

# Siskin News



Newsletter Project Updates Volume 1

December 3, 2002

## AFA Siskin Project is Moving Along!

### Red Siskin Project Recovers

**T**he Red Siskin Recovery Project has long been a focal point of the AFA's Conservation mission. [As you know, the Project's earlier successes has been lacking from communication, disease problems, and apathy in recent years.]

“ As director, I have tried to re-align the purpose of the Project and help address some of the disease issues. However, managing this Project is a tremendous responsibility, and one that I have not executed effectively. I recognize that the RSRP cannot be managed by a single individual.” Darrel Styles, MS, DVM.

### A Project Committee Begins

Responsibilities will be distributed among the Core Committee members. Darrel Styles will serve as veterinary and scientific counsel.

### Core Committee Members:

- ☐ Paula Hansen, Chair the Core Committee.
- ☐ Dr. Orland Baker, RSP Studbook keeper
- ☐ Ron Castaner, RSP Breeder

We need at least 5 other experts on this committee. Other members who are waiting to receive their Siskins, already have Siskins or just want to just be involved are encouraged to step forward and be recognized.

If you haven't received a personal email from Paula Hansen please consider this your request contact her directly now. She is looking for those who have specific areas of expertise with Siskins, sponsorship, and newsletter experience. Also, those who have been

waiting to receive siskins for the first time. You are encouraged to support the Core Committee by sharing your ideas in the development of moving the project forward. Any breeders out there holding birds and wishing to move them contact:

Paula Hansen by Email at: [pjhansen@earthlink.net](mailto:pjhansen@earthlink.net), PST (503) 581-8208 (evenings) , 2234 Juneau Court South, Salem, Oregon 97302.

### Funding

The project is lacking a healthy financial base. In order to move our siskins we must develop some creative fund-raisers to offset future shipping charges. The Siskin Project needs a financial boost. Funding will specifically support moving birds to waiting breeders through cargo, purchase of containers, and mailing of this publication and printing. Those who know of companies wishing to place ads in lieu of support please contact the editor.

You are on the Project's waiting list. To receive this publication, this is time to join in and act. The present balance reported by Benny Gallaway, AFA's President is only \$2,000.00. Yes, two thousand dollars. Continental Cargo per shipment is \$99.50. For isolated areas Delta charges \$175.00 per shipment. This balance will go quickly next year.

Disclaimer: The Red Siskin Project's Siskin News and it's volunteers assume no responsibility for claims in advertisement for the quality of goods and services they provide.

Those who don't do the computer thing-you will receive this newsletter via snail mail. Those who do email will receive an electronic .pdf of this newsletter. Depending on how many of you volunteer determines how the Project will move forward. Everyone is welcome to become involved. Lets join together to move the project forward again.

**Communication**

Communication will be a big focus. The Siskin News and the Siskin Yahoo group will help greatly. The Yahoo group presently has 27 members. Thank you Tony Sbadatino for taking the lead. You can join at no cost by searching Yahoo and requesting to join RedSiskin@yahoogroups.com

When you visit this group you will be welcomed and introduced. Post your concerns & questions. This is not an AFA group but a Siskin group. You will be addressing a larger audience and can learn from the experienced and learn with others.

**AFA Website:**

Information will be developed to reflect the progress of the AFA Siskin Breeders. The website volunteers will be in charge of posting submitted information from the Projects Board. Information such as recruitment of new breeders, new hatchlings, deaths, and breeder recognition.

**Breeder's Agreement**

AFA's legal counsel, Mr. Ring, will be asked to review documents for:

Establishing a new "Agreement" formatted for joining and participating within the Project.

**NEW RSRP MISSION**

- e To create a sustaining captive healthy population of red siskins within the US;
- e Support conservation efforts and scientific studies in the wild.

**Consortium Structure**

The Project will exist more as a consortium of breeders operating independently within a set & structured

framework. A fresh new way of working the Siskin Project. This structure will be developed by the Core Committee and finalized by AFA Board members.

**Genetic Management**

- n revising and updating the SPARKS studbook;
- n facilitating small population management program; and
- n networking breeders within the Project for genetic exchange(s).

**Education Through Articles** Sharing knowledge of the species and conservation efforts such this Siskin News or Siskin Yahoo group. AFA will set aside a section within the Watchbird quarterly magazine for a Quarterly Update. Through the help of Benny Gallaway Ph.D, AFA President, this update will include new breeders, annual studbook census of adult bird, new hatchlings, deaths, and breeder recognition. Also, update on the AFA website.

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**What's the secret?**

Some may work for you. Some may not. Always reference information on other finch specie when looking for alternatives in Siskin care. Experienced breeders may find similarities within this text. Are you looking for other variable types of formulas, mixes, procedures to share with Red Siskin Project? Each person can formulate their own methods and we encourage you do so for these beautiful bird's health, maintenance and breeding.

