



## *The Avicultural Society of New South Wales (ASNSW)*

*(Founded in 1940 as the Parrot & African Lovebird Society of Australia)*

### **A Short Talk on Blood Finches**

#### ***Neochmia phaeton (also known as the Crimson Finch)***

*(ASNSW Meeting - May 2014)*

**Ivan Cindric interviewed by Roy Barbaro**

**Roy Barbaro**

We are here to talk about the Blood Finch.

Do you breed the White-bellied and the Black-bellied Blood Finch?

**Ivan Cindric**

Just the Black-bellied. The White-bellied is a lot rarer and a lot more expensive at around \$1,200 whereas the Black-bellied are about \$350 a pair.

**Roy Barbaro**

There is a guy in Victoria that has about eight pairs of White-bellied Blood Finches. So far this year I think he has 12 to 14 young ones. He has a list that is about four pages long of people who want them. As you said they are about \$1,200 a pair whilst the black-bellied is about \$350 to \$400 a pair.

How has your breeding success been?

**Ivan Cindric**

It varies from year to year; it can go from very good to very poor for no particular reason. With housing you should definitely have one pair per aviary when you are breeding them. They will squabble a little bit through the wire but apart from that they are okay.

They get a really bad rap in a lot of articles that say that you can't house them with anything that has red plumage, it's not the case. I think it just comes down to the strain of the individual bird.

Mine are currently housed with Red-faced Parrot Finches, Painted Finches and Gouldians. I've housed them with several other species in the past and I have never had any problems.

Another thing that you read about them is that as soon as a young cock shows a single red feather you should get them out or their old man will slaughter them. I haven't found this to be the case. I usually like to leave mine in there until at least the next clutch fledges. One of my aviaries is reasonably large and sometimes I don't get in there and catch them all so there will be two clutches out and the first birds are almost fully coloured with no issues. I keep a number of birds in a holding aviary and I have had no issues so I think they have had a bit of bad rap.



Crimson Finch (White-bellied)  
Courtesy of [photobucket.com](http://photobucket.com)

## Roy Barbaro

Incubation times, how many eggs normally?

## Ivan Cindric

The same as a normal finch, approximately two week's incubation and about three weeks to fledge.

The normal clutch egg-wise is about four to six. Fledging can vary from one to six. I don't know if you have ever bred them but sometimes they will fledge one, then six, then two, so they can be a little bit inconsistent in that way.

Sometimes they can be a bit slow to get started. My first pair had five failed nests then finally fledged one, then six, six and five. But overall they are not too difficult to breed.

## Roy Barbaro

Do you find that you need to give them live food to get them through?

## Ivan Cindric

Yes definitely. When they are not breeding you don't need live food. If you see them in the live food dish you know that they have got young. I give mine [mealworms](#) and maggots and I give them [Vinegar flies](#). I taper the live food off just before the young ones fledge because I find they are not interested in the live food then for whatever reason, but definitely when they are breeding.

## Roy Barbaro

With the Vinegar flies, do you do that in a bucket with rotten fruit and flywire over the top?

## Ivan Cindric

Yes, in an ice-cream container, I just put the fruit in the bottom with flywire over the top so they can't get to it.

## Roy Barbaro

Do you feed them termites?

## Ivan Cindric

No, never. I've never been able to get them; they would love them if I could get them.

## Roy Barbaro

It is really hard to chop up a termite nest and get them all. The easiest way I have heard is with 20 litre white buckets. You get the lid and cut a hole in the middle of it (about 12-13cm in diameter), then fill it up with timber and hardwood wrapped in newspaper and made moist, put the lid with the hole in it on it then go out to a termite nest and put it upside down next to the nest. All the termites will go in there and build their nest inside it. Then you turn up two or three weeks later, turn the bucket over and put a lid on it, change the bucket over and then you just walk home with the bucket.

(See also "[Sustainable Termite Harvesting](#)" presented by Joshua Allen at our meeting in February 2014 together with "[Collecting and Maintaining Termites of the Sydney Region](#)" a review by Dr M L Eutick, The University of Sydney printed in the Avicultural Review - Monograph No 1; Edited by K C Parsons, 1983.)

*(Roy asked members present at the meeting if they had any questions they would like to ask Ivan about Blood Finches?)*

## Questions

### Question

How do you sex them?

### Ivan Cindric

They are easy to sex. The cock bird is fully red. The hen is an attractive bird in her own right; red face and red fusion over the wings and red tail. They are both very attractive. They are always on the move, flicking their tail. They are quite an inquisitive bird, especially the immature birds. If you lean up against the aviary to have a look the immature birds will tend to fly up to have a look at you. We have Corellas that fly over our place every morning and every arvo, and as they screech every single Blood Finch will just start calling in response. They are an attractive bird and quite tame.

### Question

What type of seed do they prefer?

### Ivan Cindric

I feed mine finch mix. I haven't noticed any preference for seed. also give them grains and greens seed; they like that, it comes down from Queensland. They love seeding grass. I give them a Lebanese cucumber every day. Corn on the cob a couple of times a week.

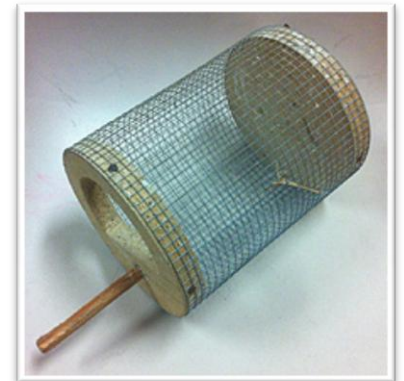
### Roy Barbaro

What about nesting? Do they use a box? Prefer a round hole or a square hole? Or do they build their own?

