# Budgerigar Journal

The official publication of the Budgerigar Association of America



Daniel and Sophie Floyd's Spangle

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## Chairman's Message

#### Greetings!

Hi everyone, and what a wonderful start to a new year. By now you have seen a major update to the BAA website. Way to go Sophie. A new issue of the BAA Journal has being published with printed copies either received or in the mail process. Our "media team" is to be commended for their continuous efforts. They would be thrilled to receive suggestions and ideas for upcoming issues.

I would like to briefly address the subject of articles. Several have said that they would provide articles, interviews, reports, etc. As of date, only a few have been received. George, our editor, has agreed only to remain doing the journal if articles and materials were provided to him and in a timely fashion. Please provide him with the support need to continue this position. Deadlines for submissions need to be at least 60 days prior but 90+ days are preferred. So, July-August-September submissions need to be sent in March with mid April the latest. We had a lot of people wanting to get involved, but as time passes, it becomes more difficult to get input. It would be great to have a library of articles, so that we always have something to print to when the next issue is scheduled.

Show season is rapidly approaching with the first show taking place in late March. For many of us, this is the reason for all of those hours of time and effort. A special thanks to each of you who continually support the shows at the local club level. Many breeders will travel 100's of miles to attend these shows. If your club is hosting the show, please remember to thank these exhibitors personally for the commitment they made to attend. Additionally, appreciation should be shown to those members who were unable to attend but have shown their support with donations of cash, raffle items, and auction birds. Remember, we do this for the BUDGIES, and the fun we have while socializing is just a secondary benefit... well, for some it may be primary! Don't forget, a show is a huge undertaking, and it requires a little 'give and take' from us all to be successful.

I'm looking forward to seeing you this year. With all of the advancements, it will be exciting to see how these exhibitors compete at their new level. I feel that the members of our current Board of Directors are eager and ready to help wherever and whenever they can. They are willing to entertain any thoughts or ideas you may have to better BAA. Just tell any member of the Board of Directors if you have a concern or idea that needs to be presented at the meeting during the Grand National. It is their duty, as Board members, to bring it forward.

I look forward to seeing you and hope that everyone has lots of Budgies to bring to shows this year. Sincerely,

Alan Hoston, BAA Chair

# From the Editor

I have had a real hard time getting to work on this issue. No excuse, just keep putting it off. Then I looked at the calendar and told myself to get busy with it.

This issue will be a bit thin, I don't have a lot of material for the Journal. I would like to thank those who have submitted material for the Journal. Being editor is a labor of love, but without the material it is difficult to put it together. We are not asking for professionalism, but your experiences in the hobby. And photos, I only have a few photos I have not used.

Show season will soon be starting up. Our first shows in Arizona will be April 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> in Chandler, AZ. Our judges will be Rick Spier on Saturday and Julie Willis on Sunday.

Show Secretaries, please submit you show report for the Journal

## Deadlines for article submissions.

January/February/March -	December 15 <sup>th</sup>
April/May/June -	March15th
July/August/September	- June 15 <sup>th</sup>
October/November/December	- September 15 <sup>tr</sup>



Dewayne Weldon's Green German Fallow

### Mountain Climbing a Difficult Peak (aka Breeding Budgies for Show)

#### Rick Spier

Picture the following: You have fallen in love with Parakeets, and discover a world where they are more beautiful than the pet store variety...You go to shows or visit breeders trying to buy the best birds, but it *feels like* no one will sell you a good bird. You put up as many pairs as you can manage and hope for eggs. When the eggs arrive, most seem to be infertile. When the few that are fertile hatch, the parents fail to feed, or pluck some of the chicks. You then have to contend with a huge variety of unknown perils to finally get to what you hope will catch the judge's eye. WHY???

People often ask me why I have chosen a hobby that insists on disillusioning the participants with great regularity. I say it is like climbing the tough mountain peak... anyone can hike up an easy trail. There is a keen sense of satisfaction we get though, when we choose one that is known to be a bit tough, and still make it to the summit. Our Budgie mountain fortunately has a few routes to the top that start out somewhat easier (Junior or Novice Divisions) and get more difficult as we grow in experience (Intermediate, Champion and Rare) But any true climber of the Budgie mountain knows that it is not the summit alone that makes the climb worth it.

