



The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

(Founding in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)

Aviculturist of the Month Mr Stan Sindel, Fairfield NSW

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Stan Sindel Interviewed by Peter Phippen

Peter Phippen

Well, Stan, as a Past President of the Society you are a well known avicultural identity. Just how long have you been keeping birds?

Stan Sindel

I've been keeping birds since I was eight years old. I'm now 46, so that makes 38 years.

Peter Phippen

That's quite a lot of experience. Briefly, can we go through your progression over the years? You've now got quite a collection of parrots; what steps have you taken to reach this status?

Stan Sindel

Well, as a kid I started with finches; [Java Sparrows](#), [Zebras](#), the general run of finches, and I gradually built up to better quality finches.

Then I went into [Budgies](#) when I was about 15 or 16 when they were really booming, just prior to the Australian [Pied Budgies](#)' appearance on the scene. I followed along with Budgies then into [African Lovebirds](#). By the time I was 21 or 22 I had a fair collection of Lovebirds.

Then by the time I was 26 or 27 I finished building this house and I had a few quid to spare, so I started into the rare parrots and I've been on them ever since.

Peter Phippen

So you have built up your collection here now over about 20 years?

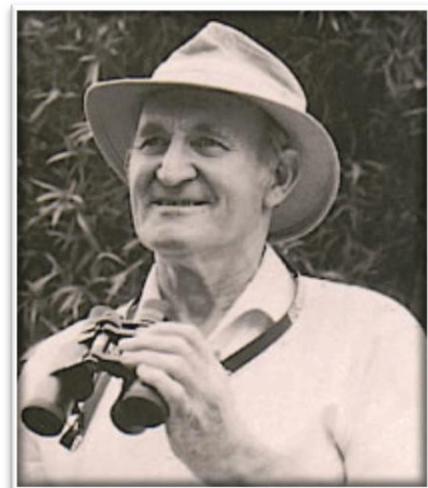
Stan Sindel

Oh yes, these sort of collections don't come overnight. When people try to get them overnight, that's when they come unstuck. You've got to build them up slowly as you go, as you can afford it, as your bird's breeding pays for them. When you try and do it out of your own pocket, your own private income, there's only one way you'll go and that's down.

You've got to consolidate your position. I've seen a lot of so called aviculturists start at the top and then work their way down. While you are breeding the birds that you've got, to trade for the better birds, you are gaining necessary and essential experience to then successfully go into the rarer birds.

Peter Phippen

Yes, I think that most of us would agree with you, and I think that most of us do start with Zebras and Budgies or something cheap and simple and work our way up in gradual steps.



Mr Stan Sindel was awarded the **Order of Australia Medal Australia Day Honours List 2003**. In recognition of all the work Stan has done for Australian Parrots.

Stan Sindel

Yes, and you learn an awful lot along the way. We are all learning, all the time and I think that the aviculturist who has learnt everything is a fool. You know I still often amaze myself at the mistakes I make.

Peter Phippen

Don't we all? How many aviaries do you have in your complex here, Stan?

Stan Sindel

Well to tell you the truth, I'm not really certain of the exact number, but it is in excess of 100.

Peter Phippen

That's an awful lot of work. Can we get an idea of the size aviary that you recommend for each type of parrot?

Stan Sindel

Yes, well, I don't advocate large aviaries. I prefer small enclosed aviaries, for small type parrots.

I'd suggest a suitable size for [Neophemas](#) would be say 7' x 3' x 7' high, fully roofed and open at the front and walled on both sides, so that the birds can't have any contact with their neighbours.

I prefer an aviary 12' long for [Rosella](#) sized birds.

[Indian Ringnecks](#), up to say [Alexandrines](#), an aviary about 18' long.

[Eclectus](#), [Greys](#) and so forth, about 18'-24' long.

I find [Macaws](#) are adequately housed in something about 24' long, about 6' wide and about 9' high. A larger aviary for these types of birds is okay, but of course space is always a problem, and mine breed in the size I mentioned.

I like my aviaries to be roofed, facing north, fully walled on both sides; all my aviaries aren't like this, but this is the way I like them now.

I like all aviaries to open into a walk-way or safety flight, and I like the safety flight to be walled up to above eye level so that people can't see in and the birds can't see out - kids, dogs and movements outside don't disturb them then.

