

Interview with GRANT & TAMMY BEUTEL

Barry & Diane McClennan, Keith and I travelled up to Toowoomba at the end of August to interview Grant and Tammy Beutel for this magazine issue. As you know, Tammy and Grant won the Greywing award at this years National which was held in Adelaide and we were interested to find out how these Novice breeders ran their set up.

Grant and Tammy were very hospitable welcoming us into their home and providing

morning tea. They later joined us for dinner at the Toowoomba Golf Club so besides having great food we had great company.



Carol: Grant, you were telling me your father used to be in birds, Laurie Beutel, I remember him in the old Southport days so how did you all get involved originally?

Grant: Originally, Dad used to work with Neale Love and I had a pet budgie and then I caught another one which happened to be a Greywing. The first breeding cages we owned we purchased of Neale's brother and then I joined the Gold Coast Society. I would have been about 8 or 9 years of age. My grandfather built the original aviary and it was something we did together. Later on, Dad joined in and we left Gold Coast and joined the Southport society.

I would have kept on showing until I went to university but Dad kept going with them for the next 20 years. I have lived all round Queensland and then Tammy and I bought our first house 7 years ago and we worked on the garden etc. for a few years. I always kept an interest in Dad's birds when I visited home but then he decided to get rid of them

I am blaming my next door neighbours for reigniting the budgie bug as they had a couple of budgies sitting in their back yard. About four years ago I played around with them again.

Barry: Whose birds did you start back with?

Grant: They are pretty much hotch potch.

Tammy: We built the aviary and wanted to test it out with birds bought of Peter Brown. We got 4 Greywings and 1 Spangle. They were Miller bloodline and we paid \$20 to \$25 each for them – as I said we wanted to test the aviary out and to see if I liked the budgies as well. They were our starters.

Grant: we probably spent the first 12 months playing around and we went to a few shows and auctions and you could say most of the birds have common bloodline. There wouldn't be too many birds in Queensland that don't have Henry George bloodlines in their birds. We managed to get some birds from Jim Le Strange (NSW) and Garry Armstrong (Western Australia). We also have some McAllister, Frampton, Horrobin, Capper/Gazzard, McClennan and Seagrott bloodlines.

Carol: Your winning Greywing has what bloodlines?

Tammy: She comes from one of the \$25 hens we bought from Peter Brown and the father is a Ken Seagrott bird. His grandfather won the 2006 Greywing National so he had good bloodlines and we got him for \$70

Carol: I keep telling fanciers they don't have to pay big money for birds, you should settle for the siblings of the good ones.

Grant: We just kept putting them together all the time as they kept giving us beautiful Greywings. We are presently trying to develop our own line from those birds.

Carol: And what do you think of the birds Tammy? Are you as involved as Grant?

Tammy: I am a fanatic now. Grant knows what he is going for. I have been with animals all my life as I have been showing stud beef cattle so I have an eye for animals. The budgies are my babies as I pamper them.

Carol: They are not too pampered are they Grant?

Grant: (loud laughter). They are looked after exceptionally well.

Carol: Now you say you have only been at this home in Highfields for a few years, I would like to know what changes you made to the Warwick aviary to the one you have now.

(below: the shed inside the shed; Louvered windows for air flow and light)



Grant: The Warwick aviary was only 4.5 x 2m tin shed which was divided into a flight and a breeding room. With the new aviary, we have sat the old aviary inside the 4 bay shed. We have split the two bays and fitted second hand refrigerated panels and lined the roof. At Warwick we had 12 breeding cages and here we are running 18. So we have the old aviary sitting inside and behind that is our breeding room. Four panels of four breeding cages, and a couple of extras. We have 4 utility cages, 3 nappies and a cage we use for our cull or show birds.



Barry: Do you use wire or wooden breeding cabinets?

Grant: We use wire cages – probably when I first started breeding budgies, the wire cages started being used. I actually find it easier as I can move cages around depending on the season to increase the airflow and out of the weather.

Tammy: We can actually move everything out of the aviary for cleaning etc

Diane: Yes we like the wire ones as nothing can get behind the cages – you can see through them.

