AUCKLAND METRO BIRD CLUB

November 2013

FINAL MEETING OF THE YEAR

Tuesday 19th Nov 7.30pm

Panmure Community Rooms, Pilkington Road,Panmure.

President's Chirp & Squawk!

Our meeting this Tuesday 19th November, will be the last for the year so it would be great to see as many as possible there. Traditionally, we have brought along gifts and a plate for supper, but this year, we will stick with the plate only (with nice food on of course!) and we will have a 'Super Raffle' with 6 draws and a range of prizes including bags of seed and gifts for 'him or her!' We will also have a discussion on how the breeding season is going (the shared highlights & lowlights?!) and perhaps comments on the effects of a week-long barrage of fireworks on our birds. Some subs and 2014 Yearbook orders have still not been paid, so on receipt of this newsletter, please contact the Treasurer, Derek Lourens (271 3774) URGENTLY to arrange payment otherwise it will be too late.

I have heard of a few people who have had a good breeding season so far and the pleasing thing is that they feel they can now show some of these youngsters in the 2014 show season. As I have said before, exhibiting your birds is simply another exciting challenge in the whole scheme of things involved in birdkeeping. What about bringing along some of your young birds to the November or January meetings so others in the club can see just what you have been up to; we could even have our own 'mini-show' in the new year, where comparisons can be made. Many clubs used to have these ('table' or 'first feather' shows) as part of their normal routine.

I have received quite a number of phone calls lately from people wanting birds "immediately to pair up with a spare cock bird." Yes, just prior to the breeding season, they all want hens! I am seldom able to oblige for several reasons; firstly, I rarely have spare hens as I plan my pairing up well in advance and quit surplus stock well before September/October; secondly, I often keep a couple of hens for my own 'emergency' uses; thirdly, I am a little cynical towards those who expect a bird when you have had to carry stock through the colder months of winter; and finally, I have found in the past that it takes sometime for any 'new bird' to adjust to the change of conditions which can include food/diet, hygiene and so on, so that they are not in the right condition to breed 'immediately' anyway. However, if I do sell a bird, I always ask the person if they belong to a bird club. Obviously, I encourage them to join the AMBC! I am a little concerned that too frequently we lose track of the birds we sell and the buyer. Often, these people quit their birds after a short time & sell them cheaply to a petshop or on Trade Me. This has also happened when some more experienced breeders have helped out newcomers. So our pure bred stock is often 'watered down' or lost to genuine fanciers. The NZ Finch Breeders Association is to be admired for attempting to keep records of breeders and the finches they keep to help prevent this. Some types of birds (eg Yorkshires, Rollers) are 'threatened' in terms of numbers and this is a situation that must be carefully monitored. My plea is: keep accurate breeding records, keep contact details of the buyer and encourage them to join a bird club.

On 23rd November, I am attending a special meeting of the NZ Federation in Wellington. This has been partly organised as a brainstorming session to share ideas on how we can improve the hobby in all its facets nationwide and to set some practical plans in place for the hobby moving forward. I encourage all AMBC members to write some of your ideas down & give them to me at Tuesday's meeting or email them to me (d.nic@xtra.co.nz) I hear plenty of 'rumbles' about what the Federation should and shouldn't be doing, so here is YOUR opportunity to do something about it! Similarly, if you have any ideas on ways to make the AMBC function more smoothly (eg meetings, newsletters, shows, fundraising etc) do tell a member of our committee.

We had two fundraising sausage sizzles at Botany in October. My thanks to those who helped out and it was pleasing to see some relative new members of the Club join with some of the 'trusty old stagers.' There will be more in the new year and I encourage more members to volunteer for what is actually an enjoyable and quite social time doing something constructive for YOUR club!

See you this Tuesday and please bring a plate of goodies, some small change for the raffle draws and money for subs & Yearbooks if you haven't paid already. If you can't make it to the meeting, on behalf of the new committee, I wish you a safe and happy festive season. ***Dave Nicholson.***

LAST CHANCE!!!

If you haven't paid your subs or for your 2014 Yearbook, you are rapidly running out of time. All current paid up members will be listed in the new Yearbook and this is being collated in Napier this month. If you haven't paid or are not sure if you have paid, contact Derek NOW on 271 3774.

IDEAS! IDEAS! IDEAS!

