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# BirdKeeper



*Latest Issue*

**SNEAK PREVIEW**

- PREVIEW OF SOME ARTICLES
- SEE CONTENTS FOR COMPLETE LIST OF ARTICLES

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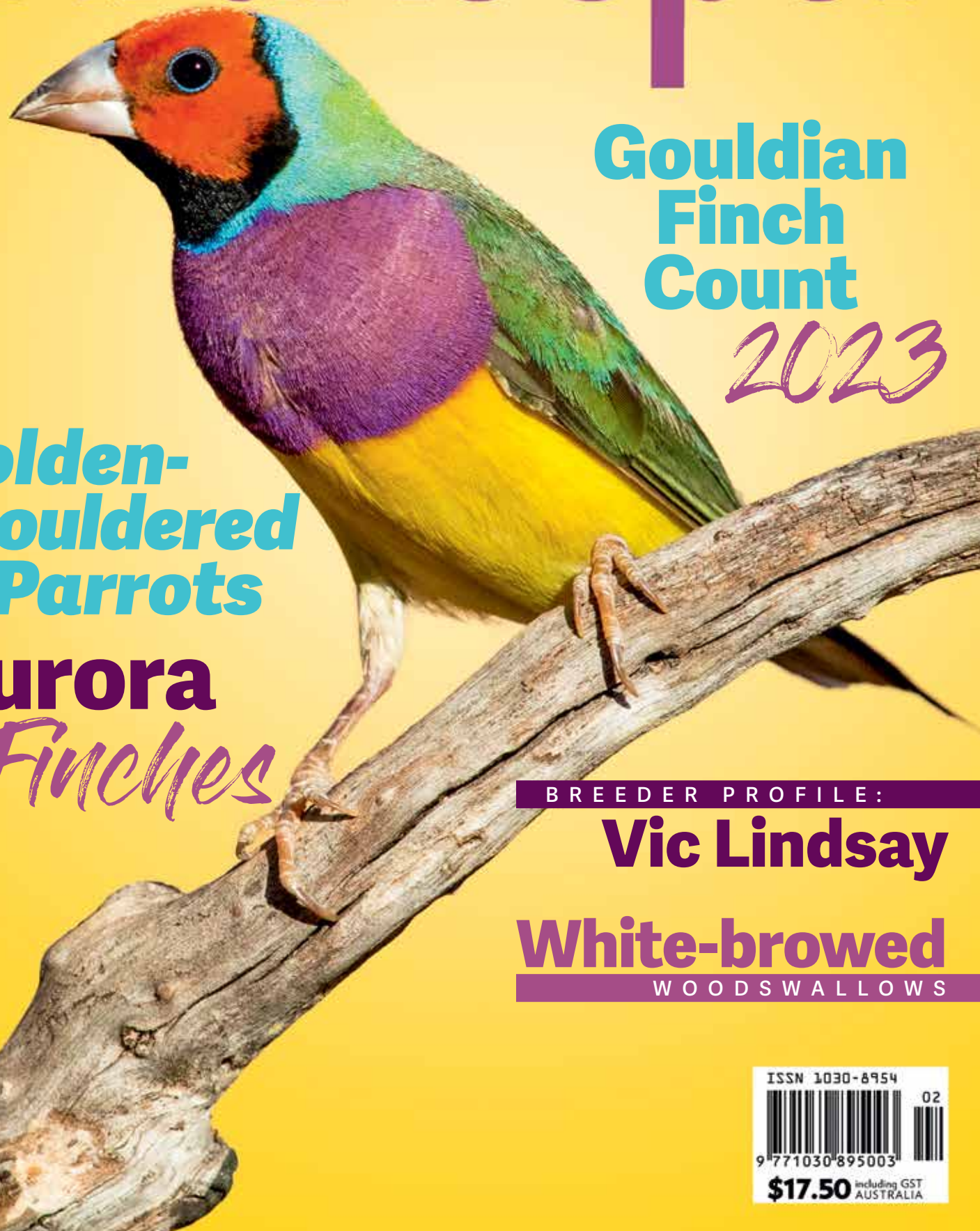
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AUSTRALIAN **BirdKeeper**

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**Gouldian  
Finch  
Count**

*2023*

**Golden-  
shouldered  
Parrots**

**Aurora  
Finches**

BREEDER PROFILE:

**Vic Lindsay**

**White-browed**

WOODSWALLOWS

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**Gouldian Finch**  
 PHOTO  
 ADAM BLYTH

# Aurora

## *The Forgotten Pytilia*



AUTHOR  
GRAHAM  
BULL



**Aurora Finch cock**  
PHOTO GERHARD HOFMANN

ONE of the distinct advantages of finch aviculture is that one can keep an active, attractive and relatively quiet mix of species together in a communal planted backyard aviary. If done well, such an aviary can be a very engaging and productive way to enjoy our hobby and learn from observing birds in a relatively natural setting.