Carol: When is the main time of the year you breed your birds?

Grant: We can breed all year round, however I try and let the weather dictate whether I breed or not. I have found the fertility goes through the roof once we get rain and storms go through. Although the birds are highly domesticated, they still have their natural instincts.

Carol: I agree with you as I have had many new fanciers complaining to me about lack of fertility or chicks' dead in shell and I keep telling them wait until it rains and your problems should sort themselves out.

Grant: Tammy and I both have a degree in Wildlife Management and that is how we met. We both spent four years at Gatton University together and have both worked through Western Queensland and seen the wild birds and they are highly driven by the weather. You can spray the birds and everything else but it is not the same as the rain.

Barry: Who does the pairing up of the birds? You or Tammy?

Grant: It is a combined effort. I would have to say it is a true partnership between the two of us. Most of the feeding through the week is done by Tammy as I don't get home early enough but on the weekend I am the one that cleans everything. Tammy is the one that sprays the birds up for the show but I am the one who spots the birds up and preps them. We both agree on a pairing we are probably right and then if somebody else comes along and agrees then hopefully we are on the right track.

Carol: Do you each have your own special varieties or do you agree on all?

Grant: We both have our favourites but it is not actually so much in variety as it is in colour. Tammy prefers the Greys and I prefer the Blues. We are pretty much fairly similar – the only thing we would like to do is to get into Dominant Pieds. The hardest thing is that we are still only just starting out and trying to find the birds without paying a fortune to start with.

Barry: When you pair up do you go visually or pedigree?

Tammy: It is a combination really. We go by the pedigree, we go by visually and we also go by if they pair up naturally in the flights. We have only just recently started looking at the feature as well. We will take a feather out of the bird and look at its shape and size.

Grant: We like birds with width of feather and length as well. I have some birds out there that would be referred to as a Double Buff but we also have the finer feathered birds.

Carol: Do you prefer to use finer feathered hens rather than cock birds?

Grant: No actually it is the other way round. I think that when the cock birds are too heavily feathered it is hard for them to mate correctly. We do pluck the feathers but still some with the broader feathers still have trouble mating.

Carol: Do you think that the broader feathered birds are not as energetic as the finer feathered birds and therefore do not mate as energetically or as often?

Grant: they are the ones we call our “sooks”. You can pick them as nestfeathers, they are the ones who will not get out of the nest box etc. I think most of our birds, because they are flying in together, have some idea of what they are doing. The biggest mistake we have made is that when we first moved here, we separated the males from the females and those birds that came through at that point of time are the ones we are having trouble with.

Carol: So they didn't learn the tricks of the trade

Grant: Yes, you know we now actually fly a couple of older pairs out with the youngsters so they can show them what has to be done. Now with the rain coming through you see the birds going through the motions whereas when we had them separated, the birds struggled to know what to do.

Carol: Getting back to your National winning Greywing, you say it came from a Peter Brown/Ken Seagrott birds mating – you say you put those birds together so how many generations down is this winning one?

Grant: This is the first generation. The hen was five years old and she was still having full nests. We kept pairing those two up over the years due to the quality of chicks they were producing.

Grant: The reason I purchased the original five birds was for that hen. I knew she was something special compared to the others. I saw the sisters that Peter Brown had bred. The cock bird is a tiny little bird but he has the bloodline in him.

Carol: So how are you using the offspring this year?

Grant: We have used the young in the past and we have nieces and nephews. We have been struggling to actually find good outcrosses we have been putting these birds back to our Normals. So whilst we have had the same pairing each year, the siblings have been going to our other birds.

Barry: Is it Greywing to Greywing matings or do you use splits?

Grant: We are just starting now to use our splits and having a look at the quality of the splits you would never think they were carrying Greywing. They are holding their own in their own varieties.

Barry: Normally what we have found is that if you continually put Greywing to Greywing you do lose size.

Grant: That is primarily what we are trying to avoid.

Carol: So when you paired the winning Greywing, what faults were you trying to correct in the mating?

