

### **Speaking with Jamie Wright**

Carol: Jamie, I am here to congratulate you on winning the Lacewing class at the 2012 Nationals held in Geelong in May. What a wonderful thrill it must have been for you. Is that the first bird you have had in a South Queensland team?

Jamie: I had a bird in 2002 in the Opaline Normal class and he ran 10<sup>th</sup>. The feedback was that he looked like the little brother to the birds that were on the top row but he was in the team and I was happy with that. I had three go away this year – I had an Opaline Any Other Variety and a Spangle and then the Lacewing won his class.



Carol: I remember you coming to the bird club when you were very young – when did you start out in the fancy?

Jamie: I started originally when I was nine years of age until I was about fifteen or sixteen and then I gave them away partly because Dad was in the Army and it was practically impossible to keep the birds. Then Kelly and I got married in 1995 when I was twenty two. I said to her wouldn't it be nice if I put a little aviary in the back yard and she naively agreed to that.

Then Brian Hollingsworth came over not long after that and just gave me a whole heap of birds which I proceeded to slowly kill off due mainly to me not knowing how to properly look after them. Every problem I could have had, I had. I had red mite, Coccidiosis, Canker you name it. It was a great training ground to make sure I looked after the birds better later on but I really felt for Brian as he had given me these birds in good faith and I slowly knocked them off.

Carol: With all these birds dying, when did you get established again?

Jamie: I think it was a slow process of just learning how to look after them and not just knowing what an illness is but knowing the fastest way to approach it. The birds that came back from the Nationals came back just a little light in body weight and as they had just finishing their moults and this cold weather has arrived it had made them a little soft. So they came straight into a warm room downstairs where they will stay until the weather remains a little more predictable and then they will go back out to the flights when they would have finished their moults and they will be fine.

Carol: What colour varieties do you fly at the moment?

Jamie: Normals, Opalines, Opaline Cinnamons, Spangles, Dominant Pieds and of course the Lacewings. The Lacewings right from the word go I just love them especially the Yellow Lacewings. That is a bit of a joke as I won the Nationals with a white Lacewing. A couple of people had asked me if I will get rid of him knowing I prefer Yellows but I think I will keep this one.

Carol: How many breeding cages have you got going?

Jamie: It starts out at the beginning with the seas with fifteen and that builds up to twenty. I don't have a lot of room so as I am building up to twenty some are on the floor and the bench so it starts to get a little crowded. But one year I kept it at fifteen and trying to get all the hens rotated through the breeding cages I found I didn't actually stop. I have found the birds and I need that break. I just find that breeding is full on and my family is very tolerant of that but if it continues for too long they just get sick of it. The season needs a definite end and I need to tell them what that end will be so life can start returning to normality.

The season starts in August or September depending on when the hens come into condition and usually ends about February. Anytime after Christmas it would just be a couple of straggling pairs down to about ten or less.

Carol: How many birds have you got flying?

Jamie: It gets up to about 200 so I have to keep culling out all year so as youngsters come out of the nest and they don't look in anyway promising, they have to leave straightaway. I like to get the numbers down to about 70 by the time I start again.



You don't need a large aviary to breed Champions



Carol: so what size is your aviary?

Jamie: The entire bird room is about 3 metres by 6 metres which is divided into half the breeding room and the other half is flight. I fly the hens and cocks together all year round. The only time they are split up is when they are in holding cages for sale.

Carol: How do you go with current Council regulations?

Jamie: I made sure when I built the aviary that it is built to all Brisbane City Council regulations with how far it has to be from fence lines etc. The shed did come with Council approval documentation which made it a lot easier. All I basically had to do was prove I put

reinforcement in the slab. The laying of the slab for the shed was a bit of an ordeal by itself as we cannot get a truck in the back yard and the cement taxi had to back its way up our very steep driveway almost to our door and then we had to wheel barrow all the cement out so was a 6 x 3 metre shed big enough? Most definitely!

Carol: Your breeding cages, what is their construction?

Jamie: Always all wire with some trays underneath. So far it has worked well. My breeding cages are from the late Cliff Scroggings. I was speaking to him at a Pine Rivers Show and he asked me how things were going. I told him it would be great if I had a few more breeding cages and he invited me out to take some of his. He was a great guy, I remember visiting him when I was a kid. It was nice that he liked the idea of being able to pass on something of his. I remember leaving his house that day in a Datsun 120Y which was almost overflowing with wire breeding cages, it would have looked ridiculous.

