Australia is a big country, and there are few places on Earth with as much variety as Australia has to offer. For example, if you could superimpose Australia over North America geographically, it would cover all of the territory as far north as the state of Oregon and south to Panama in Central America.

With so much geographical and ecological diversity, more than 700 different species of birds occur naturally in Australia. Unfortunately, the duration of our tour did not permit us to see all of them. My main objective was to see and study Gouldians in their natural habitat. Our tour covered only the portions of Australia where they could be found, which included the northeastern coast of Queensland, and Northern Territory.

Last year in the month of July I made all of my preliminary arrangements: passport, visa, airline ticket, land tour, etc. One last thing, I thought, should be to phone my friend Joe Krader to ask him if he knew of an aviculturist in Australia that I could visit. When Joe heard I was going to Australia he gave me hell for not telling him. So I told him there was still plenty of time for him to decide to go (I was hoping he would!).

Without hesitation, Joe yelled to his wife, "Gloria! Can I go to Australia with Tony?" I could faintly hear Gloria yelling back, "Yes! When can I pack your suitcase?" That was all the planning we did and we left on August 17th, flying from Los Angeles to Sydney, Australia. As soon as we got off the plane, we immediately boarded another plane that took us to Brisbane.

There, a friend of Joe's who lives in Brisbane, Mr. McAfee, gave us a warm welcome at his home, then proceeded to give us a tour of Brisbane and south of the city to the Gold Coast, where we visited the Currumbin Bird Sanctuary. Thousands of rainbow lorikeets came as we fed them sweetened soaked bread. This was our first encounter with the birds, and what a sight. At exactly 3:30 PM, they all came and ate from our hands. What a pleasure to see these super-colorful and vigorous birds at such a close range!

We spent the night in Brisbane, and the next morning we boarded our tour.
bu. The “coach captain” (bus driver) greeted us and introduced us to the other passengers, made up mostly of native Australians, a couple from Germany, and a young lady from Canada. The bus was half empty giving Joe and I several seats each. Most other passengers were couples who sat next to each other. Immediately we made friends with them, especially with the Australians who were very friendly and eager to relate to two crazy “bird nuts” from America.

The Australians were mostly farmers from the west coast vacationing and visiting the east coast. They were amazed at our love and interest in birds,

*Ant bills are often used as resting sites by various species of birds including several *psephota* species.*

*At dawn on the beach of Fraser Island.*

*Red-tailed black cockatoos in the wild. This magnificent bird is extremely rare in aviculture.*

*The elusive Lady Gouldian finch — normal purple breasted, and a black-headed, white breast mutation. These birds were bred in the author’s aviaries. He plans a return trip to Australia to see Gouldians in the wild!*

*At day break a flock of crimson-winged parrots landed in a deserted street of Karumba. This crimson-winged parrot is in the author’s collection.*

*Photos by Tony Bucic*
MEMBER CLUBS

FLOIDA (continued)
Jacksonville Avicultural Society, Inc.
Ocala Cage Bird Society, Inc.
Peek County Avicultural Society
Suncoast Avian Society
Sunshine State Cage Bird Society, Inc.
Tropical Cockatiel Club of Miami
West Florida Avian Society, Inc.
GEORGIA
Greater Atlanta Pigeon and Dove Club
ILLINOIS
Plain Bird fanciers
McLean County Pet Bird Club
Mid-West Hookbill Club
Plaza Cage Bird Club
IOWA
Mid America Cage Bird Society
KANSAS
Capital City Bird Club of Kansas
Kansan Avicultural Society, Inc.
KENTUCKY
Kentuckiana Bird Society
LOUISIANA
Capital Area Avicultural Society
Central Louisiana Budgerigar Society
Gulf South Bird Club
MARYLAND
Baltimore Bird Fanciers, Inc.
Maryland Cage Bird Society
MASSACHUSETTS
Boston Cockatiel Society, Inc.
Boston Society for Aviculture, Inc.
Exotic Cockatiel Bird Society of New England
Massachusetts Cage Bird Association, Inc.
Western New England Cage Bird Society
MICHIGAN
Ann Arbor Cage Bird Club
Great Lakes Avicultural Society
Mid-West Manor Club, Inc.
Motor City Bird Breeders, Inc.
MINNESOTA
Minnesota Cage Bird Association
MISSISSIPPI
Mississippi Budgerigar Society
MISSOURI
Missouri Cage Bird Association
NEBRASKA
Greater Omaha Cage Bird Society
NEVADA
Las Vegas Avicultural Society
Northern Nevada Cage Bird Club
NEW HAMPSHIRE
Birds of a Feather Avicultural Society
New Hampshire Avicultural Society
NEW YORK
Feathered Friends Bird Club
Financial Cage Bird Association
Greater Rochester Hookbill Association
Rochester Cage Bird Club
NORTH CAROLINA
Charlotte Meteorina Cage Bird Society
Smoky Mountain Cage Bird Society
Exotic Bird Club
OHIO
Cleveland Cage Bird Society
Golden Crested Cage Bird Club
Mid-American Exotic Bird Society, Inc.
OKLAHOMA
Bird fanciers of Oklahoma
Oklahoma Cage Bird Society
OREGON
Columbia Canary Club
Exotic Bird Club of Oregon
Northwest Bird Club
Northwest Pigeon fanciers Association
Rose City Exotic Bird Club
Pennsylvania
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Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society
Philadelphia Avicultural Society
York Area Pet Bird Club
TENNESSEE
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TEXAS
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Dallas Cage Bird Society
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Gulf Coast Avicultural Association
Houston Cage Bird Association
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UTAH
Utah Pheasants Society
VIRGINIA
National Capital Bird Club
Parrot Breeders Association
Peninsula Parrot Bird Society
WASHINGTON
Avicultural Society of Puget Sound
Cascade Canary Breeders Association
Greater Spokane Avicultural Society
Northwest Exotic Bird Society
Northwest Valley Canary Association
South Sound Exotic Bird Society
Washington Budgerigar Society, Inc.
WISCONSIN
Milwaukee Bird Society, Ltd.
Wisconsin Cage Bird Club, Inc.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club’s closest state coordinator. There is a state coordinator listing with phone numbers elsewhere in this publication.

