



FEATHERED WORLD

CANARY AND CAGE BIRD FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.



IN THIS MAGAZINE...

- *Minutes of General Meeting 4 June 26*
- ◆ Yellow Star Finch
- ◆ Bird Brains Need Testosterone
- ◆ Less People Taking Up Birdkeeping
- ◆ Parrot Speech Capabilities
- ◆ China's War on Humble Sparrow
- ◆ Polygamous Birds Have Fewer Harmful Mutations
- ◆ Birds More Afraid of Women than Men
- ◆ Swift Parrots Near Port Macquarie
- ◆ Giant Wrens On Scottish Islands



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- The editor welcomes contributions, but retains the right to amend articles and reports accordingly.
- The opinions expressed by the authors are their own and not necessarily those of Federation or the editor.
- Articles may be copied from *Feathered World* Magazine, providing the author and magazine are acknowledged appropriately.

Canary & Cage Bird Federation of Australia Inc.

MEETING DATES 2026

General Meetings 3rd September

Meeting commences at 8:00 pm

NOTE: All meetings will be by Zoom only unless otherwise advised

Table of Contents

Minutes of General Meeting - 4 June.....	Page 4
Yellow Star Finch.....	Page 14
Bird Brains Need Testosterone.....	Page 15
Less People Taking Up Bird Keeping.....	Page 16
Parrots Speech Capabilities.....	Page 18
China's War on Humble Sparrow.....	Page 21
Polygamous Birds Have Fewer Harmful Mutations.....	Page 22
Birds are More Afraid of Women than men.....	Page 24
Swift Parrots Near Port Macquarie.....	Page 26
Giant Wrens on Remote Scottish Islands.....	Page 28

FEDERATION STATIONERY SALE

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From: John Walsh - Phone 0421 011 107 - Email: ktwsh075@gmail.com

NOTE: Ensure Club Name, delivery address & phone number of order person is included



PETITION

DON'T TAKE AWAY OUR HOBBY



Victorian
Avicultural
Council



"Protect Bird Keeping in Victoria"

Your support is crucial at this time.

Background:

A review of the **Victorian Wildlife Act 1975** began in 2021, inviting submissions from community members and stakeholders. Bird clubs and peak bodies — including the **Victorian Avicultural Council**, **Avicultural Society of Australia**, **Mornington Peninsula Avicultural Society**, and **Animal Care Australia** — all provided detailed input, though this appears to have gained little traction.

The Review Panel delivered its report on **20 December 2021**, and the Government released its response in **October 2025**.

It is this response that concerns us. Several statements appear **unsupported by evidence**, including claims that *"wildlife and intensive breeding is cruel"* and that *"large wildlife collections adversely impact neighbours."* These comments do not reflect the reality of responsible, welfare-focused aviculture in Victoria.

Current Situation:

Bird keeping has a long and valued tradition in our community, bringing joy to thousands of Victorians and supporting important conservation and education programs. Recent government wording suggests new regulations may be introduced that could severely restrict responsible bird keeping. Such changes risk undermining the work of dedicated hobbyists and organisations that contribute significantly to animal welfare and community life.

This petition calls for the positive impact of ethical bird keeping to be recognised and for any new regulations to be developed in genuine consultation with experienced aviculturists. Supporting the petition helps safeguard a valued pastime, protect responsible keepers, and ensure future rules are fair and informed.

We encourage you to read and sign the petition. Your voice shows policymakers that this issue matters to a broad, engaged community. Please also share it within your networks to strengthen our collective effort.

Online Petition Link: <https://c.org/JgWcwBCftk>

SIGN THE PETITION TODAY

Protect the future of ethical aviculture in Victoria.



PROTECT RESPONSIBLE BIRD KEEPING IN VICTORIA



Have Your Say – Support Fair, Evidence-Based Wildlife Laws

THE CANARY & CAGE BIRD FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA INC.

MINUTES OF THE ZOOM GENERAL MEETING

HELD THURSDAY 4th June 2026.

The president opened the meeting at 7:55 pm, thanking the delegates for their attendance.

ATTENDANCE: There were 8 delegates in attendance, including B Barnes, R Robertson, C. Isbister, B. Wright, M. Cameron, J. Tadgell, B. Read, M. Gallagher.

APOLOGIES were received from: J. Walsh, J Forrest, K. Manton, J. Norriss, – moved C. Isbister and seconded B. Read apologies be accepted - Carried.

