



Breeder profile

Allan and Chris Druery

Interview by Marilyn Harrington

Q: How long have you both been involved in the Fancy and how did you get involved? For you Chris, was it a matter of following in your father's footsteps?

ACD: We have both been involved in the Fancy since 1982 and have been a father-and-son partnership from the beginning. We became involved in the Fancy when, as a 14-year-old Chris had a knee injury and was not able to play sport for a year and we were looking for something to occupy his time. Some of my work mates bred birds and it all started from there. When we first started we had no intention of showing, but after a year or two we entered a few birds in a show. We didn't win anything but the bug had well and truly bitten.

Q: Did you have any particular mentors?

ACD: We wouldn't say that we really had any mentor/s as such, although Neville Seage did provide valuable advice in our Intermediate and early Open years. Chris also became good friends with Eric Lane and Roy Aplin during a visit to the UK in 1988. We still correspond with Roy to this day. Overall, I would say that we have listened to, and read the opinions of, many and varied fanciers and then weighed this up ourselves and charted our own course of action. We still do this today. You should never stop learning.

Q: How did you develop your stud? What role did the imported birds play, not only in your stud but generally within the Fancy?

ACD: When we first started we purchased birds locally from other members of the Newcastle Budgerigar Club. It soon became apparent though, that if we were to progress further, we would have to travel further afield. Prior to the imported birds we really started to make progress when we purchased birds from Neville Seage. We also purchased one bird from John Scoble when he auctioned his complete stud. This bird in particular had an enormous influence, breeding several outstanding birds.

When the imports started in the early 1990s, we imported birds on two occasions. The first time, in conjunction with Gary Gazzard, we imported 15 birds. Ten of these birds came from Terry and Claire Pilkington and five came from Eric Lane. On the second occasion we imported four birds from Eric Lane, with one of these birds dying in quarantine.

Today we do not have any birds in our stud that can be traced back to the Pilkington birds. We do have several birds that can be traced back to the Lane birds, though, the outstanding Grey Green cock that is shown in the photographs accompanying this article, amongst them. Over the years we have added birds as and when required from a limited number of breeders. We have also worked very closely with Gary Gazzard for many years and, in more recent years, with Mark and Rebecca Fellows.

Our opinion is that the imported birds have had an enormous effect on the birds throughout Australia. Initially many of these birds were wasted by the vast majority of breeders, and I would place us amongst these breeders. Today, however, the quality birds are spread much more widely than ever before. In recent years we have also seen some great advances in the very best birds in the country.

Q: What are your preferred varieties and why?

ACD: Our preferred varieties are the Normal, Cinnamon, Opaline and Cinnamon Opaline varieties. We also breed Yellowfaces, Spangles, Double Factor Spangles and Dominant Pied. We have also recently added Lacewings and Albinos to assist our club at State Team Challenge time.

We believe that you need to have good Normals, Cinnamons and Opalines if you wish to improve your birds and have success on the show bench. These varieties are usually the strongest and carry the feather and features that are essential to improving all varieties. Each also brings something different to the table when it comes to feather.

We treat our Yellowfaces, Spangles and Dominant Pieds essentially as Normals. If they can't hold their own with the Normals, then they are not used. The variety takes second place to the overall quality.

BUDGERIGAR
AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL BIRD

From the Druery stud



At right: Cinnamon
Opaline Grey Green
hen



Outstanding Grey Green Cock



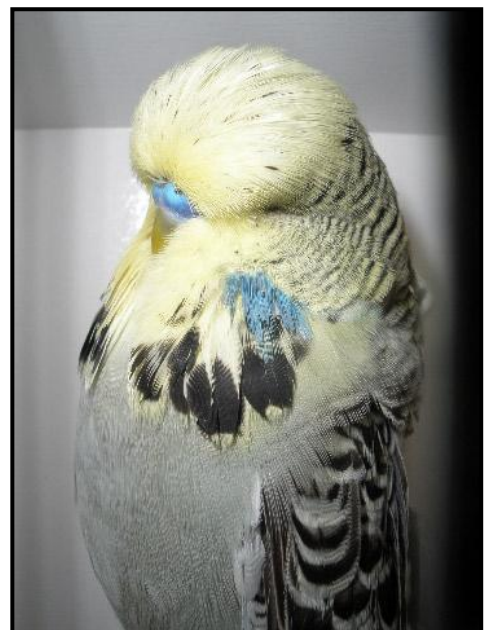
Normal Grey hen – mother of Grey Green cock
(above)



Opaline Grey hen – sister of Grey Green Cock (above)



2008 Normal Grey Green hen
daughter of Grey Green cock (above)



2008 Yellowfaced Grey cock

Q: How do you pair your birds, visually or on pedigree?

