



Member Profile

An update on Peter Dodd

Interview by Jean Painter, photographs by Nola Bradford

It's 12 years since Bobby Budgie did a very informative and detailed interview with Peter Dodd. A little bird told me that Peter has been invited to judge the St George Branch 50th Anniversary Show in February next year—and he judged their first one all those years ago! He is still a very active, popular judge and top breeder, so it is time to reflect on and acknowledge the enormous contribution Peter has made to the budgerigar hobby. On 29th September 2008, Bruce and Nola Bradford joined me at Denistone East where we were welcomed by Peter and his wife, Gwen.

Q. When did you first become interested in budgerigars?

A. I started breeding Budgerigars in about 1955, after a couple of disastrous years with Yorkshire canaries. The first variety to take my eye was the Dominant Pied.

Q. When did you join the Budgerigar Society?

A. I first joined the Australian Avicultural Society, then, after a couple of years, I joined the Budgerigar Society of Australasia, now the BSNSW. There were no branches and meetings were held in Phillip Street in the city where it was standing room only if you were late. When Northside Branch formed, I became a member there.

Q. What fond memories do you have of your early years in the Society?

A. The thrill of winning with my birds against the top breeders of the time, namely Bruce McLeod, Roy Mitchell, and Lestor Harris.

Q. Did you have a mentor?

A. No one in particular, but I did pay close attention to what I was told by the winning breeders and I studied their birds.

Q. Which varieties interested you the most?

A. Initially the Dominant Pies, but as I became more involved I had Cinnamonwings because of their beautiful silky feathering and, of course, the Black Eyes. In the early days the Black Eyed Yellows were of a very deep yellow colour with a tint of orange and they were no different in size to the other varieties of Budgerigars. I still keep those varieties today.

[Comment, J.P.: I saw the best coloured buttercup Black Eyed Yellow I have ever seen at

Peter's place this time but, unfortunately, it is a mop.

Q. Did you do anything in those early years that you would advise newcomers against?

A. I was rather shy in approaching the well-known breeders for birds and so I bought a lot of birds from pet shops. I'd advise all newcomers to learn as much as they can about budgies before spending large amounts on stock birds. In the beginning, start with the more dominant varieties, such as Normals, Opalines, and Dominant Pies, etc.; then, later on, include the recessive varieties of your choice.

Q. What are your most memorable achievements in the hobby?

A. Winning Grand Champion at the BSNSW Annual Show and my four National winners—three with Black Eyes and the other with a Normal Opaline. Also, judging the National Show in 2004.

Q. At what age did you become a judge?

A. Probably 1957, which would have made me 26 years old.

Q. How did people get on to the Judges Panel then?

A. They were invited by the Judges Committee. Then, after attending training days at different breeders' aviaries where they were guided by the Senior Panel judges, they sat a written examination.

BUDGERIGAR
AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL BIRD

Birds from the Dodd aviary



A young Normal Green cock that caught the eye



Great feather and promise
in this lovely six-week-old Black Eyed chick



Two unrelated cocks both feeding at the time

An excellent stud and show bird straight out
of the breeding cabinet where it had 4 chicks



A real showman
which won the last
Hills Table Show.
A young Spangle
Sky cock
just through its first
moult.



Normal Grey Green cock
which has produced well



Q. *You have held various positions at Branch and Society level over the years. What were they and which one or ones have been the most rewarding for you?*

A. I was Society President for three years, Chairman of the Judges Panel for a few years, member of the Colour and Standards Committee for 13 years, member of the Judges Panel since 1957 (ongoing) and has been Chairperson of the Hills Branch for some years (Peter can't remember for how long!) Being part of the Judges Panel committee would have to be the most gratifying, seeing the trainee judges graduate to become competent judges.

