

## BIRD CARER REPORT 2010

Travel went according to plan with birds having a good feed prior to boxing and departure, arriving in the Rockhampton bird room about midday Thursday in excellent condition. An observation on this year's team was the abundance of pinfeathers with blood in them suggesting that completion of the moult was delayed this year, possibly due to above average temperatures. The affected caps were left alone until arrival in Rockhampton to give these pinfeathers as long as possible to mature and resolve themselves, with some work on the caps needed on the Friday to remove blood stains from about half a dozen birds where blood feathers had ruptured sometime during the previous week. This argues strongly in favour of moving the national show to June, about a month later than currently held. That would fit snugly with the new ring issue date of September 1 and alleviate issues associated with bringing birds into show condition during the month of May.

Odd numbered classes were judged on the Saturday. The normal greens were an outstanding class of birds with the top row (first seven) all of magnificent quality. The winner was truly exceptional. Everything I had heard about that bird prior to the show through the grapevine was true. The blues were strong but they dropped off very quickly to weak birds down in condition with many having body colour suffusion (a fault) permeating the ground colour on the back of their necks and wings. Green sheen was prevalent on the black eyed selfs, with quality in the class dropping off sharply beyond the first three. Breeders need to get buttercup yellow ground colour back into that class and judges need to enforce that by placing birds appropriately. Two of the birds filling lower places appeared to me to be grey yellows, but it was hard to get close enough to be certain about that. They were obviously penalised for colour. The real fun will start if suffused is ever accepted as a class in the nationals since the black eyed self standard and the suffused standard simply describe opposite extremes of the same mutation. The albino class was very strong but many had markings (on wings and cheek patches). I only noticed blue suffusion on one of the lower placed birds. The first three albinos were exceptional. The remainder of the top row were very even and all were very strong. This was our most successful class on the day, with a fourth and a sixth, both provided by the same breeder. Congratulations. Most of the greywings had problems of some kind with the top birds not particularly good examples of the variety in either body colour or markings. Congratulations to the SA breeder who was second in that class with a very large greywing. The judges went for style and outline in the spangle double factors. The impact birds were somehow absent from this class this year. The opaline AOSVs gave us the best individual result to that point in time with a first. This was truly an outstanding bird and was so far in front of his opposition that he won despite missing his two longest flights on one side. The first three birds were excellent, but the first was the one with impact and power. All of the lacewings in the top row were excellent birds, with a third for SA in that class a very credible effort. The first three yellow faces could only be described as extremely powerful. The dominant pied class was the strongest of the day with strength right down to about number 10. As a whole they were an

extraordinary group of budgerigars. Any of the first four could easily have won that class. Crests continue to improve in depth since becoming a class, with the first two presenting as big birds. Nice crests were carried by about the first 10. The Team finished the day in a credible fourth position. As bird carers we were proud to have benched many of these birds.

The show continued on the Sunday. The grey greens were extraordinarily powerful right down to about number 13. Any bird in the top row (places 1 – 7) could have been national winners in the recent past. Greys were strong right down to 11 or 12, with the first bird truly massive, as were some that followed. The top four lutinos presented with strong exhibition features as well as exceptionally good varietal features. Clearwings were described as being of exceptional size, variety and with modern feathering, especially along the top row. As a specialist clearwing breeder I felt that a couple in the top row were too heavily marked to have been placed as high. This sends the wrong message to any novice breeder taking on this beautiful variety, and disappoints the purists who have been breeding clearwings for a very long time. However, the first clearwing was easily the best of that variety that I have ever seen – a truly remarkable budgerigar well ahead of its time. The first five cinnamons were strong, especially the first bird. One state had their bird disqualified for three toes pointing forward. The first five opalines were powerful, with a sudden drop off after that. Number 1 was an easy winner? Again, one state had their bird disqualified for three toes pointing forward. This may emerge as an increasingly controversial issue once the larger perches are in, since the wider perches appear to promote that. All of the show cages at Rockhampton had been fitted out with the standard perches. Second and third in the clearbody class was an unexpected surprise for the South Australians. This turned out to be the best class of the day. Some of us felt that this class has gradually lost its previous strength over the past few years. The fallows were a nice class, especially the first two. The first 10 spangles were super. We were nowhere near competitive in this class. The first recessive pied gave SA its third win of the show. Judges described it as an easy winner with excellent body size, shoulder and feather direction. Hens were as strong as ever and this year we had two great hens, both finishing on the top row at fifth and sixth. That helped us finish with a flourish.

The carers did make several substitutions over the two days. For whatever reason, on the day, reserve birds were stronger in the spangle double factor, lutino, opaline and spangle. We erred in hindsight by not acting similarly for the recessive peds. We left the bird in that had heavy markings on its brow, and we learnt from that mistake.

Success this year was due to having a bird in the top row for each of green, black eye, greywing, cinnamonwing, opaline AOSV, lacewing, fallow, dominant pied, recessive pied and crest, AND, two birds in the top row of seven placings for each of the albino, clearwing, opaline, clearbody and the hens class. National winners from SA were clearwing (Kakoschke & Rice), opaline AOSV (Kakoschke & Rice) and recessive pied (Peter Simic).

Placings for the states and zones were: Victoria first (500), NSW second (407), South Queensland third (353), SA fourth (307), WA fifth (258), NQ & CZ sixth (248) and Tasmania seventh (237).

John Mulley