MINUTES:

The minutes for the 4th March AGM had been published in Feathered World and uploaded on the web, they were received on a motion from B. Read and seconded by C. Isbister. The minutes for the 4th March General Meeting also published in Feathered World, it was moved C. Isbister and seconded B. Barnes that the minutes be adopted as a true record of the March General meeting – Carried

Matters arising out of the minutes: *None other than matters that can be held over for Reports and General Business.*

In-coming correspondence as follows:

- Affiliated clubs. Notification of office bearers and delegate
- Affiliated clubs requesting assistance with matters regarding insurance.
- Affiliated clubs, receipt of ring orders for 2026.
- Completed CGU Events Risk Assessment received from two clubs holding events having a duration of two or more days and or exceeding 500 attendees, Northern Zebra Finch Society, Far North Queensland Bird Breeders Club Inc. Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc
- Northern Budgerigar Association of New South Wales, requesting details of affiliation and insurance.

Conservation Partners (<https://consevationpartners.org.au>) is excited to announce the discovery of a Night Parrot (*Pezoporos occidentalis*) at a second remote location in Queensland. Together with the landholders, we are committed to continuing conservation work to better understand and protect this remarkable species. We are now seeking

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partners to support the next stage of this project. If you're interested in being involved, please get in touch:

admin@conservationpartners.org.au

- Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. Requesting the procedure regarding an accident resulting in injury to a financial club member at the Fairfield sale on the 3rd of May 2026.
- Blacktown Exhibition Birds Society, Nominating Christine Gruntar for Guest of Honour.
- Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. Receipt of CGU Liability claim for incident at Sale on 3rd May'26.
- Insurance Broker Marsh Insurance. In response to the CGU Liability Claim received on behalf of the affiliate club, Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. We advise it is noted in the claim that it was an accident. As the policy covers injury to a third party or property damage to a third parties' property **as a result of negligence of an insured person**. Whilst the member-to-member extension allows members to claim against each other, as there was no negligence by an insured person in this instance, the policy is not likely to respond. Requesting that we advise and discuss with the member and advise if they still wish to lodge a claim?
- Northern Budgerigar Association of New South Wales, payment for affiliation and insurance, acceptance of affiliation pending receipt of appropriate information of office bearers, before insurance can be arranged.
- C.O.M. invitation for the OMJ General Technical congress 2026 in Sevilla

Newsletters / Journals – Received from various clubs, with notification of club events for insurance:

- ANBC Budgerigar May Gazette
- PET Industry News. March/April'26
- Central Coast Avicultural Society. Newsletter March, April, May'26
- Shoalhaven Avicultural Society Inc. Bird Tales March, April & May'26
- Hunter Valley Finch Club Inc. Finch Fancier May & June'26
- Coral Coast Bird Club Inc. Newsletter Chatterings April & May'26

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- Thuringowa Bird Club Inc. Newsletter Winglet April' & May'26
- The Avicultural Society of NSW Inc March / April'26
- FSA The Finch Breeders REVIEW March-April'26
- Gold Coast Aviary Birds News March/April & May/June'26

Out-going correspondence as follows:

- The Border Fancy Canary Club of Australia Inc. replying to their correspondence table at the March GM, advising our inability to assist with the requested funding, including in the letter the extract of the subject noted in the March General Business.
- Affiliated clubs' assistance with insurance matters requesting information, forwarding amended certificates.
- Event Risk Assessment Template emailed to the following affiliates: Northern Zebra Finch Society, Far North Queensland Bird Breeders Club Inc., Towers Birdkeepers Inc. hosting 35th Northern Avian Conference 2026. Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc
- Affiliate Clubs, CGU endorsed amended certificates "Interest Noted Far North Queensland Bird Breeders Club Inc, Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. Nambour & District Poultry Club.
- Northern Budgerigar Association of New South Wales, advising details of affiliation and insurance, sending a invoice and covering letter.
- Various affiliates emails, texts and phone calls following up the requirement stated in the correspondence sent with the renewal invoices, requested by the insurance underwriters for affiliates to advise "the largest number of attendees that the club could expect at any single event"
- Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. Forwarding CGU Liability Claim form.
- Insurance Broker Marsh Insurance. Forwarding CGU Liability Claim on behalf of the affiliate club, Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc
- Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. Advising we have forwarded the claim to our insurance broker, who noted in the claim that it was an **accident**. They advise, as the policy covers injury to a third party or property damage to a third parties' property **as a result of negligence of an insured person**. Whilst the member-to-member extension allows members to claim against each other, as there was no negligence by an insured person in this instance, the policy is not likely to respond. Should you wish to lodge a claim, please advise.