We have to start with the birds themselves. Those in the fancy (budgie hobby) know how much character this bird has. Many of us find true refuge in our bird rooms just watching their antics. While our careers and families sometimes take their emotional or physical toll on us, our birds are always there chirping, climbing, flirting and just being all around acrobatic clowns for us. There is also the thrill of seeing what surprises are in store for us from the pairing and successful breeding. Even after so many years in the hobby, I can't describe the joy of discovery I recently experienced when a single pair raised 4 chicks: a light green, a dark green, a sky and a cobalt! 4 chicks and 4 varieties wow. It can be like Christmas morning, several times a year.

Then we have the hobby of *SHOWING* our gems. After I had been showing a few years, a champion breeder told me that she found the social aspect of the hobby to be more rewarding than the actual "bird" part of the hobby. I thought she was crazy, as I had not yet made the lasting friendships I enjoy today, and told her that I was 99% here for the birds. I have to say, that the more shows you attend, and the more often you meet and greet the same exhibitors, the sooner you will arrive at the place where it is a toss up at the very least, between the social aspect and the "bird" part of our hobby.

SHOWING, much like breeding can be a mountain to climb in itself. Too often we see a novice breeder pop out with great birds in their first or second show season. Benching seems easy....expected even. So the novice breeder moves up to Intermediate, and suddenly the competition is keener, the mountain as it were is suddenly quite steep. But take heart, even Champion breeders who have found great success on the show bench, will hit a tough time. Sometimes the best birds fail to breed, occasionally disease strikes, or a host of other factors which knock the best down a peg or two. This is when our friendships in the hobby get us through until our show team is back to what is was. My best recommendation is to find a couple of breeders you like, and get on the phone a few times a year just to say hi and chat about birds between shows. Often your bird buddies won't have the answers you need, but it is likely they will have other friends in the hobby that they can go to for help. You are not alone in this hobby, if you just take a step out of your comfort zone and reach out.

So, our mountain has its challenges to be sure.... but all in all, the trip is worth it and the view is magnificent. Enjoy.

## 2017 BAA Grand National East Penn Budgie Club September 21,22,23 -2017

Let me introduce myself, my name is Kathy Thornber, I am in charge of the raffle table for the Budgerigar Association of America 2017 Grand National with East Penn Budgie Club. I am working with Joe Riley for catalog preparation.

Would you like to help support the show with an ad in our show catalog. Half page ad \$10 ( $5^{\circ} \times 3-1/2^{\circ}$ ), full page \$20 ( $5^{\circ} \times 7^{\circ}$ ). A generic ad may be made up if needed, email or mail details and information ASAP (By April 15, 2017). Send check, made out to:

Kathy Thornber, 1725 East Windsor Rd., Windsor, Mass. 01270

You may email ad and information to Kathy coolharleykat@hughes.net

Thank you

Kathy Thornber

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Inactive: Fred Wagner Louis Smaldino

## Why We Love Budgies and Why We Show Them

By: Sophie Floyd



Left to Right: Sophie Floyd & Tibor, Eliana Floyd and Nathan Floyd



Daniel & Sophie Floyds Spangle

We fell in love with our first English Budgie named Steve (Cobalt cock), we bought from a breeder in Fort Worth, TX in 2005. We visited the Fort Worth Bird Mart in the spring of 2005 looking to buy seed and pellets for our cockatiel. As we were walking out to exit, an interesting looking blue large "parakeet" caught our attention. We ventured over to where he was and Herb Crowder (breeder) introduced himself to us and told us what an English Budgie is. Of course, we took the bird home and named him Steve after Steve Largent (NFL wide receiver for the Seattle Seahawks). We had American parakeets as pets before but the temperament between an American parakeet and English budgie is drastically different. From our experience, English budgies, since they are bred exclusively for show, appears to be tamer and calmer as they are used to being handled. We absolutely loved Steve but knew that he was getting lonely and wanted a companion. Our cockatiel at the time did not like him at all.

In 2007, our family relocated to Huntsville, AL for my husband's job with NASA at Marshall Space Flight Center. We assumed that we could easily find a companion for Steve. Needless to say, we were wrong. Because we had family back in Fort Worth, we usually go back at least once or twice a year. In 2009, we decided to try and contact Herb Crowder to see if we could buy another bird as a companion for Steve. Much to our sadness, Herb Crowder passed away. His widow gave us contact info for Mike Rankin, another local breeder. We got in touch with Mike and he became our "long distance" mentor until his passing in 2011. At our first meeting with Mike in 2009, he sent us off with two hens, one cock and encouraged us to start breeding as he knows there are not very many breeders in Alabama. We came home with a golden-faced hen with Steve and the gray cock with the spangle violet hen.

