirdmann@gmail.com. Members of BWA can be identified by their green t-shirts/polo shirts carrying the BWA logo. I would not recommend that you use anyone other than these guides.

Eco-tourism works at its optimum when local people get the greatest benefit from tourism revenue, ensuring that they protect their local environment for the long-term instead of plundering it for a quick gain. Many years ago Yundum Woods was a highly productive birding spot near the airport, but not under the control of the local community, since then it has been completely obliterated for some crops, housing and a sports stadium. This is a great shame and I wonder if this could have been avoided if stewardship had been managed in the same way as the community projects shown above.

Endangered Orange-bellied Parrots return to Melaleuca in Tasmania's south-west in unexpectedly high numbers

By Georgie Burgess (ABC News)



Eighty-one Orange-bellied parrots *Neophema chrysogaster* returned from the mainland to Tasmania's south-west this season. It is a species so endangered that just five years ago only 20 birds returned from the species' annual migration. But 81 Orange-bellied Parrots have returned to Melaleuca in Tasmania's remote south-west from the mainland to breed, the largest number seen in 15 years.

It is a turning point for critically endangered species, which requires considerable human intervention to avoid extinction. "It's looking like a healthy season ahead in terms of breeding," program manager Dr Shannon Troy said. "The population does seem to be really growing now." But, Dr Troy warns, the parrot is still one of the most endangered species in Australia and one of the most endangered birds in the world. "We need to move from a phase of preventing their extinction into starting to grow

the population. We're probably reaching that turning point now and starting to look ahead to what's next." Dr Troy said the program's objective was to have a self-sustaining population that required limited management intervention. "The next phase is to look at how we encourage this population to be more self-sustaining and increase wild behaviours like foraging and nesting in natural hollows."

This year's state budget contained an additional \$1.3 million towards tracking the parrots on their migration and maintaining the Five Mile Beach facility where birds are bred in captivity.



Program manager Shannon Troy and vet Annie Philips pictured at Melaleuca last year. *(Photo Luke Bowden)*

A risky flight

The Orange-bellied Parrot migrates to mainland Australia every autumn and returns to Tasmania to breed over summer. Not every bird makes it home. "A lot of us spend the whole spring holding our breath waiting to see what's going to happen," Dr Troy said.

This year, 139 birds departed Melaleuca, with 58 not making it back — but a return rate of more than 50 per cent is considered

high. The returns include 24 wild born birds and six captive bred juveniles from last season that made the journey for the first time. In the past, the survival rate for first-timers has dropped as low as 15 per cent. "The releases of juveniles from the captive population at the end of the season seems to be working really well and they are coming back in good numbers," Dr Troy said. A planned Parks and Wildlife Service burn around Melaleuca increased food plants, so the birds were feeding on natural foods which helped survival rates.



The parrots are beginning to breed. (*Supplied: Orange-bellied Parrot Program*)

Power of volunteers

Saving the Orange-bellied Parrot from extinction has required team work from staff with the government-funded orange-bellied parrot program, partnering with institutions for captive breeding as well as volunteers at Melaleuca daily between September and April. Volunteers count how many birds they see and the identity of the birds over six months, as well as looking for health issues and predators. "They are absolutely key to the monitoring that we do, that really helps us to understand what we are doing in terms of our management that's working or not working. It's a huge team effort."



The parrot has a distinctive orange belly.(Supplied: Pradeep Pandiyan)

Parrot migration 'unusual'

Dr Troy said other than the Swift Parrot *Lathamus discolor*, the Orange-bellied Parrot was the only other parrot that makes a full migration. "There are other smaller birds all over the world and in Australia that undertake journeys that are even longer, but it's very unusual for a parrot to be doing this." She said while the birds don't fly together, there is safety in numbers. "The adult birds act as a beacon to show the juveniles where to go," The birds move from button grass plains to salt marshes to feed during the non-breeding period. "If they've never seen that habitat before it would be hard for them to recognise what is and isn't a food plant," she said. "We think they use the other birds that have already migrated as a cue and move to where those birds already are."



