



The AFA Red Siskin Recovery Project

Extrapolated from AFA Documents with the help of Project Director, Paula Hansen

The Red Siskin Recovery Project has long been a focal point of the AFA's Conservation mission.

A Project Committee Begins

Responsibilities will be distributed among the Core Committee members. Darrel Styles will serve as veterinary and scientific counsel.

Core Committee Members

- Paula Hansen,
Chair the Core Committee.
- Dr. Orland Baker,
RSP Studbook keeper
- Ron Castaner,
RSP Breeder

We need at least five other experts on this committee. Other members who are waiting to receive their Siskins, already have Siskins, or just want to be involved are encouraged to step forward and be recognized.

If you haven't received a personal email from Paula Hansen please consider this your request contact her directly now. She is looking for those who have specific areas of expertise with Siskins, sponsorship, and newsletter experience. Also, those who have been waiting to receive Siskins for the first time. You are encouraged to support the Core Committee by sharing your ideas in the development of moving the project forward. Any breeders out there holding birds and wishing to move them contact: Paula Hansen.

Email: pjhansen@earthlink.net

Phone: (503) 581-8208 (evenings)

**Mail: 2234 Juneau Court
South, Salem, Oregon 97302**

Funding

The project is lacking a healthy financial base. In order to move our Siskins we must develop some creative fund-raisers to offset future shipping charges. The Siskin Project needs a financial boost. Funding will specifically support moving birds to waiting breeders through cargo, purchase of containers, and printing and mailing the *Siskin News*, the official publication of the Siskin Project.

Those who know of companies wishing to place ads in lieu of support, please contact Paula Hansen.

Depending on how many of you volunteer determines how the Project will move forward. Everyone is welcome to become involved. Lets join together to move the project forward again.

Communication

Communication will be a big focus. The *Siskin News* and the Siskin Yahoo group will help greatly. The Yahoo group presently has 27 members. Tony Sbatatino is taking the lead. You can join at no cost by searching Yahoo and requesting to join:

RedSiskin@yahoogroups.com

When you visit this group you will be welcomed and introduced. Post your concerns and questions. This is not an AFA group but a Siskin group. You will be addressing a larger audience and can learn from the experienced and learn with others.

AFA Website

Information will be developed to reflect the progress of the AFA Siskin Breeders. The website volunteers will be in charge of posting submitted infor-

mation from the Projects Board. Information such as recruitment of new breeders, new hatchlings, deaths, and breeder recognition.

Breeder's Agreement

AFA's legal counsel, Mr. Ring, will be asked to review documents for establishing a new "Agreement" formatted for joining and participating within the Project.

New RSRP Mission

- To create a sustaining captive healthy population of red Siskins within the US;
- Support conservation efforts and scientific studies in the wild.

Consortium Structure

The Project will exist more as a consortium of breeders operating independently within a set and structured framework – a fresh new way of working the Siskin Project. This structure will be developed by the Core Committee and finalized by AFA Board members.

Genetic Management

- Revising and updating the SPARKS studbook;
- Facilitating small population management program;
- networking breeders within the Project for genetic exchange(s).

Education Through Articles

Sharing knowledge of the species and conservation efforts such the *Siskin News* or Siskin Yahoo group. AFA will set aside a section within the *AFA Watchbird* quarterly magazine for a Quarterly Update. Through the help of Dr. Benny Gallaway, AFA President, this update will include new breeders, annual studbook census of adult birds,

new hatchlings, deaths, and breeder recognition.

Siskin Breeding Hints

1) Soaked seed: Any kind of oily seed can get rancid when wet and warm. Refrigerate your soaked mixes and only prepare 2-3 days worth at a time. Some freeze, pre-soaked seed for use later. This does not hurt the seed or the supplements you add in the mixture. It is vital to these birds to receive a higher percentage of oil seed in the Siskin mix. If you use soaked seed during breeding season or for young to learn to open seed, then do not put the sunflower chips in it, especially during warm weather. It only quickly spoils the mix. Gravity feeders for dry seed can be used in a cage environment. Do not place millet spray pieces in gravity feeders as they have a tendency to clog the flow of seed.

