

***Interview with 2013 National Clearbody Winner,
Phil Edgar***



Phil has been a member of our Society for quite a long time now and will be seen at quite a number of shows not only winning trophies but also there to steward, clean up afterwards etc. He is always quietly spoken and a true gentleman and is a very valued member of BNSBS.

Question: First of all Phil, congratulations on your first National win. What is your history at the Nationals?

Phil: Last year I had a 7th in the Lacewing and a 11th & 17th with Clearbodies. The year before I almost had a Light Green Cock go away, At our zone selections, he went straight to the front and just sat there and right at the end the judges noticed he had three forward toes so they knocked him back. He would have been my first one.

Question: A little about your history. I know you joined the club with your son Jason – was that your first interest in birds or did you have them as a child?

Phil: We were living at Zillmere at the time and since about 1990 we had colony budgies out the back We got a second hand aviary out the back and got some colony bred birds from the Kipparing Markets. They used to breed happily enough. Then Jason joined the Sandgate Club, unbeknownst to me - he saw an advertisement or an application in some magazine or other, he joined up in 1995 and I used to drive him to the meetings. After awhile, I thought bugger this, I may as join as well so the following year the partnership was formed and that continued until about two years ago. He was fading off in interest over the years and I gradually took over and I just left his name there but basically it has been just me for about the last ten years or so.

Question: what is Jason doing now?

Phil: He is still doing his uni and he has set up his own collar tracking device. For his degree he had to do something with dingoes and koalas on Fraser Island so to track them, he and a couple of buddies had an idea of making their own radio tracking collars When we first started we used to go to the shows together but his interest has waned in the birds.

Question: You have been in Bracken Ridge area for awhile now:

Phil: This will be the 11th year

Question: How are your aviaries constructed?



Phil: the flights are 6 metres long and about 3.6 wide. The original bit was only 2.4 metres wide. It was one of Rory O'Loughlans flights, he told me it was 3 by 6 metres so I laid a concrete slab floor 3 x 6 and when I put the aviary on it, it was only 2 x 4 so I put a walkway across the front of the flights. I then extended the concrete a bit to make a decent walkway.

The original bit was like the old garden shed tin with corrugated iron roof. The added bit

on the front is fibro on the ends and half way up and then wire on the front. Unfortunately it is facing the wrong way. . The breeding room is 3 by 3 metres which has been extended out to 4 x 3. Again it was an old garden shed and it is facing east whilst the flights are facing south.



In the breeding room I have 24 wire cages and in the first mentioned shed I have five flights which I just use for flying the birds. At one end I have a flight for young hens, a flight for old hens, a flight in the middle for any sellers, another flight for young cocks and the fifth flight for old cocks.

Question: If you were able to change anything with your aviary, what changes would they be?

Phil: I would probably do what Heather Farren-Price has done and that is buy a double garage and get rid of all I have at the moment and start afresh instead of bits and pieces. One of the sheds was already here and I just got another one for my tools, mower etc. and then Rory's one. Definitely if I was going again, I would go whole hog, purchase a double garage and do it properly



Question: With your breeding cages, you mentioned they are all wire ones, are the trays underneath?

Phil: all but 4 have trays underneath. When Keith's brother Robert sold out, I purchased 11 of his cages and that was the basis I got another 5 from Linda Wood when she sold out, and then

when Len Golightly sold out I got another 4, one was a double and 2 singles which had the trays in them so I made up brackets and lowered the trays.

Question: Some people don't like wire cages because they think birds can hurt themselves on the floor – have you experienced any problems?

Phil: the only thing I did have go wrong was about three years ago. I would go down to the aviary in the morning and there would be a dead bird with its legs chewed off. This happened a few days running. I knew geckos were down there but I thought they wouldn't chew the legs off. So Jason had some night vision cameras that he used for tracking animals so we set a camera up in the aviary on night. The next day when we viewed the footage and there were two rats that had been crawling on the tray under the wire bottom. In the week before I had lost about four birds so the mice were the culprits. I madly went round blocking up all the holes and I have not had a problem since. I don't mind the wire cages at all.