### Ivan Cindric

Mine have never nested in brush. I supply them with wicket baskets and I've got a few timber nest boxes but they've never used them.

What mine all love using is those wire cylinders that are about 19cm x 15cm with a timber back on them and timber on the front where the opening is.



### Roy Barbaro

I thought they were for Diamonds?

### Ivan Cindric

I have four pairs of Crimsons and every single pair breeds in those cylinders. In fact all my cup nesters like those cylinders. Don't ask me why, Singers, Siskins, Green Finches, Goldfinches, Doves, everything. They have never built in brush, always in these wire cylinders.

### Question

What is their natural habitat and distribution?

### Ivan Cindric

Northern Australia. They like to be near watercourses.

## **Graeme Phipps**

They like [Pandanus palms](#), but not just Pandanus palms, Pandanus palms with grasses growing through it right next to a watercourse.

## **Ivan Cindric**

They can be very tame, even in the wild. I have seen them eating out of people's hands, breadcrumbs and things like that.

## **Question**

You said before that there is a theory that you can't put them with anything red because they would attack them. Is that the male or the female, or would it be both of them that would attack them?

## **Ivan Cindric**

I'd say it would be the male. I've read a lot of articles that say that you can't put them in with anything red but I'd say it gets repeated. People read one article and then it gets repeated and repeated.

## **Question**

You say you are housing them with other red Siskin species; did you have them in the aviary first before you introduced the Blood Finches?

## **Ivan Cindric**

I used to have Red-faced Parrot Finches and Red-hooded Siskins. I thought if I put the Blood Finches in with the Red-hooded Siskins one of them is not going to survive through the night. I thought I'd give it a go and they were all fine.

I went up to a Queensland Finch Convention a number of years back and one bloke (he did have a large aviary), had about 10 pairs of Blood finches in with about 30 pairs of Red-brows and it was not an issue.

In my holding aviary I have about 20 of them in there. I think if you were to put two cocks in there they might kill each other but with 10 cocks in there and a whole heap of other finches I've never lost a bird. Having said that, you could get the odd rogue bird that I am sure would belt anything.

## **Question**

But they will never breed? You don't think they will ever breed if you have multiple pairs?

## **Ivan Cindric**

I think if you have a large enough aviary with five plus pairs like this bloke had (10 pairs or something like that in there, it would be okay). I think if one cock has nine other cocks to fight with he's not going to fight. If he only has one other cock to fight with, it's that dominance thing, I think he will.

## **Roy Barbaro**

That is what Mike Fidler said; he said he cracked it about five or six years ago. The hens are always the first to fall off the perch and everyone ends up with more cocks than hens and so one day he just chucked them all in together. He was running 10 or 12 cocks to about six or seven hens and he said it is like school yard bullies. When they got down on the floor and started having a squabble all the other cock birds came down to see what was going on and it would just break up. So he was actually having more success with 10 or 12 cocks and 5 or 6 hens.

## **Roy Barbaro**

Do they build a roosting nest?

## **Ivan Cindric**

That is a good question. I think they probably just use the breeding nest that they build. Mine always seem to have a nest there so they don't have separate roosting nests. They are not like Long-tails that build a separate roosting nest. Mine simply use the breeding nest.

## **Roy Barbaro**

Whilst we are talking about breeding; once the young jump, with Gouldians they are so susceptible to the cold that if one jumps in winter it is dead. If four jump at the same time they will huddle on the floor and keep each other warm. Once a Gouldian jumps it never ever goes back to the nest. Do Blood Finches go back to the nest?

## **Ivan Cindric**

To tell you the truth, I'm not sure. If they do, it's only for a couple of days.

## **Question**

Where can you get those cylinder nest boxes from?

## **Ivan Cindric**

[Ace Colony](#) has them. Bird sales have them but they have got the smaller ones. I get the larger ones because the doves all nest in them and all the cup nesters for whatever reason like them.

If you go to Ace Colony he has definitely got them. They are about \$10 or so (they are not cheap). If you go to the bird sales you can sometimes get them a bit cheaper but they're too small for Bloods.

## **Roy Barbaro**

They used to have a little Parrot Finch hole at the front but once they filled it and had all the nesting material and the young in it you could never clean them out. Now it is round and they have a semi circle wooden cut out that you can get your hand in and get all the nesting material out and start again.

## **Ivan Cindric**

Blood Finches do build rather a thick nest so if it only has a little hole you can't get in and pull it out. It is hard to pull out, especially the nesting chamber.

They use quite a few different nesting grasses – they also like that long coconut fibre and emu feathers, they like that.

## **Roy Barbaro**

While you are talking about that, there is coconut fibre that is straight, whereas in the old days it was all hairy and squirmy and it could get wrapped around the finch's leg and by the time you see it, they have either lost their leg or hung themselves with it.

## **Ivan Cindric**

If you see some of that straight coconut fibre, get it. The Parrot Finches go mad for it as well.

## **Roy Barbaro**

The straight coconut fibre doesn't tie their legs up and hang them and all that sort of stuff.

*Graeme Phipps thanked Roy and Ivan for their talk and Ivan for having a pair of Blood Finches on display for the interview.*

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