2) Sprouted millet: Pre-breeding season (January/February) Siskins seem to just tear it apart if not sprouted. Non-breeding season (June to December) Siskins will dine on it. Millet is not necessary but a good addition to the diet.

3) Fresh vegetables & fruit: Romaine lettuce, broccoli, apple (sweet apple variety), a few times a week all year long. Most prefer golden and red delicious apples. They may eat spinach, this breeder notes her flock won't touch it but will nibble on zucchini. NOTE: They like their fruit and vegetables clipped to the cage not lying on the floor. Use clothespins – cheap and easy.

4) Egg food: Mashed egg food from start to finish of breeding season whether they take it or not. Mother will usually use eggfood to feed your chicks from day one through day eight.

5) Canary wicker/plastic nests. They like them deep not shallow. I use 4' burlap strips and thin cotton string. No snagging happens. Nest liners are not necessary. The liners are pulled out of the nest even when sewn onto the wicker.

The string from sowing will get them snagged and suffer the consequences. So don't bother with nest liners.

6) Nest Building: The Siskin female does the building of the nest. She lines the nest with fine hay, 4" pieces of washed burlap, or 4" pieces cotton twine. Some females prefer to free lance and build their nests in greenery. Supplying burlap, coco fiber, and cotton twine helps make a good base. These can also keep those eggs toasty warm. Should you wish to use nest pads hot glue them in place. Stitching nest pads in with thread causes some hazards for the birds. Birds can get hung up on the threads. During this process of nest building the male always watches and never helps.

7) Vitamin Supplements: Not always necessary. There has been no special recommendation made for Siskins. Use a good balanced vitamin supplement in water should you choose to do so. Do not let this treated water stand in direct sunlight, under warm environment it will foster bacteria. Sprinkled over soaked seed which should be changed out during breeding season early morning and in the evening. Should your vitamin product be for water, use it in the water you're soaking your seed in. It is not recommended to sprout seed soaked in this vitamin mix. This vitamin soak should not be done daily but occasionally, i.e., every three weeks. There are many websites featuring supplements and avian vitamins on the Internet and supplements and avian vitamins may also be found in bird magazines. When purchasing from a shop check those expiration dates. Most female finches and Siskins need to replenish nutrients into their system vitamins and minerals can assist in this process during resting seasons.

8) Greenery in the cage: Use plastic or fake pine garland or something similar in texture. Line the left and right perimeter of the cage. USE NO SILKS. Use something that won't snag on your

birds legs. Siskins love to chew up silk greenery.

Use natural branches from any tree or bush. This is considered good foot care. Always keep perches, branches clean. If greenery gets stripped replace it. During Christmas clearances at the local art and craft stores you can get it inexpensive artificial greenery. Replacements are needed yearly. If the greenery still is in good condition, clean it in a soak of Clorox and water for 20 minutes (half cup of Clorox to 1 gallon of water). After every breeding season this is a good idea and if the greenery stinks, remove all solid waste from the it, and use the recommended Clorox wash.

9) The cages: A good size cage is 34 X 18 X 18. Scrub it well with Ammonia or with Clorox. NOTE: Never mix these two chemicals together. Rinse well to make it odorless again. Siskins cling to the sides of the cage at night so it does get messy after breeding season. Siskins don't display this behavior in aviaries but also won't breed for this breeder in a mixed aviary environment.

10) Breeding season: is from April to August. This breeder's flock started Feb 2002 year and were done by May. Siskins are proven to maintain fertility up to 7 through 10 years of age. Siskins' life expectancy under good husbandry management could be as long as 12 to 15 years.

11) Fostering: Not at all necessary but...should you consider it now or later, use female Canaries. They are cheap and usually reliable. Make sure female Canaries are healthy and use quarantine practices prior to breeding season. Keep the canary pair in the same mode as the Siskin pair. Remove a few of the foster Canary eggs and place under another Canary. Babies should be placed under the foster Canary when pin feathers appear (about 8 -10) days old. PLEASE NOTE: Canary babies are much larger so a new hatchling Siskin may be too

small for them to deal with. This breeder prefers to do this about one hour before the lights go out. Hens will be more willing to sit on the Siskin chicks. Try this when you have some days off from work in order to monitor closely. When attempting this at first, try only one chick the first night leaving a few original Canary eggs. If the female Canary accepts and feeds the chick add the rest of the Siskin clutch the next afternoon or evening.