Grant: I actually wanted something with better spots. She is probably the worst one in the whole family spot wise. I prefer my Greywings to be darker rather



than lighter. When she went through her first moult, we thought she was a dilute and we actually showed her as a dilute on two occasions. The first time the judges agreed she was a Dilute but after the second moult she came through with darker markings.

Left: National winning hen is mated to this cock on the right

Carol: I think it is very hard for judges these days with dilute being put into everything and it affects the body colour, cheek patch, markings etc. and judges just do not know what they are looking at.

Grant: I actually prefer to have my Greywings with darker markings. I want them with definite grey markings. It is the same with our Cinnamonwings, I want them to have definite brown markings. We have been producing some Cinnamonwings with really dark brown markings which is great. Our problem now is trying to buy Greywings for outcrosses that don't have Cinnamon in it.

Barry: Really? (this was said sarcastically as Barry has been having the same trouble)

Carol: What are your chances of winning Lotto? Now Tammy you say you do most of the feeding. Do you give soft food etc.?

Tammy: They have Golden Cob Supreme Budgie Mix because we don't have the time to mix our own and then we provide a bowl of striped sunflower seed mixed in with groats. Every afternoon I make up the soft food mix and that is mainly Rob Marshall products mixed with some Vetafarm products. It is convenient because if we need something it is available within a couple of days. We used to use Nestmate and since that was taken off the market we used Egg & Biscuit but we found the drop in the protein content from the Nestmate to the Egg & Biscuit pulled our chicks back.

Grant: What we actually do now is mix a small amount of Insectapro in with the egg and biscuit to build the protein up because if you look at the wild flocks they eat termites, a hell of a lot of insects as well as seed. Now we are using Insectapro the birds are improving again.

Tammy: To that we add the Rob Marshall Turbo Boost, a little E Powder and F Vite. So we stick to the Rob Marshall programme with just a couple of changes to suit us. To that we add the carrot, kale or whatever we have got. We have not got around to building our vegie patch yet to grow our own vegies. We don't like supermarket vegetables as it means they have been sprayed. When we were out at Warwick, from our vegie patch they used to get beetroot leaves and everything else. I guess it comes down to the amount of time we have.

Barry: Besides giving ours grated beetroot we add a small amount of garlic powder to assist in preventing mites.

Tammy: The Turbo Boost has a garlic oil in it and but we have been thinking of increasing the garlic without going overboard. When we have paired the birds up or breeding we give them soft food daily or when we are getting them ready for a show. Other times they may only get it once or twice a week.

Carol: What about additives to the water?

Tammy: We use the Rob Marshall programme there to. We use Quick Gel which is brilliant stuff. It is a multi-vitamin with Electrolytes. It has saved more birds than any antibiotic you can think off. When a bird comes home from a show, it will get it. Every couple of days when they are breeding they get it so they will continue feeding their young. They also get Megamix which is a citric acid to clear out the gut, and they also get Durofos and Isoford. We have actually found that Rob Marshall's products have made an improvement in the health of the birds. I can see the better feather quality. It is expensive but we both work full time. They also get iodine bells, red grit and cuttlebones. We also use the Rob Marshall water cleanser once a week but I clean the drinkers thoroughly every day. We also have found the KD will clean the birds out as well. The day after they are a little down but they pick up very quickly.

Grant: We don't crop feed, I don't believe in it. If the hen can't feed properly her daughters will feed the same way. The hens know when they want to wean the birds better than I ever will.

Tammy: We find that with the soft food mix, I feed them about 3.30pm and the hens will feed their chicks so they have a full crop, then early next morning I take the soft food dishes out. The birds are sitting there waiting for me to give them the soft food.

Carol: You are on acreage, do you feed any branches?

Grant: Not at the moment as the biggest problem we have around here is the Indian Minors and they are carriers of feather lice. We have a lot of grevilleas and stuff like that planted and once they grow up a little we will start giving them some of that. The other thing is that when we are trying to get them into the

mood we hang some Eucalyptus branches around but we are very concerned about the Indian Minors and their feather lice.

Carol: You said you are flying about 150 birds at present – is that your ideal number?