Q. *You have had great success at State and National level with you birds, Black Eyes in particular. Would you recommend a particular variety that has given you the best out-cross to improve the Black Eyes to the standard of those beautiful Budgerigars we are looking at here today in your aviary?*

A. Firstly, to improve anything you must use a quality Budgerigar, the best you have. I've tried everything and found the best out-cross for Black Eyes to be good Normal Opaline. The problem here is the waste factor as any Black Eyed Opalines have to be shown in the Opaline AOSV class and have little chance of beating the Greywing and Cinnamonwing Opalines. It would be a great advantage to all Black Eyed breeders if the Opaline Yellow and White could be shown in the Black Eyed group. This group should also include the inappropriately named Darkwing.

Q. *Will you please tell us about your aviary/ breeding room set-up, when you put your birds down to breed and your management plan?*

A. My aviary consists of five flights with suspended all-wire fly-outs to allow the birds plenty of sunshine.



Peter's flights with wire fly-out extensions.

In the breeding room there are 27 cabinets, 18 solid timber and 9 all-wire. I normally pair up in late February / early March, providing the birds are in breeding condition at that time. This may change with the advent of the new ring issue date. If you were to ask the birds when they wanted to breed, I'm sure they would say September!

In the flights there are three different perch sizes—two round and one square—and I also put a round and square (bevelled edges) perch in each cabinet. I like to provide toys in the flights to keep the birds happy and active. These consist of swings and ropes and wooden wheels. On the floors of the flights I put sawdust to keep them dry and absorb any moisture. Seed hoppers, grit dishes and water drinkers are off the ground.



The nest boxes are English style, a box inside a box.

All the birds, in the flights and cabinets alike, have soft food all year round, although not too much in the flights otherwise the birds will get too fat. The soft food mix consists of hulled oats, cracked corn, French white and feed oats soaked together in water treated with KD powder and added to sprouted mung beans and silverbeet. The seed I use is Avigrains Budgie Blue mix and the birds also get Ellenbee tonic seed mix and Avigrains peach face mix in small quantities.

The only preventative medicine I use is S76 (Ivermectin) once a month. In the water I use a rotation, adding B12 for two days followed by Calcivet for two days and then Aviclenz for two days, all as directed by the manufacturer.

I mark all eggs as they are laid with a water soluble pen (Staedler non-permanent lumocolor, medium). This way, by the time the fifth egg is laid, I will know if the first egg is clear and can be removed. Sometimes when you

remove eggs in this way the hen will keep laying. If the first round is clear, I will allow the pair to have a third round but I feel that rearing two rounds of youngsters is enough for any pair. And four chicks per nest is ideal so any single chicks in a nest will be fostered where possible.

Q. Are there any tips you would like to give people who are new to the Fancy?

- Do visit as many aviaries and shows as possible. See what other breeders are doing in their aviaries and study the type of birds that are winning on the show bench. If possible act as a steward for the judges. You will learn a lot that way.

- Don't spend large amounts of money on birds initially; start with the cheaper ones until you get more experience.

- Don't be afraid to ask questions, either at meetings or from senior breeders. Most breeders are happy to answer your questions.

- Do make sure you look after your birds. To get the results you want you must put in the effort. Keep you aviary clean, avoid dirt floors and remember that your birds need more than just seed and water.

Q. What rewards has the hobby had for you?

A. A difficult question to answer as there have been so many. I think being accepted as a judge (mainly by the winners), making new friends and, of course, winning on the show bench is always fun.



In conclusion I'd like to thank Peter and Gwen for their hospitality on the day of our interview. I believe that thanks must go to Peter from all of us for his great contributions to our hobby. He has been a wonderful mentor to aspiring judges; an inspiring leader as President of the Society, Chairperson of the Judges Panel and Chairperson of the Hills Branch; and he also willingly shares his great knowledge with all who seek it.

(Peter and I made a pact a few years ago that if there were signs that we were no longer competent judges we would delicately whisper in each other's ear. Obviously we're not done yet, Peter!)

Jean Painter