Carol: Is your lovely wife Kellie interested in the birds?

Jamie: No she is not interested. In fact I joked when I went to Geelong by saying I will text you with our results but if we win I will call and we both had a bit of a giggle. So when the bird was awarded the first placing I rang her and she told me I can't talk at the moment I am in a shop. I told her I wouldn't take up much time I just wanted to let you know we just won the National and she said "I am coming out of the shop now". Kellie and the kids had decorated my home office with streamers, pictures and balloons for when I got home and it was nice that they were excited about it as well.

Carol: How many Nationals have you been to now?

Jamie: I think the first one was Coloundra in 2006 and since then I have been to Rockhampton, Canberra and Geelong. I will go to Toowoomba and may make the trip over to South Australia but I don't think I will make it to Western Australia. I love going to the Nationals as to be honest it was difficult in the beginning as the South Queensland contingent of the National Championships is quite small so there are a lot of people you don't know initially. But if you just put yourself out there a little bit, sit on someone else's table, start up a conversation, have a cup of coffee with someone it is not difficult. What a great way to make friends with a mutual interest – it is fantastic.



That is how Brian Hollingsworth and I finished up making the trip to Victoria and see some of the aviaries down there, it was solely through the Nationals.

Carol: Is Brian the main person who has helped you?

Jamie: Yes I met Brian when I was about eleven or twelve years of age. I was walking past his house and knocked on his door and asked him would he mind showing me his birds. He

very good naturedly did and to this day I can tell him which birds he had in which cages and he will admit I am right. He is probably the biggest single influence. He is a very generous person and to the point where if you do accidentally kill something he has given you, all is forgiven and there are no hard feelings. Brian has been very influential but you know I have been members of the Brisbane & Northern Suburbs as well as Pine Rivers and I cannot think of anyone in those clubs who has not been helpful in anyway.

Carol: Getting back to your Lacewing, what bloodline does that go back to?

Jamie: That is a very interesting question. Originally it went back to Bill Silvertand, a



Lacewing cock and some Lacewings that Brian gave me and that formed the basis. Then I introduced some 100% Pilkington birds that I got from Brian Watkins and Joy Bormann and that produced some really typey birds that had great colour. Then went I got out of birds last time, one of those hens was a great breeder but too old so I gave her to Greg & Jean Horrobin

and they bred with her and that was part of their Lacewing Line that was linked to Henry George's so when I wanted to go back into Lacewings I knew exactly where to go to get some of that bloodline. The unfortunate part was that he had become very expensive but I don't regret it as it has obviously worked and the other people who

had quite a lot of input into that line have obviously done an excellent job with it.

Carol: Now you went down to Victoria last year with Brian Hollingsworth to get some birds, how are they working out?

Jamie: Well it all started with Brian and I deciding to go on a bit of a road trip every year, just a couple of boys going to see some bird places. It started with the Northern Rivers and looked at some breeding there. I had some frequent flyer points so I said lets do something bigger and I had wanted to go to Victoria to see the Sheppard and Flanagan stud for about ten years.

We had already met Alan Baxter who is President of the Budgerigar Council of Victoria and one way or another we got introduced to Colin Flanagan who was quite happy to have us visit. We constructed our visit around four Victorian studs and look the people were so hospitable and it is really a very pleasant way to have a short holiday and I cannot recommend it enough. In fact some people who thought we had driven down instead of flying were trying to organize aviary tours through Dubbo and to Ian Hanington etc. You could almost drive around the country visiting bird studs because once you know one person you know about twenty.

The birds have bred really well and the thing we liked about those birds was the fact that they have a different feather. They are very well tapered birds into the tail and very good contrast with colour between the body colour and wings and did not have the same body colour suffusion in the Normals so that was very appealing. Whether or not it was just the birds we happened to look at or buy but it was certainly an influencing factor.

Carol: Have you ever thought about going overseas and seeing the birds there?

Jamie: I have thought about it but it is a longer term goal. That would be a holiday Kellie and I would take and her tolerance of me visiting birds studs would probably wear thin. At the moment I am having such a good time meeting people around the country that I probably don't have the yearning to travel overseas.