12) Incubation: Incubation is 14 days. Chicks will begin to hatch in the sequence in which they were laid unless you use Canary breeder methods. This method is removing each egg as it is laid, replacing it with a fake egg. When the fourth egg is laid place all the Siskin eggs back in the nest. This will ensure all chicks hatch at the same time and all are about the same size. Do this over a 4 day period of time.

13) Chick Food: Soaked Siskin mix, hard boiled egg food sprinkled with supplements. Most use basic handfeeding formula sprinkled over the fresh boiled egg. Canary breeders and finch hobbyist use other ingredients, i.e., bee pollen, unmedicated game bird food ground to a powder. There are many recipes out there.

14) Bugs: this is not necessary. Forget it.

15) Closed Bands: Band hatchling Siskins at 7-8 days old. Use closed bands with identifier numbers, as they are to be registered with the Project. There are several reliable sources available from which to buy bands – just make sure you have a sufficient bands on hand.

16) Offspring: Consider the AFA Siskin stock the project's *loaned* stock. New imported stock through the project cannot be sold. Both types of stock will produce offspring, half are yours and half belongs to the AFA project. It's only a fair investment.

17) Yearly Report: THIS IS MANDATORY. All Siskin offspring **MUST** be registered with AFA studbook keeper, Orland Baker. This includes your personal half of the offspring too. Accurate records must be kept to monitor the project and your progress.

18) Affiliation with AFA: is recommended and will weigh heavily when consideration who will be given the next loan or private exchange. The studbook keeper Orland Baker is there to advise you how to breed which Siskin to which or provide you the tools to make those independent decisions. Recommendations in computer-generated scenarios for the best suggested combinations will be provided to project members. This helps avoid high percentiles of inbreeding incidents. This is worth the affiliation with AFA alone as you can apply this methodology to other species you have or will have in the future. You won't find this type of support anywhere else.

19) The RSRP Siskins: Under the project structure the Siskins are *your* responsibility. Half the clutch is your property. This is why the project agreement is exactly that "an agreement" or "good faith" loan. You will be expected to return half of the new offspring to the project or to a new authorized volunteers. Now these birds rare and difficult to find and are CITES I birds. The Red Siskin is protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. They require the seller, you, and your portion of offspring to be registered. Should you buy from a private breeder, you are also required by USFWS to obtain a permit. Fee is \$25.00 for three years. No permit is required for no commerce (\$) type activities for this project. "No commerce" is defined as trading one Siskin for one Siskin. You cannot trade for other species of birds or anything else for that matter. Non compliance is a Federal Offense so follow the rules – they are very clear.

20) Imported "new" original stock: is not to be sold at all! Project reinforces Federal Protection for new introduced stock.

21) Outside purchases: Should you find a private breeder from which to purchase more Siskins or with whom to trade, you must contact the Coordinator first. There is a lot of Siskin stock out there that is not pure, not healthy, and may carry avian tuberculosis. Also some birds may already be too closely related to your existing birds. Don't take a chance and weaken the bloodlines. You must take utmost precautions to protect your project birds and your personal stock. There is no cure or test to perform on live birds on avian tuberculosis at this time. It is the volunteer's responsibility to observe and take precautions to protect their flock. You're advised to seek advice from Dr. Darrel Styles for quarantine practices and medication.

22) Quarantine: Consult Dr. Darrel Styles.

23) New recruits: are asked to submit their interest to the Project Director, Paula Hansen. Interested individuals will be asked a series of questions. The test is your experience breeding like species which allows the Project personnel to evaluate your qualifications. Once accepted, needed information will be supplied prior to one's receiving Siskins. The waiting list can be short or long depending on interested individuals and breeding season outcomes. Budgetary circumstances may also influence the options for moving these birds.

24) AFA Watchbird & Website: will be posting updates on the project in the future. The AFA Watchbird journal will be generating quarterly tidings which will contain the Siskin project progress. This is very exciting! The breeders and public will be informed thru this medium.

