Welcome to our latest newsletter which has taken much longer to produce than hoped since the last one in November 2015! Much has been happening since then, including many things of direct relevance to finch and softbill enthusiasts. We hope the items in this newsletter are of interest.

Items include:

- A report on the 2016 AGM with some changes in your Office Bearers and Committee
- Advise of some new members joining NFSA
- Opening of the next National Finch Census.
- An Update on progress with the Save the Gouldian Fund
- An outline of the Red Siskin Initiative coordinated by the Smithsonian Institute, USA, and with support from various groups in Australia including NFSA.
- In the Queensland Report - a new “Biosecurity in Aviculture” Code of Practice in Queensland resulting from the Biosecurity Legislation
- In the South Australian report – a detailed coverage of the legislative challenges in that state
- In the Victorian Report - an update on the situation with Exotic Bird sales at public events in Victoria.
- In the NSW Report Progress with avicultural licensing and new Biodiversity legislation in that state
- A reminder about the Finches ’17 International Finch Convention in Brisbane
- and we get a roundup of other news from all our State representatives

The National Finch and Softbill Association provides a national voice and representation for finch and softbill enthusiasts across Australia. All the major finch speciality clubs and societies are affiliated as are many more general avicultural groups, and a number of individuals. We don’t produce magazines, run regular meetings or operate bird sales. Our role is to be a discussion forum and sounding board for nationally relevant issues which challenge the future of aviculture and to work with our members to encourage a range of initiatives which should bring enduring benefits. To maximise our value it is critical that all NFSA contact people provide two way communication between NFSA and members of their clubs and societies. It is also critical that any finch and softbill breeder is able to raise issues with NFSA and that we can respond.
REPORT ON THE 2016 NFSA AGM

Our 2016 AGM was actually held on January 15 2017 via Teleconference which all member clubs and individual members were advised of. Sufficient members and representatives dialled in to provide a quorum and the meeting proceeded. As a result the following NFSA office bearers were elected for 2017-18:

- President – Gary Fitt (Qld) - gary.fitt@bigpond.com
- Vice President – Gary Fitzpatrick (SA) - kooroomwaters@hotmail.com
- Treasurer – Keith Gargett (Qld) - keithwpg@optusnet.com.au
- Secretary – Richard Chilton (SA) - amalurus@adam.com.au
- Qld Rep – Keith Gargett - keithwpg@optusnet.com.au
- Vic Rep – David White - firetail555@gmail.com
- NSW Rep – Steve Porter - sjp981@uowmail.edu.au
- WA Rep - Brian McGuire - bmcsuir@westnet.com.au
- Tasmanian Rep – vacant
- SA Rep – David Pace (SA) - dpace@scotch.sa.edu.au
- ACT Rep – Tony Clibborn – mazandtony@gmail.com

Minutes of the latest AGM are circulated with this newsletter and show the main items discussed. In particular:

- Items in Bob Barnes’ Presidents report including
  - a marked increase in government legislative activity and actions from animal rights activists
  - proactive responses from FSA and CCBFA on bird sale issues in Victoria
  - and from UBSSA and ASSA on new restrictive legislation in South Australia which would severely impact the ability of private aviculturists to sell birds.
  - and QFS and QCBS in Qld leading negotiations with the government over new Biosecurity legislation
- Discussion on State representatives for Victoria and the NT
- Confirmation of new NFSA Constitution by NSW Fair Trading allowing multiple representatives from each State among other changes.
- Discussion on the next National Finch Census and Finches ‘17 Convention
- An update from Sam Davis on the Red Siskin Initiative coordinated by the Smithsonian Institute in the USA

I trust you find this newsletter interesting and valuable. If you have any item of news or concern about avicultural issues, please contact me or any member of the Committee.

Gary Fitt
President, NFSA
NEW MEMBERS AND NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

In the last year or so NFSA has been very pleased to receive some new bird club members. These are:

- Swan Hill Branch, Avicultural Society of Australia
- United Bird Societies of Western Australia (UBSWA)

It is great to have these new member clubs on board, particularly as they ensure we have appropriate representation and engagement in Victoria, and have another State representative body in UBSWA, similar to the membership of UBSSA from South Australia and QCBS from Queensland. In both cases the affiliation of the State body with NFSA give the opportunity for engagement of a large number of small generalist avicultural clubs in those states.

Unfortunately we were advised through the year that the Avicultural Society of Tasmania no longer which to be affiliated with NFSA as it had few finch keeping members. We are seeking other ways to re-engage with Tasmania.

RED SISKIN INITIATIVE
Information from www.redsiskin.org

The Red Siskin Recovery Project is an international partnership of public and private institutions that aims to restore sustainable populations of this highly endangered and iconic species to areas in Venezuela where it has been severely impacted by trapping for the pet trade. Historically, the Red Siskin was distributed across northern Venezuela. Today, only a few isolated groups remain, with a total population that may number less than a thousand individuals. Southeast Guyana presently harbors the largest known population, between a few hundred to a few thousand individuals, more than 950km from
the closest reported historical distribution in Venezuela. Preliminary molecular studies show a level of genetic divergence consistent with a natural origin for this population.