Carol: Your seed mix, do you mix it yourself?

Jamie: I haven't been but I have just started. I use a base mix and I'll add more canary and the reason I started doing this was because I had birds that started emptying the Mason jars with seed all over the floor looking for the canary seed so I have fed a little more. I haven't offered a lot more but it seems to be working so I will continue doing it.

Carol: do you feed soft food at all?

Jamie: I do – I feed a mixture of oats, groats, wheat and striped sunflower seed. I soak it overnight then rinse it with a small amount of bleach the next morning. To that I add Budgie Starter and Insectapro. I decided to use an insect protein formula which I knew a number of finch breeders were using it. The first day that I introduced it, I planned to use a small amount in the mix to see how it went but I was thinking of other things and by accident I put two enormous table spoons of it in the mix and thought well I will just have to give it to them now and they really enjoyed eating it. I find any birds that do go a little soft I find the soft food keeps them going a little longer for me to find them.

Carol: Do you feed fresh vegetables or fruit?

Jamie. Every day and every day they get something different. I am in the fortunate position that during winter we grow chickweed all through our back yard so that is the staple ingredient all through winter. They will get almost every kind of fruit and vegetable and that will rotate on a daily basis. Leaves, the whole lot, they really do get fed like royalty. I think that is why when they do go into the breeding cages they are expected to perform well because they are being looked after well and if they don't perform then they are moved out of the stud as they will not work for you or anyone else..

Carol: What age would you pair your birds up?

Jamie: This is something I was talking to Greg Horrobin about as when I took my birds to the club preselection the Lacewing cock had already bred two rounds and I was asked well exactly how young is too young? At about eight or nine months I would consider them mature enough to go as long as they are active in the flights and receptive being chatted up then I am happy. Some hens are ready to breed younger than others whilst some take much longer.



I do add hollow logs to the flight when I am ready to start pairing the birds up and I just use it for a bit of time to pick off the hens are coming in. I have a friend who has a farm at Beaudesert and there is a tree on that farm that just drops hollow logs and they thought I was a lunatic to travel that far just to get hollow logs. I am so glad I do it because as soon as I put a log in the flight the older hens know exactly what is going on now and as soon as they

start showing interest, they are put in the breeding cages and then I wait for another hen to show interest.

Carol: Do you give any preventative medications?

Jamie: Not usually although I have used doxycycline the past two seasons using it just because I have had a few new birds introduced and rather than isolating them for rather a long time in a separate area I thought I would give them Doxycycline and they seem to have responded really well to it and are bouncing around quite well.

Carol: I know the Lacewing cock is still in quarantine, but what are you going to pair it up to now?

Jamie: I have already bred two rounds of him paired to a Cinnamon Grey hen and I ended up only splitting them up as they started fighting. He is a really randy cock bird and really likes the girls so I have a couple of Cinnamon hens that I am going to try him with this season by running him to two hens at a time as he seems to be a bird that could handle that.

Carol; How often would you put your Lacewings to Cinnamons?

Jamie: Whenever I find a bird that is appropriate as a mate. Whether I use a Cinnamon or a Normal it doesn't really worry me. As long as it is the right type of bird it doesn't worry me.

Carol: You don't find the cinnamon diluting the markings at all?

Jamie: No although that is a good point. Any bird that is used in the Lacewing programme has to have good clarity in the markings regardless of whether it is a Lacewing, Normal or Cinnamon and some of the birds that are removed from that breeding programme are birds that have smudgy markings, they haven't got the crispness I am looking for. . I mean that can be a little subjective as well as when you use buffy hens they are lighter in the wings then some of the intermediate feathered birds so it is important to know what you are dealing with.

Carol: Do you prefer using a buffier hen or a buffier cock bird?

Jamie: I had this discussion recently as I have done it both ways where the buffy he is put with a really aggressive cock bird so mating does take place with no problems but with the buffier

cock bird I am looking for the tighter hen and I find they can be a little unstable when they tread and can stop the job from being done properly. I am always a little warier with the buffier cock birds unless they are very vigorous.

Carol: do you do much fostering?

