



AVI News

Volume 4, Issue 8, July/August 2016

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY JULY 30 ; 7 PM, MASONIC LODGE VISTA

President's Message

Dear All,

This Saturday, July 30, we have our August meeting since our location is busy on the first Saturday in August. We have a great presentation planned with Demi and Rosanne talking about button quail. Many of us have these birds walking on the floor of our aviaries yet find it a challenge to breed these guys since the hens do not incubate very well and the roosters often times kill the chicks. Once you have seen a mother or couple of button quail with their bumble bee sized chicks walking around, you will also think that is one of the cutest things you can observe in your bird room or aviary. This year is certainly another hot one and with temperatures soaring in most places in the county I hope you are all staying safe and cool. One of the things that I do is to keep strangers away from my birds when it is this hot because that may stress the birds out too much. It is starting to be Gouldian finch breeding season already as well and they do like the heat. Make sure the nest box does not hang in the direct sun or the babies may die or one may die and then the ants will take over and kill the others. Make sure you keep your Sevin dust handy. I have dusted babies many times without ill effect and the parents still raise them after one died and the ants swarmed the nest. Hope you are having a great month and hope to see you soon. I do have one more request, if you have anything that you think you can donate for the birdmart raffle this year please do. As you know we have our birdmart again this October and JoAnn and Marilyn would like to do a great raffle again.

Thanks and see you this Saturday July 30!

August-- no meeting, September meeting; September 3, October cancelled as bird mart is October 8

Sincerely Johan Otter, NCA President

PROGRAMS;

Program topic ALL ABOUT BUTTON QUAIL FROM EGG TO ADULT.

Speakers: Demi Hungerford and Rosanne Berg.



WAYS AND MEANS

July/August 2016

- 1) Birds ; Pair of Cockatiels, Male Green singer, Societies, Silver bills and Fire finch.
- 2) Utility cages
- 3) Large Hookbill and Finch seed
- 4) Donated items from Bird Haven and Escondido Feed

MUST BE A CURRENT MEMBER TO WIN THE NCA BIG PRIZES

BRING A CARRIER IN CASE YOU WIN A BIRD



New: You have to buy \$5 of tickets to be able to get to pick a gift if over half way through you have not won yet!

List of officers

Position / Committee	Incumbent	Telephone number
President	Johan Otter*	760-715-6462
Vice President	Jill Thorburn	760-535-2998
Secretary	JoAnn Cahill	760-518-5191
Treasurer	Chuck Smith*	760-788-1625
Immediate Past President	Johan Otter*	760-715-6462
AVINews Editor/Publisher	Johan Otter*	760-715-6462
- Assistant	Jeanette Reiersen*	760-533-0171
Hospitality Chair	Demi Hungerford	760-703-3581
- Assistant	Mary Lou Bednasek	619--750-8325
- Greeter		
Nominating Committee Chair	Jeanette Reiersen*	760-533-0171
Membership	Chuck Smith*	760-788-1625
- Assistant	Open	
Programs	Johan Otter*	760-715-6462
Ways & Means Chair	Johan Otter*	760-715-6462
- Ticket Vendor	Jill Thorburn	760-535-2998
Refreshments	Judy Booher	760-757-3371
- Assistant	Marilyn McLintock	760-941-2214
- Assistant	Jeanette Reiersen*	760-533-0171
-Assistant	Rosanne Berg	760-277-4059
Facilities	Darin Berg	760-277-3233
- Assistant	Chuck Smith*	760-788-1625
- Assistant	David McLintock	760-941-2214
Parliamentarian	Mary Lou Bednasek	619-750-8325
Technician	Chuck Smith*	760-788-1625
Ads / Telephone	OPEN	
Advertising Billing	Jeanette Reiersen*	760-533-0171
Bird Mart	Johan Otter	760-715-6462
- Assistant	Jill Thorburn	760-535-2998
Educational Outreach	Cathy Kelly	949-586-5651
Internet Contact	Demi Hungerford	760-703-3581
Publicity	Jeanette Reiersen*	760-533-0171
Publicity Assistant	Demi Hungerford	760-703-3581
Sales Table	Rosanne Berg	760-277-4059
Sergeant-at-Arms	Darin Berg	760-277-3233

Members of the Board of Directors are in **bold text**; Life Members are indicated with an asterisk (*)
 Questions or comments for Board members should be sent to ncabirds@gmail.com

REFRESHMENTS



The refreshment committee will have a wonderful dinner planned and you can make it even better by bringing a dish to share!

AVINews Buy, Sell, or Trade advertisements may be placed free of charge by NCA members, or for \$5.00 by non-members. Ads will appear in one issue of AVINews or longer as space permits. If you wish to place an ad, please e-mail it to

*otter.johan@scrippshealth.org no later than the 15th of the current month for inclusion in the next month's issue of AVINews. Ads received after the deadline **will not appear** in the next issue.*

Rules for Bird Sales at NCA Meetings

- Use of the sales table is a privilege reserved for NCA members in good standing only.
- All birds must be healthy to the best of the seller's knowledge.
- Any bird that looks unhealthy will not be permitted.
- Remove seed from the bird's cage before entering the building; water is okay. Birds should not suffer from lack of seed for the duration of a meeting.
- Cages must be clean and presentable: no dried excrement! Set cages into cardboard cartons if necessary to contain new messes.
- Secure all cage doors with wire, twist-ties, clothespins, etc., and cover cages during the meeting to quiet birds.
- With each bird, provide your name, telephone number and/or e-mail address; the name (if any), age, diet, and species of the bird; and any other information that may help educate other members and guests.
- All evidence of the presence of birds must be removed from the building at the end of the meeting. This includes cleaning up any spilled seed or hulls, droppings, feathers, fruit, vegetables, etc.
- Anyone who places a bird in an area designated for sales is responsible for that bird during the meeting.