Achieving a truly harmonious and compatible mix of different finch species that all breed productively can be elusive. There are a plethora of possible issues but one of

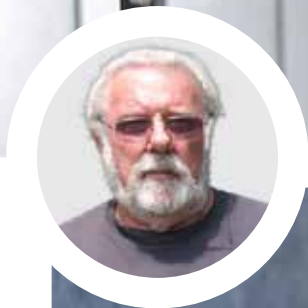
the very best ways to avoid inter-specific compatibility issues in a mixed finch aviary is to only keep species known to be of a totally placid temperament. Such species are far less inclined to display aggression or compete fiercely for the limited resources within an aviary. They breed successfully themselves while rarely having an adverse effect on breeding efforts of other species sharing their enclosure. The Aurora Finch *Pytilia phoenicoptera* is a textbook example of a quiet, placid species, ideally suited for a mixed finch aviary.





# 40 Years with the Golden-shouldered Parrot

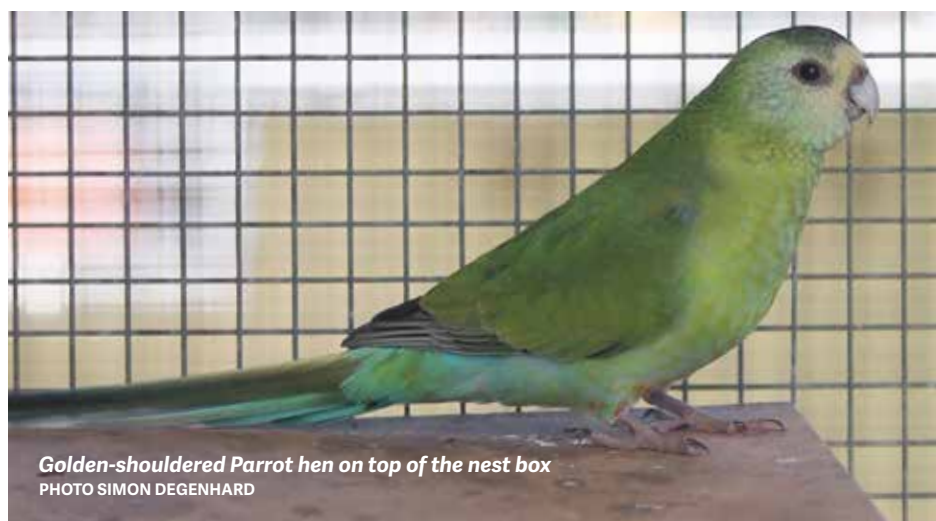
*Golden-shouldered Parrot family—from left, adult cock and hen, juvenile cock, juvenile hen and another juvenile cock—note the young cocks' brighter blue cheeks*  
PHOTO BILL BOYD



AUTHOR  
BILL  
BOYD



*Golden-shouldered Parrot cock perched on the nest box spout*  
PHOTO SIMON DEGENHARD



*Golden-shouldered Parrot hen on top of the nest box*  
PHOTO SIMON DEGENHARD

**A**FTER 40 years with the Golden-shouldered Parrot, I think some updating on its keeping and requirements may be beneficial to others holding birds. The opinions expressed are gained from my experiences with this species. That doesn't mean this is the only way. There will be many differences because of geographical location and bird-keeping methods. This is what works for me on the Central Coast of New South Wales.

## DESCRIPTION

Cocks are predominantly turquoise and reddish-orange with a black crown and yellow shoulders and brownish back. Hens are predominantly green and turquoise, and both are stunning. There is minimal variation in colour, intensity of colour, or size in these birds. Some cocks will have a wider yellow frontal band than others, and some a frontal band that is tinged with blue. Some will show more red in the belly but overall, variations are minimal.

