

The Southern Yarn

January–February 2024

NEWSLETTER OF THE DOWN UNDER CLUB OF WINNIPEG INC.

downundercalendar

FEBRUARY

Australia Day & Waitangi Day
Saturday, Feb 3rd, 5 pm
Scandinavian Cultural Centre

Mid-winter, a perfect time to warm up and get together with familiar faces – and, who knows, some new Aussies and Kiwis might just drop by as well. Come for the food – and stay for the fun. There will be a “Cook Off”, so dig out your favourite CHILI recipe, or try a new one and bring it along to share. If you are not taking part in the Cook Off, please bring a plate for the potluck supper, either a main dish, or veggies, salad or dessert. The social time will include two-up, and the bar will be open.

APRIL

ANZAC Day
Saturday, April 27, 4:30 pm,
for 5 pm start

Scandinavian Cultural Centre, PLEASE NOTE – arrival prior to 5 pm is requested. 5 pm is when the formal remembrance parade will begin and we aim to have everyone seated for the start of official formalities. Make a date to commemorate ANZAC Day with a memorial service and the younger generation playing a significant part again, singing of our national anthems, followed by a delicious POTLUCK. This has been a particularly important event for our Club for 75 years, so come and be part of it and the social to follow. Bring a dish to share for the meal and, don't forget, the bar will be open.

Land Acknowledgement

The Down Under Club of Winnipeg meets on Treaty 1 territory in the Province of Manitoba and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live and gather, and all the lands from whence we came, including Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia and Canada. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the elders past, present and emerging.



Our 2023 Christmas party had a great turnout and lots of family fun.

Happy New Year

to all members of the DUCW,
wherever you are!

May this be a year of good health, happiness and fulfilment of your hopes and resolutions.

Our year ended on December 31, and we invite you to renew your membership in the DUCW. Our very reasonable fees support our activities, including Australia Day and Waitangi Day (which is coming up on Saturday 3 February), ANZAC Day, our annual golf tournament, not-so-formal dinner, family Christmas party, website, and this newsletter, *The Southern Yarn*.

Annual membership fees are still \$20 for an individual or \$30 for a family/couple. You are more than welcome to pay for 2 years, if you would like to do that.

How to pay? The easiest way is by **e-transfer** from your financial institution directly to the Club's bank account. Simply register the Down Under Club as a new recipient, use our email – info@downunderclub.mb.ca, and pay the appropriate membership amount due. Or you can mail a cheque to Stn Main, PO Box 1655, Winnipeg MB R3C 2Z6.

If you need to update any of your information, such as address, family members, contact info, or to change how you receive the newsletter, simply send us an email. We value your support of and involvement in the Club and all we offer our members. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Catherine Bowering, Membership Chair



Al, Allary and Isabella with Santa's elves.

Christmas Mystery Solved

On Sunday December 3 at the DUCW Christmas Party, a child was missed during the gift-giving part of the evening. Santa was bereft, the audience aghast, and the child unsure why she was the only one who didn't receive a present from Santa.

It wasn't long, however, before the mystery was solved – a small hole in the corner of Santa's sack! – and a solution was instantly devised.

And so it was that the very next day, Head Elf Margaret Munn worked with Present-Delivering Elves Jenny Gates and Leon Badali to hand deliver the lost gift to Isabella Walton. Not only were the elves warmly greeted by parents Allary and Al, but they were joyfully welcomed by Isabella, who, after opening her art box gift, insisted we take a photo around the family's beautiful Christmas tree.

Thank you, Isabella, for making our trip from the North Pole so much fun. And we promise that we won't miss you next year.

(PS – Santa says “Hi!”)

online



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email: info@downunderclub.mb.ca

editorially yours

Charlie Powell



Happy new year, *Yarn* readers! And it's not just a new year, it's also the Club's 75th! That's quite an achievement for a little outpost here in the middle of North America, eh?!

Talk about the "Aussie/Kiwi battler" – the DUCW exemplifies just such a character. And this little *Southern Yarn* gazette plays a not so insignificant part in the battle to stay alive and relevant 'midst the constant bombardment of alt-media's missiles, mortar and manipulations.

So, if you value these 8 pages in your inbox or mailbox every couple of months, please heed Catherine's renewal reminder (p.1). Where else does one find such concise and concentrated downunder content?