We want this to be successful, and your input and suggestions are very important to us.

Sales Table Chair

Johan Otter, Ways & Means Chair

Disclaimer: *NCA is not responsible for and does not guarantee any birds bought, traded, or sold at NCA meetings and events. Responsibility and guarantee are entirely the concern of the parties involved in the exchange.*

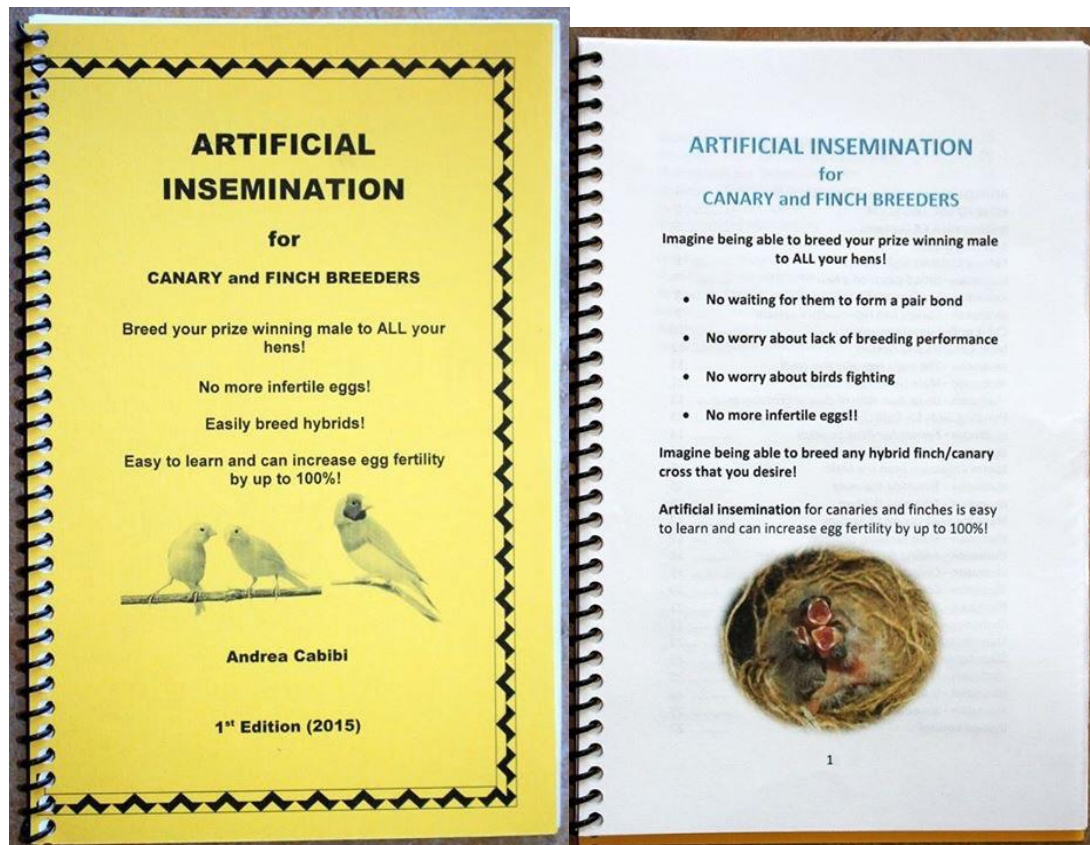
Member Advertisements;

1) From Andrea Cabibi;

The ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION KIT for Canary and Finch Breeders has finally been produced! The kit includes all the equipment needed to bring artificial insemination into your bird room and includes a detailed and fully illustrated book with all the instructions. Andrea has been developing these techniques over the last several years and it has been FANTASTICALLY effective, especially with her Norwich canaries and at her job in the zoo saving endangered bird species. The instructions are easy to follow and you don't need anything other than the Artificial Insemination Kit.

Contact Andrea Cabibi (760) 749-1434





2) CANARIES FOR SALE

Japanese Hoso canaries from top winning lines
Belgian Waterslager canaries from winning lines
Other breeds also available.

Contact Andrea Cabibi (760) 749-1434

3) FOR SALE

I have a cockatoo and would like to sell, she is about 10 years or so, and would like to get 2 hundred for her she is easy going and says by bird and tame she is used of dogs and cats. I would like to sell her before I get more attached.

Contact Diana Zografos dianazgreek@gmail.com

4) Everything left from 30 years of bird breeding: Large California Erect Easy cages, top of the line Candler, triple beam gram scale, parts of incubators and brooders, books and magazines and much more. Susan. cell 650-554-0922; house after 11/1/15 760-765-0854

5) Two large aviaries and various cages
Johan Otter 760 715 6462

Life Members

Through the years, life memberships have been awarded to deserving people in NCA; we honor them here during their lifetime and for their dedication to the club:

Pearl Swatsek: Club Founder and First President

Susan Boyer: Member since November, 1984; AFA Rep.; Librarian

Shirley Foults: Past President

John McGrew: **AVINews** Editor for eight years

Amy Boyd: Past President, Educational Outreach, Secretary

Terry Runyon: Past Vice President

Johan Otter: Member since January, 1990; Past Treasurer; Past President; Past Vice President; Current President, Ways and Means chair, editor etc.

