

# *AFA Red Siskin Project - Quarterly Update*

*Paula Hansen, AFA Red Siskin Project Chair*

Conservation and Research for AFA. Walt will oversee RSP. Other projects on Walt's assignment are: CITES, Cooperative Breeding Programs; Exotic Bird Registry.

While our birds are nesting this quarter it is time to say "thank you" to those clubs, individuals, businesses, and AFA members who seriously understand the importance of the Red Siskin Project (RSP). This provides a financial boost, not to mention the good message it sends to breeders and volunteers. Each dollar donated went to assisting birds being moved through cargo preventative vet checks last fall. Birds were able to be located to new breeders coming on board, retrieving birds donated, and providing a resource to respond to rescue birds in the future. All forwarded funds and expenses are overseen and reported to AFA's Donna Mallory CPA and Chief Financial Office. Donna, by the way, does a fantastic job of keeping the RSP's accountability and in compliance.

Our Special thanks go to:

- Florida's Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club donated a \$300.00 check. In addition, donated table space for, member and RSP breeder Ron Castaner. Ron set-up and man which brought in \$207.10. All Proceeds were donated to the Red Siskin Project.
- New York's International Canary Club who purchased RSP totes. Embroidered totes were used as awards to their top bench winners at their bird show last fall. What a creative way to support both winner and aviculture!
- Higgins Group Corporation's cash donation \$200.00 and 50lb millet spray.
- Gary at Bird Daddy Exotics, at [www.birddaddy.com](http://www.birddaddy.com), has offered to donate a percentage of sales back to the Project that each AFA member for all the Versele Laga and Orlux products. This euro blend of wild seed siskins contained in the Blattner's mix appears to be a nice supplement in addition to the standard Siskin mix used by breeders now.
- Ashe Husein of North Brunswick, NJ. for providing technical support for the Red Siskin Project's new website. Visit the new site at:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~redsiskinproject>

Over the past few months RSP has received correspondence and questions. We'd like to share some of them with you:

**Comments:** "There is much interest here in the Red Siskin but unfortunately everyone seems to keep their

advise or know-how to themselves, breeders seems to be very secretive about their stock, breeding tricks, and getting advise is very difficult."

- "I have read your RSP details with interest and would like to know more and even exchange comments and ideas with breeders."

**RSP Response:** One of the benefits of communication is sharing and exchanging information. RSP breeders are willing to share their husbandry information with everyone. It is also our goal to educate about these birds. There was a detailed article in Watchbird's 2nd Quarter issue. Outlined were the basics and some detail of keeping and breeding siskins. We hope that it was helpful for AFA members to find this information.

**Question:** "I have maintained a state permit for Red Siskins since I was a member of the old RSRP. Now that it is apparently defunct, is it necessary for me to have a Federal permit as well as a state permit if I want to maintain a small stud of my own."

**RSP Answer:** Aviculture has come to a place where breeders need to be aware and make it their business to stay on top of such rules and keep an eye on what their state may want to pass. No permit is required for no commerce (\$) type activities for any individual. "No Commerce" is defined as trading one Siskin for one Siskin. So if this individual wanted to stay independent with no federal permits that is okay. Each state requirement is another story. Most states require permits now for just holding birds. No getting around that legally once the law is on the books. AFA has always advocated that its members to get involved to help avoid unnecessary state regulations. Don't wait for someone to do it for you.

The Recovery part of RSRP is still active. It isn't defunct but has changed its direction, leadership, and has been reorganized. We're still here and welcome you join us!

**Comment:** "Everyone on the internet said it is so easy to breed those birds, I try to follow what other siskin breeder's suggestion on the internet, but I guess every breeder has different methods. They bred thousands of Red Siskin in Europe, and I have problem breeding any. I know something is missing."

**RSP Response:** As with everything, it's never easy unless you know how. Once you know then it's easy. There isn't much written on Red Siskins other than basics in

ornithology books which are observations and data. The RSP wants you to be successful with your birds. There are like species you can find information on. The Green Singing Finches and Canaries for example. Compare those basic husbandry requirements against what you are doing now. Seed of course is the exception. Sounds like some fine adjustments will get your birds breeding.

**Question:** "For two years in a row, same thing happen, the males are singing, the females are busy carrying nesting materials, all three females are trying to make nest, and then tearing it apart. They do that for one week, then everything stops, no nest, no eggs, no babies, and that is all for the year. Frustrating. I wanted to know how to qualify to participate."

**RSP Answer:** Sometimes birds take a while to settle in. You should be observing breeding by the second year. Now is the time of year to act. Review what you're feeding your birds and hours of lighting. Use a good siskin mix — if you need help with that we can help. What is the cage size or are they in a mixed flight or cage? What type of nest have you provided? Sometimes females like to free lance and build their own in artificial greenery. Try coco fiber and burlap strips both need to be 4" in length. Use both materials. Mount your material to the front of the cage. Siskins really don't like to use material from the cage floor. You will be surprised how changing your methods and location of nest and materials will have more positive outcome this season.

**Comment:** "I have been raising finches; Gouldians, Self-colored Societies, and recently, Zebra Finches since 1988. Breeding success has been good as has the average longevity of my birds as well. Part of what attracts me to the Red Siskin project is the possibility of adding meaning to my hobby by helping to ensure the survival of a threatened species."

**RSP Response:** That is exactly what brought RSP breeders together. It's not just a hobby but a commitment by those ready for that next step — adding meaning by ensuring the survival of a species by managing a healthy population within the US and working with others who feel the same way.

**Question:** "I believe there is some licensing I will have to pursue in order to be able to have the Red Siskins and I would like to know how to initiate that process. How difficult is it to become licensed? What are the initial costs? How am I evaluated as a prospective participant?"

**RSP Answer:** No federal license, per se, is necessary to have Red Siskins. But prior to buying or keeping siskins

you will need a USFWL *permit*. You will have to check with your state's Fish & Wild Life or Agriculture Department, though, and inquire about any existing rules your state may have. When that is covered, then apply for the Federal permit next. Each state has different requirements. Ask for the paperwork and review their questions. The Federal permit is the same for everyone nationwide.

**Question:** "Hello, I am a breeder of finches and have always wanted to be involved in the red siskins. I have small aviaries that are not in use right at the moment that measures 3x2x3 feet. I would love to find a pair of siskins, and join the club. Can you please tell me how I can go about doing this and helping these little jewels for their future."

**RSP Answer:** Those wanting to join the project are asked to fill out a questionnaire. The information is given to a Review Panel which consists of RSP breeders. The questionnaire of 20 questions asks for information on your husbandry skill, what you have managed, and how you have done so. We also ask for a person who can verify your information. It's quite painless and could also be used as a prerequisite for your USFWL permit. We feel our questions are focused more on your interest and husbandry skills present and past. If you are accepted as a volunteer breeder you're invited into RSP's private internet group to learn and strengthen your skills. You do not need to hold a permit prior to applying but will not be issued birds until you do acquire your permits.

Part of Red Siskin Project's education program is answering your questions.

Email or send your letters to us. Our email address posts to our group at:

**redsiskinproject@earthlink.net.**

