

# Koos Jakobs: living life to the full

Fred Wright profiles the remarkable South African budgie man **KOOS JAKOBS**, whose talent and determination in the face of adversity set an example to his fellow hobbyists

## BUDGERIGARS

**S**OUTH African fancier Koos Jakobs has been involved with birds for many years. Before starting up with budgies, he was an avid breeder of various poultry as well as finches. In 2008 he won the zebra finch section at the East London Cage Bird Society show. That event had a section for show budgies run by the East London Budgerigar Society (ELBS), and there Koos met ELBS chairman Andre Kruger. In 2012, Koos joined the ELBS.

Koos showed his budgies at various provincial shows and, in 2015, he took the award for third best novice at the National Championship Show in Bloemfontein. Then, in April this year, at the Eastern Cape Additional Provincial Show held in East London, Koos won four Challenge Certificates.

Those achievements are not the work of just any budgerigar competitor in the early years of their career. By trade, Koos

is an electrician, trained to do live work. On July 5, 2001, he was busy with repairs on a mains network when he came into contact with 22,000 volts. His electrocution meant that he had both legs amputated above the knee, and his left arm amputated to the shoulder blade.

Koos had been married for only seven months when the accident happened. His wife Lizette has stood by him and has supported him in everything he does. He works for the electricity utility Eskom, and

is currently works co-ordinator for sub-station maintenance covering the whole of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. He travels several days per month

for work and has his own vehicle, which has been customised to meet his requirements.

For the ELBS, Koos serves as the public relations officer, a position 100 per cent suited to his bubbly personality. People just love talking to him. When it comes to show time, he assists with all

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Meet the team: Koos (right) and son Ruan Jakobs (centre) with aviary assistant Steven



Promoting the ELBS, from left: Diane Kruger, Anthony Slight, Andre Kruger. Koos in front



Positive: Koos Jakobs is always ready to help fellow fanciers. All photos: Diane Kruger

the fundraising for the club.

Koos's birdroom is completely wheelchair-friendly. The whole area is flat and has been designed so that he can manoeuvre around in his wheelchair without bumping into anything, especially the breeding boxes.

Koos has an aviary assistant, Steven, who helps with the cleaning of the birdroom, and the feeding and watering of the birds. Koos is able to ring the chicks on his own, but if he does struggle help is at hand. His wife Lizette, his son Ruan (who is also a junior member of the ELBS) or Steven are always willing to assist.

When pairing up birds, Koos is able to pluck the feathers himself. However, when it comes to preparing for shows, Koos is not able to do this on his own and then ELBS chairman, Andre Kruger, steps in and helps with the plucking of the spots. This arrangement is only until Ruan is ready to take over. Ruan is currently 12 years old and is busy

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learning how to work with the budgies and is being trained on getting the birds show-ready.

After the 2016 show season, Koos will be promoted from novice to intermediate, as he has gained enough points from exhibiting at the various provincial shows, as well as at the National Show in 2015. He will also be participating at the 2016 National Show, which will be held this month, from July 29-31, in Bloemfontein.

Koos is a very high achiever and would like to become one of the top breeders in South Africa. With the drive he has within him, this is definitely something that he will be able to achieve as no matter what he tries, he makes it work. If you tell him that he cannot do something, he will do everything in his power to show that he can do it.

Koos's ambitions: he would like to get more people interested in the breeding of

show budgies and he would also like to get more members for the East London Budgerigar Society.

*Fred Wright is a regular visitor to South Africa and is frequently invited to judge on the show circuit in that country.*

## An all-round competitor

BESIDES being involved with the ELBS, Koos is also very active when it comes to sport. He is part of the Bullfrogs Wheelchair Rugby Club in East London. He also participated in the South African Wheelchair Rugby Team from 2007 to 2015 and was nominated to represent the players for South Africa from 2008 to 2015. In 2009, he was awarded trophies for the best and fairest player of a tournament, in New Zealand, which was selected by all the teams present.

In 2008, he also participated in the national tournaments for disabled sportspeople and achieved gold in shotput and javelin. The following year he was elected general manager for the Eastern Cape disabled sports team for the Nationals held in Port Elizabeth.



Koos in his aviary



Attending an ELBS meeting, from left: Koos Jakobs, Andrew Kruger and Anthony Slight, with Wally Luck at the front