ACD: When pairing our birds we take into consideration both visual qualities and pedigree. We pair first on visual qualities and then the relationship of the birds is considered. Having said that, the majority of our pairings, however, are made along family lines and involve pairing birds that are related. Preferred pairings include cousins, aunt to nephew, uncle to niece and half brother to half sister.

We do not pair birds together just because they are related. The birds must be of the required quality, complement each other and must not double up on faults. Over the years this approach has produced many outstanding birds for us. On occasions we do pair birds that are not related at all, with the pairing being made purely on visual quality. This approach has also produced good results for us.

We also believe that when pairing your birds it is very important to study them in a show cage. Some birds look fabulous in the flight but display faults in the show cage that were not apparent in the flight. At the end of the day we are breeding exhibition birds and it is what they look like in a show cage that matters.

Q: Describe your feeding and preventive health regimes.

ACD: Over the years we have tried many different things when it comes to feeding. We think that it is important to find what works for you and to stick to it.

These days we maintain a fairly constant approach to our feeding throughout the year. We feed a commercially available seed mix, to which we add canary. We also feed a separate bowl of white millet, a bowl of combined red and jap millet, a bowl of combined hulled oats, and sunflower and white millet to which we add breeding aid. We also feed horse oats.

As for the water, each week we provide fresh water for a couple of days, tracemin for a couple of days and soluvet for a couple of days. We also provide various greens such as silverbeet, chicory, beetroot, fennel, dill, carrots, rosemary, corn and gum branches. Other supplements that we use are Murphy's minerals, cuttlebone, grit and pigeon minerals. The only change that we really make during the breeding season is to feed a soft food mixture comprising grated carrot, soaked oats, spinach, egg and biscuit and soy meal.

When it comes to preventive health measures we do not really do much at all. We treat all our birds with Ivermectin and have on occasions used doxycycline.

Apart from that we only treat birds on an as-needs basis. Thankfully, over the years we have not had a lot of health problems; we hope that we never do.

Q: How has your aviary design evolved over the years? Describe your current aviary design, including any special features.

ACD: In the time that we have been in the Fancy we have only had three aviaries. When we first started out our whole setup was 12ft x 8ft. It consisted of two flights each measuring 4ft x 8ft and a breeding room measuring 4ft x 8ft. We extended this set-up so that our breeding room measured 12ft x 8ft. The breeding room contained 12 breeding cages. The construction was a timber frame with hardiflex cladding and a corrugated iron roof.

In 1993 we moved house and built one of our two current aviaries. This set-up is a brick and tile construction (to comply with building covenants). It has three flights, each measuring 12ft x 4ft, with a loft on the front, a breeding room measuring 12ft x 12ft and another storage room measuring 12ft x 12ft. The breeding room contains 18 breeding cages. The breeding room and flights also have lights on a timer, for extending the daylight hours.

In 2006, we built a second aviary soon after Chris and his wife built a new house. This set-up consists of two flights, one measuring 5ft x 10ft and the other 5ft x 13ft and a breeding room measuring 9ft x 13ft. The construction has a steel frame, clad externally with colourbond sheeting and lined internally with hardiflex. The walls and roof are fully insulated and a whirlybird is installed on the roof. A loft is also attached to the front of the flights. Lighting is also installed in the breeding room.

Q: What approach do you take to exhibiting, including picking your show team and show preparation?

ACD: We have never been ones for showing a lot. We tend to usually show in the local area, Central Coast and Northern NSW. At these shows we are competing against some of the best breeders in the country and they are a good gauge of how you are going. Apart from the State Team Challenge, we have not shown in Sydney for quite a few years, mainly due to the potential for high temperatures when most of the annual shows are on. We had a bad experience with this some years ago.

We do not believe in over-showing birds as this can have a detrimental effect come breeding time. However, some birds are natural showmen and love being in the show cage. You really have to treat each bird as an individual and decide what you think is best for the bird.

When it comes to selecting our show team, we really start picking our young birds as they come out of the nest. Birds that show potential are noted and are caught on a fairly regular basis to have a look at in the show cage. This gets the bird used to being caught, handled and being in a show cage. We also like to handle promising looking birds in the nest as well. However, it is also important to let birds develop. Don't try to push things to early. Once young birds start to break cap, let them develop. Don't be tempted to show them before they are ready.

