

Prision Visit

On the 28th of April 2008 I had the pleasure of talking to two groups of inmates at the Mount Gambier prison in relation to their budgerigars, husbandry, training of the birds, clipping of wings and claws etc.

Each inmate arrived with their cage in hand and budgerigar / budgerigars within

There are approximately 30 inmates with budgerigars. The maximum they can keep are two and they are not supposed to breed with any.

Each session went for 1 hour and there were 8 guys at each session.

It was apparent that the 'no breeding' rule is not strictly adhered to, as where owners had two birds, the second was often the offspring of one very productive hen who just happens to nest in a little cardboard box (no next boxes allowed) placed on edge of the pet cage where a drinker would normally slot.

A number of the guys have expertly placed shade cloth on or around or over these cages to shade the birds from the sun.

Each and every bird that I sighted was in excellent health and were in the main quite tame and obviously the joy of each inmate.

Sadly there is an occasional loss, some of the guys clip the wings of the birds to enable them to have access to the courtyard. This is where the major losses occur, would you believe magpies see these birds on the grass, swoop and yes that is it - gone.

Others do take flight but seem to return by the next day and often back to the cage that they departed from.

One question that was asked of me was which bird that I thought would be the best in show if they were competing against each other .

I diplomatically suggested that each bird was a winner in the way that they are cared for and they way they have an impact on their owners and congratulated them all on being such wonderful carers of these birds.

I was given a nice card (attached) and a wooden carved blue tongue lizard - absolutely wonderful.

Yes, I am hopeful of doing more presentations for these guys at some other time. It was pleasing to see how caring and appreciative of their birds they are and also of the time that I was able to give to them.

Nigel Tonkin