

Neville Connors

A Celebration of Life

29 March 1951—6 January 2014

Words by Sheryll Steele-Boyce

In the early afternoon of 6 January 2014, Neville Connors passed away after a short battle with melanoma cancer.

Neville was born in Atherton, Queensland, the youngest of four children. At the age of 10 his family moved to Grafton, where he enjoyed his schooling at St Joseph's and a variety of sports including surfing and hockey. From an early age Neville kept a variety of animals including Budgerigars and finches.

As a teenager and younger man, he spent time in New Zealand, surfing—in which he showed particular talent, however he chose not to follow that path as a career. When he returned to Australia, he joined the Navy for a few years before returning to Grafton to work as a clerk with the railways. It was around this time that he purchased a property so he could further develop his interest in animals.

A keen sportsman, Neville was highly regarded in Grafton for his expertise in hockey and played until just a few years ago. He coached many junior and adult teams over the years including taking the men's and women's A-grade teams to premiership victories. He was presented life membership of the Grafton Hockey Association—at his funeral service the senior members formed a guard of honour in respect of his contribution to the sport.

When he met his wife Enid (Noddy), they discovered a mutual bond of devotion to family and birds. They married on the property known as Casuarina Parrot Gardens at Ramornie, near Grafton.

Neville and Noddy were deservedly proud of the establishment of this picturesque property which started from humble beginnings, with them living in a caravan with their first children and a couple of Glossy Black Cockatoos!

A true family man, Neville was very proud of his sons Sonny and Haley and daughters Ellanie, Shalanne and Tullara. Just prior to Christmas, Neville escorted his eldest daughter Ellanie to her marriage to Gavin—a very special family occasion indeed.

Over the years Neville and Noddy bred and handreared thousands of quality birds, including a wide variety of Australian and exotic parrot species. Their greatest success was with breeding Glossy Black Cockatoos.

They authored a world-first title on black cockatoos—*A Guide to Black Cockatoos as Pet and Aviary Birds*—which was translated into Czech.



Neville presented at numerous bird conventions and clubs around the world, including the International Loro Parque Bird Conventions of which he was the Australian convenor and representative.

The passing of a great man brings deep sadness and emotion. However, we are left with memories of Neville's good humour, gentleness, smiling face, enthusiasm and courteous manner.

Neville showed incredible courage during his last days and periodically communicated his progress via phone and email and received visitors in good spirits on this difficult journey. He even attended the Northern Rivers Aviculture Society (NRAS) Christmas gathering after being hospitalised a few hours earlier, and caught up with close friends for meals, enjoying a special family dinner the evening before passing.

In one of his emails to his concerned friends he stated—*I have had a good life, don't owe any money and have always done my best to be totally fair in any and all dealings...Would I love to be able to live longer?...Absolutely, there have never been enough hours in a day, let alone days in our lives. Living in the bush I am constantly reminded of how beautiful nature is and try to take time to look, listen and smell such joys.*

Enjoying wonderful friendships, travel, our work, and most of all a beautiful family, has made my journey a pleasure trip.

Such was the attitude of this man who will be remembered by many for his dedication and contribution to bird keeping and aviculture, and the ongoing education and communication that paved the way for many to improve their bird husbandry skills and breeding techniques. Neville was well known for openly sharing and assisting other breeders. He also travelled the world visiting many fellow breeders, bird collections and zoos, providing an opportunity to develop wonderful and long-lasting friendships.

Neville and the late David Harrison pioneered Australia's most successful parrot convention—AVES. The first event was held in 1993, and the most recent in 2013 was the 11th convention with Neville at the helm, despite the beginning of his illness. Supported by Noddy and NRAS members, Neville had developed a successful formula for the AVES Conventions and continued to lead in the organisation of speakers—a large majority from overseas—and convention proceedings, including meet and greet dinners, aviary and other tours and a full program of education with entertainment (supported by the talents of a very gifted and entertainment-orientated family).

The finale of each convention was enjoyed by all who attended a tour and barbecue at the beautiful Casuarina Parrot Gardens. And if that was not enough, the following day a lucky few would

head off on a 10-day outback birdwatching tour, accompanied by Neville. The attendees of AVES 2013 will not forget that last event in Neville's company, particularly those on the outback tour, just days before he was aware of his prognosis.

NRAS members are committed to continuing AVES into the future.

It is a sad time to reflect, however it is important to take a moment to ponder the achievements and contributions Neville Connors made to the bird keeping community internationally during his life-time.

Sincere condolences and thoughts are with Noddy and her family at this time. Thank you for sharing and supporting a wonderful man in whatever he did!

Neville, you have touched many and will be remembered by us all with sincere fondness.

Thanks Nev!

RIP

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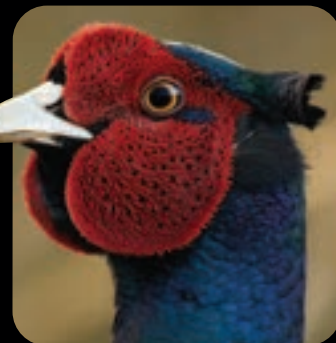
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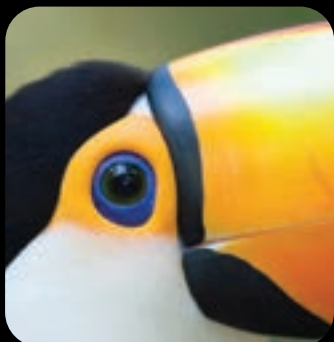


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