Show preparation is very important. We put a lot of emphasis on getting our birds into condition. We have written an article on this previously. In summary, we start spraying our birds on a daily basis three weeks before our first show. Spraying is stopped the day before the show. We then continue this process for our whole show season. Birds are also washed on an as-needs basis. Removal of excess spots is carried out the day before the show.

Our birds remain in the flight while being prepared for shows. The birds are caught up the evening before the show. After returning from a show the birds are placed back in the flight, provided it is not too late; otherwise, they are returned to the flight the following morning.

Show preparation involves attention to detail. You need to be closely examining every member of your show team on a daily basis; and looking for any potential problems, such as damaged flights and tails, spots and blood quills that may have broken. Attention to detail can mean the difference between a bird being in condition and not being quite right.

Q: What have been some of your highlights and major achievements?

ACD: We have had many highlights over the years but would rate the following (in no particular order) as the highest of the highs:

- being inducted into the ANBC's Hall of Fame
- winning ten National Logies and
- winning the BSNSW Annual three times in a row.

Q: What is the most memorable advice about the Fancy that you have been given?

ACD: Many years ago Neville Seage told us that there is a 15-year apprenticeship when breeding budgies. We think this is very true. You can taste success relatively quickly, but to maintain that success over a prolonged period you need to be willing to constantly learn and move with the times. You also need to learn to deal with the inevitable downs that you will experience.

Q: How do you work your partnership? Do you share all tasks or is it a matter of balancing strengths and opinions?

ACD: We both maintain our own studs, so each of us performs our own day-to-day tasks. All show preparation is carried out by Allan because, being retired, he has more time to do this. We move birds from aviary to aviary on an as-needs basis for showing and breeding purposes. A bird that is bred in one aviary may not necessarily remain in that aviary.

Although we live about 45 minutes drive apart, we regularly visit each other's aviary. We also spend quite a bit of time on the phone on a weekly basis getting an update on what's happening in each other's aviary. When it comes to pairing, we discuss many but not all pairings and come to a decision on what we should do. We do not always agree with each other but quickly put this behind us and move on. It is not uncommon for us to independently come up with the same pairing.

Q: After so many years, how do you maintain your enthusiasm and find new challenges? What are you currently aiming for in terms of breeding and exhibiting?

ACD: After being in the Fancy for nearly 30 years, we have experienced many highs but also many lows. I think that it is important not to have unrealistic expectations. Not everything is going to go to plan and it is important to focus on the positives and not the negatives. Things are always changing; and the style of bird required to compete on the show bench constantly changes. Seeing birds such as those of Daniel Lutolf, Jo Mannes and other top breeders in the world is very inspiring.

We get a lot of pleasure from seeing a good chick in the nest; whether it ever makes it onto the show bench or not, it is another piece of the puzzle. We also love watching young birds develop. We have recently started breeding Red Eyes again after a break of nearly 20 years and it will be a challenge to get these birds to the quality of our Normals. Overall, we are constantly trying to improve the quality of our birds as well as our depth of quality. We are also trying to improve the number of chicks that we produce per nest.

Q: What changes would you like to see in the Fancy? How do you think we can encourage more enthusiasts?

ACD: We would like to see more co-operation between fanciers and less petty jealousy in general. Although not widespread it is certainly a negative. We have been great friends with Gary Gazzard for over 20 years and have worked closely with each

other for much of this time. It has helped each of us achieve great success and we have always been glad for each other's successes. If more people adopted this approach, the standard of birds in general would rise.

We think that more enthusiasts could be encouraged by clubs getting experienced fanciers to mentor new members.

Q: What advice would you give newcomers to the Fancy?

ACD: Our advice to newcomers is to not be in too big a hurry and there is no secret recipe for breeding good Budgies. Read as much as you can, listen to as much as you can and learn the basics before you spend too much on birds. When you first start it is probably more important that you actually breed plenty of chicks rather than the quality of the chicks you breed. Once you have a bit of experience under your belt, establish a solid base from which to work. When you have reached this stage you will be far better off spending your money on a handful of good quality pairs from one or two breeders rather than buying them from all over the place.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

ACD: Yes. We encourage all breeders to get their birds to their club selection for the State Team Challenge. This will help get the best team possible for NSW so we can come out on top at the Nationals.