It was a little frustrating at first because nothing was working out too well. The pairs did not like each other. So, we were back to square one and attempted to see if we could get more budgies locally. We found a lady in Tennessee in 2012 who had some and purchased a few pairs from her. From that, we started breeding and build up our lines. Since our kids were small, it was hard to travel to shows with a baby and a toddler. Also, we didn't have birds that we thought were show quality. Around 2013, our children were old enough now to start traveling with us so we could start showing. We got them interested in budgies when they were toddlers and taught them how handle, feed and band the birds. It is also something fun we can do together as a family.

We continue to breed with what we have and started to get some success but the birds were still not what I would consider show quality. My husband and I started reading up on genetics and how to pair birds on the internet. Information overload was a bit much but we eventually sort of figured some of it out. In early summer of 2014, we decided to see if we could find another breeder in TX. I did another search and went to the BAA website and looked up any info I could for breeders in TX who specializes in exhibition quality birds. I got a hold of Julie Willis and hooked up in late May of 2014 and picked up some birds from her that we knew would help us improve. We both want to thank Julie for mentoring us and her steadfast commitment to BAA. Julie encouraged us to come to the New Orleans Budgerigar Society show in July 2014. We did and absolutely loved it and won some in the junior and novice divisions. For us, it is not just about winning that is the thrilling part. Yes, winning is great but we find a lot of joy in camaraderie, making friends and learning more about breeding from other breeders. Special thanks to Jim Fleeker, Rick Spier, Maureen Broaderick, Rich Werner, Dave and Pam Collier, Pauline Domenge, Dewayne Weldon, Stuart Sacks, Herb and Margie Doucet, Josh Anthony, Chad Babin, Gary Olsen, AJ and Susan Mccord, Robert Marshall, "Doc" Travnicek and many other friends we have made the last two years going to shows. We appreciate your friendship and support as we navigate and figure out this fun hobby and to better ourselves as well as our birds.

We continue to go to as many shows as we can as our schedule allows. I will say it is challenging with both of us working full time, raising school age children and being involved in other volunteer activities. Spending time with our birds helps relieve some of the stresses we encounter with the busyness of life. We have now advanced from novice to intermediate and our son, Nathan, had just advanced from junior to novice. We expect our daughter, Eliana, to advance to novice soon. Both of our children actively participates in pairing, breeding and banding their birds with their own band codes. We let them pick what they want to breed and they are responsible for raising and caring for their birds.

We enjoy showing and getting together with friends. Our family is committed and will continue to show as much as we can. We encourage those members and others sitting on the fence about showing to come to one of the BAA shows. There are a lot of nice people who will answer questions and help as much as they can. In addition to seeing what goes on at shows, you will get to see a variety of birds in each division (Rare, Junior, Novice, Intermediate and Champion) as well as make new friends. We have made a lot of friends and are very involved in the club now. For the birds and great friendship!!

### BAA 2017 Show Calendar

Apr 29-30 – Arizona Budgerigar Society Chandler Boys & Girls Club 300 E. Chandler Blvd Chandler, AZ 85225 Contact: George Hollingsworth <u>outbackbirds@cox.net</u> 602-677-1335

June 3 - Maryland Budgerigar Society Dual Affiliated Winston Travel Lodge 160 Front Royal Pike Winchester, VA 22602 Contact: Kevin Smith <u>Kidker426@aol.com</u> 631-988-4100

June 24 – Arizona Budgerigar Society Mesa Women's Club 200 N. MacDonald Mesa, AZ 85201 Contact: George Hollingsworth <u>outbackbirds@cox.net</u> 602-677-1335

Aug 12-13 – Treasure Coast Budgie Club PSL Community Center 2195 S.E. Airoso Blvd Port St. Lucie, FL 34984 Contact Pablo Ortiz <u>Fatboy-98@comcast.net</u> 772-344-9631 or 732-277-2245

Aug 26-27 – Arizona Budgerigar Society – dates are tentative City Gym Hallomon & Main Camp Verde, AZ 86322 Contact: George Holliingsworth <u>outbackbirds@cox.net</u> 602-677-1335

Sept 16 – Fort Worth Bird Club

Fort Worth Bird Club 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual All Bird Show Cleburne Conference Center 1501 W. Henderson Cleburne, TX 76330 Contact: Cheryl Burnes <u>fwbc@fortworthbirdclub.com</u> 682-231-3099 or 817-455-2016

#### Sept 21-22-23 - 2017 BAA GRAND NATIONAL

East Pennsylvania Budgie Society Day's Inn 3400 Airport Road Allentown, PA 18109 Contact: Richard Werner <u>Squab1313@yahoo.com</u> 570-646-9459 or 570-880-5386