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Matters arising out of correspondence:

- Moved B. Barnes and seconded J. Tadgell that application for affiliation and insurance be accepted for Northern Budgerigar Association of New South Wales.
- Conservation Partners (<https://consevationpartners.org.au>) re the discovery of a Night Parrot (*Pezoporus occidentalis*), following a brief discussion, the Secretary was asked to let them know we were interested in being kept informed.
- Insurance claim for Parrot Keepers & Exhibitors Society NSW Inc. M. Gallagher advised that the clubs management committee is to have a meeting next week to review the matter. Following a brief discussion on the member-to-member cover extension of the policy, the secretary was requested to investigate the option for cover of an accidental / individuals' accident without out negligence of another insured person.

It was moved by C. Isbister and seconded by M. Cameron that the correspondence be received and the secretary's action endorsed - Carried.

TREASURERS REPORT

1. Term deposit Westpac \$145,000.00
2. Cheque account balance 4th June'26 \$13,366.42
3. The following accounts were submitted for endorsement:
 - Editor of Feathered World April / May & June / July issues \$300.00,
 - ACA Membership 2026 \$100.00,
 - Coditech rings \$8,047.55

It was moved by C. Isbister and seconded by B. Read that the payments and the Treasurers' actions be endorsed - Carried.

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REPORTS:

1. Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) DAFF website: www.agriculture.gov.au/agricultureland/animal/welfare/aaws

Drafting of the renewed AAWS is in full swing and 2026 will continue to see extensive consultation for all animal group chapters.

The AAWS project team received a wide range of stakeholder feedback on the preliminary draft of the livestock and production animals' chapter over the last couple of months. This is currently being reviewed. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to provide comments and suggestions. The high level of interest continues to demonstrate the importance of a national strategy.

Following an update to the chapter scope in response to stakeholder feedback, a draft aquatic animals chapter will next undergo stakeholder consultation.

Engagement with stakeholders who have an interest in the research and teaching chapter will also resume shortly, having commenced in late 2025.

Drafting of the overall high-level strategy is well underway and will be further informed by expanded consultation as we progress development of all chapters.

Throughout 2026, the AAWS project team within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will continue to work closely with State and Territory governments, and other government agencies with animal welfare responsibility, to develop the AAWS and its 6 animal group chapters.

The President commented, other than the above noted, we had not received any matters related to avian activities.

2. ACA Request to Share Survey for NSW Keeper Licence Holders and advising

Native wildlife licensing no longer sits within National Parks & Wildlife. It's now under the Biodiversity & Heritage Regulator. The DCCEEW has undergone a complete restructure. The Department is currently collecting feedback from NSW Keeper licence holders

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about how they keep records under their licence. Advising they have received 300 responses so far and are hoping to broaden participation to ensure we capture a wide range of experiences and views. Requesting us to place the survey link and/or the attached QR code on your website, social media channels. Advising the survey will go offline on Sunday the 19th of Ap



3. Victorian Government's review of the Wildlife Act 1975,

proposed changes could unfairly restrict bird keeping and breeding in Victoria. The changes might be based on misconceptions about the industry, rather than evidence, and could impact responsible bird keepers, their clubs, and the welfare of the birds. Victorian aviculturists have a petition that aims to ensure that any new laws are fair, balanced, and informed by real experience, and that the rights of responsible bird keepers are protected.

M. Cameron made concerning comments on the matter and urged all bird keepers / breeders / pet owners Australia wide to sign the petition. Online Petition Link: <https://c.org/JgWcwBCftk> Also urged all clubs and individuals to speak to their local PM. The concern that if the changes to the Act was implemented in Victoria, it is bound to progress to other States. Please refer to the single page included for the background information.

Moved J. Tadgell and seconded by C. Isbister that the reports be accepted and thanked – Carried.

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GENERAL BUSINESS:

- **2026 Ring Orders.** Supplementary orders will be ongoing during 2026, however delivery time frame and cost for transshipment will vary.
- **RAS Update RAS** –Total entries are 455 across 39 exhibitor, Love birds – 89, Budgie – 53, Canary – 88, Finch – 132, Parrot – 93.
- **Show and Sale dates – Conflict** of Sydney shows with NSW Country show dates. Unfortunately, this year both the Dubbo (Orana) and the Bathurst shows are conflicting with Sydney shows on the same weekend. We requested the Sydney clubs to communicate with the country clubs prior to setting a date for their show. It is important that we support and give the remaining country shows (Clarence River, Gulgong, Orana-Dubbo, Bathurst, Mid North Coast,) as much support as possible.
- **Show and Sale dates** – The web has been updated with all the show, sales and auction dates. Clubs are requested to email **Matt McKenzie any updates** to that recorded Email clubs@ccbfa.org.au
- **INSURANCE.** CCBFA is legally required to maintain an updated record of all clubs' office bearers and the club's official postal and email address. **The Underwriters have stated for CCBFA and affiliate clubs to maintain proof of membership**, by maintaining a membership register. **It is also important to note that we have a requirement that all affiliates give advanced notice of cancellation of insurance. Hence affiliates are requested to advise Federation by the 30th of September should they not require cover for the ensuing year. Failure to do so will necessitate being charged.**
- **INSURANCE – EVENT RISK ASSESSMENT.** CGU underwriter has advised that they have implemented a new requirement, (an EVENT RISK ASSESSMENT) for when events have more than 500 people attending, or the event goes over more than one day.