The Red Siskin is legally protected in all countries where it has occurred in the wild and is listed on the US Endangered Species Act and CITES Appendix I. It has been classified by IUCN as endangered internationally since 1952 and critically endangered in Venezuela. Various Australian groups, including FSA and NFSA are collaborating in the Red Siskin Initiative – very appropriate given we have the best captive population globally. The recovery program will involve work in the field and with captive populations to be established at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and in Venezuela. Representatives of the Smithsonian team visited Australia to see how we breed Red Siskins to inform the captive program in the US. They learned a lot.

The main purpose of housing an *ex situ* population at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute is to conduct research and develop protocols for breeding, care and successful release that will inform facility design, breeding and reintroduction programs in Venezuela. Some potential questions that can be addressed with a captive research population include:

1- Enclosure/cage size to optimize breeding and produce Red Siskins fit for release
2- Optimal age for reproduction without losing genetic diversity in the population
3- Incorporating advanced molecular tools for breeding management (see genetic threats).
4- Develop basic husbandry, breeding and chick rearing protocols.
5- Nutrition/diet
   - Develop feeding protocols for maintenance and breeding.
   - Determine receptivity of birds to novel food items (important for released birds)
   - Determine maximum reproduction without affecting the health of the breeders.
6- Health management
   - Develop medical care protocols for known common health concerns
   - Develop anaesthesia protocols
   - Investigate parasitology (Atoxoplasmosis, cryptosporidia, coccidia, pseudomonas)
7- Document growth and developmental stages
   - Develop an aging chart and weight gain statistics
   - Morphometrics
   - Physical changes over time (eyes open, feather eruption, colour changes, etc.)
8- Investigate the best way to track released birds (radio transmitters, PIT tags, bands)
9- Determine social dynamics
   - How should animals be housed/kept (breeding, non-breeding adults and juveniles, different sexes etc).
10- Characterise genetic structure of captive populations which might compromise field releases.

There is much to be done and Australian expertise will play a significant part.
The National Finch and Softbill Association has now conducted three censuses in 2008, 2010 and 2014 to gather information on the numbers of finches and softbills held by the members of NFSA affiliated clubs or by any finch or softbill keeper who wishes to participate.

These have proven very useful in providing a snapshot of relative numbers of different species and particularly identifying species in decline where extra conservation breeding efforts are needed.

After each census the NFSA produces a comprehensive analysis of the overall numbers and trends across the country and then publishes a report. The 2014 census included 41,619 birds held by 410 respondents and gave us some good indications of the most popular species and the species in trouble. Data for 56 exotic finches, all the native finches and over 50 species of softbills was captured.

So NFSA is now conducting its next census (from January 2017 to April 2017) with results to be presented at the Finches’17 Convention (July 7-9, 2017). Results will be made available to all NFSA Member clubs and published in major avicultural magazines such as Talking Birds.

The census is **totally anonymous**. We don’t want to know who you are or your address, although it would be useful to know which State you come from. We simply want you to record the numbers of each species that you hold and send in your results. There are many ways you can participate. Census forms have been distributed to many clubs and through a number of websites. For example you can download a census form from the NFSA website ([www.nationalfinch.com](http://www.nationalfinch.com)) or from the QFS website ([www.qfs.org.au](http://www.qfs.org.au)). Just fill it in and post it off.

Or you can complete the Census on-line through SurveyMonkey. The link for your web browser is [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFSAcensus2017](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFSAcensus2017). Just click on this link or copy and paste into your Browser. Please complete only one type of census.

We know that the census won’t reach every finch and softbill breeder. That is fine. Provided we get enough people to respond the census will provide a valuable picture of the relative numbers of species and how many people keep them. This will provide further information on which species are rare or becoming rarer and need some help.

So please encourage your members to participate in this aspect of your hobby and complete an NFSA Finch and Softbill census form - [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFSAcensus2017](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NFSAcensus2017)
The Endangered Gouldian Finch, 
*Erythura gouldiae*

- Gouldian Finches are Australia's most spectacularly coloured grassfinches
- Gouldians are one of Australia’s 18 grassfinches. Several species occur across the northern grasslands, but some are found throughout temperate Australia as far south as Tasmania.
- Gouldian Finches are distributed across the savanna grasslands of Australia’s tropical north from Derby, WA, to the Gulf of Carpentaria and across to central Cape York and the Atherton Tablelands.

**Status today**

While Gouldian finches are popular and abundant aviary birds worldwide, their wild population has declined dramatically over the last 30 years and they are now classified as **Endangered**. This status was recently renewed by the Federal government. Only a few thousand remain in the wild, mainly in the Top End of the NT and Kimberley region of WA in small groups of 10-200 birds. They have almost disappeared from Queensland.

Map shows records of Gouldian finches (purple squares) for the last 10 years of records in e-Bird database.

**WHY HAVE THEY DECLINED?**
Key threatening processes

- inappropriate fire regimes
- grazing impacts
- competition for nesting sites

Fire and grazing have dramatically changed across northern Australia. Intense and extensive late dry season fires have replaced the previous mosaic of small patch fires at different times of year. This has reduced the availability of nesting sites and the diversity of seed resources for Gouldians at critical times of year, particularly in the late dry/early wet season (Oct-Dec).