Jamie: Yes I do and almost by accident when there was one year when I got back into birds this time where I was putting down a large number of first year hens and cocks and not all of them filled eggs, hens were trying to figure out where they should lay either inside or outside the boxes, how do I raise chicks so I was moving eggs round quite a lot. So that has provided a lot of opportunity to do a lot of fostering, so if I find a pair with a clear round it never bothers me as there is always someone else with eggs I can put under them. Sometimes fostering helps gets a pair through two rounds speedily to free up cages for another few pairs.

Carol: How many rounds would you let them lay if they are clear?

Jamie: If the second round is clear after fostering eggs and they have raised a round and then their second round is clear that would probably be it. I think if they can't get their act together after raising a family then that is too bad. I would try them again with different partners after a week in the flight as that seems to bring them back in a bit..

Carol: The chicks you have bred out of the Lacewing to the Cinnamon Grey already, how are they coming along?

Jamie: they have good features but I would like to see more length in them and I think that is a struggle for most breeders now. The modern exhibition budgie is a very tall bird so when you have the bigger headed birds that are short in the body, unless you really know what is in their background and there is body length in their background then it is difficult to continue using them. To be honest, he wasn't the tallest bird on the bench either and that is an issue with him.

Carol: Do your birds have much flecking?

Jamie: I didn't but I can trace it back to a single cock bird that was a very prolific breeder. I read something a little while ago that was suggesting flecking was a sexlinked characteristic I don't know if it is but I have found that from that line I am more likely to get a flecked hen and an unflecked cock bird so possibly there is a bit of truth in that. That is something I am watching this season as there is only so far you can get on the show bench no matter how good it is.

Carol: Flecked headed birds can win the National

Jamie: Yes I heard a few people talking about the ticked birds winning in Geelong. It is only a penalty I know. I think the day the judges held a forum to talk exhibitors through the finer points of judging was an excellent opportunity to get their heads around what is going on when a class is being judged. Because I think we are trained when looking at a bird to look at their show and breeding prospects whereas a judge is not interested in their breeding prospects. So

it really helped to get a little more laser focused so when a bird has a fault, and they all do, to know exactly what sort of penalties are being applied. Even to the point of us being asked what sort of penalties we would apply ourselves, and when the question is presented to you it becomes much more confronting, oh hang on that is a good bird but perhaps that is not as serious a fault as a bird down the line a little.

Carol: it is very hard for a judge that has a super bird in front of him/her that has flecking and the next clear headed bird is a six inch wonder whatever way the judges goes he/she will be criticized.

Jamie: Yes and I think it is always going to be the challenge for judging but I really liked the way the SQBJA was proactive enough to get exhibitors in and give them a first hand look at exactly what is confronted when you are judging a class of birds as it is so much more difficult than imagined and often when you are sitting back watching a class being judged you cannot see the finer points like flights missing, toes forward , ticking etc. Judging is tough but.

Carol: Have you ever thought of becoming a judge?

Jamie: I would like to look at it in a little more detail but at the moment I probably would need a little more experience with the lesser varieties. The guys from Toowoomba made some good suggestions about borrowing a pair from somebody and giving all the chicks back afterwards. When space is an issue as it is in my position it is a little hard but I would be interested.

Carol: You were at the preselection, and I don't mean this as a criticism but as a constructive comment, is there anything you would change in the procedure?

Jamie: Look I really like the way it was run and I think the format that was run this year was much better than in the past and by that I mean the judging was happening in the same area so you could see the two classes being judged at once from where you were sitting. Because the three judges were going together as a group you could see the collaboration that was taking place between them and when they picked up on an issue, you may not have been able to see it but you could tell there was some active discussion going on.

The only criticism I would have is that at the end of each class when the judges are commenting it is really difficult to understand and hear them. From sitting in the crowd I know when you get the backseat drivers who like to comment from a distance, when you can't hear or understand the judges the critics feel justified. I think even to the point where the judges could go into a little more detail so that when three senior accredited judges have judged together and come to a consensus are making constructive comments about the top three birds it can be an instructive approach. After that we are just interested to know what the final placings were..

Carol: Is there anything else you would like to add Jamie?