This edition, again, is a typical example – there's Club and member news, book reviews, bird views, OZ and NZ news – you choose. Since there likely would not be a DUCW if it weren't for the BCATP, it gets another prominent mention (p.6). The humble but joyful little canary gets the honour of first bird "viewed" this year (p.8).

Huge thanks again to Jenny, Peter, Judy, Catherine, advertisers, Brian, et al.



Manitoba finally returned winter. Lake Katherine ski trails in Riding Mountain Park. Hydesmith photo.

president's ramblings

Peter Munn



G'day from our house to yours.

It has been two months since my last report to you, and my re-election to the office of President of the Down Under Club of Winnipeg. Like others on the DUCW board, I consider it a privilege to serve on a board of an organization that has actively existed since 1949, and for those with an arithmetical bent, that calculates to being in existence for 75 years, in this year. That is pretty special for a small club like ours, and to honour the men and women from New Zealand and Australia, and their compatriots from Canada who welcomed them here as part of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and to whom we owe thanks for the origins of the club, we will be embarking this year on a 75th anniversary celebration of our humble beginnings. Planning has started, and we

will keep you on track with news as it happens.

And now more personal news from the Munns. Our Prodigal (youngest) Son, Tyler, who moved to Toronto about 10 years ago, and met and wed his soulmate Hannah, has become a Dad, and Hannah a Mum (Mom), to a beautiful girl, Matilda Leah Munn. Margaret and I went to Toronto in early December and met with our best Christmas present of the year. It was a great 5 days, Hannah and Tyler are great fun to be around, and of course meeting Matilda was the highlight of the trip. (Now is that a great name or not? I am ready to go waltzing with Matilda any time.)

We reluctantly headed home and did really enjoy our Christmas celebrations with the rest of our family.

So, all the best wishes for the New Year to all,

Peter

Those funny pattern boxes...

Remember to access the links at the end of stories in *The Yarn* by using the QR (Quick Reponse) codes. The unique patterns are able to input the required data via the camera of your smart phone and lead you to the website, no typing required. Give it a try! Point your phone's camera at the patterns and click on the links we want to share with you. Let us know what you think!



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THANK YOU, DUCW!

Downunder Travel Ltd has been honoured with a long and strong relationship with the DUCW. We are celebrating 20 great years in 2024, and all of you have been a very big part of our journey. All bookings made from DUCW members in 2024 will result in a donation of \$50 to the Down Under Club of Winnipeg. Our thanks to you all for your wonderful support and friendships over the last 20 years!

— Sincerely, Jason Webb

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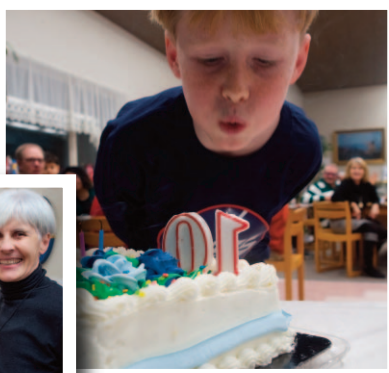
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The annual Christmas party was a hit, including a visit from Santa and a birthday celebration for Owen Davidson who moved into double digits.



A big hello to long-time member **Tess Shelton**. Tess is 98 years strong, and still living in her own home out in Vancouver. Cheers to you, Tess. (L-R) Amahra, Lisa, Tess and Alan, Tess on her 98th birthday.



A few words from our outgoing DUCW Social Coordinator

It has been a few years of me arranging events for and on behalf of the Club, including a necessary couple of years in there of COVID limitations/Zoom gatherings, but hopefully things are not too difficult from now on.

I chose not to stand for re-election at the recent AGM. There are only a couple of years until I reach my 80th birthday, and I am no longer hauling tables and chairs around, so it is high time to fold up the tablecloth, hang up the billy, retire the lists, etc. At the AGM, all other office-holders were re-elected unopposed.

If any Club member (and it's not necessarily a job for a woman) would like to take the Social Coordinator mantle, please speak to any one of the Club Executive.

My thanks to all who assisted me over the years.

– Judy Powell

Vegemite, anyone?

If you need to stock up ...