Births/ Deaths/ Accidents/News/

Updates. The report or update news and its content belong to AFA. No confidential information on any breeder will be released without the breeders authorization. You may be identified by a breeder number or assigned studbook acronym should you wish to keep your identity confidential. Breeders are encouraged to submit to the Project Coordinator any stories, outlines he/she may wish to share.

25) Agreement: this will be reviewed by an attorney of AFA to ensure your protection and that it is clear and easy to understand reading. Each project breeder MUST sign this agreement. It is a confirmation you understand USFWL rules, Projects goals (mentioned above), and mandatory quarterly progress reporting to the Project Coordinator. Change of name, address, email, phone number MUST be reported to the Project Coordinator as soon as possible. AFA Siskin Project assures you there are no hidden agendas in this agreement.

26) AFA Yahoo group: Requested on line support to exchange information. Other non profits use this as a support system we should too. Here's the web address group:
RedSiskin@yahoogroups.com

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Update from Studbook Keeper Orland Baker, M.D.

It is critically important to get COMPLETE studbook information. The result will produce information of great value to every breeder in the project. Contingent on this report, is how often any given breeder updates the studbook keeper on what's going on at that breeder's location. Bulk mailing of the Institutional Questionnaire will be sent to all breeders at least once each year. In the past five years, there has been a steady decline in the number of breeders responding to the Projects questionnaires and/or supplying information as requested. Perhaps due to the breeders (people in the program) not being adequately informed on what's going on in the project or failing to receive appropriate direction.

During the PAST TWO YEARS, I have received breeding reports from 4 RSRP breeders only. Whether you have hatchlings, deaths, or no more birds the studbook keeper must be made aware in order to document properly into the database. It is must for a healthy consortium program. The Studbook Keeper MUST be appraised by each and every person listed in the project, exactly what his/her current population consists of. An ideal situation would be for some sort of "regional manager" to visit every breeder's aviary.

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Sun Seed's New Bird Wellness Program

For over twenty years Sun Seed has produced superior quality premium grade seed mixes. The Company has always been known as the innovator in the seed manufacturing industry. In November, 2001 Sun Seed formed a partnership with the number one manufacturer of bird food and vitamins in Germany; Quiko. Throughout the Avicultural community Quiko is recognized as a professional grade product line. The foundation of this line is baked product made with real eggs and honey known as eggfood. Essentially this is a supplemental food that is added to the basic daily diet.

According to Jeff Clark, Sun Seed's Vice President of Marketing and Sales, the real beauty of this eggfood is that birds universally accept the food and eat it before they eat anything else. "If you want to supplement the diet with vitamins, or need to medicate a bird, eggfood is the ideal medium for doing this. Because the birds completely ingest the eggfood, you are assured that they ingest anything that is added to the food."

European aviculturists have been using eggfoods for generations. With the exception of canary breeders, the concept is relatively new to the U.S. More and more aviculturists and avian hobbyists are embracing this method of improving the diets of their birds.

Sun Seed has developed a program for use in pet stores utilizing 5 Quiko products to improve the health and condition of birds kept in a retail environment. The Bird Wellness Program as it is called is a three-stage feeding program that increases protein levels, provides essential vitamins and eliminates parasites, certain bacteria and fungus that can infect birds.

The first stage uses a formula consisting of eggfood, vitamins, a protein supplement, and a probiotic that is fed to newly introduced birds for the first five days that they are in the store. The second stage utilizes eggfood and vitamins as a basic daily supplement. The third stage is feeding the original introductory formula once a week as a prophylactic treatment.

The Bird Wellness Program was tested by a number of avian specialty stores across the country before being introduced. "The feed back was phenomenal." Clark said. "We received nothing but positive feedback, including several claims that this approach actually saved the lives of some birds that had been in jeopardy. Some breeders have also begun using this approach. It is very beneficial in any situation where there is a regular turn-over or introduction of new birds into the setting."

Sun Seed has always been a strong supporter of the independent retail pet industry. The Bird Wellness Program is just one more way that Sun Seed is trying to promote proper avian care.

Contact Clark at 1-800-221-6175 for more detailed information on this program. ❖