Chuck & Fran Smith: Members since January, 1999; Chuck: **AVINews** Editor for over twelve years; Fran: AFA Rep.

Jeanette Reiersen: Member since 1998; Past President; Past Vice President; Past Refreshments Chair

Disclaimer

The quality of any merchandise, livestock, or other items received through North County Aviculturists (NCA) fund raisers, or through advertisements in **AVINews**, is assured by the donor or seller. NCA is in no way responsible for the quality or health of any item, animal, or service provided by any advertiser. No guarantee or warranty is offered, expressed, or implied for any prize awarded. In no event shall NCA, its board of directors, or its general membership assume any liability for damages or losses, either direct or consequential, which arise from the acceptance of any prize or award. Acceptance of prizes or awards constitutes agreement with the above conditions.

Our Purpose

The purpose of North County Aviculturists (NCA), is to stimulate and promote interest in Aviculture, and to gather and share information for further education of the membership, and to bring into friendly contact all who love and raise birds.

The Editor reserves the right to edit or reject all submitted material. The material submitted to **AVINews** is the opinion of its authors, and does not reflect the opinions or endorsements of NCA, **AVINews**, or its Editor. Any reproduction of material appearing in **AVINews** must cite the material's author, and a copy of the reproduction must be sent to NCA.

ONE NAME-BADGE-WEARING DRAWING

AT BEGINNING OF MEETING

ONLY members wearing an official club name badge (no paper name labels) are eligible to get a ticket for our monthly name-badge-wearing drawing. If you forgot your badge or have one on order, not eligible to receive a ticket. (If you order one I will have it for you the next month so you will be eligible the first meeting you are wearing your official badge.)

The purpose of this is to encourage the wearing of your name badge.

Any questions or to order a badge (\$6.50), please feel free to call me.

ADDENDUM: The ticket you are given gives you the chance to win 5 tickets to be used in our ways and means (opportunity) ticket drawing at the end of our meeting.

Thank you. Jeanette Reiersen (760) 533-0171

Those members that bring items for the Ways and Means table will receive a ticket for a chance to win 10 ways and means tickets. The item needs to be \$5 or higher in value.

Wear your name badge for a chance to win 5 ways and means tickets for the ways and means drawing.

Membership Stuff

When you join NCA or renew your membership, please fill out a fresh membership form; that's the only way Chuck has on keeping the database accurate and up to date.

Everything on the form will be added to the database, but **won't** appear anywhere else unless you mark the boxes to tell Chuck that you want it to.

Please indicate which bird types are pets and which are ones you breed.

Please don't abbreviate or assume that Chuck knows what you mean when you write (for example) "lineolated." Lineolated **what?** And whatever they are, are they truly lineolated or perhaps only lineated (there **is** a difference)?

The membership form has been updated with a note to this effect, and also indicates the new policy of memberships running for one year from the date on the application, rather than January through December as was the previous policy.

Please also note that the new NCA mailing address does **not** apply to membership forms; please continue to mail renewals and new memberships to the address on the form.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:



August birthdays:

Fran Smith August 8

Cathy Kelly August 14

Alice Boe August 31

Treasurer's Report

6/01/2016 Thru 6/30/2016

	June-2016	June-2015
Beginning Balance (Total)	\$9,491.72	\$8,123.12
Beginning Balance (Checking)	\$8,531.42	\$7,163.30

EXPENSES	June-2016	June-2015
Misc.	(\$40.00)	(\$118.78)
Ways & Means	(\$175.00)	(\$81.00)
Rent – Hall	(\$90.00)	(\$90.00)
Bird Mart	\$0.00	(\$81.45)
TOTAL EXPENSE	(\$305.00)	(\$371.23)

INCOME	June-2016	June-2015
Interest Income 0.030%	\$0.00	\$0.19
Membership	\$135.00	\$80.00
Ways & Means	\$315.00	\$400.00
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$0.00
Bird Mart	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$450.00	\$480.19

OVERALL TOTAL (gain or loss)	\$145.00	\$108.96
Ending Balance (Checking)	\$8,676.42	\$7,272.26

Savings Account (SDCCU)	\$960.30	\$959.86
Interest Income 0.050%	\$0.04	\$0.04
TOTAL	\$960.34	\$959.90

TOTAL ENDING BALANCE	\$9,636.76	\$8,232.16
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Submitted by Chuck Smith
July 1, 2016

Beginning Balances are from last month's bank statement.

Checks written for the month

check # 3250	\$ 90.00	Vista Masonic Lodge - Rent for June
check # 3251	\$130.00	Johan Otter - Birds and seed on raffle table
✓ check # 1644	\$ 45.00	JoAnn Cahill - plants and birds on raffle table
✓ check # 1645	\$ 40.00	Rosanne Berg - refund for refreshments

✓ = check is cashed as of 01 July

**Please bring a gift for the ways and means table and claim
your ticket from Johan**



Is that really worth \$5???