## PREPARATION & OBTAINING BIRDS

Anyone contemplating keeping this species should first talk to successful breeders and read as much published material as possible to understand what is required. The Golden-shouldered Parrot is a tropical species and, although now bred widely, it is still a winter breeder. This species is somewhat domesticated but not quite to the extent of its cousin, the Hooded Parrot. Some Golden-shoulders will require heated nest boxes in cooler locations. In milder and warmer areas, this may not be required.

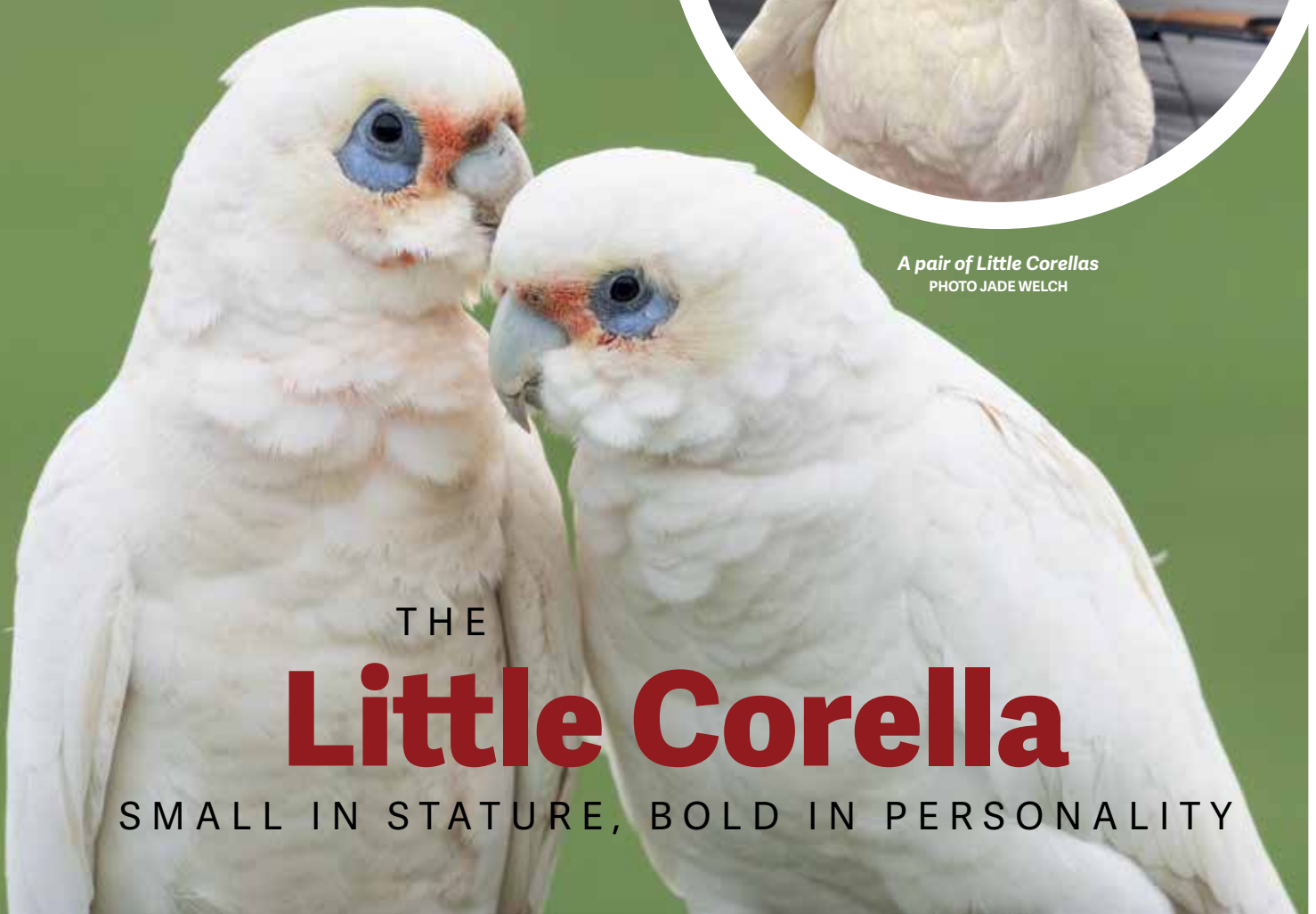
For any bird species, you must realise that your birds are fully dependent on you for *all* of their needs. Birds aren't just pretty to look at. Their feeding, water, correct housing and overall wellbeing is *completely dependent on you*.