Any ideas for helping the hobby progress are always welcome. The best opportunity for years is coming up! The NZ Federation committee is meeting in Wellington on 23rd November and all members of the AMBC are invited to contribute ideas/comments. Please write these legibly and give/post them to Dave Nicholson (9 Pelorus Place, Pakuranga, Auckland 2010 or email them to him: d.nic@xtra.co.nz)

Sausage Sizzles

So far for next year, the club has been able to get two weekends for fundraising

sausage sizzles at Botany Downs - 11th/12th January 2014 and 22nd/23rd February 2014.

As always we will be looking for members to help. Keep these dates in mind.

Auckland Metro Club Cups

Could these cups be returned at the next meeting or phone Vince on 09 534 4988 for collection.

COMMITTEE FOR 2013/2014

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Breeding Season

Evolution generally has adjusted the timing of avian breeding seasons to maximize the number of young produced. In the temperate, subarctic, and arctic zones, the overriding factor is the availability of food. Abundant nourishment is needed, not only by growing nestlings and juveniles, but also to meet increased energy demands of breeding adults. For females those increased demands include the energetic burden of producing eggs; males need additional energy to support vigorous displays and to defend territories. One or both adults generally participate in the work of building a nest, foraging for more than one individual (mate or chicks), and in some cases territorial defence or guarding young from predators.

For most birds the young hatch and grow when insects are abundant. In the arctic and subarctic, egg laying is concentrated primarily in May and June to take advantage of the late June-early July flush of mosquitoes, blackflies, butterflies, and other six-legged prey. The supply is rich near the pole, but the season is short, and birds must court, mate, and nest well before the risk of frigid storms is over. In fact, geese that nest in the arctic arrive on the breeding grounds before the snow is gone, in order to start incubating as soon as nest sites are clear. The geese depend on reserves of body fat to sustain them in an initially food-poor environment.

In general, the number of passerine broods raised annually decreases as the poles are approached. Widely distributed species in North America that manage to rear only one brood at the northern edge of their ranges, may rear two or more at their southern limits. In temperate areas, many passerine species commonly re nest if a clutch or brood is lost; in contrast, many nonpasserines can produce only one brood. In some nonpasserines, such as arctic-breeding geese, the reproductive organs begin to shrink as soon as the eggs are laid. These birds have neither the energy reserves to lay replacement eggs if a clutch is lost, nor sufficient time to rear the young of a second clutch even if one could be produced. In fact, the young of arctic-breeding geese often do not have time to mature fully before winter conditions return, and seasons without successful breeding are common for species such as Snow and Ross' Geese.

Although not the only factors, assured food supplies and accompanying benign weather are by far the most common influences that affect the timing of the avian breeding seasons. To find examples of other factors, however, we must look outside of North America. For instance, to reduce predation on eggs and young, the Clay-coloured Robin (which only rarely nests in South Texas) breeds in the dry season in Panama, when food is relatively scarce. Fewer losses to predators more than compensate for the risk of starvation for the chicks.

In addition to such ultimate causes favouring the evolution of breeding at a particular time, we must consider environmental changes that are proximate causes of the triggering of breeding behaviour. The overwhelming majority of bird species living outside of the tropics sense that it is time to start breeding by the lengthening of the days as spring approaches. Day length, per se, has relatively little to do with breeding success, although, of course, long hours of daylight to forage -- especially for time-constrained bird populations in the Far North -- can be very important. But evolution seems to have latched on to day length as a "timer" of activities, since it is a signal that can be used to forecast future events. If, for instance, birds that breed in the arctic did not start to develop their reproductive organs until insects were abundant, the insects would be gone before the eggs hatched. The day length cue for development occurs long before the insects emerge. Other factors, such as weather (and associated abundance of food), also play important roles in starting the reproductive process, and especially in fine-tuning responses to the cues already provided by day length. For example, if Red-winged Blackbirds are experimentally provided with abundant food, they will begin laying their eggs three weeks earlier than birds without supplemented diets.

At least some birds also have "biological calendars" -- internal timing devices that are independent of external environmental cues and tell them when it is time to breed. Consider experiments involving the Short-tailed Shearwater, a Southern Hemisphere species that "winters" in the summer off the Pacific coast of North America but breeds on islands near Australia. Birds were kept in a laboratory for over a year and subjected to a constant light regime, 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness, for the entire period. In spite of this constancy, their reproductive organs developed and their feathers moulted at the same time as those of Short-tailed Shearwaters in the wild. The physiological basis for biological clocks and calendars -- the mechanisms by which they function -- remains one of the great mysteries of biology.