

source. Grit helps the birds grind the grain in their gizzards. Vitamins and additional minerals may be added to the grit mixture. All are available at pet stores. Supplements to this diet may include bread — toasted, crumbs or soaked in milk or with peanut butter as a treat. Wheat germ, ground fruit (apples, oranges), mealworms and finely chopped hard boiled egg are also good. Allow only the amount that can be consumed in one to two hours and remove leftovers to prevent possible spoilage. Water should be offered in shallow dishes or crocks that may double as a bathing area. You will quickly discover the Societies love to bathe. Keep water clean and all dishes disinfected regularly.

Place cages high so the birds can observe their surroundings and feel protected from other household pets. Find a bright location that will allow sunlight to partially bathe the cage, but never direct sunlight. Be very careful about drafts, too much may chill a bird. Optimum temperature should be kept between 15.6°C and 29.4° (60° to 85°F). Loud noises may also frighten birds, so keep TVs and radios at a minimum around them. Even if you're not planning to breed your birds, give them a nest to roost in at night, they will all pile in together and sleep through the night; just remove any unwanted eggs. If using artificial light, consider a full spectrum bulb placed on a timer with a dimmer, so they won't get caught in unexpected darkness. In an aviary, a very dim (10 watt) lamp may be helpful for birds disturbed at night to find their roosting places again.

Society Finches offer a beginning aviculturist an opportunity to observe behaviors of bonding, courtship, nest building, breeding, egg production, chick raising and fledging much faster and more successfully than with other non-domesticated species. It would be helpful to keep a record or diary of these behaviors/events for reference and further insights to birding behavior. Other considerations may be to contact the National Bengalese Fanciers Association, your local bird club, or visit your local zoo and talk to the avian professionals for more information.

In closing, may I say welcome to the fascinating world of aviculture, and very good luck with all your future avian endeavors! ●

Raising the Charming Bourke's Parakeet

by Jami D. Kennedy
Saugus, California

I remember the day well when my husband brought a small bowl with a diaper in it into the kitchen and placed it in front of me. As I peeled back the folded diaper, there huddled a piece of grey fluff with the smallest beak I'd ever seen! As I looked quizzically at my husband, he explained that as he was making his routine inspection of our small bird aviaries, and the nest boxes in each flight, he found a disastrous sight. Inside one of the Bourke's Parakeet nest boxes he found the mother and three babies dead, and one baby, about two weeks old, clinging to life. This is what he presented to me. I told him that I couldn't feed a bird that small, and who could find the beak on a baby Bourke's anyway! (I was used to hand feeding parrot types, after all!) He informed me that I was "a pro" and could do anything I set my mind on. Looking back, I realize that this was probably a buttering up job on his part, but it worked. I ran over to the feed store and purchased a 1 cc syringe, because the smallest I had in the house was 20 cc at that time, and that just wouldn't do. I successfully raised that little Bourke's baby, and she became my constant nursery companion for the next three years, flitting from cage to cage and riding atop my shoulder as I fed my nursery full of cockatiels, rosellas, and assorted parrot babies.

I know I'm known for telling sentimental, almost unbelievable stories about my birds, but I swear they are all true. This one is as well. This little Bourke's did not have a cage, she lived in my nursery, occasionally flying into the kitchen to see if I was preparing the next batch of handfeeding formula. She monitored my feeding each time, watching intently from my shoulder. Since I was usually feeding 60 cockatiels at a time, there were occasions where one would flutter

down from its cage. The nursery at that time was my small family room, so with the clutter of many, many cages, piles of diapers, and the aquariums I used as brooders, the cockatiel would be lost. On one of my missions of cockatiel finding one day, the Bourke's flew off my shoulder and onto the floor. She started to chirp and excitedly hop back and forth while facing a folded pile of diapers. I looked around the diapers and there was my baby cockatiel! From that time on, when I had a baby to find, I just waited, and my Bourke's would eventually find it and "point" to it. She was my unofficial nursery attendant. True story!

Now that I've gotten the sentimental "mother hen" story out of my system, I'd like to tell you a little about one of the most precious, docile birds ever to come out of Australia, the Bourke's Grass Parakeet. They belong to the family Psittacidae, a large family of birds which belong to the Psittaci-forme group, and bear the name *Neophema burkii*, or *Neopsephotus bourkii*.

Of all the grass 'keets, I believe the Bourke's Parakeet is the hardest, even though it is the most docile. We have only raised the Bourke's, but this is comparing notes with other grass 'keet breeders.