Question: When is the normal breeding season for your birds?

Phil: It used to be from about March to December but when they changed the ring issue date to September, I modified the season from about 6 weeks prior to 1st September. Last year I had some of the previous years rings left over so I started about June.

Question: And now the rings will be going back to January. It won't be next year but in about a few years.

Phil: Yes I heard that. I noticed this year there are a few clear eggs whilst others have lots of fertile eggs. I noticed the National winner has six fertile eggs so that is good.

Question: Your seed mixture – what is it?

Phil: I just get the AGM bags from Allora from northside Produce. It is reasonably priced and that is the only brand he carries so there is not much choice. It has been okay and I have had no problems with it. For soft food I use parrot mix with extra sunflower in it. I soak this with a small amount of bleach in it overnight and then rinse well. I add chicken starter, 1 teaspoon of Avian Vitaliser and one teaspoon of Soluvite D. I probably feed that every second day to the breeders. In the flights I feed Silverbeet, corn on the cob, grass runners, Lilypilly branches, dandelions, thistles, anything that grows in the lawn I just dig it up and give it to them.

To the water, I use a vitamin supplement that has vitamin D and calcium in it. I give that to them for a couple of days once a month but mostly just fresh water. In the breeding cages, I put Avicleans in the water. There is also Murphy's vitamins I mix in with the food. I usually have calcium blocks in the breeders. I used to give a lot of cuttlefish which my neighbours obtained for me but I haven't had any for awhile. Mind you when the birds eat the cuttlebone, it leaves a bit of a mess. I give grit from the Produce store, I give them the medium grade. I have tried the red grit which the birds like but it does stain a bit.

Question: What varieties are you flying in your aviary?

Phil: I am concentrating on the Lacewings and the Clearbodies. I also have Normals and Dominant Pieds, Opalines, a few Cinnamons and some Opaline Cinnamons. I did have Spangles and Recessive Pieds which I did quite well with but they started going downhill and I was getting into the Clearbodies at that stage and you have to use your Normals with all of them so I thought the Recessive Pieds could go. At the pre-selections I had two years in a row of getting 4th placing but they went down. I think they went down from putting too many Pied to Pied matings and not enough splits or Normals being used. Also, when I saw the Recessive Pieds Henry George was breeding I thought I am wasting my time continuing with them.

Question: Where did your Lacewings originate from?

Phil: the first couple I got was from Alan Eustace who got his from the Bill Silvertand dispersal sale. And then I got a couple of Kevin O'Callaghan birds from the auctions and some from the Jennings. The Clearbodies I got mainly from John McAllister and one or two from Les & Fran Percy. The mother of the National winner I got from the O'Reillys' which I purchased at an auction a few years ago. The father of the winner was from a bird bred from a John McAllister bird that was also split Lacewing. I use my Lacewings as if they were Lutinos when it comes to my Clearbodies. So I mix and max the two varieties. By using the Lacewings this way, it saves me from having another variety like the Inos in my aviary. I have had no problems, I have also used Normals and Opalines with the Clearbodies. The father of the National winner was a Clearbody Light Green Opaline split Lacewing and the mother was a Normal Sky Clearbody. He was the best out of the nest – there was another Green cock and two hens that were average looking. I have the winner mated to a half sister, same father but a different mother so hopefully I will get something good out of it.



Question: What features are you trying to improve on your National winner?

Phil: He has the head and length but has no meat, when you grab him he is all feather so I am trying to bulk him up. The one he is paired to has a bit of meat on her, not as good in head but body is better. I am trying to keep the head without the losing the length. He has the best head out of all four of that nest. He has a half brother that almost as identical but a lot shorter and not quite the blow on the head. He won the Gold Breeder award for Clearbody last week at Pine Rivers.

Question: What about your Lacewings – what are you working on to improve them?