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- * *CGU have provided a template to assist if the club does not have a risk assessment template. This template lists a number of risks, which may or may not apply to the insured's events. Using the CGU template, you can delete or write N/A in the corresponding fields.*
- * *The intention of the risk assessment is to show that the affiliates are considering the risks and mitigating/preventing them. Assessing the risks will mean you will know how to respond, if/when an incident occurs.*
- * *Regarding the number of people attending events, this information is to understand the size and exposure of each which will better help understand the risk as a whole.*
- * *The insurance policy cover is not changing only the underwriter's requirement for the information.*
- * *We presently require notification of the event (name, dates, venue/address, where known) to be received by the end of October for the following year events.*
- * *On receipt of club's payment for the renewal of affiliation and insurance, a "General" insurance certificate will be issued (as we currently do) to enable the affiliates to initiate bookings.*
- * *For all shows, sales, auctions, conventions and other events with more than the 500 attendees or are more than a one-day event an "Event Risk Assessment" must be submitted to the CCBFA secretary, for the event / venue (as soon as the venue name / address, dates are known). If using the same venue in subsequent years, you will only be required to advise the date and estimate number of people attending.*
- * **After the affiliate has submitted an "Event Risk Assessment" for the event / venue, an amended insurance certificate will be issued, endorsing the details of the event. Only then will the event be insured.**

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- **Guest of Honour Dinner:** Two Guest of honour Greg Gingell and Christine Gruntar Luncheon organized by the Border Fancy Canary Club of Australia Inc. to be held Sunday 2nd August at 12 noon, at Merrylands Bowling Club. Bookings with John Palmano, phone 0412 921 131
- **Unacceptable conduct at events,** the President B. Barnes brought to the meetings attention ongoing incidents that have occurred at shows, which is concerning and affecting the number of exhibitors / exhibits at shows. Following some brief comments, it was stated that all should adhere to the basic principles of community clubs Code of Conduct re behaviour. Key Principles of a Club Membership and Code of Conduct are Respect and Fairness Harassment and Discrimination. The CCBFA Constitution details in clause 24 Disciplining of affiliates/individuals.

The President thanked Bob Wright for facilitating the Zoom meeting for tonight and thanked the delegates for attending, as there was no further business the meeting closed at 9:00 p.m.

Notice of the next General Meeting, Zoom only

Thursday 3rd September 2026

Meeting commences at 8:00 pm





NATURAL SUPPLEMENT FOR
FINCHES



PRIMA
1 KG NET



THE YELLOW STARFINCH

The appearance of the "yellow mutation" of the star finch, a bird looking like gold in the eyes of bird lovers is ranked highly of species preferred by fans of exotic birds in Europe.

However the first thing to know is that it is not a mutation really but a combination of two other mutations that cause the back of this star finch to be yellow. This means you must combine these mutations to breed them. These mutations are;

Fawn Mutation

This mutation has been around for many years, known by many in Europe as "Isabela" or "Pastel", a recessive mutation. It is now more commonly referred to as "Fawn". This mutation reduces the black pheomelanin of the feathers of the bird, so the tone of its back is more clear, highlighting the contrast with the head and tail which remain their bright red.

CINNAMON Mutation

The pastel mutation is dominant sex linked mutation, with a cock and a normal hen we will get hens cinnamon and normal cocks split for cinnamon. The best way to differentiate fawn to cinnamon is the red colour of the tail, cinnamon mutation dilutes the red, while the fawn mutation maintains its intensity.