Grant: We are probably a little crowded at the moment and I don't like crowding them. I actually think that by not crowding the birds we produce more hens.

Tammy: We mostly breed hens which is good for us. Our hens are much better than our cock birds.

Grant: It is just one of those things. If you have a look at a wild budgie flock, if the flock is low in numbers to build it up they produce hens. These hens then breed at three months of age. As soon as the conditions start to dry off and the food resources start to come back, they start to produce more males. Essentially they are just trying to pass on the genetics to the next generation. How they achieve that is that it is just a natural fact "what is the best to pass on in the genetics". If you don't crowd your flights you will produce more hens. You are more likely to pass on your genetics through the female rather than the male. Crowded flights produce more males and smaller birds.

Carol: You weren't at the Nationals in Adelaide when you won, did you ever think it would win?

Grant: We think it was about two years ago when you and Keith came up to the Toowoomba club and you showed the National photos. You said "if you had a bird better at home, what is it doing at home"? And Tammy and I just looked at each other. We didn't have the confidence to put the birds in.

Barry: We try to instill in our novices to bring their birds along to the club selection and let the judges decide if it is good enough.

Grant: We knew she was pretty good after about the fourth or fifth judge told us to make sure she was at the selection show. Her sister is a better bird than her but she dropped her tail.

Carol: So are you planning to go to the Nationals in Perth?

Grant: Perth is on the cards.

Tammy: We both went to the Nationals in Toowoomba and Grant helped with the videoing. We were involved in it.

Carol: So being involved with the Toowoomba Nationals, did it wet your appetite to attend more?

Grant: I have been to the Nationals in the past as Dad was involved with the Nationals at Broadbeach so I had been involved.



Tammy: It was nice to meet people from all around Australia.

Carol: I noticed you have really deep nest boxes, about 8" deep, why is that.

Tammy: We used to have smaller shallower nest boxes when we were in Warwick and the aviary used to face west. We found the heat was building up in the nest boxes and causing French Mould. When we moved out here and set the aviary up, the breeding cages we have large openings so we built the nest boxes to cover the opening. We have found that they are much better with more air flow.

The boxes are about 8 inches deep with the concave bottom and we put sawdust on the bottom and ventilation holes around the top.

Carol: I noticed you have no hesitation in putting Yellow Face Greys to Normal Greens. Is it bird first and variety second?

Grant. Pretty much. I actually don't mind having Yellow face in the greens as it gives a little more intensity in colour. We have a lot of double factor Yellow Faces and we deal with them. I think to have those Yellow Faces running through the greens gives them a little more quality.

Carol: I notice you have some Spangles – is that a line you will be concentrating on?

Tammy: It is just happening. We like Double Factors. We want to find ourselves a couple of Double Factor white cock birds as we have a couple of hens there.

Carol: So you want to go the quick way to get double factors and not the longer way round of putting Spangle to Spangle and getting approx. 15% Normals, 50% Spangles and 25% Double Factors.

Grant: We have to a point. The whole thing now is to get the varieties we want as we only have 18 breeding cages. I believe you can have too many varieties - Usually with the spangles it gives up 3 varieties, and I like using Opalines to increase the size in them. I don't mind using the Spangles to other varieties to get body size.

Carol: What varieties do you have at present?

Grant: We have Spangles, Opalines, Greywings, Yellow Faces, Normals, Cinnamons, Dilutes and we want the Dominant Pieds. It is a case of any of the Dominant Varieties we can breed with our Normals without ruining them. We want the Dominant Pieds for the size.

Carol: You said earlier that with the way your aviary is set up you could breed all year round. Do you like to give your aviary a break?

Grant: We have only had this set up for 18 months now. We prefer not to breed over summer but last year we had to do that to get birds breeding. We like to do about three rounds per year.

Carol: Do you do much fostering?

Grant: When we have to.

Tammy: We do tend to have large nests of ten fertile eggs so we have to foster them out.

Carol: Do you cull your worst chicks off to the pet shops in the area?