Gouldians are more specialized feeders than other finches and rely almost exclusively on annual sorghum during the breeding season (March to July) and a variety of other grasses at other times.

Gouldians are unique among finches in nesting only in tree hollows – only of a certain quality and in certain trees. Fire reduces the availability of hollows by killing old trees which have the hollows and by killing seedlings so that fewer trees survive. There is also evidence that the more aggressive Longtailed finch often disrupts nesting attempts by Gouldians as they also compete for hollows.

While many thousands of Gouldians were once trapped for the pet trade this has not occurred since 1982 and is not a cause of their decline.

Research is helping

Save the Gouldian Fund has been in existence for 10 years and research supported by various institutions including the STGF has:
- Identified annual cycles of food preferences
- Identified nesting requirements
- Shown negative impacts of late season fires
- Implemented an artificial nestbox program
- Better managed fire over huge areas and demonstrated the benefits for Gouldians

Gouldian finches slowly recovering BUT THE JOB IS NOT DONE

How can you help?

- Donate to STGF or sponsor a nestbox at www.savethegouldian.net
- If you’re a bird breeder checkout products from Naturally for Birds – most profits go to STGF www.naturallyforbirds.com.au
Biosecurity in Aviculture Code of Practice for Queensland

On July 1, 2015 the Queensland Government introduced a new Biosecurity Act which could have had major impacts on aviculture. Working in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAFF) an Aviary Birds Biosecurity Reference Group was established to achieve a resolution of the issues. The group comprises NFSA (represented by Gary Fitt), QCBS (Qld Council of Bird Societies), QFS, FSA, Aussie Finch Forum, Australian Veterinary Association, plus three avian vets. QCBS provided representation for the interests of a broad range of bird keepers.

The Reference Group met three times and one of the main achievements was the recognition by DAFF that aviary birds do not constitute a significant biosecurity risk to agriculture - poultry enterprises in particular. Indeed aviary birds are more likely to be impacted by biosecurity threats (largely disease) rather than be a source. The avian vets were very supportive of birdkeepers in arguing this position.

As a result we proposed amended wording for the regulations to better define “caged birds” in the legislation. The proposed new words were:

- **captive bird** means a bird in captivity, whether wild by nature or bred in captivity and whether native to Queensland, migratory or introduced, that—
  (a) is kept for human consumption or to produce eggs for human consumption; or
  Example— chicken, duck, emu, goose, quail, partridge, turkey
  (b) has been released for free flight since it started to be kept in captivity.
  Example—a pigeon (Columba livia) used for racing

Acceptance of this effectively exempted all avicultural species and we were able to convince the Agriculture and Environment Parliamentary Committee (AEC) to accept this changed definition and recommend that the Government pass the amendments Bill, which they did. **So, this was a great outcome!**

BUT it remained critical that aviculture broadly demonstrated commitment to sound biosecurity and early in 2016 we finalised an “Aviary Birds Biosecurity Code of Practice for Disease Prevention and Traceability in Queensland”. Key elements include: Preventing wild birds having contact with your aviaries; Cleanliness for aviaries, cages, feeding equipment; Limiting visitors to your aviaries and birds; Quarantining all new birds; Knowing the signs of disease; Dealing with unwanted Aviary Birds; Actions for Organisers, Exhibitors and Vendors at Bird Shows, Sales, Auctions and Markets; Responsibilities for Clubs to provide Information, education and contacts.

Full copies of the Biosecurity COP are available from QFS.
Black Throated Finch in the News

The plight of the Black Throated finch and the potential impacts of the planned Adani Coal mine in the Galilee Basin of central Queensland has remained in the news during 2016. Black Throats (white rumped form) have been in severe decline for some years and the population has contracted to be now only found around the Townsville Coastal Plain and inland into the Galilee Basin.

Conservation efforts for this species are coordinated by The Black Throated Finch Recovery team (http://www.blackthroatedfinch.com/) which includes a team of ecologists and environmentalists is playing a key role in coordinating activities to help recover the wild population of this species which is now probably the most threatened Australian finch. QFS is a supporter of the Black Throat Finch Recovery Team and Gary Fitt is a member of the recovery team.

The BTFRT recently put out a statement about the potential impacts of the Adani Mine and have played a role in defining the conditions now applied to the mine by the Federal Government. Those conditions require major efforts to ensure the survival of the Galilee Basin population. An article by BTFRT members Eric Vanderduys and April Reside highlighted the decline of the Blackthroat.

The southern black-throated finch is now almost entirely restricted to an area from Rockhampton north to Townsville, and has been declared extinct in New South Wales. The northernmost part of its range is threatened by urban
and peri-urban development around the northern Queensland city of Townsville. The largest remaining stronghold for black-throated finches is within the Galilee Basin, a 500 km-long coal measure running from around Alpha to Hughenden. Within this area are the proposed Adani (Carmichael), Alpha, Kevin’s Corner, China First, China Stone and South Galilee coal mines. Collectively, these cover nearly 1,700 square km. Much of this area is proposed to be open cut. The Carmichael mine in particular covers the best “hotspot” known for black-throated finches. Were these mines to go ahead, the finches are likely to suffer steep declines.