With longer aviaries I have to roof both ends with an open strip in the middle. An 18' aviary would have say a roofed 6' section at each end and an unroofed 6' section in the middle. This is to let the light in. A long aviary gets too dark at the long end if it is fully roofed. I don't like the open area, but you have to let light in. The birds don't like the dark. I know that fibreglass lets the light in but I don't like it because it makes the aviaries too hot, and some of the birds that I have just cannot take the heat, particularly the [Kākāriki](#), and the [Blue-wings](#), and even the Lovebirds.

If I was building new aviaries I would endeavour to make them fully roofed, but with adequate light, without using fibreglass. Out west here it gets too hot and I still lose a lot of young in the nest on those really hot days around Christmas. The best way of roofing that I've worked out over the years is to have them sloping up towards the front of the aviary with flat fibro sheets covered with corrugated iron. This keeps the draughts out, the tin reflects a lot of the heat, and air can circulate through the corrugations.

Peter Phippen

Okay, well that gives us a few things to think about. Now, I saw an awful lot of different species of parrots in your aviaries there Stan. In fact you have a better collection than the zoo. What birds do you have?

Stan Sindel

I do have a fairly large variety of parrots; both Australian and foreign. They range in size from African Lovebirds and [Fig Parrots](#) up to the Macaws. Virtually everything that is available in-between that is legal, I keep. I'm definitely not prepared to take in anything that is not legal. And that's about it.

I've got a lot of South American varieties, a lot of Asiatic varieties, African Greys and most of the rare Australian parrots. A few cockatoos - I haven't ventured into the [Black Cockatoos](#) - I don't feel that I could do them justice; and I am particularly interested in colour mutations. I have been for 30 years. This applies to both Australian and foreign parrots. If there's a colour mutation available at a fair price, I'll buy it. Particularly lovebirds - I was fortunate to get a couple of blues early in the piece when they first appeared and I've done well with them. I've produced a lot of blues, and the ivories, and hopefully this next season I'll breed the greys. Whether I do remains to be seen.

Peter Phippen

With regard to breeding, I guess that you are pretty happy with your results over the years. Are there any that you've had any trouble with, anything you have not bred yet, any special problems?

Stan Sindel

I don't think that any of us are really ever happy with our breeding results. I always feel that I could have done better.

Time is my big enemy. I feel that if I could spend more time with the birds I could breed more young ones.

I find that breeding results are directly related to the weather. I find that here with such a varied collection that if I have a bad season with some varieties it's often a good season with other species. One compensates for the other.

I believe that you get out of the birds what you put into them, if you're lucky. I think that diet is one of the major factors for breeding success. Put birds in an aviary with dry seed and expect them to breed and you won't get much. But give them plenty of green food, vegetables, fruit, sprouted seeds, all the other essentials, and you've got a chance.

One of my biggest problems in my early years was keeping birds alive. Once I learn how to keep them alive then I can usually breed from them. I mean, there have been birds that I haven't been able to breed from - the [Green Rosella](#), the Tasmanian Rosella - I couldn't breed them, but I think that it's our climate here. Every spring they'd come into beautiful breeding condition and I'd think that they are ready to go this year, and then by the end of October they'd go into a moult, because in Tassie they breed late in the season, and by the time it's that late here it's too hot and they go into the moult.

I don't keep [Scarlets](#) here because I never have any success with them, a fact that amuses most parrot men. I have had them and I have bred them on many occasions, but I don't feel that I've had a lot of success with them.

Apart from that I've bred most birds that I've kept, that is, if I pair them up. I have quite a few birds here that I haven't ever put into a breeding aviary to breed from - I just don't have the room... and that's another problem. But most I've kept I've bred from, even if I don't feel that I've done well with all of them. There's been the odd one that I haven't bred from.

This year I bred the [Jenday Conures](#) for the first time - they've been very elusive - it's taken me many years to breed from them - but I persisted with them and eventually got there. That was very pleasing, I can assure you.

Peter Phippen

You started to mention the subject of diet there before, Stan. Can you tell us what you feed your birds? Anything special?

Stan Sindel

Yes, I don't give them the normal dry seed mixture, which surprises a few blokes. I feed a very poor seed diet; and a few blokes feel I starve my birds. All the small parrots up to the Indian Ringnecks are fed only [French White Millet](#) - that's the only dry seed that they get when they're not breeding. But, every day each pair would receive [apple](#), [silver beet](#), [raw green peas](#), [milk arrowroot biscuits](#), sprouted [sunflower](#) and [wheat](#) seeds, soaked [corn](#). I believe that these softer types of foods keep the birds in good condition. If they're still hungry when they have finished this they can fill up on French White Millet seed and this won't put any weight on the bird. I cannot breed from fat birds, and I find that if I keep the birds at a reasonable level of condition I get reasonable breeding results.