Grant: One of the biggest problems we have is that the pet shops will only take the sparrows. The whole thing is that people have the misconception out there that the show birds are not fertile. It is the line that is the problem. I know what lines I have here and some may only have one or two chicks per nest whilst others will have eight. Birds are hard to sell. We prefer to sell our stock within the club and therefore we know where we can obtain out crosses. We are probably a little more fortunate in the fact that we are both working and we can let our birds go for roughly \$25.

Carol: Now what do you look at when you are culling your birds?

Grant: I usually look at the visual quality. I usually keep the show bird and then a spare, so if the show bird doesn't breed, hopefully the spare will. It is what birds that are going to move us forward or what lines produce. It is always interesting to get a few sets of eyes over them. Tammy and I have a look and then we will get someone else in to look. We have culled hard and fast to start out with and we are now producing numbers.

We look visually but also at fertility. Families that are really fertile we will keep them to put over birds that are not as fertile. Unfortunately I tend to persist

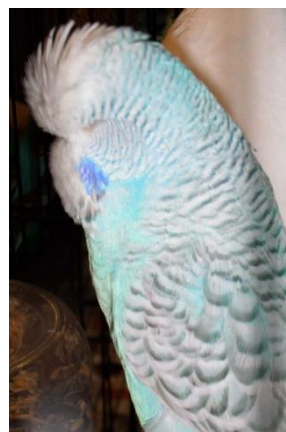


with birds a little too long especially birds that are really good. I have a lovely Double Factor sitting out there that has only ever produced two chicks.

Carol: I know what you mean. Keith has a Double Factor Melanistic Spangle which is a lovely bird but we had it for

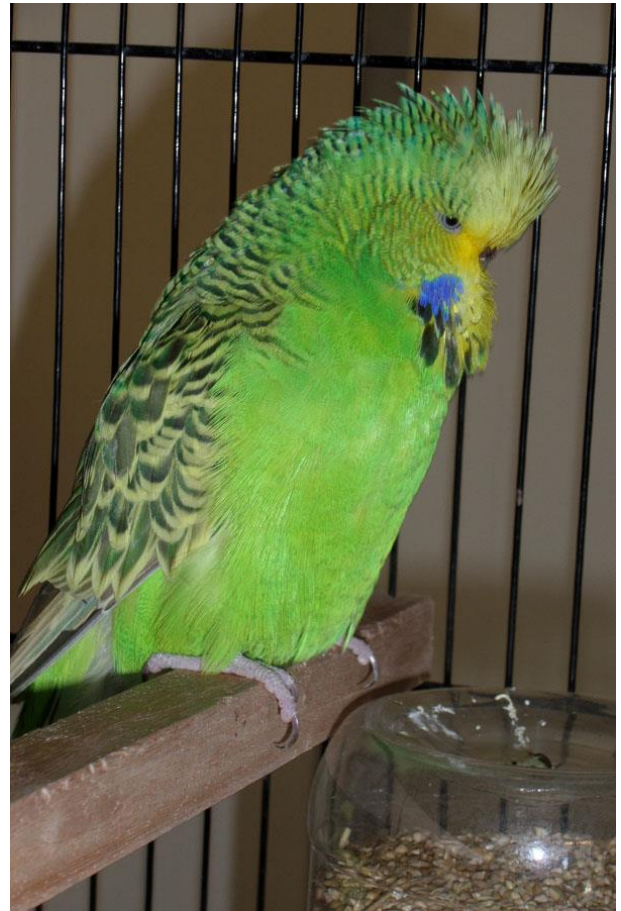
two and a half years and it would not produce. We put it on the top row, middle, the bottom, left corner, right corner, good light, bad light, you name it. We decided to try it with a shared nest with Neville Spencer who could put two blades of grass together and produce chicks. Low and behold! Chicks in the first round. He is a genius!

I sincerely thank Grant and Tammy for passing on their knowledge, being so friendly and hospitable to us.



The Beutels with their logie & rosette

A young Greywing coming along in the flight



Above: Brother and sister to National winner



Breeding cage set up: Seed in 1 container and a Combination of groats & sunflower in other.



Seed dishes inside a large Box in flights with red grit on side