As mentioned above the Yellow Star Finch is not a mutation itself, but a combination of those mutations. The following are some breeding combinations and the resulting offspring.:

- Fawn-Cinnamon (yellow) cock and normal hen will give us:
 - Cocks: Normal split for fawn and cinnamon
 - Hens: Cinnamon split for fawn
- Fawn-Cinnamon (yellow) cock and fawn hen will give us:
 - Cocks: Fawn split for cinnamon
 - Hens: Yellow
- Cocks Fawn and Hen Yellow:
 - Cock:Fawn split for cinnamon
 - Hen: Fawn



Source <http://www.lonchura.com/naturebrain>

BIRD BRAINS NEED TESTOSTERONE FOR STRONG SONG

Male canaries that got testosterone doses throughout their brains made better music than those that got the hormone only at the brain region associated with mating behaviour.

A canary's song sounds sweet and innocent, to us anyway. But for male birds, music is actually part of a testosterone-fuelled mating ritual.

So what's the pathway from hormone to harmonics?

It was thought that male canaries became motivated to sing when testosterone hit the specific brain region normally responsible for mating behavior. It's called the medial preoptic nucleus, or POM.

To find out, scientists first gelded some unfortunate individuals. Some of these canaries received doses of testosterone to the POM only. Others got broad testosterone exposure throughout the brain.

After treatment, both groups of canaries began singing. Although they sang roughly the same amount, the birds receiving broad hormone doses made music that was louder and of higher quality. They also sang more while potential mates were present. The study is in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

So testosterone in the POM does inspire mating behaviour. But the hormone must act more globally to create a proper performance. Quality courtship requires a complete bird brain.

Source: Report by Sophie Bushwick at <http://www.scientificamerican.com>



WHY ARE LESS AND LESS PEOPLE TAKING UP BIRDKEEPING

The number of people keeping pet birds has dropped significantly over the last two decades. While birds like budgies, cockatiels, and parrots were once staples of suburban households, modern lifestyles and changing social attitudes have altered the landscape of pet ownership.

The following are some of the suggested reasons why fewer people are choosing bird keeping today.

High Care Demands and Long Lifespans

Many traditional bird buyers underestimated the commitment required to keep avian pets. Small birds like cockatiels can live for 15 to 20 years, while larger parrots often live for 50 to 80 years. This means buying a bird is often a lifelong commitment or one that requires legal estate planning. Furthermore, birds require specialized avian veterinarians, which are harder to find and more expensive than standard dog and cat clinics.

Shifting Housing Trends

Modern urban living is less accommodating to bird ownership. More people are living in apartments and rental properties with strict noise regulations. Birds communicate through loud vocalizations, squawks, and screams that easily penetrate apartment walls, leading to neighbor disputes. Additionally, birds require significant space for flight cages to maintain their health, which is difficult to accommodate in smaller living spaces.

Modern urban living is less accommodating to bird ownership.



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The Rise of the "Fur Baby" Culture

Cats and dogs have largely monopolized the modern pet market. The pet industry has heavily shifted toward "fur baby" culture, offering extensive infrastructure for dogs and cats, including pet friendly workplaces, dog parks, specialized cafes, and mobile grooming. Birds do not fit easily into this public, mobile lifestyle, making them less appealing to younger generations who want to take their pets on outings.



Increased Ethical Awareness

Public perception regarding the captivity of wild animals has changed dramatically. Exposure to wildlife documentaries and animal welfare campaigns has made potential pet owners more conscious of the psychological toll captivity takes on birds. Issues like feather plucking, stereotypic behaviors, and the ethics of clipping wings have discouraged people from keeping creatures meant for flight inside cages.

Intense Daily Maintenance

Birds are notoriously messy and demanding pets. They constantly scatter seed hulls, feathers, and dander, requiring daily cleaning to prevent respiratory issues for both the bird and the owner. Unlike cats or dogs, they cannot be reliably house trained. They also require hours of daily direct social interaction and mental stimulation to prevent boredom and destructive behaviors, making them incompatible with long working hours.

PARROT'S SPEECH CAPABILITIES

Parrots are among the most remarkable birds on Earth. They can mimic human speech, solve complex puzzles, form deep social bonds, and live for decades — sometimes longer than their human caregivers. A growing body of research is now uncovering the biological and evolutionary reasons behind these extraordinary traits.

Scientists have long observed that parrots combine cognitive complexity with exceptional longevity. The scarlet macaw, for example, lives an average of 30 years, and some individuals reach over 80 years of age — a lifespan that, relative to body size, rivals that of humans and other primates. This is unusual because, across the animal kingdom, larger species typically live longer. Parrots break that rule.