In their paper the authors showed that around 60% of the finch’s remaining habitat is potentially threatened by mining activities. Our research also shows that of the very high-quality habitat known in the Galilee Basin, 50% is under threat from mines that have undergone advanced planning.

The future does not look bright for the southern Blackthroat and conservation of this form in aviculture is critical.

QFS Finch Conservation Programs
QFS is continuing its conservation breeding programs on Javan munias, Rufous backed manikins and Black Hooded Yellow Siskin and now the White Rumped form of the Blackthroated Finch (Southern race). We are having considerable success with Javan Munias and Black Hooded Yellow Siskins, but Rufous Backed Manikins are in dire straits. We have been unsuccessful in obtaining any young stock and none have been bred from the small number of birds we have. Any sources of young rufous-backed mannikins would be welcomed. Likewise the Blackthroated Finches are proving more challenging than expected. Only a handful have been bred so far.

Aviaries for Young Finchkeepers program
Through the very generous support of an anonymous benefactor QFS is now able to directly encourage and support new young finch aviculturists by providing a 3m x 1.5m x 2.1m professionally built finch aviary, plus some birds and accessories and a free membership to QFS – a starter pack for a future in the great hobby of aviculture. We are looking for young people:

- 18 to 30 years who wish to move into finch breeding
- Who may already have a few birds, but could benefit from a new aviary.
- Who are willing to commit to finch breeding for at least 3 years
Potential recipients are nominated by QFS members and we require a mentor for each new person as well. We are grateful to D&S Aviaries for design and construction of the aviaries.

At the January 2017 QFS meeting we presented the first recipient of an aviary, birds and accessories a package valued at $1700 - 15 year old Kieran McMahon from Mt Nathan, south of Brisbane. Kieran’s aviary was delivered on December 17 by Dave Hackney (D&S Aviaries) who is constructing all the aviaries in our program – and brilliant aviaries they are too. The aviaries are 3 m x 1.5 m x 2.1 m high, with steel frame, insulated full roof and covered with 6mm welded mesh to keep out vermin. They are an ideal beginner’s aviary. Three other young recipients (all young girls) have now been identified and will receive their aviaries and birds in the next few months.

QFS has a number of other initiatives to support young bird keepers. Over the last 12 months we have provided free memberships to about 6 junior finch keepers. Our Juniors Fund continues to grow through numerous donations from members, often in conjunction with renewal of their membership.
Finches ’17 is fast approaching
The Sixth International Finch Convention is coming on **July 7-9, 2017 in Brisbane**. This convention will occur at the same venue as last time – Women’s College, University of Queensland with its brilliant facilities and accommodation. Early bird rate is ended – **BUT IF YOU CONTACT GARY FITT QUICKLY YOU MIGHT STILL BE LUCKY!**

It will feature 6 international speakers - Jonathan Fink (USA), Luigi Montini (Italy), Dylan Dukas (South Africa), Lindsay Nutley (Vietnam), Gerhard and Claudia Hofman (Germany) and 10 Australian presenters - Sam Davis (NSW), Peri Bolton (NSW), Gregory Parker (NSW), Cheryl Mares (Qld), Vic Boorman (Qld), Don Burke (NSW), Stacey Gelis (Victoria), Deborah Monks (Qld), Brian Bohl (Qld), Jeff Bray (NSW).
The only news that has mattered in Victoria over the last year or so has been the ban on sale of exotic birds at public bird sales in Victoria. This ban had its origins in conflicting legislation in Victoria, unusual definitions of pet shops back in 1994 and some unfortunate raising of welfare issues around bird sales by animal rights activists.

Over many months various avicultural groups have sought to resolve the issue with the Victorian government with Sam Davis and CCBFA pulling together hundreds of small clubs in Victoria. NFSA has had input to submissions and by participating in meetings. Not having a Victorian representative for NFSA has limited our direct involvement a little.

Below is a lot of detail and history about the issue, but the good news is that in late February 2017 the news came through that Cage Birds ARE TO BE EXEMPTED FROM THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 96 OF THE DOMESTIC ANIMALS ACT 1994. This is great news and a testament to the efforts of all those who have worked to achieve it, particularly Sam Davis. Bird sales must still comply with a code of practice focussed on bird welfare, but this is exactly what we expect and should not be a problem to comply with.

The information below was assembled by Sam Davis on behalf of the CCBFA and all the clubs involved in the campaign. It may now seem superfluous but is worth documenting in showing how a problem can develop.

“”

HISTORY OF THE ISSUE, UPDATE AND WHERE TO NOW

What is the issue?
It is currently illegal in Victoria to sell, exchange or even offer for sale birds (and other specified animals) at club organised events such as sales, shows, auctions or meetings. Although the law has been in place for over 20 years, it was unknown to bird clubs until brought to attention of authorities by Paris Yves just prior to the Mornington Peninsula Avicultural Society (MPAS) sale back in mid-2015. Bird clubs throughout Victoria have routinely sold and exchanged birds at their sales, shows, exhibitions, auctions and meetings without incident. We have identified 195 bird clubs operating in Victoria, so we are talking about thousands of events annually. The RSPCA has no records of any welfare issues whatsoever at any of these events. For many clubs such events have been held continuously for well in excess of 100 years.