**SISKIN BREEDING HINTS:**

- 1) **Soaked seed:** Any kind of oily seed can get rancid when wet and warm. Refrigerate you soaked mixes and only prepare 2-3 days worth at a time. Some freeze, pre soaked seed for use later. This does not hurt the seed or the supplements you add in the mixture. It is vital to these birds to receive a higher percentage of oil seed in the Siskin mix. If you use soaked seed during breeding season or for young to learn to open seed then do leave the sunflower chips out, especially

during warm weather. It only quickly spoils the mix. For dry seed gravity feeders can be used in a cage environment. Do not place millet spray pieces in gravity feeders as they have a tendency to clog the flow of seed.

**2) Sprouted millet:** Pre-breeding season (January/February) Siskins seem to just tear it apart if not sprouted. Non breeding season (June to December) siskins will dine on it. Millet is not necessary but a good addition to the diet.

**3) Fresh vegetables & fruit:** Romaine lettuce, broccoli, apple (sweet apple variety, a few times a week all year long. Most prefer golden and red delicious apples. They may eat spinach, this breeder notes her flock won't touch it but will nibble on zucchini. NOTE: They like their fruit and vegetables clipped to the cage not lying on the floor. Use clothes pins cheap and easy.

**4) Egg food:** Mashed egg food from start to finish of breeding season whether they take it or not. Mother will usually use eggfood to feed your chicks from day one through day 8.



**5) Canary wicker/plastic nests.** They like them deep not shallow. I use 4' burlap strips and thin cotton string. No snagging happens. Nest liners are not necessary. The liners are pulled out of the nest even when sewn onto the wicker. The string from sowing will get them snagged and suffer the consequences. So don't bother with nest liners.

**6) Nest Building:** The Siskin female does the building of the nest. She lines the nest with fine hay, 4" pieces of washed burlap, or 4" pieces cotton twine. Some females prefer to free lance and build their nests in greenery.

Supplying burlap, coco fiber, and cotton twine helps make a good base. These can also keep those eggs toastie warm. Should you wish to use nest pads hot glue them in place. Sticking nest pads in with tread causes some hazards for the birds. Birds can get hung up on the treads. During this process of nest building the male always watches and never helps.

**7) Vitamin Supplements:** Not always necessary. There has been no special recommendation made for siskins. Use a good balanced vitamin supplement in water should you choose to do so. Do not let this treated water stand in direct sunlight, under warm environment it will generate bacteria. Sprinkled over soaked seed which should be changed out during breeding season early am and evening. Should your vitamin product be for water use it in the water your soaking your seed in. It is not recommended to sprout seed soaked in this vitamin mix. This vitamin soak should not be done daily but occasionally i.e., every 3 weeks. There are many websites with supplements and avian vitamins on the Internet and in bird magazines. When purchasing from a shop check those expiration dates. Most female finches and siskins need to replenish nutrients into their system vitamins & minerals can assist in this process during resting seasons.

**8) Greenery in the cage:** Use plastic or fake pine garland or something similar in texture. NO SILKS. Use something that won't snag on your birds legs. Siskins love to chew up silk greenery. Line the left and right perimeter of the cage. Use natural branches from any tree or bush. This is considered good foot care. Always keep perches, branches clean. If greenery gets stripped replace it. Christmas clearances at the local art and craft stores where you can get it inexpensively. Replacements are needed yearly. If the greenery still is in good condition clean in a soak of Clorox & water for 20 minutes. Half cup of Clorox to 1 gallon of water. After breeding season it is a good idea and if it stinks, remove all solid waste from the greenery, and use the recommended Clorox wash. For concentrated Ultra brands use less Clorox. Rinse well!

**9) The cages:** A good size cage is 34 X 18 X 18. Scrubbed good with Ammonia or with Clorox.

**NOTE:** Never mix these two chemicals together.

Rinsed well to make them odorless again. Siskins cling onto the sides of the cage at night so it does get messy after breeding season. Siskins don't display this behavior in aviaries but also won't breed for this breeder in a mixed aviary environment.

**10) Breeding season** is from April to August. This breeders flock started Feb 2002 year and are done by May. Siskins are proven to maintain fertility up to 7 thru 10 years of age. Siskins' life expectancy under good husbandry management could be as long as 12 to 15 years.



**11) Fostering.** Not at all necessary but...should you consider now or later use female Canaries. They are cheap and usually reliable. Make sure female Canaries are healthy and use quarantine practices prior to breeding season. Keep the canary pair in the same mode as the Siskin pair. Remove a few of the foster canary eggs and place under another canary. Babies should be placed under the foster canary when pin feathers appear (about 8 - 10) days old. PLEASE NOTE: Canary babies are much larger so a new hatchling Siskin may be too small for them to deal with. This breeder prefers to do this 1 hour or ½ hour before the lights go out. Hens will be more willing to sit on the siskin chicks. Try this when you have some days off from work in order to monitor closely. When attempting this at first only try one chick the first night leaving a few original canary eggs. If the female canary accepts and feeds the chicks add the rest of the siskin clutch the next afternoon or evening. Again transferring the balance of canary egg balance with the rest you already moved.