**NORTH
COUNTY
AVICULTURISTS**
North San Diego County, California

Application for Membership

This is a (check one):

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal



Membership includes: voting privileges; selling privileges at meetings; eligibility for all opportunity drawing prizes at meetings; access to the NCA Google Group; monthly PDF version of the newsletter via electronic means.

Membership runs for one full year from the date of your application.

Please **print** the following information completely and legibly, and check the boxes to indicate what you would want to include if a Member Roster is printed.

Primary Member

Membership: - \$25

Today's date: _____

☐ Name: _____ ☐ B-day M/D _____

☐ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP Code: _____

☐ E-mail: _____

☐ Phone: _____ ☐ Cell: _____

☐ Bird interests: _____

Additional Members

Name (adult \$5 / child \$2): _____ ☐ B-day M/D _____

Name (adult \$5 / child \$2): _____ ☐ B-day M/D _____

Name (adult \$5 / child \$2): _____ ☐ B-day M/D _____

Name Badges

Custom-engraved name badges are \$6.50 each and should be ready within one month. Please print clearly and write any additional names on the back.

Badge for _____ Badge for _____

Payment

Total - Membership: \$ _____

Total - Badges: \$ _____

Total Amount Due: \$ _____

Make your check payable to North County Aviculturists and mail everything to:

**NCA Membership
Chuck Smith
15039 Chemise Creek Road
Ramona, CA 92065-5138**

**This section for use by
Membership Chairperson**

Check # _____

☐ data entered in database?

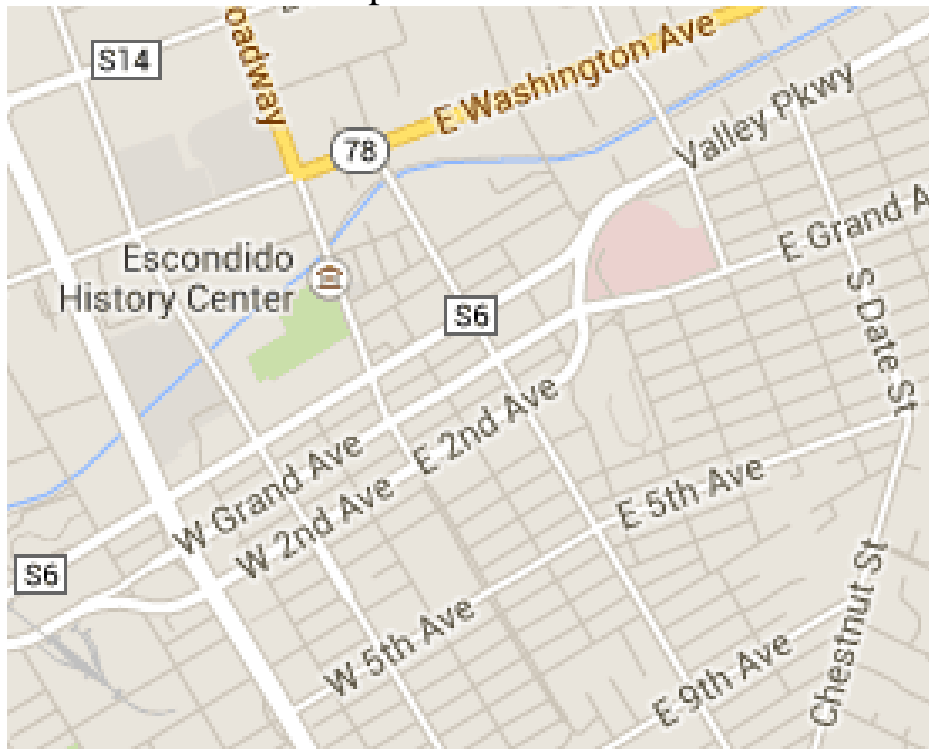
Date entered: _____

OUR CURRENT PATRONS;

Local Sponsor; A Bird Haven, Escondido, CA

249 E. Grand Ave Escondido, CA 92025-2802 (760) 741-2622 A Bird Haven on E. Grand Ave in Escondido, CA 92025-2802 Discount Prices, One Year Trade-In Policy, All Types, to Pamper Your Bird, Specializing In The Breeding of Exotic Birds, Seed & Supplies, San Diego's Most Complete Bird Store, Parrots-All Types, Parrots All Types, Parrots - All Types, Over 7400 Sq Ft, Largest Selection of Birds, Large Selection of Hand-Fed Baby Birds, Hundreds of Exotic Birds, Hand Raised Babies and Cage's Perches & Stands. For more information on A Bird Haven Escondido their website URL is www.ourfeatheredfriends.com.

Hours Open: OPEN 7 DAYS



ESCONDIDO FEED

—
QUALITY
GOODS
—



EST. NINETEEN SEVENTY EIGHT

ESCONDIDO FEED

649 ROCK SPRINGS ROAD

San Diego County Bird Club Directory

1) African Love Bird Society: An international organization that meets twice a year at the AFA Convention and the National Cage Bird Show. Write to PO Box 142, San Marcos, CA 92069 for a sample journal and membership information, or call **619-442-1164**

2) Budgie Fanciers: Meets on the second Saturday of each month at 6:30 pm at 1400 N. Johnson Ave., Suite 101, El Cajon, CA 92020. Contact Greg Ruthl at **(858) 487-7976**

3) Finch Society of San Diego County: Meets on the fourth Sunday of each month at 2:00 pm at the Elks' Lodge, 13219 Poway Rd., Poway, CA 92064 Lee Mize home# **858-278-5542**

4) Hookbill Hobbyists: Meets on the second Sunday of each month at 6:30 pm at the MITE Bingo Hall, 1365 N. Johnson Ave., El Cajon, CA 92020. Contact Rusty Hinds at **619-470-3435**

5) North County Aviculturists: Meets on the first Friday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Masonic Lodge, 761 Eucalyptus Avenue, Vista, CA 92084.