British Food Co. at 3125 Portage Ave – <https://british-foodco.ca/>

Portage Family Foods at 1881 Portage Ave – thanks to expat Leanne Foley for letting us know

Stonewall Family Foods – a longer drive from Winnipeg, so be sure to phone before you make the trip to confirm they have it in stock



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Didger know?

Regular didgeridoo playing is an effective treatment alternative well accepted by patients with moderate obstructive sleep apnoea syndrome. That's the finding of a scientific study involving 25 patients who complained about snoring. Didgeridoo lessons and daily practice at home with standardised instruments lasted for four months, while participants in the control group remained on the waiting list for lessons.

[Source: BMJ. 2006 Feb.]



Australia in Space

[Source: Australian Academy of Science] Australia in Space presents a ten-year plan for Australian space science, with recommendations and strategies to advance national interests and priorities in space; growing

the innovation economy, developing sovereign capability and improving the lives of all Australians. Our vision is for Australia to be a respected partner in the global community of spacefaring nations, leading

our own space missions with Australian science teams and Australian-built payloads and spacecraft systems. These missions will propel breakthrough science and technologies, and Australian expertise will contribute to the most significant international space missions. These activities will accelerate development of sovereign space capability and help train and grow a world-class workforce of professionals and technologists to feed the new opportunities arising in the burgeoning high value industry, research and applications sectors.



New/old friend for the kiwi

[Source: BBC, 3Sep2023] These "prehistoric-looking" birds have just been successfully released back into the wild in New Zealand, and it's got people pretty excited! The takahe are large, brightly-coloured, flightless birds who until fairly recently were thought to be extinct. Now, 18 of the very rare birds have been released in Lake Whakatipu Waimāori valley in New Zealand, where they used to live, more than 100 years ago. "There are few things more beautiful than to watch these large birds galloping back into tussock lands where they haven't walked for over a century," said Tā Tipene O'Regan, a rangatira (elder) of the Ngāi Tahu tribe, who own the lands where the birds live.



Featherston Military Training Camp and the First World War

[Source: New Zealand History] Featherston Camp was New Zealand's largest training camp during the First World War, where around 60,000 young men trained for military service on European battlefields between 1916 and 1918.

At its peak, Featherston Camp could sleep and feed more than 9,000 men, and train them to be infantrymen, artillerymen, mounted riflemen, and machine gunners. The government used the camp as a German prisoner of war camp and military hospital in 1918-1919, and as a storage facility from 1919-1926.



Sheep-shearing Sheila Sacha

[Source; NZHerald, Doug Laing, 23.12.20] A former Tararua College pupil from Woodville smashed a record beyond the scope of any scholastic dream - the first woman in the world to shear 700 sheep in a nine-hour day. Shearing at Centre Hill, near Mossburn in Southland, the now King Country-based Sacha Bond set a world women's nine-hour strongwool lambs record of 720 - a lamb every 45 seconds, caught, shorn and dispatched, and 59 lambs more than the previous record of 661 shorn by Southlander Megan Whitehead in January 2021.



National wine museum?

[Radio NZ, Jan 9, 2024] Wine magazine *Te Whenua* editor Robert Saker wants a national wine museum established to properly collate and preserve New Zealand viticulture's rich heritage. After stumbling across an 1897 *New Zealand Herald* article about a Wairapa vineyard's vintage during research for an opinion piece, Saker was spurred to turn it into a call to action. "If I can stumble upon this, what other treasures are out there?" he said. The current approach to keeping wine history was "piecemeal", with the national winegrowers association not even having an archivist on staff, he said. "I thought, it's time to do something about this, and a national wine museum which collates all we have and gives the impetus to dig a bit deeper made perfect sense."





Cricket, anyone?

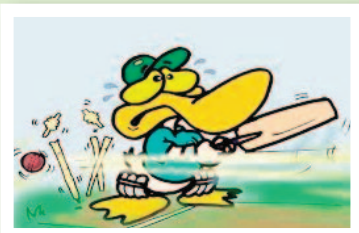
I kept wondering why the cricket ball was looking bigger and bigger. And then it hit me.

The Australians came down
like a wolf on the fold,
The Marylebone cracks
for a trifle were bowled;
Our Grace before dinner
was very soon done,
And Grace after dinner
did not get a run.
(Thanks, Terry D.)