A major study led by the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior analyzed data from over 130,000 individual parrots across 217 species. The findings revealed that relative brain size predicts life expectancy better than body size, diet, or reproductive patterns. This supports the "cognitive buffer hypothesis": smarter birds are better at avoiding predators, finding new food sources when old ones disappear, and adapting to changing environments — all of which reduce their risk of dying young

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The genetic evidence is equally striking. Researchers sequencing the genome of the blue-fronted amazon parrot identified several unique genetic adaptations, including parrot-specific novel genes and modifications to regulatory sequences shared with humans. These include changes in genes linked to telomerase activity — an enzyme that protects chromosome ends from aging — as well as DNA repair, cell cycle control, and cancer suppression. Remarkably, parrots evolved similar genomic changes in brain-development genes as those seen in the human lineage, suggesting convergent evolution of cognitive abilities.

Even more surprising: parrots retain the ability to learn new vocalizations well into old age. A 2024 study on budgerigars showed that older parrots, while having slightly less vocal diversity, are still capable of learning and socially converging on new calls, with no age-related decline in vocal plasticity. This neural resilience is linked to continued expression of FoxP2, a protein critical for vocal learning that typically declines with age in other species.

These findings collectively paint a picture of parrots as uniquely gifted animals whose intelligence and longevity have co-evolved. Their ability to learn throughout life, adapt to new threats, and solve problems allows them to survive longer — and their longer lives, in turn, provide more time for learning and social bonding. It is a virtuous cycle shaped by millions of years of evolution, and one that continues to fascinate and inform the study of aging, cognition, and brain health across species

Source: [#fb_lifestyle](#) [#creators](#)



Fatty Liver Disease in Parrots

The Silent Killer You Might Be Missing



What Is It?

A life-threatening condition where fat builds up in the liver, causing organ failure.



Common Causes

- Seed-heavy diets
- Too many nuts/treats
- Lack of exercise
- Obesity
- Poor nutrition



Seed-heavy diets



Too many nuts/treats



Lack of exercise



Poor nutrition

Warning Signs

- Lethargy
- Weight gain
- Overgrown beak/nails
- Poor feather quality
- Swollen abdomen
- Breathing issues



Swollen abdomen

Breathing issues

Why It's Dangerous

- Often shows NO early symptoms
- Can lead to sudden death
- Damage may be irreversible if caught late



Early Action Saves Lives

Fatty Liver Disease can be reversed if caught early.

"It's not just what they eat—it's how they live."



Majestic Wings Rescue

#ParrotHealth • #FattyLiverDisease • #BirdCare

CHINA'S WAR ON THE HUMBLE SPARROW

In 1958, one of the world's most powerful nations declared war on an enemy with zero weapons, zero strategy, and zero chance of survival.

The target? The common sparrow.

The Chinese government believed these birds ate too much grain, and eliminating them would instantly end hunger. But this plan triggered one of the greatest self-inflicted catastrophes in human history.

The tactic was brutally simple. Sparrows can't fly for more than 15 minutes without resting. So, millions of citizens took to the rooftops, banging pots, beating drums, and screaming.

Terrified, the birds kept flying in circles until they literally dropped dead from exhaustion. In just a few months, nearly 2 BILLION sparrows were wiped out. The nation celebrated victory



But nature always bats last.

By 1960, the real enemy arrived. Without sparrows to hunt them, locusts and caterpillars swarmed the country in apocalyptic numbers. They devoured entire crop fields in hours, triggering the Great Chinese Famine.

Desperate to fix the mistake, the government had to secretly import trainloads of live sparrows from the Soviet Union just to restore the balance of nature.

But it was too late. The ecological collapse resulted in the tragic deaths of an estimated 20 to 30 million people. It remains the ultimate historical lesson of what happens when humans try to outsmart Mother Nature.

History is truly weirder than fiction.

POLYGAMOUS BIRDS SHOWN TO HAVE FEWER HARMFUL MUTATIONS

Bird species that breed with several sexual partners have fewer harmful mutations, according to a study led by the Milner Centre for Evolution at the University of Bath. The study, published in *Evolution*, shows for the first time how polygamy increases the efficiency of natural selection in wild populations.

Most birds pair up with a single mate each season, with some species like swans or geese mating for life.

In contrast, some bird species like the House Finch are polygamous, having several partners per breeding season, however it is unclear why they have evolved a different mating system.



An international team of scientists led by Bath analyzed the genomes of 150 bird species, spanning all the major bird families and from locations across the world, including six species that were sequenced for the first time.

By counting differences between the genes inherited from the individual's mother and father (termed the heterozygosity), they were able to estimate the level of genetic diversity across each species.

They also looked at the frequency of gene mutations in each species and whether they changed the sequence of proteins for which they coded or were "silent." The former, called non-synonymous polymorphisms, are often detrimental to the individual, whereas silent mutations are generally harmless.