6) San Diego County Canary Club: Meets on the third Saturday of each month at 1:00 pm. For information regarding meeting place please contact Carol Whelan at **619-825-8635** or David Benites at **619-426-8276**

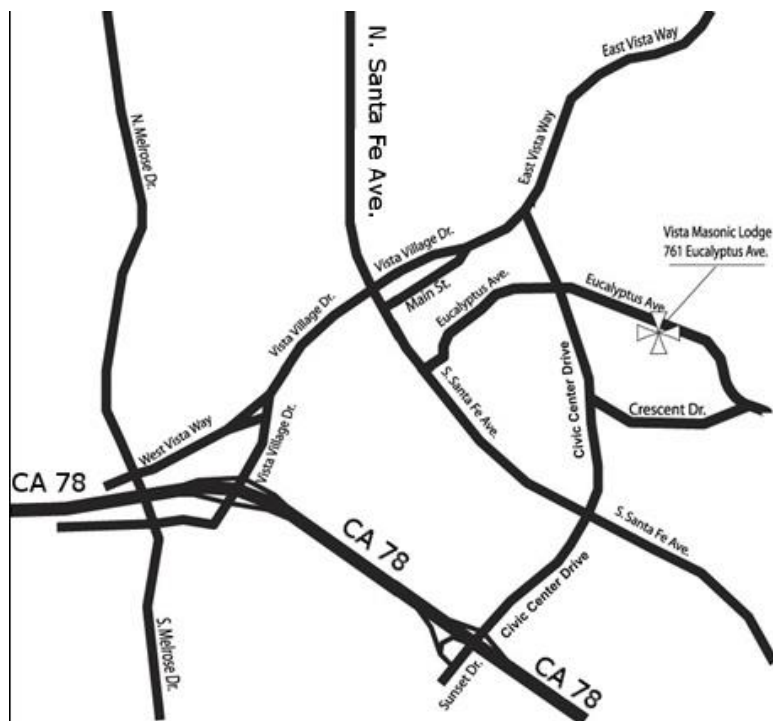
7) San Diego County Game Bird Breeders: Meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm at the Kennedy Center, 1675 E. Madison Ave, El Cajon, CA 92019 George Nelson **(619) 669-4804**

Directions to our Meeting

From the North County Coastal area, take CA-78 east to the Civic Center Drive exit and turn left onto Civic Center Drive . After about 1.1 miles turn right on Eucalyptus Avenue. Travel about 1/4 mile on Eucalyptus Avenue and watch for the Masonic Lodge on the right.

From the East and South, take I-15 north to CA-78 and go west. Exit at Civic Center Drive in Vista, and turn right onto Civic Center Drive. After about 1.1 miles turn right on Civic Center Drive. Travel about 1/4 mile on Eucalyptus Avenue and watch for the Masonic Lodge on the right.

From the North Inland Corridor, take I-15 south to Gopher Canyon Road and turn right. Follow Gopher Canyon Road 4.7 miles to East Vista Way. Turn left on East Vista Way and drive 3.2 miles to Civic Center Drive, and turn left. Travel about 1/4 mile on Civic Center Drive to Eucalyptus Avenue and turn left. Travel about 1/4 mile on Eucalyptus Avenue and watch for the Masonic Lodge on the right.



The Red-Billed or African Firefinch – Captive Care and Breeding

Posted by: [Frank Indiviglio](#) in [Bird Behavior](#), [Bird Breeding](#), [Bird Species Profiles](#), [General Bird Care](#), [Wild Birds](#) July 22, 2010 [6 Comments](#) 4855 Views

Also known as the Senegal Firefinch (*Lagonosticta senegala*), this spectacular African import is one of the few entirely red-colored birds available to aviculturists. Northern Cardinals, one of my favorites, are not legal to keep here in the USA...the Red-Billed Firefinch is the only species I've found that comes close to matching it's brilliant plumage. They are not rare in the wild or captivity, but never lose their appeal – even to lifelong bird keepers, Firefinches always seem “special”.



Range and Habitat

Ranging throughout much of Africa south of the Sahara, Firefinches have adapted well to people...in many developed areas their chirping is among the most familiar of the day's sounds. The typical natural habitat is savanna, overgrown scrub and the edges of lightly-wooded areas.

Several related species, some of which are equally as gorgeous as the Red-Billed Firefinch, also occur in Africa, but none are well-established in captivity.

Captive Housing

Firefinches are quite amiable towards other finches and small softbills, and are excellent candidates for mixed species aviaries. Their even temperament allows for colony breeding. Pairs also adjust well to [indoor cages](#), but bar-spacing is an important consideration...their diminutive size (3.5-4 inches) may allow Firefinches to wedge their tiny heads between the bars of cages designed for canaries or budgerigars.

Despite their small size, Firefinches truly come into their own in [large outdoor aviaries](#). There they will remain active from dawn to dusk, foraging for insects, which are among their most

avored foods, seeds and sprouting plants. Although somewhat shy in close confines, in large cages and aviaries they seem much more at ease and willing to show us a great many interesting behaviors.