A friend of mine is a retired cricket umpire. He doesn't lift a finger now.

A woman is giving birth and her husband rushes to the hospital to be there. On his way, he decides to call the hospital to see how she's doing but he accidentally calls Lord's Cricket Ground instead. Someone answers and the husband asks, "Hi. How's everything going there?" The reply came, "Well... we have three out and hope to have the rest out by lunch. Last one was a duck."

(In cricket, a duck is a batsman's dismissal with a score of zero. A batsman being dismissed off their first delivery faced is known as a golden duck.)



Top NZ Reads in 2023

[Source: 29 December 2023, Radio NZ]

Looking for a good read? Then keep an eye out for one of these books by Kiwi authors.

Everything I Know About Books edited by Odessa Owens and Theresa Crewdson – An eclectic collection that gives readers a behind-the-scenes glimpse into how our books are made and marketed with a uniquely Aotearoa perspective, telling the story of publishing in essays, comics and poetry.

Birnam Wood by Eleanor Catton – The characters are incredibly well-observed and feel so absolutely real, the rest of the plot is perfectly balanced between believable and outrageous, and it's got a cool cover, too.

Unsheltered by Claire Moleta – Set in a near future Australia-alike, this post-apocalyptic fiction is unusually pointed and intimate. The quest at its heart isn't grand, but its viewpoint is firmly from ground level, and the mundane details of daily survival gives way to a harsh and desperate new one.

The Axeman's Carnival by Catherine Chidgey – Everywhere, the birds: sparrows and skylarks and thrushes, starlings and bellbirds, fantails and pipits – but above them all and louder, the magpies. We are here and this is our tree and we're staying and it is ours and you need to leave – now. Part trickster, part surrogate child, part witness, Tama the magpie is the star of this story.

Bird Life by Anna Smail – Sometimes it's the book you're immersed in that seems closest and therefore best. This intriguing, shimmering novel is a captivating story set in Tokyo with two protagonists: Dinah, a New Zealander grieving the death of her twin brother; and Yasuko, a solo mother whose son has recently left her without explanation.



Naked Under Capricorn by Olaf Ruhen – Published in 1958, this is the story of the great Australian outback and the relationship between white man, Davis Marriner, left for dead, naked, robbed and abandoned, and the aborigines who come to his aid. It is a vivid and moving account of Aboriginal life and the issues it raised, which are just as relevant in Australia today.

Tangi by Witi Ihimaera – This winner of the 1973 James Wattie Book of the Year features Tama, who works and moves in the Pāheka world in Wellington, learns his father has died and returns home for the tangi. Moving gently between the spaces of finding out about his father's death, travelling home and preparing for the tangi, we observe the process and roles of whānau and hapu.

The Bone Tree by Airana Ngarewa – This is not an easy read, with its spare, evocative writing and sense of place. Kauri and his little brother Black are abandoned. No rudder. No language. No love. Dad's mean and mum's dead. A fallen-down house with empty cupboards but plenty of demons. It's a brutal coming-of-age story set loosely in the '90s against a backdrop of intergenerational trauma, state care, the loss of te reo and tikanga, urbanisation, and the neglect of the most vulnerable. But given the state of things politically right now, Kauri walking alone along that harsh road, one step forward, ten back, is, sadly, a striking metaphor for our times.

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GettingtoKnow...

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

[Source: Government of Canada] When the Second World War broke out in 1939, Canada was an ocean away from the scene of the fighting in Europe. But geographical distance did not mean that Canada would not play an important role in the struggle to restore peace.

One of the first and most important contributions our country would make to the war effort would be the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP). Under a deal signed in 1939, Canada agreed to provide facilities and training for airmen from every part of the Commonwealth. Canada was ideally suited for this program because our country was far from most of the active fighting and had lots of wide-open spaces and good flying conditions.

"The Aerodrome of Democracy"

The BCATP was an enormous undertaking. In 1939, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) had only 4,000 personnel, less than a dozen airports of its own and training facilities for only 400 ground crew per year. Now the RCAF was expected to train thousands. It had to recruit instructors, build air bases, acquire aircraft, and develop training schools for different specialities. By war's end, there were 151 training schools and every province had BCATP installations. Canada was, in U.S. President Roosevelt's words, "the aerodrome of democracy".

