

Allan Chalmers, who is based in Broadford, is a well-respected member of United Budgerigar Society Club. I visited Allan's last April, 2022. It was such a beautiful morning and it was absolutely a nice drive to get there. Allan made me feel welcome and showed me around his aviaries and breeding room. We then had a long nice chat (or rather an informal interview) over a nice cuppa and some delicious biscuits.

His Love of Birds Started at the Age of Six

Birds have always (from when he can remember) been Allan's hobby of choice. He started off his love of birds at the age of about 6 with a pet budgie called Charlie which he had for years. From there, at about the age of 15, his dad and he built a small aviary out of second-hand materials that his dad collected on his way home from work. That was him hooked. He loved breeding budgies. From there, he started to make purpose made aviaries for different kinds of birds, mostly Australian types. He had bred finches and most of the Australia smaller parrots specialising in red rumps at one stage. This was where he began to selectively breed birds other than just in a mixed aviary. When breeding all these different kinds of birds, he always had at least one pair of budgies he couldn't be without. Having birds and now his show budgies give him an out away from the type of work he does, giving him something else to think about.

Joining A Budgie Club

Allan remembers one day his family and he were in the Epping area when they noticed a sign saying budgie auction. They decided to go in for a look and before he knew it, he had started to bid, winning a hen (Cinnamon Light Green). A guy came over and introduced himself to them as Vic Murray. Vic sat with them getting to know them all and helped with what to look for in the show budgie. Vic told him all about the budgie clubs and show scene. He ended up buying 5 budgies that day and was so impressed with what Vic had told them that along with his youngest daughter he joined United Budgerigar Society club. Once there, he met the other members and was given really good help and advice. Allan has been a member there now for about 5 years and is finally getting his exhibitor points to allow him to move up to intermediate status in 2023. He finds going to the shows, he gets to meet a lot of great people and has made good friends, not only at United's but all the other clubs around Victoria. It is a hobby where everyone likes to help each other and the competition and banter is fun.

Allan's First Win & Best Win

Allan's first win was with a young Lutino hen at the Bendigo Diploma Show in 2019. He won the best young beginner bird and best Lutino in the show. However, his best win so far was at Riverina Club Diploma Show in 2021 with a Grey Green cock bird where he won best young beginner bird, best Grey Green in the show and reserve young cock bird to the diploma winner. At this show, he also won best opposite sex to his Grey Green cock, best beginner adult (an Opaline Grey Green hen) and Opposite sex to her.

The varieties that Allan breeds are Normals, Opaline, Cinnamon, Recessive Pied and Clearwing.



Allan with an impressive display of his Rosettes he was awarded at various budgie shows over the years

Aviaries, Bird Room and Breeding Facility

Allan started out revamping his aviary which is approximately 4m x 4m into 4 flights and a walkway. These are about 900mm wide x 2.7m long and about 2.1m high. All his flights and bird room face east so that his birds get the morning sun. He has always designed his aviaries in this way. He houses his hens and cocks in separate flights, while the other two house a pair of cockatiels and his young birds that have moved up from the nappy cage.

There was initially a small breeding room at the back of flights. However, this lasted about a year before he turned the garden shed (about 3.6m x 3.6m and about 2m high) next to his aviary into his breeding room, which he now has 20 breeding cages, 2 large holding cages, some bench and storage space and a small sink. The old breeding area now has 3 large cages where he houses new birds.

His flights and breeding room are fitted with portable heaters and fans for his birds' comfort. To clean his bird room and flights, he has set up a ducted vacuum system in a shed next to his bird room. He has ducted tubes running to his bird room and flight area where he attaches a vacuum hose to clean the two areas. According to Allan, with this system, it helps to eliminate the fine dust being blown around the bird room and flight which a small portable vacuum does. He vacuums daily at least once. He also makes up a mixture of Dettol and a pest control for birds in a spray bottle and he wipes down all surfaces once a week. All his breeding cages are lined with newspaper which is changed weekly.

The Feeding Programme

He feeds his birds a good quality seed mix. He also gives his birds small amounts of oats, tonic seeds and supply fresh water daily. He also adds supplements to their water once a week which is mixed between a variety of vitamins. Once a week he makes up a batch of soft foods for the birds, which they love. He feeds the same to his breeding birds but gives them other vitamins and minerals as well.

What do you hope the near future would bring in terms of the hobby?

Allan is hoping that he keeps enjoying his time in the hobby. He has said right from the start, *"As long as it is something I enjoy doing and does not become a chore, I will keep breeding and showing my birds."* He really enjoys going out to his birds after work and having a beer while cleaning and tending to his birds and seeing a chick leave the nest that has some special features is always a great bonus and feeling.

*"I remember the first day I met Allan at the auction, he referred to, standing in the queue to pay for birds he had purchased. At that time, he said himself and daughter Chloe were breeding budgies. As Allan said, he was given an introduction to the workings of our hobby by Vic Murray and not long after became a member of our club. Allan from day one has been a keen contributor to our club always eager to take advice from experienced breeders. On a couple of occasions Vic Murray and Steven Bradley have visited to give him guidance and encouragement as well as myself spending a couple of days over the last few years culling his birds. **Allan has become a valued member given the distance involved each time he attends a club event. I am sure Allan has enjoyed his involvement with success on the bench and socially.**"* Alan Baxter,
The President, United Budgerigar Society

Interview By Sean Wong



Allan's breeding room