Jamie: I think one of the highlights of winning the National was that Brian Hollingsworth was with me as he has been such a great mentor and friend. I was recently sent a photo of Brian



and I with the National Trophy by Barbara Baxter and it is a really special memory of that trip. It was great that she thought to send it up to me so it is great to have friends in other zones.

I thought the South Queensland team was really good although there are some varieties that could improve. There are certain varieties where we were way down the line but there were other varieties like hens, recessive peds where first and second is saying we can breed birds very well but more attention has to be paid in some of the lesser varieties.

I think if anything the lower placed varieties gives new comers an opportunity to expand into them and get a bit of traction quite early. I know of some breeders who have commenced breeding Clearbodies as they feel it is an opportunity where they could after just a few short years be representing the zone.

My advice to anyone starting out is I think it would be unrealistic to say you don't need an apprenticeship as you do. I know a lot of people advise to start with pet shop birds and this is a good way to gain experience as I know I killed a lot of good birds though ignorance but the amount of time it takes you to become really skilled in looking after them is quite large so if you breed something that is quite good it takes a lot of time. I think the older more experienced breeders are not given enough credit for the time they have put into it. I have always found them very open to answering questions and that is where club nights are fantastic.

One of the biggest challenges I have ever had was getting back into birds as I had this starting point of the quality when I got out of them but those birds are either not available or too expensive and I know a few people tell me I spend a lot of money on birds but I had in mind what I wanted to start with and I had to spend money to buy it. I would not recommend that way unless you are going back into the fancy. You cannot get your line back.

Carol: We found the same thing when we came back. As soon as someone else has it, they mix it with other lines and your line is lost.

Jamie: I spoke to Trevor Drew from Victoria on that very point. He had a great line of Yellow Faces and then got out of them. When his circumstances changed and wanted to go back into them I asked him if he got his line back. He said if someone had picked up a group of them he may had been inclined but when they are scattered around the line is not the same.

Sometimes know I think about it I know when I gave that hen to Greg & Jean Horrobin she was 50% Pilkington and I placed some value on that but no one else did. Now when I see that this birds goes back to Binks I think there are so many generations back now that it would not be relevant. Some people do manage to keep their lines pure and that means a little more.

Carol: Now some personal questions: What do you do these days for a living?

Jamie: I am a financial planner and I work for myself so having the birds to be able to get out of my career and enter another world by just walking out the door is a great way to distress. I

had a conversation with Colin Flanagan from Victoria who had been to a business coach in the context of a seminar who had said “all you CEO’s and self employed business people need to go find yourself a hobby” and one of the examples he gave was breeding live birds so even the experts find it is a great way to distress as long as you find what you are looking for there.

Carol: Now you have four children, are they interested in the birds?

Jamie: At times they have been. At present no. They have given me the nickname of “The bird nerd” although since winning the National they have not been game enough to call me that. They are very supportive and they don’t complain when they come to set up the staging for shows and auctions for our club, they do some of the recording at auctions at times but at this time they are not coming down and pushing me out of the way so for my sanity I quite like that.

Carol: Any other interests that you have?

Jamie: I coach hockey and have done so for the past six years which has been very rewarding and the birds provide me with a bit of respite from that as well as the hockey team is juniors. I did coach netball and hockey at the same time one year and that nearly killed me. I have just gone back into competitive swimming so I swam my first Masters carnival a little while ago but to be honest it falls a distant second behind the birds so it gets a little time that I can afford but no more.

Carol: Favorite music For my fortieth birthday it was a bush dance. It featured a lot of country music and my kids now look like the cleverest in their school as they now know who Slim Dusty is. Techno and heavy metal is off my list but really everything else is okay.

favorite sporting team I would be pretty foolish if I didn’t say it was my own hockey team under 11’s at Kedron Wavell. Definitely my favourites at the moment but ask we again next week and I may change my mind.

Below, a few of Jamie’s young up and coming Lacewings – look out for him this year.

I wish to thank Jamie for the time he has put into this interview. I have always found Jamie to be respectful, polite and very willing to listen to others and this mannerism has paid off well this year





Above: a few of Jamie's young up and coming Lacewings – look out for him this year.

I wish to thank Jamie for the time he has put into this interview. I have always found Jamie to be respectful, polite and very willing to listen to others and this mannerism has paid off well this year. Once again, congratulations Jamie, Kellie and family.