**12) Incubation:** Incubation is 14 days. Chicks will begin to hatch in the sequence in which they were laid unless you use canary breeder methods. This method is removing each egg as it is laid, replacing it with a fake egg. When the fourth egg is laid place all the Siskin eggs back in the nest. This will ensure all chicks hatch at the same time leaving feeding chick size uniform. Do this over a 4 day period of time.

**13) Chick Food:** Soaked Siskin mix, hard boiled egg food sprinkled with supplements. Most use basic hand feeding formula sprinkled over the fresh boiled egg. Canary breeders and finch hobbyist use other ingredients, i.e., bee pollen, unmedicated game bird food ground to a powder. There are many recipes out there.

**14) Bugs:** this is not necessary. Forget it.

**15) Close Bands:** Band hatchling siskins at 7-8 days old. Use closed bands with identifier numbers, as they are to be registered with the Project. NFSS has such bands available. Membership in NFSS is required to purchase bands but it is not necessary for you to use this source. If you have a closed band source like Red Bird Band Products Inc or L & M Bird Bands be sure you have a sufficient bands on hand.

**16) Offspring:** Consider the AFA Siskin stock the projects loaned stock. New imported stock through the project cannot be sold. Both types of stock will produce offspring, half are yours and half belongs to the AFA project. It's only a fair investment.

**17) Yearly Report:** THIS IS MANDATORY. All Siskin offspring MUST be registered with AFA studbook keeper, Orland Baker. This includes your personal half of the offspring too. Accurate records must be kept to monitor the project and your progress. (See Studbook keeper's update.)

**18) Affiliation with AFA** is recommended and a will weigh heavily when consideration who will be given



the next loan or private exchange. The studbook keeper Orland Baker is there to advise you how to breed which Siskin to which or provides you the tools to make those independent decisions.

Recommendations in computer generated scenarios for the best suggested combinations will be provided to project members. This helps avoid high percentiles of inbreeding incidents. This is worth the affiliation with AFA alone as you can apply this methodology to other species you have or will have in the future. You won't find this type of support anywhere else.

**19) The RSRP Siskins.** Under the project structure the Siskins are your responsibility. Half the clutch is your property. This is why the project agreement is exactly that "an agreement" or "good faith" loan. You will be expected to return half of the new offspring to the project or to a new authorized volunteer recruits. Now these birds rare to find & are CITES I birds.

The Red Siskin is protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. They require the seller, you, & your portion of offspring to be registered. Should you buy from a private breeder. You are also required by USFWS to obtain a permit. Fee is \$25.00 for 3 years. No permit is required for no commerce (\$) type activities for this project. No commerce is defined as one Siskin for Siskin. You cannot trade for other species of birds or anything else for that matter. Non compliance is a Federal Offense so follow the rules their very clear. (See Q & A Section for more info.)

**20) Imported "new"** original stock is not to be sold at all! Project reinforces Federal Protection for new introduced stock.

**21) Outside purchases** Should you find a private breeder from which to purchase more siskins or trade, you must contact the Coordinator first. There are a lot of siskin stock out there not pure, not healthy, and carry avian tuberculosis. Also they may already be too

closely related to your existing birds. Don't chance and weaken the bloodlines. You must take utmost precautions to protect your project birds and your personal stock. There is no cure or test to perform on live birds on avian tuberculosis at this time. This is a critical piece which is the volunteer,s responsibility to observe and take precautions to protect their flock. Your advised to seek advice from Darrel Styles for quarantine practices and medication.

**22) Quarantine** Consult Dr. Darrel Styles.

**23) New recruits** are asked to submit their interest to the Project Director, Paula Hansen. Interested individuals will be asked a series of questions. The test is your experience breeding like species which allows the Project to evaluate your qualifications. Needed information will be supplied prior to receiving Siskins. The waiting list can be short or long depending on interested individuals and breeding season outcomes. Budget also can reflect availability to move these birds.

**24) AFA Watchbird & Website** will be posting updates on the project in the future. AFA's Watchbird magazine will be generating quarterly tidings which will contain the siskin project progress. This is very exciting! This is for the breeders and public to be informed thru this medium. Births/ Deaths/ Accidents/ News/ Updates. The report or update news and it's content belong to AFA. No confidential information on any breeder will be released without the breeders authorization. You may be identified by a breeder number or assigned studbook acronym should you wish to keep your identity confidential. Breeders are encouraged to submit to the Project Coordinator any stories, outlines he/she may wish to share.

**25) Agreement:** this will be reviewed by an attorney of AFA to ensure your protection and that it is clear and easy to understand reading. Each project breeder **MUST** sign this agreement. It is a confirmation you understand USFWS rules, Projects goals (mentioned above), and mandatory quarterly progress reporting to the Project Coordinator. Change of name,