Firefinches are birds of grassy habitats, and forage mainly on the ground. Bamboo and other grasses and shrubs planted in their aviary will make them feel at home and provide foraging opportunities. They adapt well to cool temperatures (i.e. 65 F for short periods) if slowly habituated, but need shelter from damp and drafty conditions.

Diet

A high quality [finch seed mix](#) should form the basis of their diet, but a steady supply of insects is essential if Firefinches are to remain in good color and peak condition.

Small crickets, mealworms, waxworms, grubs and [wild-caught insects](#) should be offered year-round, and are an absolute must for parents with chicks. [Canned insects](#) should also be considered. In outdoor situations, a variety of [live plants](#) can be used to attract local insects into the aviary.

Fresh sprouts and [egg food](#) should also be a regular part of your Firefinch's diet.

Breeding

Once habituated to their new surroundings, Firefinches may nest in either cages or aviaries. A thick, low-growing shrub will usually be chosen outdoors, while a nest box is essential if the pair is kept in a cage. They construct a complex, dome-shaped nest with a side opening and do not tolerate nest inspections (so leave them be!).

Females may produce up to 3 clutches yearly, each containing 3-4 eggs. The eggs are incubated for 11-12 days and the chicks fledge by day 18-21. They gain independence quickly, but are best left with the parents for 1 month after fledging.

Sexual maturity is often reached by the age of 9 months, but breeding is best delayed until the birds are at least 1 year old.

Further Reading

Comprehensive article on Breeding Firefinches (several species) in [Outdoor Aviaries](#).

AFRICAN SILVERBILLS



African Silverbill (left) Indian Silverbill (right)

Common Names

Warbling finch

Description

The sexes are similar, and the only way to tell the sex of the birds is to wait for the male to sing its soft warbling song. Females will of course lay eggs. I was lucky with my first Silverbills since they had been DNA sexed.

Diet

Silverbills will prefer the larger seeds of a [parakeet mix](#) to the smaller seeds commonly found in most finch mixes. They like the large white proso almost exclusively and will leave the canary and oats groats behind in the mix. I now provide them with just the single seed of white proso and have much less waste. They seem to have no interest in any kind of soft food. In the larger colony where they are housed with other mannikins, I do provide my egg food mix ([Roy's egg food](#)) , but for breeding pairs I mostly supplied them with a commercial dry mix. They don't seem to be interested in any of it and are not even interested in greens or soaked seeds. Some breeders report that their Silverbills will eat other foods so I keep trying. I offer my regular moist egg food mix to the breeding pairs when the young fledge in hopes that they will begin eating it. A few young that were raised under Society finches do readily take the egg food mix since they were raised on it. This should be a great benefit to their young. They should be given access to grit, and [calcium](#) in the form of crushed egg shells, crushed oyster shells and cuttlebone.

Breeder's Notes

The African Silverbill is a ready breeder. One of the easier members of the Lonchura family to encourage to breed. Very little needs to be done for them other than provide a quiet breeding area with some half-open nestboxes. They are a timid species and do not like the intrusions of frequent nest inspections, but a peek every now and again after the eggs are laid and when the chicks hatch is not too much of a problem. After banding the chicks at around 12 days though, leave the nest alone.

I provided them with a standard [half-open nest box](#) and gave them plenty of

cocnut fiber for nesting material. Typical of mannikins, they wove a nice ball nest with a narrow entrance directed to one side or the other of the opening in the box. Clutches ranged from 4-6 eggs and incubation was shared by both sexes, often with both in the box. Incubation is approximately 13 days. The young are dark and do not have much fuzz on them at all. Their begging pattern is similar to Cutthroats and Redheads in that they have a very large gape and stretch their heads straight up. They may change this as they age to the more typical estrildid pattern of turning the head and bending down low, but I only observed them at the young age. Begging outside the nest was typical of estrildids. The young fledge at about 20 days and are independent after approximately 2 weeks, but it's always better to be cautious and not remove them before 3 weeks. The usually will return to the nest at night with the parents during this time and there usually is no problem with keeping the young with the adults. The only reason to usually remove the young is so that the parents can get back to raising the next clutch.



©Roy Beckham
African Silverbill



Additional Notes

There are three subspecies, *L. cantans cantans*, *L. cantans inornata* and *L. cantans orientalis*

There are a number of mutations overseas, but none of them have arrived in the U.S. due to the import restrictions of this species listing on CITES appendix III. Some of these mutations include a Chocolate, Ino and Cinnamon (probably more appropriately a Fawn). These "mutations" may be the result of hybridization with Society finches and then back crossed to the Silverbills.

Silverbills have hybridized with a number of different species including many different members of *Lonchura* and others including the Zebra finch. Hybrids between the other *Lonchura* are possibly fertile. Hybrids with the Indian Silverbill are known to be fertile. Look for a pinkish rump area on these hybrids to determine parentage.



Immature African Silverbill. See the mouth markings of nestling Silverbills ([click to view](#))

Birdkeeping Naturally

EB Cravens

June '16

“Cockatoos Considerations, Part 1”

Some while ago an experienced parrot keeper friend of mine wrote this suggestion on my monthly article series renewal form for “Birdkeeping Naturally.” “I would like to hear about your experiences with cockatoos, especially white ones. I have the ‘Umbrella from Hell,’ living at my house.”