What is the current law?
Section 96 of the Victorian Domestic Animals Act 1994 limits the sale of animals to pet shops, private residences or sales approved under the Wildlife Act 1975. The animals
affected include dog, cat, rabbit, guinea pig, mouse, reptile, caged bird or any other similar animal of a class or kind prescribed by the regulations. Section 96 was designed to prevent the sale of animals at “car boot” style markets. Hansard records no mention of club run events whatsoever, hence the law was enacted in ignorance of the thousands of club run events operating throughout Victoria annually. The Minister, under Section 5 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 is able to exempt any class of animal from any provisions of the Act. via a recommendation to the Governor in council.

What about sales approved under the Wildlife Act 1975?
The Wildlife Act 1975 applies to native animals only, hence when approval under the Wildlife Act 1975 has been given then only native species at those particular events can be traded. To date, this applies to the Victorian Avicultural Council (VAC) affiliate sales and the annual Reptile expo run by the Victorian Herpetological Society (VHS). In Victoria (and nationally) there are no exotic reptiles held legally in private collections, therefore the VHS annual expo is currently unaffected by this issue. In aviculture we have numerous exotic species, from Canaries through to Macaws. Exotics cannot legally be traded at VAC affiliate sales. Note that there is a sound argument that it is the sale event itself that is approved under the Wildlife Act 1975, and hence that is sufficient to permit exotics to also be traded at Wildlife Act 1975 approved events.

So what has already been done about this?
Many groups and individuals rapidly wrote submissions to the Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford, to resolve the matter. We presumed it to be an issue that would be rapidly and simply resolved. Unfortunately, the responses where less than satisfactory – no acknowledgement of the facts of the issue, no attempt to argue the case logically and no offer to consult. Responses to correspondence were routinely delayed for many months. It was clear this was going to be a drawn out affair.

Sam Davis (President of the Finch Society of Australia, Vice President of Canary and Cage Bird Federation of Australia) continued to lobby the Minister for a Section 5 exception from the troublesome Section 96. Eventually, after close on a year of lobbying he was offered a meeting in April 2016 with Minister Pulford’s Chief of Staff, Megan Berry. A significant proposal was prepared and submitted to the Minister’s office in preparation for the meeting. This proposal was compiled and supported by 195 avicultural clubs operating in Victoria

Dr Stacey Gelis (Avian Veterinary), Dr Gary Fitt (NFSA Vice President), David Renshaw (VAC President) and Sam Davis (President of the Finch Society of Australia, Vice President of Canary and Cage Bird Federation of Australia) attended the meeting. It is accurate to say the meeting was tense from both sides, however there was a commitment from the Chief of Staff to respond within weeks to the central issues.

After waiting more than a month, the promised response was not received. Ongoing emails, phone calls and letters over many months ensued. A response from Minister Pulford was eventually received on 1/8/2016. The response simply stated that “an
exemption from Section 96 would not be appropriate at this time” and noted that a review of Section 96 was underway and would be introduced to parliament this year.

**So what is the issue with the amendment Bill?**

The Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Bill 2016 was introduced into parliament on 11/10/2016 and 12/10/2016. As the name of the Bill indicates, it is primarily concerned with shutting down puppy farms. It also limits the sale of dogs in pet shops to animals that are being rehomed. These items are by far the main business of the Bill. Our issue, is by all accounts a relatively minor part of the Bill.

The Bill proposes to add Animal Sale Permits as an additional method of selling animals (including birds) via Section 93 of the amendment Bill which inserts clause (ab) into the controversial Section 96 of the Domestic Animals Act 1994.

The current Section 96 is as follows....

A person must not sell any animal referred to in the definition of pet shop or prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of that definition—

(a) unless the animal is sold in the course of conducting a domestic animal business in a premises that is registered under Part 4 for that purpose; or

(aa) unless the animal is sold in a place that is a private residence; or

(b) unless the sale is approved under the Wildlife Act 1975.

Penalty: In the case of a body corporate, 150 penalty units;
In any other case, 30 penalty units.

The amendments would mean Section 96 would read as follows...

A person must not sell any animal referred to in the definition of pet shop or prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of that definition—

(a) unless the animal is sold in the course of conducting a domestic animal business in a premises that is registered under Part 4 for that purpose; or

(aa) unless the animal is sold in a place that is a private residence; or

(ab) unless the animal is sold at a place specified in an animal sale permit and under and in accordance with that permit; or"

(b) unless the sale is approved under the Wildlife Act 1975.

Penalty: In the case of a body corporate, 150 penalty units;
In any other case, 30 penalty units.

The definition of a Pet Shop includes dog, cat, rabbit, guinea pig, mouse, reptile, caged bird or any other similar animal of a class or kind prescribed by the regulations.

The definition of "sell" includes barter or exchange and also agreeing to sell or offering or exposing for sale or keeping or having in possession for sale or sending forwarding delivering or receiving for or on sale or authorizing directing causing suffering permitting or attempting any of such acts or things.