Orange-bellied Parrots feeding at Melaleuca so they can be monitored by volunteers. (Supplied: Orange-bellied Parrot Program)

Breeding begins

The orange-bellied parrot program provides nest boxes at Melaleuca so the birds have somewhere safe to breed and lay eggs. Dr Troy said there are already some eggs, and nest checks will be done in January with the hope there'll be chicks. Of the birds that returned, 50 were male, and 31 were female, which Dr Troy said is preferred. "It's desirable to be that way round, ideally we'd have the females being able to have some mate choice and choosing the male they want," she said. Captive-bred birds that are released will also be male-heavy. "The ladies can be courted by a few males and decide in advance who is likely to be the best provisioner and father of their young."

The next step

Dr Troy said as the program begins to move from saving the parrots from extinction to growing the population the birds will need to learn to feed independently. The birds are currently



An Orange-bellied Parrot at the entrance of an artificial nest box at Melaleuca.(Loretta Lohberger)

given supplementary food. "We're starting to think about scaling back the food so we're just using the food during monitoring times and the rest of the time they need to forage on their own," she said.

The birds would also need to find their own homes. "They'd need to be breeding in tree hollows instead of nest boxes," she said.

Dr Troy said the birds will also need to be able to withstand some loss to the population, so if a predator or health issue takes out a few birds it wouldn't have a catastrophic effect on the population trend. "At some point the population needs to get large enough that we're not having to manage individual birds and individual nests."

Jewels of the Forest by Michael Jackson

In early 2011 Brian Ainge sadly passed away. Recently his son Carl has donated to the League the limited edition print pictured opposite.

The picture portrays a pair of Green-winged Macaws by British wildlife artist Michael Jackson and is no. 21 of a limited edition lithograph of 500. It is a large image with a quality mount and frame - the frame measures 106cm x 86cm (approx. 41 3/4" x 33 7/8"). This edition was originally released in 1997 and is now sold out. The original price as £379 according to labels on the back.

We believe that this was one of a series depicting other macaws including Blue and Golds.

Brian kept a wide range of species over the years keeping mainly Parrotlike until about 1995 when he moved into Waxbills and in his latter years he kept Gouldian Finches and other Australians. We do not know if he ever kept anything as big as macaws.

Brian was a great supporter of the League, showing regularly and on at least one occasion he generously donated money to post out the magazines and later paying again for the postage to send out the 75th anniversary edition.

We invite interested members to send SEALED BIDS for this picture to Bryan Reed by post. (address for Bryan Reed shown below) These should reach Bryan no later than the 31st May. Please include a contact number, so Bryan can advise you should you be successful. We have set a reserve of £100 and cannot accept bids lower than this. Bryan is willing to meet up with the successful bidder at any of the events at Stafford or maybe Newark, but if the picture is to be shipped this will be at additional cost. If there are more than one person bidding the same amount then the bid that was received first will win.

Bryan Reed, 4 St. Andrews Drive, Tivendale, Oldbury, West Midlands B69 1PR



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Birdkeeper Registration “Farce”

In the Spring 2023 edition of Foreign Birds there was a notice of a consultation regarding the proposed registration of birdkeepers by DEFRA. This proposed registration is meant to keep a check on Avian Flu. This consultation was due to end in May 2023. We had expected (hoped) that the result of this consultation would be widely publicised within the hobby before new regulations came into effect.

As you may have seen in the “Editor’s Letter” section of the 6th, 13th and then further details in the 20th March 2024 editions of Cage and Aviary Birds (C&AB), not only does this publicity not seem to have happened, but new legislation may have already been decided upon, already enacted, and published on the DEFRA website and therefore a new law we will have to comply with. However, this is not entirely clear and even open to misinterpretation. This has been described as a “farce” by C&AB.

Since the spring of 2023 the Foreign Bird League have been in regular group e-mail communication with several, but not all, societies, including the Avicultural Society, NCA, Canary Council, Zebra Finch Society, Turaco Society, British Waterfowl Assn and World Pheasant Assn to name a few, and of course, Rob Innes (the Editor at C&AB).