Sept 23 – Arizona Budgerigar Society Mesa Women's Club 200 N. MacDonald Mesa, AZ 85201 Contact: George Hollingsworth <u>outbackbirds@cox.net</u> 602-677-1335

- Nov 4 Utah Budgie Society Washington County Museum 25 E. Telegraph & Main Washington, UT Contact: Kim Vandermeyden <u>Kimv44@comcast.net</u> 801-641-0120
- TBA Greater Kansas City Avicultural Society Coronation of Our Lady Church 13000 Bennington Avenue Grandview, MO 64030 Contact: Ann Graff <u>A graff@lovelandtiels.com</u> 816-358-2688

## Are we killing the natural instincts of the budgerigar? Bob Wilson

The exhibition budgerigar of today is far removed from its wild cousin in the Australian Outback, but we must ask the question if our general husbandry practices and cafeteria style feeding are having a negative impact on the natural instincts of the birds in our studs.



The exhibition budgerigar and it's "wild-type" relative.

Several years ago during one of my regular chats with Eric Peake we discussed a presentation by Rosemary Low at the "Think Parrots" convention in London. The topic of Rosemary's talk was the importance of foraging or fossicking for food by ground feeders like budgerigars, cockatiels, etc, and its role in stimulating the natural instincts of the bird.

Ground feeding parrots like budgerigars are deep diggers .This stimulates the brain towards survival.

A key factor of captive breeding, as we do with budgerigars, is that we go in direct opposite to the wild aspect of bird community relations.

Budgies are group feeding birds, and have the ability to share danger and location of food with communal contact when in a mass or flock.

Budgies are also by nature a very active bird. They are ground feeders and foragers, and get plenty of exercise. In the wild they leave the trees and nests in the early morning and fly to areas where there is abundant seeding grasses, frequently 40-50 kilometers away.



On reaching the feeding grounds they forage, first eating the green seed heads, then they fossick around on the ground for dried seed. When crops are full they return to the nests to feed youngsters or perch in the trees during the heat of the day. During the afternoon they forage again, and later take refuge in the trees as the sun begins to set.



In the wild it's survival of the fittest. Not only do the birds have to avoid their natural predators... eagles, hawks, nest raiding butcher birds, snakes, goannas, dingoes and feral cats.. but the constant search for food demands that they are fit and healthy, or they will not survive.



Hawks attack flocks in flight. Butcher birds raid nests killing chicks.



On the ground goannas and snakes are waiting.

Only the fit survive, and research in the outback shows the wild budgies have a good lifespan, and, depending on the season and availability of feed, raise at least a couple of nests of healthy chicks each year, so fertility is high too.

Conclusions from the presentation and associated long term research: Staying as close to nature as possible with foraging/fossicking being an integral element in aviary management has a direct relationship with activity, health, fertility and breeding production of budgerigars and other ground feeding birds.

#### Now let's take a look at how we manage our birdroom.

Flight cages seem to be getting smaller and smaller which severely limits the activity and exercise the birds get. Exercise is an essential element in the health of the birds and physical development of youngsters.

In the majority of cases seed is provided in dishes or bowls. Husks are removed, blown off, and new seed added on a daily basis. The birds sit on the side of the bowl to eat and do not have to work (fossick or burrow down through husks) to access all the seeds they need. Somewhat similar to eating hamburger and fries at a table in McDonalds for every meal, yet we wonder why some birds seem prone to put on extra weight (fat).



Individual seed dishes for one bird, or a pair, does not give the bird brain decisions that need to go with communal feeding.

The seed bowls are located just inches from the perch in the breeding cages, and in some cases on elevated tables or platforms in the flight to keep them off the floor. Virtually no activity, i.e. exercise, is required to get to the cafeteria feeding.

Any seed that is not eaten after several days is disposed of. The birds have eaten their favorites which usually include the oats and other calorie laden grains, and those which are less to their taste but may be more nutritious are thrown out with the trash.



In many cases breeders use cages with wire bottoms so any spilled seed and husks fall to a removeable tray.

These wire bases eliminate the ability to fossick through seed the birds cannot reach, and in the case of youngsters they do not learn to forage or fossick naturally. And again good fresh seed that falls through the bottom wire grid is often thrown out with the trash.

We also ignore the "survival of the fittest" theology. In most cases, when a bird is off color or showing signs it is not well, we guess as to the cause and administer medications of choice in the hope they will save the bird.