The addition of Section 96 (ab) then brings into play the outrageous Animal Sale Permit system which Section 32 of the amendment Bill introduces.
A plain English summary of the proposed Animal Sale Permit is as follows:
1. The local council must prepare a report, with council staff able to check the venue and accommodation to be used for birds at the sale. That report must be prepared within 21 days of an application from a bird club being received.
2. If council approval is given an application can then be made to the Minister, who can approve or refuse that application.
3. Each application to the Minister must include a copy of an agreement from a vet who will check the premises and accommodation for birds to be sold, and who will be in attendance throughout the sale.
4. Each application to the Minister must include a guarantee to purchasers for each bird offered for sale.
5. Each application to the Minister must specify the species to be sold and the number of each species.
6. Each application to the Minister must include the full names and contact details of any person who will be selling birds at the sale.
7. Sale organisers must, within 28 days after the sale date, submit a report to the Minister which lists each species and the number of each species offered for sale at the sale, and the number of each species sold at the sale.

Clearly the above requirements and conditions would be impossible for all but perhaps the largest sale events to fulfil. There are numerous valid arguments against each and every condition. Councils do not have the expertise, on what grounds does the Minister approve or disapprove, no vet will be able to provide the given assurance, guarantee of sale for live animals are fraught with issues, species, numbers and sellers are unknown in advance – we could write a book! The central issue is understanding how this proposed animal permit system could possibly improve animal welfare for events that have been successfully self-regulated without incident for over 100 years.

If the amendments are passed into law as written, then sales, auctions and any trading of animals outside of pet shops and private homes will close down to the advantage of other means of trading that cannot be regulated, such as over the internet. We predict major animal welfare issues will follow.

So what was done?
During October 2016 the Bill was read for a second time and parliamentary debate was scheduled Tuesday 25th October through to Thursday 27th October 2016. Various clubs coordinated efforts to contact opposition members of parliament and local members to oppose the bill. Also a number of requested amendments were assembled but the consistent suggestion from aviculture was to simply exempt CageBirds from the Act.

This combined effort now appears to have been successful!

Back in 2011 a number of organisations forwarded submissions to the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) regarding recommended changes to the Wildlife Schedules and Regulations. These changes included the recognition of a number of sub-species not currently listed and to move a number of species from a specialist permit to a basic permit as well as moving a number of basic species to exempt. Currently no permit is required to keep or trade in exempt species. It was also recommended that a considerable amount of the red tape be removed from the fauna permit system.

Past history of the DEWNR fauna permit system. Back in the 1980s there were approximately 11,000 permit holders in the system. Following a review in 2001 a number of commonly kept species were exempt from the fauna permit system and the number of permit holders dropped to 7,000 as predicted at the time. Since this time there has been no further reviews or species exempt from the fauna permit system but the number of permit holders has continued to drop dramatically with the number of permit holders now being approximately 2,800. Of this number the largest percentage of permit holders is made up of persons holding reptiles only and not birds. We believe there are several reasons for this, an ageing population now keeping birds with very few young people taking up an interest in our hobby. Smaller back yards in new housing developments and the restrictions on building aviaries also species previously exempt from permit and the cost of a permit to keep and sell wildlife and the red tape associated with it.

In 2015 we had our first meeting with DEWNR, following this a number of meetings made up of different groups, licenced fauna dealers, bird clubs, bird & reptile keepers and associations, a cast of thousands. It took some time before DEWNR reduced these numbers back to a couple of smaller working groups, hence the Wildlife (bird) Advisory Working Group was formed by concerned parties who have the appropriate knowledge, experience and skills with the legislation concerned and species of birds both in their captive an natural environment. This small working group was originally recommended to DEWNR and would have saved us all a lot of time if it was introduced from the word go.

All of the bird people united together as one working group when DEWNR released the draft Wildlife Regulations 2017 for public comment. The greatest concern was the introduction of a new regulation. “Regulation 33 Prohibition on dealing except under section 58 class 2 permit” (licenced fauna dealer). The introduction of this new regulation was never discussed with any of the stakeholders prior to its release. To put it
into simple terms they wanted to more clearly define the difference between a person who is a licenced fauna dealer and a breeder. Under this new regulation you were considered to be dealing if you, purchased or sold protected animals on a continuing or repetitive basis, or if you advertised on a website or through print media. Offer to buy or sell protected animals on a continuing or repetitive basis, or a person buys or sells protected animals under a business or trading name. In addition to this they introduced a limit of only 20 birds that could be bought or sold by a breeder in a 12 month period. As an examples if you used a business card as most of us do or advertised in your club magazine or on the internet on a regular basis or attended bird sales and either bought or sold birds on a regular basis you would be classified as a dealer. Currently a basic keep and sell permit (breeder) cost $80 per year where as a basic licenced fauna dealers permit cost $750 per year. As it currently stands a licenced fauna dealer can sell anything he purchases or imports after 7 days were as a breed must keep anything he purchases or imports for 6 months before it can be sold.