AUTHOR  
JADE  
WELCH



Little Corellas can  
make great pets  
PHOTO HAYDEN DIX



A pair of Little Corellas  
PHOTO JADE WELCH

# THE Little Corella

SMALL IN STATURE, BOLD IN PERSONALITY

**A**USTRALIA is home to a vast number of parrot and cockatoo species. Some, such as the Cockatiel and Budgerigar, have become stars in their own right and are now found in the aviaries and homes of enthusiasts around the world. Galahs and black cockatoos are adored both at home and abroad. One species, however, has long been underrated—the Little Corella *Cacatua sanguinea*.

## DESCRIPTION AND BEHAVIOURS

The Little Corella is one of Australia's most numerous birds, found across the country, including Tasmania. It is the most widely distributed of our three corella species—the others being the Long-billed and Western Corellas. There are five subspecies recognised—*C.s. sanguinea*, *C.s. normantoni*, *C.s. gymnopsis*, *C.s. westralensis*, and the

northernmost subspecies *C.s. transfreta*, found in New Guinea.

You may also hear Little Corellas referred to as the Short-billed Corella, Dampier's Corella, Bare-eyed, or Blood-stained Cockatoo. Though lacking the colours of the Galah, Major Mitchell's and black cockatoos, Little Corellas have a beauty and charm of their own. Measuring 38cm and weighing 350–530g, they are resilient, rambunctious and playful.

Often observed in suburban environments, swinging from power lines, digging up soccer fields and bickering among themselves as they come to roost, Little Corellas have adapted to a niche, where many other species have failed. Flocks of hundreds are seen in many areas where they once were not found—often a case of being heard well before being seen!

In more rural settings, Little Corellas flock together, foraging by morning and afternoon before returning to their roost, filling moonlit nights with their noisy antics. In areas of agriculture, they often find themselves at odds with farmers for raiding crops and orchards and feeding on grain.

In the aviary, the Little Corella can be a comical and rewarding species to keep and, as a pet, can be very affectionate and loyal. One thing to be taken into consideration is the fact that these birds can be noisy, along with being destructive. If noise is not an issue, then read on ...

In this article, we look at the experience of two aviculturists in two states, who have had years of experience with this diminutive white cockatoo. It is a species that deserves a place in more aviaries, and more homes.





AUTHOR  
**GARY FITT**  
Save the  
Gouldian Fund CEO

# Gouldian Finch Count 2023

THE RESULTS

**Black-headed Gouldian Finch cock**  
PHOTO RODNEY BUSHELL

**A GREAT** group of 27 volunteers assembled in the Wyndham caravan park, in the east Kimberley region of Western Australia, all keen to help with the week-long 2023 count of Gouldians and other finches from September 4–8. For 15 volunteers, this was their first Gouldian Finch Count and there was much anticipation. It was great to have Save the Gouldian Finch (STGF) founder Mike Fidler with us again.

## COUNT HISTORY AND PROCEDURE

The Gouldian Finch Count was first carried out in 2008 and completed each year to 2013. There was then a gap of four years before the count recommenced in 2018. Covid restrictions caused another two-year gap in data collection as we couldn't get to the Kimberley. Nonetheless, we are progressively building a set of long-term monitoring data of Gouldian Finches which is critically important to understanding the population status of this endangered species. We need to know how the population is trending—is it increasing, static or decreasing? Our multi-year counts at sites within a defined study area provide this type of information.

The Gouldian Finch Count is always done in early September as by this time, late into the dry season, water points across the landscape are significantly reduced and the finches and other birds are concentrated at the remaining sources. The 2023 count followed a good wet season in 2022/23 and some highly unusual rain (30–60mm) in July 2023—what should be the dry season. We knew there would be more water in the landscape for this count, which meant the birds could be widely dispersed and accessing water points that we didn't know about. So, our expectation was that we may not record the numbers seen in the 2022 count—the highest numbers since 2008.

The count depends on the fact that all finches, being seedeaters, need to drink regularly. The population of Gouldians will come in for a drink early each morning before going off to forage. This pattern is stronger with Gouldians than with any other species. Thus, if we have counters at all the potential water points across the landscape early each morning, we can get a reasonable snapshot of the local population.