We found the Bourke's very easy to breed, and I would highly recommend this bird if you're thinking of getting into breeding small birds for the first time.

If you are hurting for space, you can colony breed the Bourke's but we have found that this does not produce the best results. They are not aggressive to their mates, other Bourke's, or other birds in the cage, but the production is not what it should be when you colony breed them. We have, however, placed a pair of Bourke's in

Avian Trade Shows & Seminars

Central Florida Bird Breeders Annual Fall Bird Sale & Swap Meet Sunday, October 3, 1993

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admission \$3.00, children
under 6 free

Kissimmee Valley Livestock
Exhibition Hall,

Highway 192/441, next to
Silver Spurs Rodeo Grounds,
1.2 miles west of FL turnpike
entrance, 25 minutes from
Orlando Int'l. Airport

For more information, contact:

Bert & Susan Gottfried

(407) 777-7363

or Dwight Greenberg

(407) 631-9800

Kansas Avicultural Society, Inc. 11th Annual Bird Show and ACS Specialty Show October 9, 1993

Ramada Broadview

400 W. Douglas, Wichita, KS 67202

Contact person:

Lynda Warren, c/o KAS

P.O. Box 3953,

Wichita, KS 67201-3953

Avicultural Society of Tucson presents its 8th Annual Bird Fair October 17, 1993

Tucson Convention Center

Exhibit Hall A

9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

For information, call:

Terri Morgan (evenings)

(602) 721-4768

Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club will host a Bird Show and Fair October 30-31, 1993

at the Quality Inn - Executive Plaza

823 Murfreesboro Road

Nashville, Tennessee

Contact David Holcomb,

Show Chairman (615) 399-3201

Missouri Cage Bird Association's Annual Bird Show November 5 & 6, 1993

Day's Inn

15 Hilltop Village Center,

Eureka, MO 63025

Phone (314) 938-5565

Contact Dianne Groves, show secty.

12470 Sparrow Wood Dr.,

St. Louis, MO 63146

(314) 576-4136

or Bonnie Reynolds, MCBA secty.

3417 Minnesota Ave.,

St. Louis, MO 63118

(314) 772-5142

Rose City Exotic Bird Club is having its Annual Fall Expo and Show November 6 & 7, 1993

at Washington County Fairgrounds
Hillsboro, Oregon

For show info:

Sally Smith (503) 658-5242

For expo info:

Kim Ghobrial (503) 297-7591

28th Annual San Diego Bird Exhibition and Sale November 6 - 7, 1993

Del Mar Fairgrounds,

Del Mar, California

Open to the public

Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 6 & 7

For information contact:

Mike Morrison, Show Manager

P.O. Box 191204,

San Diego, CA 92159

or call (619) 466-4999

Emerald Coast Avian Society's First Annual Sale / Swap November 13, 1993

at Frank Brown Park

Panama City Beach, Florida

For information call:

(904) 785-1953 or (904) 234-2140

Mid-South Budgie Club is hosting a Fall Fair

November 20 & 21, 1993

at the National Guard Armory

Calvery Road, Glasgow, KY

For information contact:

Mary Russell

416 Cherry Street,

Glasgow, KY 42141

or call (502) 651-8150

Pomona Bird Mart November 28, 1993

L.A. County Fairplex Bldg. #4

Pomona, California

9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Admission \$4, youths 5-15 \$1,

Parking \$3

For information call:

(805) 269-0424

Florida Federation of Avian Societies presents

"A Passion for Parrots"

December 3 - 5, 1993

at the Radisson Hotel - Orlando Airport

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challenges and opportunities of bird

keeping in a sub-tropical environment.

For info contact:

Morgan Knox (407) 892-0643

Dwight Greenberg (407) 631-9800

John Meade (813) 677-5200

Kentuckiana Bird Society and Feathered Friends Society are sponsoring their 5th Annual Exotic Bird Fair December 4 - 5, 1993

Louisville, Kentucky

For information contact:

Sandra Kron (812) 923-8349

or Bill Murphy (502) 452-9724

Avian Research Association Avian Handfeeding Lab

starting in **January 1993**

and repeated every other month

Chaminade University of Honolulu

3140 Wai'alae Ave.,

Honolulu, Hawaii

For information contact:

Dave DeWald (808) 735-4726

Avian Research Association Basic Avian Pet Ownership and Care starting in **February 1993**

and repeated every other month

Chaminade University of Honolulu

3140 Wai'alae Ave.,

Honolulu, Hawaii

For information contact:

