

The Mark Hawke Story

and a very successful one it is.



Question: *How long have you seen breeding budgies and how did you start.*

Mark: I have been breeding budgies for the past twenty two years now. I had them earlier as a boy but then left home, met the other type of bird, got married and then got back into them. When I came back into them I got help from Steve Draper in Dubbo – we were not only work colleagues but friends as well. I still have some off his bloodline in my aviary now. I also received help from John Scoble, Wayne Cusack, and John Barden and Peter Baker but have no longer got that blood in my birds except maybe a fraction. I have nearly 100% of my own bloodline now as I hardly ever bring birds in.

Question: *What do you feed your birds in way of seed, soft food etc.?*

Mark: I mix my own seed comprising of 40% Canary, then a mix of French White, Jap, Pannikin, Hulled Oats & Sunflower. I put this into one Mason jar. In another Mason jar I have straight Canary and in the third jar I have Small Parrot Mix. This way the birds can eat whatever seed they want. The diet doesn't change too much. I find if I feed the birds all the seeds they will eat anything and if I sell any birds they settle in to the new diet mix quite quickly. Too many times you hear of people buying birds from breeders and

within a short time the birds die. I think this has a lot to do with the different diet so I have mine on all different seeds so they settle in well.

I also give them spinach and carrot but no soft food mixers as I haven't the time and it can cause a lot of problems. In Winter I leave at dark and get home in the dark so I have to keep things simple. I rear them tough. In the flights I put Eucalypt branches (River Red Gum) and they love this native trees. I have seen thousands if not millions of wild budgies and noticed they love the Eucalypt trees on the river banks so I treat mine to the same thing.

Question: *Do you give any preventative medication at all?*

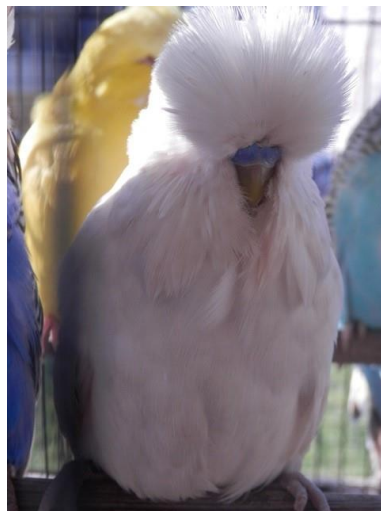
Mark: I treat for Coccidiosis every five weeks and I change the medication around so the birds do not build up an immunity to one drug. I also work for one day every five to six weeks, I also treat for one day with Probiotics'. I also give the Rob Marshall Vitamins. On the days when the birds are due to have straight water I add Avi-Cleanse to it.

Question: *How many birds do you have flying and what colour varieties are they?*

Mark: I fly a maximum of two hundred birds. I have a number of varieties, Normals, Opalines, Cinnamons, Yellow Faces, Dominant Pieds, Spangles, Lutinos, Albinos, Fallows, I got back into the Lutinos this year with 100% of my own old lines from Allan Dalrymple and the Fallows about three years ago from Daniel Goodee which have some of my lines in them.



Young Yellow Face Cinnamon Blue



Young Double Factor Spangle



Young Spangle Violet

Question: *You have been very successful both in New South Wales and at National Level: This year in Adelaide was very successful. This includes in Hens 1st and 4th: Albino 1st: Fallow 9th Spangle AOSV 13th*

With so many varieties it must be hard to keep improving them so we will concentrate firstly on the Albino - What is your preferred mating with this variety?



2014 National winning Albino



2014 National winning Hen

I don't have that many breeding cages so I try to breed my Normals first. With the Albino, I tend to mate Albino cocks to Any Grey Series birds -Normal Greys, Opaline Grey Spangles and Grey Spangles as I find this is the best mating. The pairing that bred the National winner was Albino Cock x Grey Opaline Spangle Hen. The brother to the winning Albino is a Grey Opaline/Albino split Cock which is now paired to the sister of the father. So that is an Aunty to Nephew pairing. I do pair Albino to Albino but they must be visually super or in the odd case to increase my numbers of Albinos. I also find that to get good hens I put an Albino Hen to a grey series cocks. By doing this the hens are much stronger and bigger boned hens.



With the Fallows I don't have large numbers. I did breed Fallow to Fallow this year. I have also a very strong Yellow Face family so I have mated a Fallow to a Yellow Face Sky hen to lengthen the mask and spot in my Fallows.