which they considered pests. They told us stories of thousands of Galas (Eolophus roseicapillus) eating their crops, and unfortunately, in desperation, shooting some in order to scare them away.

We left Brisbane in the morning and travelled north on the coast bound for Maryborough, enjoying the scenery from our comfortable, air-conditioned bus. At noon we stopped in a small town, the name of which I don’t recall, where we found a beautiful park and ate our picnic lunch. The bus was equipped with a portable kitchen, where our ‘tour hostess’ doubled as a cook and prepared our lunches daily while on the road. That evening we reached Maryborough, and nearby on the coast we boarded a ferry to Fraser Island.

We arrived at the island in the evening and drove in a small four-wheel-drive bus, slipping and sliding through the rainforest on a sandy road to the motel on the other side of the island. The ride, which lasted approximately one hour, seemed to last all night. The darkness of the night, made even more dark by the thick rain-forest canopy, offered an exciting ride which Disneyland could never duplicate.

Fraser Island is the world’s largest sand island. The superb beaches, towering sand dunes, and clean, clear lakes and streams make it a paradise for nature-lovers. The interior of the island is carpeted with a lush rain-forest.

The next morning I got up before daybreak, went to the beach, and waited for the sunrise. Several sandpipers (Calidris acuminata) were already walking the beach, reminding me of the saying, “The early bird gets the worm;” and they certainly did. The air was brisk and invigorating; no one was there except me and the sandpipers. They walked around me with no concern of my presence. As the day began to break several horses came to the beach. Later I learned they were wild horses; the Australians call them “Brombies.” The sun never came up, and it suddenly began to rain. I then realized we were experiencing tropical weather. Geographically, we were now located approximately on the latitude equivalent to where Cuba is in the northern hemisphere. The rain did not last very long but it did chase me back to the motel. It was time for breakfast anyway.

After breakfast Joe and I went bush walking hoping to see some birds. Joe kept teasing me by pretending to see a Gouldian. I knew better, for this was not Gouldian territory. We did see many rainbow lorikeets, sulphur-crested cockatoos, and other species of birds
unknown to us.

The next morning we left the island and proceeded northward along the Bruce Highway. We drove mostly through cane and acres of sugar cane plantations. I was not aware that the world needs so much sugar! In the next four days we visited two more Barrier Reef islands, where we had plenty of time for sun bathing and swimming. These islands abound with bird life, and Joe and I had field days of picture taking and bird watching.

I must mention that if you like seafood. Australia has one of the most delicious fish, called "Barramundi," which I never refused when the menu gave me the choice. Also, Australian wines are just as good as our California wines or better.

As we proceeded further north, the weather became warmer and warmer, and the landscape became more and more tropical, comparable to that of Central America. The month of August in Australia marks the end of winter and is the best time to be in northern Australia. The rainy season will start there some time in October, and this is the time, I was told, when you should visit southern Australia. At any rate, we were now in the right place at the right time in Cairns.

Cairns is the capital of the far north and probably the best known city in Queensland. For the next three days we stayed in a very nice hotel which gave us an opportunity to recuperate and prepare for our next tour. In the meantime, we took side trips in the surroundings of Cairns.