Experience tells us that some birds are less robust than others and these are prone to minor infections that in the wild would be their demise, yet we fight to keep them alive knowing that any bird that has been seriously ill rarely, if ever, returns to top health and vitality.

If a bird is off color far better to attempt natural remedies to help it rebound, rather than medications which tend to strip the gut of all desirable flora and leaving it with virtually no natural immunity to fight off infections.

### Making A Few Changes To Test The Theory

Being someone who always tries to stick as close as possible to nature I decided to make a few changes and monitor the results.



When not breeding my birds are kept in a walk-in flight 10 ft x 6 ft x 7 ft high with moveable ladder perches positioned to allow plenty of exercise flying up, down and across the flight.

The floor of the flight cage is divided into sections using 4" x 2" wood. The three sections under the perches are covered with chopped timothy hay which is replenished as needed every 2-3 weeks.

The timothy hay contains a little molasses which is used to bind it together in bales for packaging.



The birds forage through the new chopped timothy hay when it is added, soon gnawing it down to a "powdery dust" that is easily swept up before a fresh supply is added. Not sure what they are after but there is obviously something they crave as they spend days gnawing on it and grinding it down.



Large dishes and trays containing seed, grit, and dry supplements were set in the center section of the vinyl tile floor inside the door, so the birds must fly down to "the ground" to eat. In the past the dishes and trays were topped up every couple of days so seed was readily accessible to the birds, and towards the end of the week any uneaten seed was disposed of. (Most weeks a good amount of husks and seed went in the trash).

The major change made related to seed. At the beginning of each week large, deep plastic trays were filled with fresh seed.



The new "deeper" plastic feed trays, 5 inches in depth, are filled with fresh seed at the beginning of each week for the birds to forage through.

As more of the seed was consumed husks accumulated at the top and uneaten seeds dropped lower in the tray. The birds would then dig down through the husks to find uneaten grains, moving their heads from side to side to move the husks aside as they fossicked lower.

No budgie will eat contaminated seed, only the clean seed, They test with the tongue prior to shelling the seed.

After a few days trays were checked to confirm there were uneaten seed towards the bottom, so I was sure there was food available if they "worked" to find it.

At the end of the week all dishes and trays were emptied onto the floor, Husks and uneaten seed, grit and any dry supplement that remained. Dishes and trays were removed, and during the day the only source of food was the "left-overs" on the floor.

The birds foraged through the leftovers, eating anything they had missed in the dishes, which was now much easier to find spread out over the floor.

By feeding in large deep plastic trays they are in a similar state as in the wild. By topping up the trays once a week then scattering the remaining seed at the end of the week the fossicking stimulates their brain to function,

At the end of the day the husks and anything remaining on the floor was removed. One observation was that very little seed was left at the end of this day..... which translated to a savings on seed costs. 99% was now being eaten instead of a large portion ending up as trash.

The deep plastic seed trays were then filled and returned... and the process started again.

After just a few weeks it was interesting to note that most birds preferred to fossick through seed spilled on the floor rather than sit on the side of a dish and gorge themselves with seed without working for it.

The birds were definitely more active. As in the wild, they spent the majority of each day foraging and fossicking through the seed and timothy hay on the floor, returning to the perches for quiet time early afternoon and again as the lights dimmed at the end of the day.

Activity between the sexes also seemed more intense, especially when pick blocks, branches, and seeding grasses were added.

The overall health of the birds also appeared to be improved. It was rare to see a bird off-color even during heavy moults or when there were extreme weather changes.

**Breeding season**: The hens were anxious to breed. Most were exploring the nestbox within hours of pairing up, and started laying within 10-14 days.



Fertility and hatchability have been excellent since the changes.

Breeding pairs again preferred to fossick through seed spilled on the floor of the breeding cage, rather than sitting on the side of the seed dish.

Another trend was for youngsters in the flight to develop and muscle up faster than in previous years (but that could have been more to do with disposal of middle of the road stock prior to breeding season).

#### **Conclusions:**

It is too early to reach any final conclusions after only 18 months using these methods. However it would appear that the overall health, vitality, fertility and production in the breeding cage has improved, along with a substantial savings in seed costs.

It will take several more years to confirm if the improvements were a result of the foraging and fossicking stimulating the natural instincts of the birds.

So far results are very pleasing. Maybe something for others to consider.

Special Thanks to **Rosemary Low** and **Eric Peake** for sharing their experience and knowledge in helping us to understand the impact we have on the natural instincts of our birds.