I think that unlimited sunflower seed for the smaller parrots is fatal. The only time my birds get dry sunflower seed is when they are rearing young ones. Then I give them all that they can eat. When they have young in the nest I increase the quantity of softer good - the sprouted seed, the green peas, etc.

The larger parrots are a different proposition. They are fed on a basic sunflower diet; that's the cockatoos, Eclectus, etc. They also receive sprouted seed, the green food, etc., and the cockatoos and Macaws also receive [peanuts](#).

I also give brown wholemeal bread to all my birds - they love it - especially when they are rearing young. The Lovebirds really go for it.

Peter Phippen

Talking about Lovebirds, you were telling me before about a colony of Peach-faced that you have that give unbelievable breeding results. Can you tell us more about them?

Stan Sindel

Yes, well there are eight pairs in that aviary. They are all splits and they have the potential to throw 12 different colours, and they've thrown them all except the greys.

Anyway, last season they flew over 130 young between them. They produced over 160 that I could tell what colour they were by their pin-feathers, but I lost about 20 or so of the last round on one very hot day that we had. I had even lifted the lids off the boxes, but it was a very bad day and that was the end of them. But that is the best breeding colony of Lovebirds I have ever seen. Twenty young per pair average in one season is a lot. In fact, I don't think that you could find a colony of any type of bird, even Zebras, who give these results.

Peter Phippen

Right. Well have you any real problems in your aviaries or is everything running as smoothly as it seems?

Stan Sindel

No, like everyone else I have problems, and one the biggest ones at the moment is, believe it or not, mice. For many years I have been an advocate of sand floors in aviaries and I had many years of success with them. But now I am busy concreting all the aviary floors because the mice have got so bad. In the last couple of years I have tried breeding in aviaries with just concrete floors and I have had the same results and had no bad effects, so I am doing the lot now and I hope this will get rid of the mice. I put a sprinkling of sand over the concrete floor and this had the same effect and it makes the cleaning of the aviaries a lot easier.

My other problem is time, or rather the lack of it. I just don't have enough of it to do the things that I want to do with my birds. I've put everything that I can to make looking after the birds easier and less time consuming in my aviaries, like an automatic sprinkling and watering system, the aviaries are all drained, I have seed hoppers in all the aviaries, but there's just so much to do that I just don't get the time that I need to do anything extra that I want to do. I really have too many aviaries for one man to look after unless he can do it full time. My wife and my mother help me, but I still have to spend three hours every day just to feed and water them. I think that you have to spend time on your birds to get the results.

There's one other thing that I should mention, that isn't a problem with me now, but I think that a lot of people do have this problem and maybe don't know it. Every year before I put my birds down to breed I clean out all my nesting boxes and logs and spray them with an insecticide to kill any small parasites that may be hiding in cracks, particularly the red mite. These little blighters can cause a lot of trouble. The small amount of effort involved in this exercise is invaluable. When I've sprayed the receptacles I put a layer of plane shavings in the bottom as a liner. I wet it down and it holds moisture for many months.

Peter Phippen

Well, Stan, is there anything else that you'd like to mention?

Stan Sindel

Yes, there's one other thing that I would like to mention and that's a bit more to do with feeding. I give my birds what I call a domesticated diet. I only feed them food that can be bought regularly so as to be able to give the birds a consistent diet. I don't rely on any natural supply of foods - seeding grasses and so forth, because with the quantity of birds that I have I couldn't possibly get enough of it on a regular basis to supply all my birds. Sprouted seed, green peas, and the other things that I give them, give them the same nutrition and vitamins that they would get from wild foods, and I know that I can give my birds their regular diet every day because I can always buy it. It's not that I have anything against seeding grasses, etc., but you just cannot rely on these for a consistent and regular supply. I feel that it is best to get your birds used to a regular domesticated diet so that they are getting their nutrition daily instead of an irregular supply of natural foods because if these natural foods are not available, then your birds are missing out on necessary nutrition. I think that that's about it.

Peter Phippen

Stan, on behalf of all the members, thank you very much.

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