Contrary to their expectations, they found that polygamous species on the whole were no more diverse than monogamous ones, although the small number of species with polygamous females did have higher than expected genetic diversity.

They also found that, relative to the number of silent mutations, the polygamous species had significantly fewer potentially damaging mutations that changed the protein sequence.

Kees Wanders, Ph.D. student in the University of Bath's Department of Life Sciences is first author of the paper.

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He said, "Species evolve through natural selection, where harmful mutations are removed from the population in the long term because individuals with the mutation don't survive long enough to breed, or individuals with beneficial adaptations survive for longer."

"However, species also evolve through sexual selection, where evolution is shaped by individuals competing for access to mates, so that only the most desirable characteristics are successfully passed down to offspring."

"This research suggests that sexual selection aligns with natural selection in birds, so that harmful mutations are removed more efficiently in polygamous populations, where sexual selection is particularly strong."

"We still don't know exactly why some bird species are polygamous when most pair up for a breeding season or even for life."

"There are many different theories about why polygamy evolved in these species, but we've found the first evidence that it increases the efficiency of natural selection by rooting out harmful mutations and avoiding the effects of inbreeding."

"It's been previously observed by others in the lab in fruit flies, but this is the first time it's been observed in wild populations of birds."

Dr. Araxi Urrutia, Senior Lecturer at the Milner Centre for Evolution at the University of Bath and last author of the paper, said, "I had a hypothesis that in polygamous species, where individuals can't easily find a mate and have to travel further to find a breeding partner, that this would mean that there would be more genetic diversity in these species.

"However, we were surprised to find there was no evidence for this—instead we found that these species had fewer harmful mutations."

"Despite this apparent evolutionary advantage, most birds tend to stick together to raise their chicks because it gives their offspring a better chance of survival."

The data for this study was collected as part of the B10K Project, with scientists from China, Wales, Denmark, Hungary, Germany, Netherlands and Mexico contributing to the research.



BIRDS ARE MORE AFRAID OF WOMEN THAN MEN

An international team of researchers studying urban birds in Europe has uncovered a mystery—such birds seem to fear women more than men. Their study, published in *People and Nature*, found that on average birds will let approaching male experimenters get over three feet closer to them before flying away.



This metric, also known as “flight initiation distance,” is commonly studied and can be influenced by a range of factors, including the number of people around, the bird’s alertness, and now, apparently, the sex of the human nearing them. The behavior was consistent among 37 species studied in cities across five different countries. But the researchers have no idea why.

“I fully believe our results—that urban birds react differently based on the sex of the person approaching them—but I can’t explain them right now,” study author Daniel Blumstein of UCLA said in a statement. “We used bleeding-edge comparative analysis techniques that showed our findings were consistent across cities and species, but we simply don’t have a conclusive explanation yet.”

How can birds even tell the difference between men and women?

The researchers ruled out hair length, body size, and height as things that could have spooked the birds. The male-female observer pairs were all similar heights and weights, and they took care to hide their hair if

one of them sported a longer style. Despite their efforts, however, the researchers said that birds might still be able to detect subtle differences in appearance, including waist-hip ratio, gait, and possibly hair length.

Another factor could be odor. Although birds tend to rely more on their eyesight, there's some evidence certain species can sniff out predators. If that's the case, differences in the chemical signals from males and females could tip them off about the sex of the person approaching.

Regardless of what the birds are keying in on, it doesn't explain why they're more startled by women than men. One theory involves a hypothetical evolutionary history between women and birds. It's possible, the researchers say, that while men stalked larger prey, women were responsible for catching and killing smaller prey like birds. Over several generations, birds learned to fear women more and haven't changed



"First of all, it wasn't a spider, and secondly did you really have to yell, 'Die alien scum!'?"

LARGE FLOCK OF SWIFT PARROTS SEEN NEAR PORT MACQUARIE

Avid birdwatcher, James Bennett, was out looking for a rare bird recently near Port Macquarie when he heard a distinctive call that piqued his excitement.

"For the last month or so, I have been checking areas for swift parrots, which are a winter migrant ... some years they miss these spots, but it's always worth checking," he said. "It was flogging down with rain, and I had the windows down in the car listening for their call ... it's a very distinctive call, and when you hear it, you know."

Mr Bennett alerted other birdwatchers and they recorded not just one or two, but a large flock of about 50 birds at Lake Cathie, south of Port Macquarie, on the New South Wales Mid North Coast. It is a significant sighting of a species, which conservationists estimate is down to between 750 to 1,500 birds in the wild.