The Wildlife (bird) Advisory Working Group responded to this by developing a petition totally objecting to Regulation 33 which was widely distributed throughout our industry with 3867 signatures collected to-date. A submission totally objecting to a number of proposed changes to the Wildlife Regulations, in particular Regulation 33 has since been forwarded to DEWNR. After many meetings of an unsatisfactory nature we have since had a special meeting chaired by the Director DEWNR to table and air our concerns regards the proposed Wildlife Regulations and Schedules. Following the concerns raised at this meeting nominated representatives from our group in company with the Director DEWNR met with the CEO of DEWNR to brief her of our concerns which were taken on board. This then lead to another meeting with the DEWNR Steering Committee to once again review and work through Regulation 33 in particular for a better outcome.

Well where are we now? Yes we have had some problems along the way and it has not been easy justifying our proposed recommendations but believe we are now close to a resolutions.

As an example in our origina l submission we had asked for all the sub species of black cockatoos to be recognised in the wildlife schedules and of these we recommended that 3 of the most commonly kept sub-species of the Red tailed black cockatoos be moved from a specialist permit to a basic permit along with the Swift parrot. At this stage it has been agreed by DEWNR that all the sub-species will be recognised. DEWNR has however been reluctant to more the 3 sub-species of Red tailed black cockatoos and the Swift parrot for a specialist permit to a basic permit due to conservation concerns. We believe this may still eventuate based on documentary evidence we have provided to DEWNR on the status of these sub-species in their natural environment and the ease of their keeping and breeding in captivity. In particular we have made it quite clear Red tailed back cockatoos are not under threat in their natural environment due to take from the wild but more so from habitat destruction and in most cases from both the illegal and legally approved land clearance of their known habitat in a number of states.

We have recommended that 5 species of Wrens, 3 species of Chats, 5 species of
Honeyeaters, 3 species of Robins, 4 species of Woodswallows, the Eastern whipbird and including the Black winged stilt, Inland dotterel & Bush stone curlew be moved from a specialist permit to a basic permit. Extensive documentary evidence was provided to DEWNR regards the ability to successfully keep and breed these species in captivity along with documented historic breeding records dating back as far as the 1940s. At this stage these species have been agreed to by DEWNR.

Other specialist species included moving the Rose crowned & Superb fruit doves from a specialist permit to a basic has also been agreed to.

We have also asked for all the parrots and finches not indigenous to South Australia and some species of Doves, Pigeons, Quail and including some species of Water fowl be moved from a basic permit to exempt from permit. Most of the species recommended have been agreed to in principal but not finalised at this stage.

Other changes asked for has been the ability to apply for and process import/export permits on-lines similar to other states.

**Bird Sale News from South Australia**

Birds sales held in South Australia in 2016 proved to be quite popular as usual. In particular the Murray Bridge Bird Sale was well up on the number of buyers through the doors compared with previous years. There was a total of 91 seller and trade stands booked-in on the day. There were a diversity of birds for sale both exotic and native parrots, finches, doves, quail and some soft bills. It was quite evident at most of the sales that exotic parrots along with licenced native parrots were not easy to move compared to exotic and native finches in some cases sellers completely sold out.

**UBSSA Annual Seminar**

The United Bird Societies of South Australia Inc (UBSSA) holds a 1 day seminar each year for its members and bird enthusiast, as usual this years seminar was well presented with a number of interstate speakers. In particular and of interest was the presentation by Simon Degenhard on the recovery program and re-introduction back into the wild of the Spix’s Macaw. Other guest speakers included Sam Davis who spoke on softbills. The seminar usually has 4 well known guest speaker along with an Avian Vet or someone with wildlife scientific expertise. Guest speakers are sourced both locally and from interstate with experience in both parrots, finches and softbills. The seminar cost $30 for members and $40 for non-members, extremely well catered for with morning tea, lunch and afternoon tea including refreshments. The next seminar will be held on Sunday 30th July 2017. The cost of membership is $15-00 a year which includes regular news letters. For more details contact the Executive Officer, Brian Reichelt 74 Dartmouth Street Port Augusta SA 5700 or Telephone 08 86423314, Mobile 0418 896995 or e-mail breich@bigpond.net.au.
ASSA Honours the McKechnie family

On Sunday, September 25th, 2016 an inscribed red gum bench was presented to the Gorge Wildlife Park to commemorate more than 75 years of service to the Avicultural Society of South Australia by three generations of the McKechnie family, the proprietors of the Park. The recycled timber used was made into the bench by our committee member Chris Kinsman’s son Levi.

The late Bob McKechnie and his two sons Colin and Ted all served on the committee of the society at various times. Bob was Secretary, Editor and a Vice President, and was later our Patron for several years, as was Colin. All three gave freely of their vast avicultural knowledge and were frequent Guest Speakers.

In the early 1960s Ted McKechnie brought both White-eared Masked Finches and Lesser Red-brows back from a trip to Cape York. He was later awarded the Society’s Bronze Medal for the first official breeding of the White-eared Masked Finch in South Australia.

Colin’s wife Yvonne was also a Patron of the society, and was instrumental in granting free entry to the Park for society members and their immediate family. With the untimely passing of Colin, Ted and Yvonne the mantle has now passed to Colin’s son Steve. Although he has not played an active role in society management, Steve has been an entertaining Guest Speaker on a number of occasions.