Our count methodology is now well validated by research of our collaborators at Charles Darwin University (Collett, SJ *et al* 2022). They concluded that, 'Waterhole count data was likely most reliable for Gouldian Finches as a higher proportion of Gouldian Finches visited waterholes within the first few hours of sunrise (5am–8am) and did not revisit the same waterhole during that period. Thus, waterhole counts undertaken 2–3 hours post-sunrise should result in a reasonable proportion of the local Gouldian Finch population being counted.' This gave us confidence in the approach used.





AUTHOR & PHOTOS  
PETER  
ODEKERKEN

# Visiting Papua New Guinea

PART 2: NEW BRITAIN

**Open areas such as Highland River are great to spend an early morning or late afternoon as birds go to and from feeding and roosting**

**A**S my friends wanted to see the Blue-eyed Cockatoo, which is endemic to New Britain only, that was the next stop in our July 2023 visit to Papua New Guinea. That is not to say that I wasn't interested in seeing this wonderful species, but I have been fortunate to see it on two previous visits to Kimbe Bay, a large, sheltered bay about one-third of the way along the north coast of New Britain. PNG's largest island is being 'transformed', with huge areas of indigenous forest replaced by African Oil Palm plantations. So, off we flew from Kavieng to Kokopo, near Rabaul, on eastern New Britain.

PNG is known for its extremely high accommodation costs. This means that tourists tend to minimise their time in areas like Port Moresby and head off to their desired destination. New Guinea tourism is also hampered by the fact it is such a rugged island with few roads. Airfreight contributes to costs in remote areas, which is virtually all of PNG. Despite this, I have never returned from this area without being impressed by this wild, largely unknown part of the world.

## KALAU LODGE

I was fortunate to have the contact details for a local lady, Leilani, of Kalau Lodge, who had studied in Australia and married an Australian. This made communication easy as I don't speak Pidgin, which is the universal language of PNG.

While she had no real knowledge of birding, she was incredibly helpful, securing a 4x4 at a competitive rate, and guides to assist in communicating with local landowners with some knowledge of birds. The lodge was inexpensive, and its facilities were of a high standard.

Previous trip reports indicated that birding was fruitful on the Warangoi River and around the power station. Rabaul is well known for volcanic eruptions and Mount Tavurur is the active stratovolcano of the Rabaul caldera. Its last major eruption was on 29 August 2014, when the ash plume rose 18km into the atmosphere. (Smithsonian Institution) The caldera was formed centuries ago and Rabaul has realised its threats a number of times, including being buried in ash after an eruption in 1994. (Britanica) It is a picturesque setting but, with more eruptions likely, I would feel uncomfortable living there.

***The Musschenbroek's Lorikeet has a stout bill to obtain food from seed and hard fruit but also feeds on nectar***







AUTHOR  
BEN LLOYD

# The Distinctive and Delightful White-browed Woodswallow



**White-browed  
Woodswallow cock**  
PHOTO ROB DRUMMOND



**White-browed Woodswallow hen**  
PHOTO ROB DRUMMOND

**FIRST** saw the White-browed Woodswallow *Artamus superciliosus* in captivity on a visit to the Hunter Valley and thought 'what a magnificent and striking species to have!' I then really took notice of them on a visit to the former On the Perch Bird Park, Tathra, NSW South Coast some time prior to it closing in 2020. While standing inside one of the walk-in aviaries, they flew down and took mealworms from my hand. When a pair of White-brows became available at a Spring into Finches and Softbills auction in 2019, I spoke to the breeder and decided to give them a go. When talking to people about softbills, I'd heard that they were too hard to keep, 'I don't have the experience', or that they were aggressive and would kill other birds. I used to believe this, but once I got to know a few breeders and researched further, I ventured into my first species and have kept and bred a few softbill species since 2016. This is my experience with the White-browed Woodswallow.

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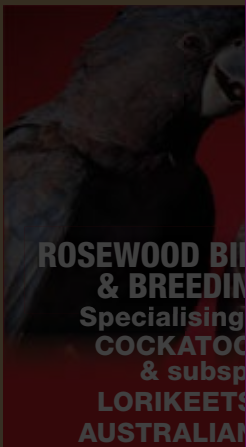
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