Now it had been years since I last wrote about white cockatoos; as I recall even that article was concerning a recurrent hobbyist’s stance not to breed any more of them into the captive parrot world, since so many large cockies here in the states seem to end up in adoption programs.

Nevertheless, for those tried and bewildered owners who find themselves in the possession of a bird which occasionally shows traits like that of the knowledgeable lady above, I will take a stab toward some slight characterization of this enigmatic *Cacatua* genus as parrot pets. Here we are basically talking about the white 'toos. Though there are of course many similarities, the pink and black species behave rather differently as pets.

First off I would mention that I do not own any cockatoos. I rescued a severely chest-plucked Citron Crested hen for a time many years ago, and by and large I have handfed, trained, boarded and helped save and re-home tens of *Cacatua*, all which belonged to other people. I find cockatoos too naturally noisy for my location and lifestyle—and entirely too intelligent and needy for my farm and flock workload.

That, said, I do love being around and petting the well adjusted Moluccans, tritons, umbrellas, corellas, goffin's, eleonoras, rosies and more that I have known over the decades. It's kind of like the love one can harbor for young nephews and nieces; it seems so easy when someone else ends up taking them home each time!

Moreover, I certainly have known some very well behaved and stable cockatoo pets in my time. Lesser Sulfur Cresteds who were 12-hours-a-day activity nuts, Moluccans loved and cuddled and always in the middle of the family life with kids and grownups alike, rose-breasteds that got outside, had the ground to forage, even flew free weekly in guarded locations. The idea that cockatoos cannot make satisfactory companion parrots is certainly not entirely true. The problem, and the basic reason for this column, is that many keepers have trouble staying ahead of their cockatoo's needs. The old adage that "I have outgrown the way you are keeping me" fits closer to the *Cacatua* group than to any other kind of psittacine. And there is a distinct tendency for some owners to get deep down discouraged—pit of the tummy kind of upset—when their cockatoo reacts to an unchanging lifestyle with screeching, biting, feather shaving, or other unsocial and dysfunctional behaviors. Make no mistake, these intelligent parrots love an interesting stimulating life. Fall into boring ruts with your care-giving and you might end up with a cockatoo that finds its own sneaky ways to create drama and get your attention. Witness the biting Tritons I have worked with who were unpredictable and always looking for a keeper's bold reaction.

If you have ever seen in person or a video of a cockatoo high up in a eucalypt tree, bouncing and flapping and screaming to its heart's delight, you will understand more of your bird's requirements. I even knew one owner of an umbrella cockatoo who would take ten minutes during every day to yell and screech at the top of lungs with her psittacine to help vent some of that 'wild need.'

So what is the long-term solution to keeping a well-mannered white 'too? It starts with any breeders still producing baby cockatoos for the pet market. These persons must recognize that, contrary to popular belief, trying to suppress the exuberance of a juvenile cockatoo by trimming its wings and confining it to a weaning cage many hours of the day with a few toys, food and water, will in the long run work against producing a pet parrot that develops a balanced, controllable personality. Young cockatoos, especially fledglings, need endless hours of activity each day in order to eat properly and

sleep enough. Stifling such needs will not create a placid bird—in fact there may be no such thing in the white cockie crowd. Such keeping only serves to frustrate your parrot, increasing the chances that undesirable behavior emerges.

Have you ever felt the muscles in a cockatoo? They have amazingly strong hips and feet, wings and chest, beaks. These are athletic psittacines. Their strength and activity level are not to be trifled with. Any seller or pet shoppe attempting to downplay such characteristics and continually promote the peaceful, cuddly side of a cockie (especially when they are babies), is doing a disservice to pet parrot aviculture by setting up customers who will eventually give up and abandon a strong-willed, high-energy parrot they really had no business acquiring in the first place. This reflects badly on the seller, and puts another demanding bird into the endless cycle of rehoming. Think of it this way. If you ran a farm store, you would not try to sell a pair of geese to a client that came in seeking chickens would you?

As an aside for aviculturists, it also helps to have a baby cockatoo that has been raised many weeks with its parents and weaned and fledged around lots of other hookbills so that it is imbued with the self-realization of being a bird rather than an orphan impressed on humans. Cockatoos that are not hung up on human stroking and are independent enough to play long periods a day by themselves make the best long-term pets...

I once knew a Sulfur-crested Cockatoo owned by a knowledgeable man in his seventies. Tito had a large macaw-sized wrought iron cage which every day was enhanced with new green boughs, plastic objects, brown paper bags stuffed with rattly things, hard to open nuts and millet sprays and clean plastic gallon milk bottles with wood beads locked inside. Tito could disassemble most any object in five or ten minutes, then would go down and haul that milk bottle up to his top perch and proceed to figure a way to get the beads out of it. His owner used to tell me the best place to buy new toys for an intelligent cockatoo was the hardware store! That was one fine pet, I can tell you. But it took daily time and effort to keep him that way.

This emphasizes another facet of Cacatua keeping. These birds require an inordinate amount of energy by a care giver to keep them happy. They are one of the highest maintenance parrots one can obtain. It is the responsibility of the pet store or breeder selling a cockatoo to underline this when showing off a young bird to a prospective customer.