The society values the service rendered by the McKechnie’s, and hopes the bench will convey to Park visitors, as they rest upon it, our appreciation of the contribution the McKechnie family has made over the last 75 years. Next time you visit the Gorge Wildlife Park, seek out the bench, rest on it and contemplate the huge impact Bob, Colin, Ted, Yvonne, Steve and all the other members of their family have made both to our society and aviculture in general in South Australia.
Not much to report from NSW for 2016. We have been actively supporting FSA president Sam Davis and the CCBFA in efforts regarding the restrictions on sales of exotic birds at public bird sales in Victoria and participating in responses to the legislative review of the biodiversity conservation Bill in NSW efforts.

The Red Siskin initiative has been well received with Warren Lynch from the Smithsonian, Washington DC touring a number of facilities throughout NSW. For further information on this initiative please see www.redsiskin.org. The aim is to get a better understanding of the breeding requirements and ecology of the Red Siskin and seek to restore sustainable populations back in its native habitat. I (SP) have had the experience of seeing these little gems in their native environment during one of my regular trips to South America. From this experience and having visited the local markets I feel the situation with the wild population won’t improve without a change in attitudes towards trapping and the pet trade.

**Comment on Bird Sales**

Sales in NSW this year were interesting to say the least. I travel to most of the major sales as a buyer and a seller and found the sale scene to be rather unpredictable this year. The smaller sales at the start of 2016 seemed to have a good ratio of buyer to seller resulting in many birds sold. Sales from May to August seemed to attract more casual observers than buyers. The number of birds benched did not seem to decline compared to previous years which is a positive. These fluctuations may reflect seasonal changes in breeding of birds however I noted in previous years the sales weren’t so quiet on the selling end in the winter months.

**Legislative Review of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Bill.**

The draft Biodiversity Conservation Bill (draft Bill) and supporting products were released on 3 May 2016 for an eight week public consultation period. The draft Bill will replace the wildlife provisions currently contained in the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NPW Act) with a new, risk based framework for managing wildlife activities.

Under this approach, it was anticipated that some low risk activities may be exempt from licences, codes of practice may be developed for medium risk activities, and high risk activities will continue to be licensed or prohibited. The release of the draft Bill was an opportunity for aviculture to comment on broad issues such as the risks associated with the various species. CCBFA, NFSA and some other bodies coordinated a response led by Sam Davis (FSA) seeking to rationalise the licensing requirements around avicultural species.
Over a period of up to two years, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service intends to consult with key stakeholders to revise the rules and standards applying to wildlife activities in order to align with the risk based framework outlined in Bill. A first consultation meeting was held in February 2017 with a second proposed for April. NFSA has been represented by Bob Barnes and Neville Simmons in the first consultation.

Bob reports that Robert Oliver (the Implementation Manager) appears very professional and receptive to ideas. The first meeting was attended by a diverse group of attendees with 10 from aviculture, 10 from Reptile keepers, 2 Pet industry, 2 RSPCA, 4 from animal welfare. A diverse range of opinions was canvassed – everything from not allowing pets at all from the animal welfare lobby through to completely regulation free – an equally unrealistic expectation.

Everyone's views were listened to and in the main attendees supported each other. The Pet trade representatives were concerned with unlicensed sellers of reptiles, rather than birds. The plan now is to convene meetings with representatives of each taxa of animals aiming for a submission to the Minister by mid May.

A meeting with Aviculture is scheduled for April 1 and we have opportunities to:
1. Make changes to the species classifications.
2. Review and/or update the Code of practice.
3. Review licencing conditions.
4. Remain on review group after implementation

Sam Davis is coordinating the interaction. NFSA will be represented by Gary Fitt. Having a coordinated and consistent avicultural viewpoint will be essential to success.

News from Western Australia
Brian McGuire, Perth

No specific news from WA, but Brian McGuire reports that birdkeepers efforts to expand the range of finches allowed to be kept in WA continue to be thwarted by the WA Dept of Agriculture. Submissions to allow a range of species which are commonly kept in the eastern States are routinely approved by the WA Environment Department, but denied by the Agriculture Department and without any explanation for the decision.

NFSA is now proposing to escalate this issue and we will help WA Finch Society to resubmit requests with additional backup information and seek to engage directly with the WA Government departments to seek at least a justification for decisions.

News from the ACT
Tony Clibborn, President

Nothing at this time.
NFSA Member Clubs, Societies and Affiliates

- Association of NSW Country Bird Exhibitors (including their 11 member clubs)
- Avicultural Society of South Australia
- Ballarat Branch, Avicultural Society of Australia
- Swan Hill Branch, Avicultural Society of Australia
- Canberra Finch Club
- Finch Society of Western Australia
- Finch Society of Australia (Sydney)
- Hawkesbury Finch Club (Finch Society of Australia)
- Hunter Finch Club (Finch Society of Australia)
- Wollongong Finch Club (Finch Society of Australia)
- Queensland Finch Society
- Taree & District Canary & Finch Society
- Kempsey-Macleay Bird Club
- United Bird Societies of South Australia
- Queensland Council of Bird Societies
- United Bird Societies of Western Australia

Plus we have Memoranda of Understanding with:

- CCBFA - Canary and Cagebird Federation of Australia

These MOUs outline how we will work cooperatively with these two bodies.