Dave DeWald (808) 735-4726

Avian Research Association Bird Mart & Swap Meet June 13, 1993

Sept. 12, 1993 Dec. 12, 1993

Chaminade University of Honolulu

3140 Wai'alae Ave.,

Honolulu, Hawaii

For information contact:

Dave DeWald (808) 735-4726

Birds Exotic Spring '94 Bird Mart Extravaganza & Sale March 5 & 6, 1994

Hillsboro, Oregon

For more info, contact:

Ron Marks, manager

19235 SW Pilkington Road

Lake Oswego, OR 97035

(503) 684-3799

Seventh National Avicultural Convention of Australia March 11, 12, 13, 14, 1994

Ringwood Performing Arts & Convention

Centre, Melbourne, Australia

For more info, contact:

John Hince, publicity officer

7th National Avicultural Convention,

Donnybrook, Pipers Creek Rd.,

Kyneton, Victoria 3444, Australia



A pair of Bourke's Parakeets.

a flight with a pair of cockatiels and both pairs had successful breeding seasons.

For one pair of Bourke's, our flights were 4' by 8' by 8', constructed out of 1x1/2" wire. Several flights stood side by side, and there was a center aisle with more flights on the other side. This safety area is a must so you do not suffer the loss of a fly away bird. Plywood covered the top and sides of each flight, but only one third of the way from the back forward. The rest of the flight was open to the elements, but enclosed with a safety area, so the birds could enjoy all the seasons and fresh air.

If at all possible, do not place your flight on a dirt floor. This goes for all birds, but the *neophemas* are prone to getting worms, and they dearly love to fly down and check out what interesting morsels of food lay in the dirt. If you have dirt floor flights, try putting wire over them to dissuade the rodents from entering the flight. The birds should be wormed once a year, no matter what type of floor your flight has.

The nest box was a simple lovebird box, wooden, about 6-1/2" x 10-1/2" x 9-1/2", with a little porch on the out-

side so the male could stand watch. We placed clean pine shavings in the box. If you choose to try your hand at colony breeding, be sure to put one and a half times as many nest boxes as you have pairs of birds in the flight. They like a choice, and this avoids any squabbling over boxes. For one pair to a flight, one box is sufficient.

The normal breeding season is spring, but they have bred at other times of the year as well. They lay one egg every two days, with four to six eggs in a clutch on the average. The gestation is 18 to 19 days. We never allowed our Bourke's to raise more than two clutches per season, it's just too hard on them. Simply pulling the nest box prohibits them from clutching again. This is especially important if you do not pull the babies to hand feed. You want to be assured that you will have healthy breeders for years to come.

The babies fledge in just a few weeks. At this time, it's hard to determine the sex of the bird. You can check the white markings under the wings, and if they are very prominent, you usually have a hen. But, if they are light or nonexistent, it could be

either sex. We never found it necessary to determine the sex before maturity. The first molt is at about six to seven months, and at that time, the males take on a beautiful blue tint to their forehead. That sign is unmistakable.

One of the reasons I suggest the Bourke's for your first breeding experience is that it is really not necessary to handfeed the babies. They are such docile birds, that the hen will allow me to lift her up to check her young, and though flighty, if you catch one of the fledged babies or adults, they do not attempt to bite you.

Overall, the Bourke's Parakeet has a grey body, with dark blue accent around the wing edges. This is set off by the beautiful rosy-pink chest. Though they do not compete, color-wise, with their counterparts in the *neophema* family, to me they are shining stars in my aviary. Their wings make a sort of whistling sound as they flutter, and they never fail to fly to the front of the flight when I enter the aviary.

I have heard that the Bourke's have the ability to talk and whistle, though I have never heard one do so. I have had two as personal pets and they never attempted either. Their charming chirp is enough to thrill me anyway. We feed our Bourke's a diet of a good small hookbill mixture with vitamins, mixed vegetables, sprouts, millet spray occasionally, our own soak and cook mixture, and from time to time bits of apple, oranges, and other fruit in season.

Though we do not breed the Bourke's in as large numbers as we once did, I still keep two pairs in my aviaries just because I love them so much. I donate the babies to the various bird clubs for their raffle tables or special auctions.

Whether you raise the Bourke's for a source of income or for your own enjoyment, you will be charmed with this little bird from Australia. Once you've had them, you'll find you won't want to be without them in your aviaries.

What ever happened to my hand fed Bourke's nursery attendant? Unfortunately, somebody left the door open one day, and my special pet flew away! What about keeping your pet birds' wings clipped for safety? Well, I guess that's another story for another time. ●

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