

Breeder Profile

The Welshman Family

an interview with
Ray Welshman



The Welshman Family aviary

1. How long have you been involved with the Fancy and how did you get involved?

Before coming to Australia I had Budgerigars for about 10 years in Northern Ireland. I starting with pretty colours and then went on to exhibition birds—my mentor was my father who taught me everything I needed to know. My best result was a Best Breeder in Show award. To win a Best in Show award was difficult as we had to compete against big money birds from England. With work commitments I was not able to spend as much time on Budgerigars as I would have liked in the years before I came to Australia. My wife Joy and I migrated to Australia in 1978 and after we bought our first house in Blacktown the urge to have birds returned. We joined Western Area Branch in 1983.

2. Where did you source your birds?

When importation started we got birds from Henry George—mainly Sadler, Snell and Sherman lines. Later we added some Pilkington/Binks birds via Garry Hyslop and Geoff Wood and, after Phil Irwin left the hobby, we got a few really nice birds from him. Laurie Cauchi let us have some Binks and Hough Bros. birds. In the late 1990s we bought a few of the cheaper birds at John Scoble's auctions. These birds combined well with our stock.

Our real breakthrough came in 2000 when we got a Plunkett and Tasi grey cock which we mated to a Hough-Pilkington line bird. They produced exceptional chicks including one which won four grand champion awards. In 2000 we obtained a Wood and Keane Cinnamonwing Grey Green which Graeme Wise had bred and as well as a few other Wise birds off Jimmy L'Estrange which, when crossed to our stock, produced our national winning Grey Green line.

Budgerigar August/September 2007

We tried to be careful where we get our stock in the early days of importation. Some 'gurus' advocated crossing the imports with local stock and thereby wiped out 50 years of selective breeding. Unfortunately a lot of people listened to them. If it had not been for people like the Hancocks and a few others who kept the Budgerigars pure we would be in a sorry mess now. We have built up a reasonable stud of birds without spending vast amounts of money and now that it is a level playing field anyone can do the same.

3. Do you specialise in any particular varieties?

The only variety we specialise in are Lutinos which are really Emma's and Amanda's (our daughters) birds. We mostly have Normals, Opalines and Cinnamonwings, plus a few Dominant Pieds, Spangles and Yellow Faces for a bit of colour in the aviary.

4. Describe your aviary design.

Our aviary is 20 ft long x 12 ft wide. It is made of colorbond steel with a white roof which keeps it a little bit cooler along with two whirlybirds in the roof. The aviary is divided in half—the breeding room is 10ft x 12ft; the other half is divided into three flights, each approximately 10ft x 4ft. The breeding room has 36 cages, 30 of which we use for breeding and the remainder for stock cages. We have a wire nappy cage situated in the middle of the room. We walk around it and place things on it which helps steady the youngsters.

5. Do you keep your cocks and hens in the same flights?

Cocks and hens are kept separate during the breeding season. At other times young cocks may be flown with old hens, and old cocks with young hens. This makes it easier to keep control of our stock. Baby birds are kept in our middle flight where they receive more extras than the other birds.

6. How do you pair your birds and what do you look for when pairing them?

We try to match the birds, pairing one with lateral to one with frontal rise (blow), making sure they have width above the cere and a wide face as they are probably the most important features in a modern Budgerigar. We also breed for width of shoulder because it is necessary to get the head, face and width of mask we require. Pairing blow to blow can result in snaky necks, and pairing birds with lateral feathering together can produce dumpy looking birds. All other features are taken into account and we do not double up on faults if at all possible. We follow these pairing methods year after year to achieve dependable results.

7. What are some of your breeding practices?

Breeding usually takes place from the end of February to the end of October or November so that the birds are not stressed during the hotter months. Young hens may be kept up to four weeks in the breeding cage because they usually take longer to lay than hens which have previously bred. Fostering is carried out if we get hens plucking chicks and to even up nests and let hens with only one or two chicks nest again. Also pairs with clear eggs may also end up fostering as this sometimes results in full eggs on the second round. Two or maybe even three rounds may be taken depending on the condition of the birds and whether the young are fostered.

8. Describe your feeding regime and preventative health measures.

In the breeding cages we feed plain canary feed in one feeder and 50/50 Jap and French white seed in the other because it prevents a lot of wastage. The only downside is that we need three seed bins instead of one in the aviary. We also separate the seeds in the flights.

Sprouted oats and sunflower, in the ratio of four parts oats to one part sunflower, are given to the birds every afternoon. Our birds get greens (silver beet, endive or English spinach) every morning. As soon as they get it they usually feed their chicks. The birds also get a mixture of 50/50 fine shell grit and canoundra, mineral blocks (home made), vitamineral in finger drawers, cuttle bone and aviclen in the drinking water which may also have calcivet in it when we pair up.

Usually in the hotter months we treat our birds for canker and coccidiosis. This year we used emtryl for 5 days with a week off, then a further 5 days with emtryl mixed with sulphaquin. After treatment any birds looking 'off colour' may be re-treated and, if that does not work, they are usually culled. Our birds are sometimes given doxycyclene but we did not feel they required it this year as they were jumping out of their skins. We worry about the overuse of antibiotics and try to breed healthy birds naturally.

9. What is the best piece of advice you have been given about keeping budgerigars?

Probably keeping water in ceramic dishes in the flights on the floor (out of the sun). The water stays so much cooler than in the fountain drinkers hanging on the wire. Since I have used them I have not lost one bird in the hot weather. I have John Scoble to thank for that.

10. How often do you show individual birds?

All birds are individuals and some can be shown more than others. It is better to show cock birds and sparingly show hens. Possibly the best bird in our stud freaks out after a couple of hours in a show cage, so we leave him at home. We see novices and even some senior members who breed a good bird which goes to every table show and branch show, and then they are surprised when it fails to breed or, worse still, dies.

11. What have been some of your highlights breeding and exhibiting Budgerigars?

Winning at the Nationals in 2004 with our Grey Green! His daughter (Grey Green, Hens' Class) and half-sister, an Opaline Cinnamonwing (Opaline AOSV), went to Melbourne in 2005 but were not shown. A half-brother came second in the Grey Green class in 2006 and two cousins came second in the Normal Greens and Hens' Classes. The second placed hen in 2006 is the mother of the Grey Green placed second at this year's National.

2006 was a good year for us. We won the Platinum Wings Award and had six grand champions from six shows attended. We also had four second placings at Nationals and two eighth placings. Our biggest thrill this year was winning the Yellowfaced award at the Hills Annual Show—the first Yellowfaced we had ever shown. Unfortunately it dropped flights a week before the State Team Challenge.

12. What are your goals for breeding and exhibiting Budgerigars?

Our goals are to breed good birds that we like, and go to shows and have a good time, whether our birds win or not. Having a good time is probably the most important thing because people who enjoy themselves stay in the hobby and the ones who don't usually leave.

13. Is there any particular advice you would give people who are new to the Fancy?

Newcomers to the hobby should try and control the urge to buy birds every week because it is only a waste of time and money. They should try and get an experienced breeder (of modern birds) to mentor them. It takes time to learn how to breed a stud of quality birds and it is better done in stages—people who win a lot in their early years get disillusioned when the magic wears off. It can be easy to pop out a good bird but it is a lot harder to breed them year after year. This is what we are all aiming for.



**Grey Green Cock
2nd
2006 Nationals**



**Hens' Class
2nd
2006 Nationals**

**Successful birds
from the
Welshman Family
aviary**



4 x Grand Champion



**Light Green
2nd
2006 Nationals**



**Lutino
2nd
2006 Nationals**

Interview by Marilyn Harrington