During the time of its operation, the BCATP employed 3,540 aircraft, 33,000 air force personnel, and 6,000 civilian employees. The government built 7,000 hangars, barracks, and drill halls for the air bases and training schools.

Most training schools had three runways, each 100 feet wide and 2,500 feet long. Enough concrete was used in creating the runways for all the BCATP air bases to build a 20-foot wide highway from Ottawa to Vancouver.

Under the original agreement to establish the BCATP, Britain was to pay \$218 million, Canada \$313 million, Australia \$97



million, and New Zealand \$21 million. Costs, however, escalated far beyond the 1939 estimates. In the end, Canada paid \$1.6 billion of the total cost of \$2.2 billion. In terms of today's money, that meant that each taxpayer living in Canada ended up contributing more than \$3,000 just to pay for the BCATP.

Rigorous Training

Training in the BCATP was challenging and rigorous. Pilots, wireless operators, air gunners, air observers, and flight engineers went through months of training at specialized schools.

The pilot training was the longest and most difficult. From Initial Training School, they went to Elementary Flying Training School, where they got their first chance to fly, followed by Service Flying Training Schools where they were separated into fighter and bomber pilots. From there they went into Advanced Flying and Operational Training Units before going overseas.

Of the Canadians trained in the BCATP, 25,747 would become pilots: 12,855 navigators; 6,659 air bombers; 12,744 wireless operators; 12,917 air gunners, and 1,913 flight engineers.

The risks and sacrifices of those serving their country during the Second World War were not limited to those who were engaged in active fighting. Training could be hazardous, as demonstrated by the 856 trainees who died in crashes during BCATP's five years of operation. As high as these figures may seem, it was to the credit of the plan that, by 1944, only one fatal accident was being recorded for each 22,388 hours of flying time.

Everyone Pitches In

Civilians played an important role in the BCATP, providing instructors for training schools and community support for airmen who were far away from home.

Bush and commercial pilots joined as instructors, working side-by-side with military personnel.

In the beginning, the government entrusted Canadian flying clubs with the organization and operation of the Elementary Flying Training Schools. Many of their members had served in the First World War and provided an immediate source of skilled manpower.

Civilian instructors in Elementary Fly-



ing Training Schools emphasized safety, working under the maxim “There are old pilots and bold pilots; there are no old, bold pilots.”

Some flying clubs paid for the entire cost of a training school using private funds or community donations. In Vancouver, citizens paid for 14 training aircraft out of their own pockets.

Women’s organization ran canteens, sports organizations supplied athletic equipment and service clubs provided items like pianos for barracks halls.

Many people invited trainees into their own homes for meals as a patriotic gesture and as a part of their personal involvement in the war effort.

An Outstanding Success

The BCATP was an outstanding success. By the end of the war, it had graduated 131,533 pilots, observers, flight engineers, and other aircrew for the air forces of Canada, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand. While over half the BCATP graduates came from the North American continent, the plan trained personnel from all over the world including about 2,000 French, 900 Czechoslovakians, 680 Norwegians, 450 Poles, and about the same number of Belgians and Dutch.

- 72,835 graduates joined the Royal Canadian Air Force
- 42,110 graduates joined the Royal Air Force
- 9,606 joined the Royal Australian Air Force
- 7,002 joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force

The Legacy

Knowing about our country’s military history helps us to understand the Canada in which we live today and how we can build our future together. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan helped create a legacy in Canada that continues to this day, demonstrating that our future is indeed built on our past.

Canada Remembers Program

The Canada Remembers Program of Veterans Affairs Canada encourages all Canadians to learn about the sacrifices and achievements made by those who have served – and continue to serve – during times of war and peace. It also invites Canadians to become involved in remembrance activities that will help preserve their legacy for future generations.



Bookseller at the End of the World

Several months ago, my friend Jo in New Zealand and I swapped non-fiction books. I sent her a copy of M. A. Appleby’s *Winnie the Bear*, and Jo sent me *The Bookseller at the End of the World* by Ruth Shaw.

Ruth’s book is an absolute treasure, a surprise telling that captivated me from start to finish. From incredible joy to deep tragedy, the book speaks of pirates on the high seas, protests on foreign and familiar lands, pig farming, gold mining, gambling, and a life spent running from things.