Phil: Size mainly and a bit more head. Markings are not too bad with the Normals being a bit better than the Opalines. Unfortunately all my birds are a bit short except the Clearbody winning family. They have slightly longer bodies but

definitely longer tails. They look longer when you put them on the perch. I have been told the tails are a little too long – when they start touching the floor they are getting too long as it throws the bird out of balance.

I want the length with the head blow.

Question: Have you attended any Nationals?

Phil: At Coloundra in 2006 I went up for the Saturday to watch the judging but I couldn't find where the birds were being displayed anywhere. I could see people going up and down this path and I wondered what was going on there but I didn't actually ask. It would have been good to see them but I missed out. I didn't make it to Toowoomba as I had to work on the Saturday and was too buggered on the Sunday. I had phone calls from different people telling me about the win but I didn't make it up there.

Question: so what were you feeling when Heather Farren-Price was the first to call you with the good news?

Phil: Heather rang first and I jumped up and down and screamed. I didn't think it had a chance to get a first. You told me it went straight to the front and stayed there. Actually at the preselection Wayne Robinson told me I would probably run in the top three and somebody else said it would be in the top five and I thought that would be alright. When you said it went straight to first and stayed there I thought it was terrific. I thought there would be better birds there than mine.

Question: Some people don't put their birds in the preselection and zone selections as they are worried the ordeal affects the birds breeding ability. You haven't experienced any problems have you and how did you treat him when he arrived back home?

Phil: I checked yesterday and he has six fertile eggs there. I gave him a few weeks off and paired him up in the last week in July. When I went up to collect him and the other bird, I heard there had been an amount of sickness in some of the teams so Garry Menzies gave me some Sulphur to dose them up for a week which I did.

Question: Are you just concentrating on the varieties you have now or is there another variety that interests you?

Phil: I would probably like to stay with the ones I have at the moment but with a few more Normals. I got three from Henry George over the past few auctions which included a Sky, a Grey and a Greygreen. I have been to Henry's aviary with Heather a few times but I have mainly purchased lacewings at those times.

Question: How are you finding your time in the Open section now?

Phil: It is harder to win a prize but I am basically not in it anymore for that reason. I just put a few birds in to give the judges something to look at. I don't care if I win or lose as it is just something for me to do.

Question: Have you got any other hobbies?

Phil: I don't think so? I watch a bit of V8 supercar racing. I have built a few holding cages every now and then. But nothing hobby wise as it is a bit hard when you only have two or three hours in the morning or afternoon spare. I sometimes work days and sometimes night but hopefully soon I will be able to retire from the work force.

Question: Have you ever had thoughts of becoming a judge?

Phil: No, I have been stewarding with most of the judges and seen some of the problems they experience. I was stewarding with Henry George last weekend in the Novice section and he had birds in the wrong classes, and some nestfeathers being broken etc. Just the thought of having to judge a class of twelve birds is too daunting for me. Stewarding enables you to look at the birds closely, you hear all the comments and you get to ask the judges why they placed the birds the way they did

Question: Where can you see the fancy going in the future?

Phil: It is a bit of a problem as there are not a lot of younger people joining. Also lack of land size is an issue. I was speaking to a chap at work the other day and he has just purchased a home in Fitzgibbon and between his wall and the neighbours it is only about 30cm wide. You basically have six inches either side of the fence and in most cases you can't even fit in a Hills Hoist so that combined with council regulations it is pretty hard.

Fortunately I have never had a problem with my neighbours here. The neighbour on one side used to work with Neville Spencer and the neighbour on the other side, their daughter went to school with Bill Silvertand's daughter Nicole. I know I was only here a few months and had just put the aviary up and the neighbour came knocking on the door and we were talking about the birds. Unfortunately she gets that disease of ringing in the ears, I think it is called Tinnitus, she wanted to know if it was her ears playing up or were there actually birds in the backyard.

Question: so you don't have any problems with possums or anything feral?

Phil: No possums but definitely cats. I have had the odd bird of prey sitting eying them off. The aviary is not double wired but because there is a walkway at the front of the flights, the other birds cannot get to mine.

Question: For you seed in the breeding cages, do you use Mason jars or dishes?