I got into the Fallows to try to gain points for our club (MBC) in the selection (STTC). I was traveling with Daniel Goodee to Sydney for that show who had bought a lot of birds from me and he had bred some Fallows that had Bruce & Nola Bradford blood plus a little bit of Ian Hanington's in them.. So I bought four pairs off him when he got out of the birds. In that show Daniel's fallows placed 1st, 6th and 7th and the cock went on to win the National title. So not a bad lot to start with.

I have been putting my best birds into them to hopefully improve them. Last year at the state selection, Ernie Wise's bird won the class, and mine were placed second, third and fourth. I believe if they had taken the bird they placed third it may have been an entirely different story. It was a dubious decision but for every dubious decision, one may go against you but some go your way, so it all works out in the wash. The younger fallows I have bred this year are now bigger than the National winner so it's onwards and upwards hopefully.

Question: Consistently, I am finding now that no matter who I speak to, breeders have not got enough Normals in their bird rooms. What is your feelings about this and how important do you think good Normals are and why.

Mark: I feel there is too much emphasis on the other weaker varieties – you can't go anywhere on the show bench without Normals. Putting Normals to weaker varieties unfortunately may improve the weaker variety but it pulls the quality of your Normals down. Unfortunately as I said earlier, we breed all these lesser varieties to help the our clubs at inter branch

It is unfortunate we cannot get more club members to show their birds for the selection shows. What is the use of having a super show bird if you don't show it at the biggest and most important show? Also, a lot of breeders will not put hens in the shows - I targeted the Hens Class this year and finished upcoming 1st and 4th so I've got to be happy with that.

Question: At what age do you pair the cocks and the hens and when do you pair up and finish and how closely would you breed your birds and do you pair up visually or by pedigree. What sort of records do you keep (computer, books etc.)

Mark: I am finishing up now in November and unfortunately I have not had a good season this year. It would be a big mistake to keep breeding through summer as it reaches 45 degrees here in Dubbo. I like to pair cock birds around seven months of age and hens around ten months. Definitely no earlier but I do prefer them around twelve months of age.

When you breed a good bird you have to get that family going. If it doesn't breed on for you, you have lost the line and that's no good to anyone. You must have fertile family lines. I do breed closely – I do pair cousins together but I also breed father to daughter. All my birds are related somehow. I looked for a couple of outcrosses at an auction but I don't have thousands of dollars to throw around. I see no point to it. Budgerigar prices are very overinflated. A really good bird should not cost more than \$500.

As for record keeping I keep everything on paper. I would like to have a computer programme but haven't got one yet. I do take lots of photographs of my birds. I take photos of the parents when I pair them up and I also take photos of the babies as they develop.

Question: *What is the size, of your aviary?*



Mark: My aviary is 4metres x 4 metres x 3 metres high. It was an existing cage and I have made do with it. My set up is not flash but it is not the cage you have to worry about, it is the quality of the birds in it.

My breeding room is 4 metres x 3 metres and I have twenty four breeding cages, all wire. I also have a sink, running water and power to it.

Question: *Do you trim the birds feathers when you pair up and how heavily?*

Mark: I do usually pluck the vents completely bare but I wait until I see the hen is swelling. This disturbs them for a day or two but it is no great concern. I find if I pluck them when I first pair up, the feathers start growing too quickly. I put the hen and the cock bird in the breeding cage together with the nest box.

Question: *How do you prepare your show team - For example for the Nationals, when would you start and how do you do it.*

Mark: I don't do any preparation really as I just don't have the time. Unless you can catch your birds up eight weeks prior to the show it is useless as they have a tendency to go backwards in the holding cage. I usually grab out the birds two days before, spot the feathers then put them outside in a holding cage and hose them down. They are then ready to go. I also have no time to train them. As I said earlier, I work long hours and sometimes things can go wrong and I will lose a whole nest of birds as I have not been home to see things starting to deteriorate but a job is a job.

Question: *Is there any other topic you would like to touch on or any advice you can give to my readers?*

Mark: Yes, just keep it simple. People have a tendency to overdo things – just leave your birds alone. If one is sick, remove it immediately. If I notice a bird is sick, I will put a couple of drops of Sulpha D to the beak and this usually saves 90% of them as usually it is Cocci. Also, don't take losing on the show bench too tough. It takes time to breed Champions, you have to build up families and this takes years.

Question: *On a personal level,*

- a) What is your favourite food – steak or seafood
- b) What is your favourite drink – red or white wine
- c) What is your favourite sport and name of team – NRL and the Roosters
- d) What sort of music do you like – being a lad born in 1960, it has to be Rock 'N Roll.
- e) Favourite past time – I love riding my Harley and my 1968 Bonneville Triumph