



The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)

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

Princess Parrot Mutations *Polytelis alexandrae*

(ASNSW Meeting - April 2014)

Steve Fitzsimmons interviewed by Graeme Phipps

Graeme Phipps

We are going to talk to Steve about the Princess Parrot *Polytelis alexandrae*, which would have to be one of the top birds of aviculture of all time. In Europe they are known as the Princess of Wales Parrot, the Queen Alexandra Parrot, Alexandra's Parakeet, etc. They are named after Princess Alexandra of Denmark who later married the Prince of Wales (King Edward VII) of England. There was a move a little while ago to rename it but it came back to the Princess Parrot.

How long have you had Princess Parrots Steve?

Steve Fitzsimmons

I have had them now for about 25-30 years. I started with normal green mutations and then progressed through to other mutations.

Graeme Phipps

How many mutations are there in the Princess Parrot, roughly?

Steve Fitzsimmons

You have got your blues, you've got your cinnamons, your white lime, yellow lime; you've got your cobalt, you've got your silvers; and then you have got all your various splits from these mutations, etc.

Graeme Phipps

Wow, so quite a range of mutations available. Which mutations have you concentrated on in your aviculture?

Steve Fitzsimmons

I started off with the greens and then I bred the yellow mutations. I went to yellow lime and then yellow lime to white lime, then yellow lime/white lime to cobalt; then cinnamon, silver, and I am progressing from there. I am currently trying to cross the cobalt with birds that are carrying the blue gene hopefully to produce a cobalt/white lime.

Just as an example, the bird in the photo on the right is a white lime which actually has a blue shoulder and a purple rump. I am trying to get the cobalt colour but with the white lime. When they say lime in a white bird the lime is actually blue; and in yellow birds it is actually green.



White Lime (hen)



White Lime (Cock)

The bird in the previous photo is a white lime hen. The hen doesn't have any blue on the wing, only a bit of the lime (the blue colour), under the wings. The cock birds vary. Some have just the purple on the rump and some have just the blue on the wing. The idea is to try and enhance the colour to the rump.

Graeme Phipps

Sometimes with mutations they can be a bit of a worry. Sometimes they don't breed as easily as the normal birds breed and the normal does breed very well. Do you have any trouble breeding any of the mutations? Has there been any challenges?

Steve Fitzsimmons

With the white lime having the blue factor they tend to have the strength too so I don't seem to have a lot of problems with the actual breeding of the white limes as compared with the normal green birds. The problem is the success rate in relation to numbers. With the green birds and the blue birds the nests are often five but with the white limes the average is down to about three with some of them. Having said that, you get some birds that just produce a good five every time. The white lime cock and hen is not really a good combination to put together long term; it is just because the genetics of these birds are very good because of the colouring, I put them together for this year but I will out cross them again next year.

Graeme Phipps

So they are highly related?

Steve Fitzsimmons

Colour-wise, white to white is not good together. It was because of their size that I put them together. They are a good size so I wasn't particularly worried about that. If they were small birds I wouldn't be doing that.

Graeme Phipps

Are they easy to sex? I mean with the normals there is no problem determining the sex but are there any problems because of the mutation?

Steve Fitzsimmons

The Princess parrot does take a little time to sex. Normally at about five or six months of age they do start to give themselves away by starting to display courtship habits. They don't get the colour until they about 18 months of age when you are just coming up to the end of the breeding season.

Graeme Phipps

So to hazard a guess, how many Princesses would you have bred in the 25-30 years?

Steve Fitzsimmons

At the present I have got about 25 Princess pairs down at the moment. This year wasn't a great year due to the weather. From 27 pairs I had about five pairs that actually bred, the others just laid eggs but the eggs they produced were clear. I put it down to the humidity and the way the weather was because generally the pairs that didn't breed are normally good breeding birds. When you have 20 pairs that are doing the same thing it is generally something in common that is not right. The five pair that I did breed they bred well.

Graeme Phipps

Do you have other mutations that you would like to show us Steve?

Steve Fitzsimmons

Yes. The bird in the photo on the right is a cobalt - the colouring of the wall at the back of the aviary there doesn't enhance it. You can see the colouring on the wing there; that determines the cobalt.



Cobalt (Cock)

The idea of the cobalts too is to put the cobalt, which is the dominant bird, with a normal blue. This will produce a

percentage of cobalt and everything else will be normal, it doesn't produce a mix of any kind. So the idea is to pair a white lime with the cobalt because the white limes carry blue it could produce a cobalt from which is split to white lime. Eventually I hope to produce a white lime with the cobalt wings and the purple rump.

That is a yellow lime cock bird in the photos on the right with the green on the wing and it has the purple rump. The female is at the back, she is a yellow bird that just carries the green under the wing (the lime).



Yellow Lime (c) & Yellow Lime (h) behind

Graeme Phipps

How are they housed? They are not in suspended aviaries are they?

Steve Fitzsimmons

No they are in conventional aviaries. Those aviaries there are three metres long by 900mm wide and there is a walkway at the back. At the front they are half shade cloth because I am in a valley on acreage and all that the birds can see is the Hawks, the Butcherbirds and the Kookaburras; and everything else. So with the shade cloth if they are on the perch they are okay and if they are on the ground and they get spooked they can fly up and they feel settled.



Yellow Lime (Cock)

Graeme Phipps

Have you had any other challenges during your years of breeding Princess parrots? They are a gorgeous bird.

Steve Fitzsimmons

There are always challenges. If the birds are being fed right and everything is right and they don't breed, you just have to put it down to the weather or the hawks or something that is just not right with them. If something is not working you have got to keep making changes, but if something is working, don't touch it.

Graeme Phipps

Are the nest boxes you are using all standard for Princesses or do you use different types of nest boxes?



Cobalt (c) and Blue (h) top right.

Steve Fitzsimmons

The Princesses are not too fussy but they seem to like the grandfather clock style boxes that I am using. There is an inspection hole at the side and when I walk through the walkways I just lift it up and look in and often the bird will come out or I just move them aside a bit so I can check the nest.

I use a heavy grade wood shaving - a bit coarser than sawdust in the bottom.

Graeme Phipps

Well thank you Steve. That was a very interesting interview and I am sure enjoyed by all our members.

The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW): <http://www.aviculturalsocietynsw.org>

Contact Us: <http://www.aviculturalsocietynsw.org/contactUs.php>

Join us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AviculturalSocietyNSW>

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/#!/AvicultureNSW>

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in the Avicultural Review and/or on this website do not necessarily represent those of the Avicultural Society of NSW. No responsibility is accepted by the Society, the Editor, the author/s, Webmaster and/or Administrator/s for the statements, opinions and advice contained herein. Readers should rely upon their own inquiries in making any decisions relating to their own interests.