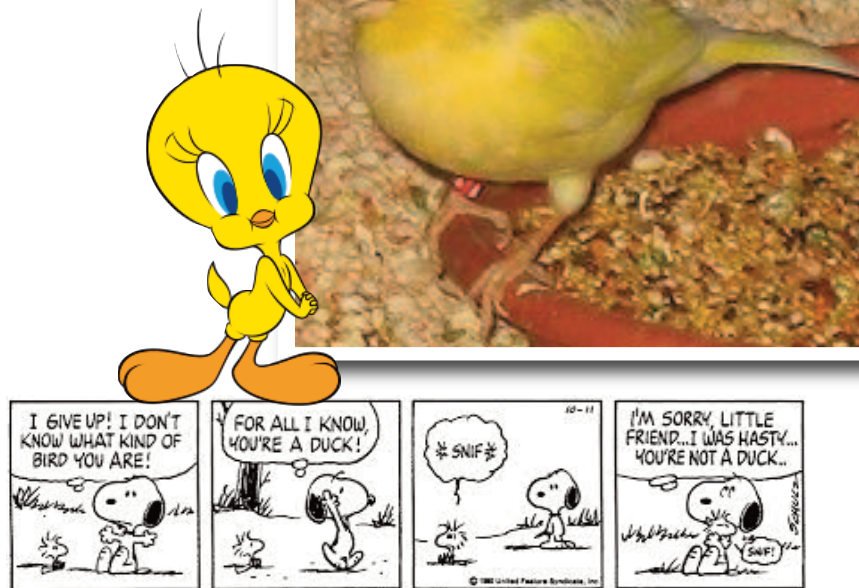
The adventure comes full circle when Ruth returns to New Zealand where she reconnects with her first love, and eventually sets up her first bookstore. As she told *Stuff NZ* in April 2022, “It’s a hobby that’s turned into a lifestyle. I just love the people, and I love the interaction.”

To share any more will spoil the surprise that awaits with every turn of a page. But suffice to say that one of the guiding lights throughout is Ruth’s love of books, and a deep desire to share them with as many people as possible.

Bookseller is rich, funny, and an accessible read, and has already got me planning my own trip to visit the bookseller at the end of the world.

– Jenny Gates





Tweety Pie

Domestic Canary [Wikipedia]

Maybe the most famous of his breed, Warner Bros' "Tweety", is definitely a canary. What about Charles Schultz's "Woodstock"? Even Snoopy doesn't know!

Not a duck – maybe a mockingbird??

Or could be a canary ...

Canaries were domesticated in Europe after being introduced by Spanish sailors who brought them from the Canary Islands (the name of the islands is not derived from the canary bird; rather, the birds are named after the islands).

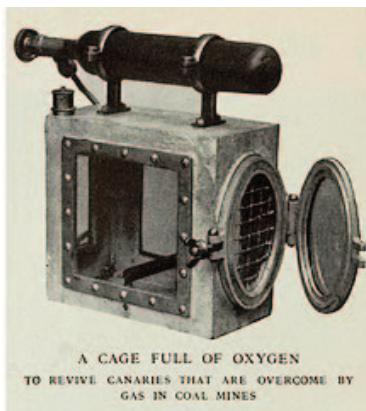
They replaced mice as the sentinel species for detecting carbon monoxide in British mines from around 1900 because they were found to be more sensitive and showed more visible signs of distress. Their use was phased out in 1986.

Wild canaries are yellowish green in colour. Domestication has led to breeding to enhance various desired features – colour, shape, song – often just for the purpose of winning competitions.

One result of selective breeding is the Australian plainhead, the only breed of canary created in Australia.

The only one you will see in the wild here or downunder is an escapee, although our North American goldfinch has "wild canary" as a nickname.

I don't know what breed of canary our pet was when I was a kid, but it was a cheery little companion.



Left: Mining foreman R. Thornburg shows a small cage with a canary used for testing carbon monoxide gas in 1928. Right: Resuscitation cage with an oxygen cylinder serving as a handle used to revive a canary for multiple uses in detecting carbon monoxide pockets within mines. [Wikipedia]



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