On the face of it we thought that there were two changes to the registration regulations. This was as we understood the situation as of 18th March.

All keepers of 50 or more birds **must** register with DEFRA and also require a CPH (County Parish Holding) number from their local authority. This applies at the point that your birds reach 50 and will include any chicks. Under 50 then registration was to be voluntary. The guidance notes lists the birds covered by this and read as follows:- **Chickens, turkeys, aviary birds, birds of prey, cassowaries, ducks, emus, geese, guinea fowls, kiwis, ostriches, partridge, pheasants, pigeons, psittacines** (for example parrots, budgies and cockatiels), quails and rheas.

You’re a bird keeper if you’re in charge of the day-to-day care of birds, including any you keep as pets.

Rob Innes has said that his understanding is that “aviary birds” is a catch-all which includes regulation “cage and aviary birds” such as canaries (obviously of key relevance to C&AB readers) and also presumably other species, such as turacos, which would be housed in an aviary.

Then the bombshell hit—at 9.30pm on 19th of March we received an email that advised that the regulations were to change again. In late Summer/early Autumn 2024 everyone keeping ANY BIRDS with access to the outside MUST register. Those held in a domestic dwelling or secure “bird house” are exempted but, there are still some definitions to be confirmed, such as what is a “bird house”?. See the two websites below for the actual wording.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/poultry-and-other-captive-birds-registration-in-great-britain>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-help-protect-poultry-industry-from-bird-flu>

Clearly, this affects our branch of the hobby. Furthermore there are changes to the regulations for “bird gatherings”.

Phil Mumford from Cambridge Bird Sales mailed me the following regarding licenced bird events :-

“The rules for bird gatherings haven’t changed since August, apart from the February update regarding ‘mixed gatherings’. All this really does is mean that if you want quail or other poultry at your bird sale you have to have both licences, and in this case the poultry licence now effectively supersedes the captive bird licence, in that ALL birds have to be inspected by a vet and ALL vendors have a CPH number. I see this more of a clarification of a grey area from what was brought in back in August, rather than a new rule”

As far as we can tell if you are arranging a show or sales day then everything will be fine if you fulfil the requirements of the general licence for captive birds (see the definition in red below). BUT if you allow any excepted birds (eg chickens, ducks, geese, partridges and QUAIL, which of course would include Chinese Painted Quail and

other ornamental species) then you will need to have a vet attend the event and check out **all birds**. The vet can then leave the event, but must remain on call should a bird develop an illness during the event. Obviously, this is going to be very expensive and difficult to administer (especially at some of the massive events at Stafford and Newark etc).

What is even more confusing is that there seems to be different rules for bird events held in England, Wales and Scotland.

EXD 178(AI) Captive Birds

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2018/1136

The Avian Influenza (Preventive Measures) (England) Regulations 2006

1) In accordance with regulation 6(2) of the Avian Influenza (Preventive Measures) (England) Regulations S.I. 2006/2701 (“the 2006 Regulations”) the Secretary of State grants this general licence which permits, subject to compliance by the licensee with the conditions in the Schedule, the gathering of captive birds with the **exception of**:

galliforme birds (including pheasants, partridge, quail, chickens, turkey, guinea fowl)

anseriforme birds (including ducks, geese, swans)

birds that are reared or kept in captivity for the production of meat or eggs for consumption, the production of other commercial products, for restocking supplies of game or for the purposes of any breeding programme for the production of these categories of birds

At the point of this magazine going to press (20th March) we are still awaiting clarification and/or confirmation of the new regulations, so anything shown above is not necessarily 100% correct. I urge you all to keep an eye out for developments being printed in C&AB. When the position becomes clear then we will also show this on the newly-designed FBL website and print it in the next available edition of Foreign Birds.

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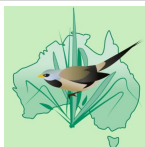
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