Swift parrots breed in Tasmania during the summer before migrating to the mainland in search of food in the cooler months.

Last year, hardly any were seen in NSW.

"Whenever you spot one ... it's pretty special, your stomach drops, and you get pretty excited," Mr Bennett said.

"They really are an incredible looking bird with their bright scarlet coloured face, long pointed tail and very unique call and feeding antics."

Significant northern sightings

BirdLife Australia's regent honeyeater recovery advisor, Mick Roderick, said the sighting was encouraging after last year, when most of the swift parrot population did not migrate further north than Victoria.

He said in addition to the 50 recorded around Lake Cathie, there had been recent reports of swift parrots elsewhere on the Mid North Coast, including 10 at Crescent Head.



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They have also been recorded around Sydney and the NSW Hunter region, and even a couple north of the Queensland border at Brisbane.

"It's really exciting given we barely had any swift parrots in all of NSW last year," he said.

"We've had more in NSW before the end of May this year than in all of 2025."

Swift parrots fussy eaters

Mr Roderick said it indicated food sources were probably more favourable in NSW than Victoria this year.

"Because we are seeing so many, so early, this year in NSW — and two birds in Brisbane — it really does suggest their food sources in Victoria are nowhere near as good as they were last year," he said. "It really points to the importance of having many options for swift parrots.

Mr Roderick said "swifties" were relatively fussy eaters.

"Similar to [critically endangered] regent honeyeaters, they tend to go for the really high-quality food sources, whether it's a blossom source, or lerp," he said.

Lerp is a sugary protective casing around psyllids, which are tiny insects that feed on the leaves of native trees.

"It's like a little umbrella the psyllids cover themselves with to protect themselves from prey," Mr Roderick said. "But birds have learnt that it is actually a nice, sugary and carbohydrate-rich food source."

Threats remain

Mr Roderick said there was a flock of nearly 700 swift parrots around Bendigo in Victoria last year, which was an encouraging sighting. But he said significant threats remained, including habitat loss and predation, primarily by the sugar glider.

The Australian National University leads a team of conservation biologists working with the swift parrot to try and boost its numbers.

"They [swift parrots] are probably doing better than we thought maybe five years ago ... it's difficult to say there's evidence of recovery, there might be a few more birds being seen, but that's about it ... the threats remain," Mr Roderick said.

The appearance of swift parrots at Lake Cathie comes after the recent sighting of the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater bird in the town,

GIANT WRENS ON REMOTE SCOTTISH ISLANDS

Tiny wrens living on remote Scottish islands are giving scientists a rare look at evolution in action. A new study led by researchers at the University of Birmingham found that several isolated island populations of wrens are evolving independently, with some growing dramatically larger than their mainland relatives.

Researchers discovered especially striking examples of "island gigantism" in wrens from Shetland and St Kilda. Island gigantism occurs when animals isolated on islands become much larger than related species on the mainland. Famous examples include the giant tortoises of the Galapagos and the extinct Dodo of Mauritius.

The size differences uncovered in the study were dramatic. Wrens from mainland Britain typically weigh between 7 and 10 grams. On St Kilda, however, the birds weighed between 13 and 16 grams.

According to the researchers, the largest St Kilda wrens are more than twice the size of the smallest wrens found on mainland Great Britain. That places them among the top 25% of known cases of island gigantism in birds around the world.



Scientists also found little evidence that wrens from Shetland and St Kilda regularly interbreed with mainland populations. Their long isolation appears to have allowed them to develop unique physical traits, songs, and genetics.

Dr. Michał Jezierski, from the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences and lead author of the study, said: "We found that all four Scottish Wren subspecies are genetically distinct from the Wrens of mainland Britain; with the Wrens of Shetland and St Kilda being especially distinct in both appearance and song. Their genetic distinctiveness is so high, that it is likely they are on their way to becoming new species."

IMPORTANT NOTICES!

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For legal and insurance requirements, affiliates are requested to notify the Federation Secretary of changes in office bearers, public officer and delegates, also changes of the club's meeting location, email and postal address.

Notifications should be on club's letterhead or if required a hard copy or electronic copy of the *Office Bearers' Information and Privacy Provision Consent Form* is available from the Secretary.

Ron Robertson, Secretary, The Canary & cage Bird Federation of Australia Inc. PO Box 230, Frenchs Forest, NSW 1640; Phone 0402 888 291; Email: federationbirdclubs@aapt.net.au

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*Send in reports on your club's activities and news.
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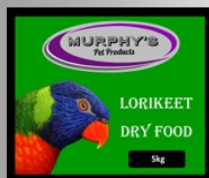
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