Offshore from Cairns we visited Green Island. The island is actually part of the Great Barrier Reef. While having lunch there under the palm trees, many small finches came close enough to be touched by our hands while feeding them bread crumbs. These finches are very small and have a very prominent white circle around their eyes, giving them the appearance of having big eyes. A quick look at our field guide gave us the name of these finches as gray-breasted silvereye (Zosterops lateralis).

We toured the underwater coral gardens by glass-bottom boat, then it was back to Cairns, where our present tour was to end and the second to start. The next day we left Cairns and travelled through the Atherton Tablelands, across the base of the Cape York Peninsula. In this area, according to information I read in the book, "Breeding Australian Finches," by G. W. Iles, the Gouldian finch is present during the dry season, but does not breed. I made
sure every morning to rise early and investigate the area before we departed. But there were no Gouldians in sight. I did see flocks of zebra and owl finches however. We continued our travel westbound via the "outback" on Highway 1 through Georgetown, Croydon, Normanton, and finally reached Karumba. Karumba is located on the coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria and is Australia’s prawn (large shrimp) fishing capital. Karumba is Australia’s equivalent to the outport towns of the Amazon and, despite its modern amenities, still has that "far away" frontier feeling.

After spending a very restful night, I got up very early. This was also Gouldian territory, and there was hope of seeing them. When I left the lodge it was still dark, but as I walked through the town the day began to break. Suddenly, a flock of large birds that appeared to be pigeons landed in the street. My first thought was, "Pigeons! I can see them back home every day." As I approached the birds they flew away, and then I realized they were not pigeons but crimson-winged parrots (Aprosmictus erythrophthalmus). They landed in nearby trees, and I was able to photograph some. I hoped to see Gouldians, but had no luck.

We left the same morning and rode all day through the outback. The route went through Normanton, Burketown, Cloncurry, and Cloncurry. This is the area where the Cloncurry parrot (Barnardius barnardi magillivrayi) lives. Joe was very interested in seeing this bird, but unfortunately we didn’t see any! After many miles of desert-like scenery, low bush, and many ant hills, we reached Mount Isa. The town is a comparative oasis in the wilderness. After a good night of rest, we embarked on another day of travel through the desert. In the morning we crossed the border from Queensland into Northern Territory, and by evening we reached Tennant Creek. The Northern Territory is the least populated and the most barren area of Australia. I enjoyed the vast empty spaces, a welcome site after leaving crowded Los Angeles. Australia’s total population is about 15 million; Los Angeles and its suburbs have about the same!

My early morning walk through the back streets of Tennant Creek provided several sightings of zebra finches. No Gouldian finches yet. After a good breakfast at the motel (by the way, Australians know how to serve a good breakfast; we always had a choice of bacon and eggs, cooked cereals, dry
cereals, orange juice, coffee or tea), we left and headed northward through Eliot and Larrimah to Katherine. This stretch of travel took us through miles and miles of low bush and grass land. Some short stretches of highway were not paved yet.

We observed flocks of different cockatoos. As we approached Katherine and the landscape became more forested, we were privileged to see many red-tailed black cockatoos (Calyptrorhynchus magnificus). I was able to approach them fairly close and take several pictures. This spectacular bird is an impressive sight. I have no words to express the joy I felt observing these birds in their natural habitat. This is also Gouldian territory, but still none were to be found.

In the late afternoon we arrived in Katherine in time to watch a flock of sulphur-crested cockatoos (Cacatua galerita) feeding in the trees right in front of our motel. Joe was always quick and ready to give me the monetary value of what we were observing, which was always in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. In the same place, we watched flocks of chestnut-breasted finches, but no Gouldians yet.

From Katherine we drove north to Darwin, where our tour ended. With only one day before we were to fly back to Sydney, we rented a car in Darwin and investigated the nearby area in hopes of finding the Gouldians. We desperately drove around in the outskirts of Darwin, but to our disappointment, we never saw one Gouldian finch. We flew back to Sydney, and the next day we boarded our plane back to Los Angeles.

Both Joe and I enjoyed this trip tremendously, but it left me with a feeling of unfinished business. I must return to Australia to see Gouldians! I am planning a group tour this year in July-August. It would be nice to share the trip with a bunch of "bird people," and the larger the group the less expensive it would be. The approximate cost of a 15-day land tour would be $1500. The main portion of the tour would be Northern Territory, Darwin, and Kakadu National Park. If any of you are interested in this unforgettable adventure and wish to experience nature at its best, please write to:

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We will send you a detailed itinerary, the cost, and information of what to do.

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Name: Bali Mynah (starling), Leucopsar rothschildi

Range: Northeastern forest of the island of Bali, Indonesia

Status in the Wild: Fewer than 200 birds

Status in Captivity: 492 specimens in 66 institutions and 8 private collections

Conservation Action: 40 specimens from North American population are to be sent to the Surabaya Zoo, Indonesia as part of a captive breeding/release program.

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