Phil: I have got d cup dishes that hang on the back in the middle and grit in dishes on the base. The babies climb up and along the perches to get the seed.

Question: Do you limit your birds to two rounds per year?

Phil: Usually, occasionally I have had three but I have found that is when a bit of French Moults comes into it so I try to limit them to two rounds.

Question: Do you foster much?

Phil: Yes I do. Last year I had three or four hens that had 10 to 12 eggs so I fostered some eggs and chicks under some pairs that had clear eggs. I don't put up fosters intentionally. A few years ago I did but now I just pair up and that is it.

Question: Do you pluck vents at all to increase fertility?

Phil: I have done on some of the buffier feathered birds but I have only plucked two birds this year. I usually check to see but there was one of Jamie Wrights Lacewing that was really buff so it got the treatment but normally I don't even bother.

Question: How many rounds of clear eggs would you let a pair have before you have had enough and split them up?

Phil: One last year there was an O'Callaghan hen that I really wanted something out of. The first round was clear so I let them foster again, so I let the 4m go again and a second round clear so they fostered again.

Question: You didn't try swapping the cock bird to see which one may have been infertile?

Phil: It was starting to get too late as by then it was around Christmas time and getting too hot. I mated her again this year to a different cock and again clear eggs so I think I may have to give her a miss.

Comment by Keith Gough to Phil: We have a large Double Factor Spangle cock which has been to about four or five different hen birds and each time the eggs are all clear. We let him foster but it made no difference. I said to Neville Spencer, take him to your place and if you can get anything out of him, we will share the nest – six fertile eggs the first time.

Phil: I have done that myself, I have tried changing the position in the breeding room as some birds like the area to be darker, some like it lighter. Some like being on the top row whilst others like it on the bottom.

Question: With the club, do you see any way of making it more interesting either with meetings etc.

Phil: Well I think you are doing all the right stuff now. Every month you have a different topic and you have different speakers at the meetings. You can only do that for so long before you start repeating yourself and the more experienced members think gosh I have heard this before I am not sure what to do. You need to get the younger people into it.

Question: It is hard these days as the younger ones have work, mortgages, kids playing sport etc.

Phil: I had a couple from Brighton Danny & Susan Foley and I think they have joined the club. They have bought a few birds from me and they are new into the game and very nice people. It is people like them that we are trying to encourage. I try to help people in the fancy.

Question: You have to try and help fellow fanciers and new people into the fancy haven't you?

Phil: that is what I thought when you were saying about lending birds to other fanciers and sharing rounds – I don't know why people don't do that more. I know I have done it a few times. If you are friends and you have birds sitting in a flight and someone else has a suitable mate, go for it.



far left: half brother to winning Clearbody. Good depth of mask and shoulder. Good markings

Left: Young 2013 rung Lacewing. This bird shows lots of potential with good shoulder and markings



Left: Phil looking into his flights. Please note the walkway he constructed to give him more room to look at his birds and to keep the native birds away from the flights.

I thank Phil for taking the time to answer my questions and to thank him for the very kind donation of two Clearbody hens for a raffle at our February 2014 Annual show. Pictures of these two hens are on the next page.

Raffle birds : These two Clearbody hens have been kindly donated by Phil Edgar for a raffle prize at our February Annual show. If you would like a ticket, please call me on 07 3886 869. Tickets are only \$1 each. Thank you Phil for making these wonderful birds available to fellow fanciers.

This is your chance to win two lovely hens from the 2013 National Clearbody Champion breeder.



I would also like to thank Henry George for donation a Grey Cock and an Opaline Sky hen for raffle prize at our September Show. These were truly lovely birds and at the time of writing this magazine, I sincerely hope I win them. To get quality birds for a \$1 raffle ticket is the best deal going.

It was the same at our Lawn Show when Brian Hollingsworth donated a lovely Light Green cock from the Home/Howard breeding line. This is a fantastic way for fanciers to get quality stock into their bird room at a very minimal cost and to raise money for the society at the same time – Thank you gentlemen.