

Budgerigar breeders; get another hobby!

I have had the pleasure of breeding budgerigars for nineteen years. The enthusiasm and desire to succeed is the same now as it was when I was a Junior exhibitor attending my first show. A common concern with young people coming into the fancy is that once they discover the none-feathered variety of birds and the ability to consume something stronger than orange squash, their interest in the birds will fade as quickly as it arose. However, despite discovering the above, I stuck with the hobby and I am quite sure that one of the main factors behind me sticking with breeding and exhibiting budgerigars is that I have always had other hobbies and interests.

Whilst budgerigars can provide exhilaration when you breed that stonker, which you've been waiting so long for, anticipation when that bird is bang on condition before a big show, excitement when it wins it's class, adrenalin when it takes its colour award and then total fulfillment when it takes a major award in the show, that same bird can also return home, drop off the perch and break your heart. The reality is that sometimes you just feel "why on earth do I bother?". As breeders of exhibition budgerigars, we must accept that by manipulating nature to enhance the pedigree of our chosen variety, we are certain to suffer more frustrations and disappointments than achievements and moments of joy.

With the inherent risks of challenges and setbacks, it is important for fanciers to have other interests outside of budgerigars in order to make sure that the hobby is kept within some perspective. Think about it, if you do nothing else but breed budgerigars, it will become your whole world. Whilst this idea is fine if the hobby was easy and difficulties were few and far between but that just is not the case. Therefore, when a fancier suffers a disaster in his sole hobby, it hits them ten times harder than it would with a person has other interests and is thus able to take his mind off budgerigars. Essentially, a fancier could end up taking his budgerigars far too seriously and rest all of his hopes for achievement and fulfillment on something that could drop dead in an instant.

If you look at some of the top fanciers in this country, you will see that there are some common alternative interests, which are adopted. For example, golf, breeding coi carp, race hounds, fishing, tennis, shooting, diving - all of these activities provide the opportunity of enjoyment, which may come in handy if things are going terribly wrong in the bird room.

Fanciers who have wider interests also tend to take a more light hearted view of the politics which are inevitable in any enthusiast's organistaion. A person who has no interest other than budgerigars will view the way in which the hobby it is governed and regulated as a matter of life and death. They will

demand to make sure their opinions are heard and acted upon and may be oblivious to other peoples methodologies and ideas on moving forward. This fancier may also use every opportunity to use budgerigars to grab is five minutes of fame by standing on his soap box and making his points known. On the other hand, a breeder who allows more than budgerigars into their life will be able to be more relaxed about decisions that do not go their way or benefit their own position. Therefore, this type of fancier will be more likely to listen to others and take their views on board and will be less likely to throw his toys out of the pram when they do not get their own way. Taking the above into account, perhaps intense political arguments that often flare up in the hobby would occur less if more fanciers had other interests and thus were able to put budgerigars into the context of what they are – a hobby.

Budgerigars are not the be all and end all of life, they are a wonderful creature that can provide so much opportunity for enjoyment and pride for a breeder and exhibitor. However, coming second in a class is not a life and death situation. We all seek to be part of an enjoyable hobby with less politics and more breeders coming up through the ranks. The reality is that this will not happen if we take ourselves and the fancy too seriously and lose sight of what is really important for the hobby going forward. Take an interest in something outside of budgerigars and you will learn to appreciate the special qualities of our chosen fancy. If the majority of exhibitors possess this appreciation, it will make it so much easier to attract new members and help us in our quest to rejuvenate the hobby back to where it should be.