Too many outlets stress the cuddliness of the young white birds, their malleability when raised as handfed babies. Sure, I like petting a fluffy ball of clean feathers as much as the next bird person; but I also know that this is the last selling point I want to emphasize if I am looking to place a fledgling cockatoo in a long term situation. In fact, I would venture the opinion that the more an owner spends his real time petting a cockatoo pet instead of devising active, athletic games to play with it, the more likely sexual problems are going to arise once that bird goes through puberty and wants something more from the closest creatures in its life. By the way, sellers have a duty to tell prospective clients the full story about the profuse and lung-irritating white powder down that comes off of such psittacines their whole lives.

Sexuality and cockatoos go hand in hand. They are one of the few genera I have encountered that actually copulate out of season for fun and bonding reasons. Touch them all over every day and you are going to keep their minds on sensuality. T'would be much better to concentrate your interaction in ways that divert your cockatoo's interest away from intimacy and substitute metabolic activity, brisk outdoor weather, and play instead. That way an owner kills two stoats with one stone, so to speak: the bird works out its need to burn off calories with vigorous physical action, hence is more tired and fun-loving, less likely to obsess with touchy-feely human contact.

Another aside....keeping a cockatoo without its wings and the physical activity this allows is just asking for behavioral troubles.

FOODS: Are you over-feeding your pet cockatoo? Does he or she delight in throwing out a goodly portion of the daily food bowl fare? Is your bottom-of-the-cage clean up chore heavy every day? Have you confused the miniscule eating habits of these big birds with those of more gluttony eclectus or amazons or the like? Most of us over-feed our parrots as we over-feed ourselves. In the case of cockatoos, not only does it give them the opportunity to pick only the favored items from the dish (unless you feed 100% extruded pellets which is seriously boring and boredom and cockatoos are match and tinder!) but it can hype them up with rich, energy-inducing, nest-inspiring nutrition, to the long term detriment of bird and owner.

Remember, some wild cockatoos go days and eat nothing all day long, 'cepting budding eucalyptus flowers, some dried-out grassy seedstuffs, bark and cellulose items, water and most likely a bug or ten. I would never deny a cockatoo interesting little seeds like millet, canary, hemp; but I would also find ways to offer them garden-gathered maple tree twigs, marigolds and pansies, green crabapple buds, chard stalks and any other imaginative thing that would get them away from the high-energy, same-thing-in-the-dish rut they may be in. If you own a roseate cockatoo, beware the overweight syndrome.

Some of the cockatoos I have rehabilitated were plumage pluckers; some were incessant screamers; some were overly aggressive towards one or more humans. Biting in birds that for years had been absolutely cuddly and affectionate speaks volumes about their environment and the slow, steady buildup of frustrations toward the way we hobbyists are keeping them.

Invariably I would introduce those parrots to a natural habitat with logs and the ground and leafy boughs and a sandbox and a sprinkly fountain and swinging ropes direct sunshine and rain, and anything else that might break their dysfunctional habits overnight. Some we gave fresh tree stalks held in a Christmas tree stand. Others got piles of river rocks and pebbles and hidden treats down in the 'pukas' (Hawaiian for 'holes').

As I see it, there are only two ways to outsmart a captive pet cockatoo. The one is to get it a compatible psittacine to live, preen, and be friends with—taking the pressure off the owner to be the bird's one and only, but adding somber other difficulties such as more noise, more mess, and more mate-injuring interactive needs. The other is to stay one clear step ahead of your 'too.

‘Happiness is a diversion,’ I like to suggest, and with this trying group of psittacines, that is especially true. A busy cockatoo is a satisfied cockatoo. And, most likely the owner of that bird is also contented—at least for the time being. After all, who likes their pet birdkeeping hobby to cause ill sensations of guilt, inadequacy, or aggravation down near the human digestive tract? Not I. That is why I never chose to keep cockatoos.

Aloha, EB Case Study: Foreign Body

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By: Carol Hurst, RVT

Birds are curious and mischievous. They explore their environment with their beak and tongue. Any pet that enjoys placing objects in their mouth has the potential for ingestion of a foreign body.

A two-year-old hyacinth macaw presented for general symptoms of not feeling well and not acting likehimself. The owner did report that the bird liked to chew on different things and if they didn’t keep an eye on him he would get into things. The bird had a history of a normal physical examination and routine bloo chemistry and complete blood count testing.

Upon physical examination, besides being quiet, the bird presented as normal. Due to the general nature of the symptoms, the doctor recommended radiographs and blood chemistry testing. The owners agreed to radiographs.

Immediately, the problem was recognizable. There are two abnormal structures located within this bird. The first and smallest (closest to the head) is the microchip.

Identified by the shape and location, we also have a history of a microchip application for this bird. The larger and denser object is located in the ventriculus.

All birds have a ventriculus. After food leaves the stomach, it passes into the ventriculus where further digestion takes place.

There are a couple of techniques for removal of a foreignbody. Depending on the location, endoscopy is one way to remove an object that doesn’t belong. There are different types of endoscopes. One that is flexible and can be manipulated into the various body cavities works well for foreign body retrieval. The endoscope allows the doctor to see inside the body and using a variety of surgical instruments, gently remove the foreign structure.

Surgery is indicated when the object is not easily retrieved, would break apart during removal or consists of something that would cause harm (caustic or sharp) if it were extracted through the body.

For this bird, the item was removed via endoscopy. The bird recovered fully.

Foreign body ingestion is almost always considered an emergency.

