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<https://www.toronto.com/news-story/10460786-sunday-mornings-are-for-the-birds-in-scarborough-literally/>

## Sunday mornings are for the birds in Scarborough - literally

Bird group has been gathering in Knob Hill Park for more than 30 years

**BY DAN PEARCE TORONTO.COM**

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Buddy, left, Alfred, Desmond and Sanja talk birds during an outing at Knob Hill Park. - Dan Pearce/Metroland

Wood bird cages the size of a shoe box hang off wooden poles scattered around Knob Hill Park early Sunday morning.

Inside each cage is a small finch songbird.



*A chestnut-bellied seed finch hangs out in the park. The birds, native to the Caribbean and South America, are called Towa Towa in Guyana and Bullfinch in Trinidad.*

Their owners, men from Guyana and Trinidad, are socializing with their friends after a morning of friendly competition and training.

One of the participants Alfred (group members only wanted first names used) says guys come to the park to see who is the better bird trainer and which bird can step up to compete and give the owner bragging rights for the day.





*Alfred shows how he transports his bird to the park in a plastic tray to contain any mess or spills.*

Two cages, each containing a male finch, is hung on a pole a couple of inches apart. The first bird to whistle 50 songs is deemed the winner.



*Two chestnut-bellied seed finches are put together to be judged on the number of songs they sing. The first bird to hit 50 is deemed the winner. The territorial bird instinct is to woo females and defend their turf.*

Andrew has been in Canada for 18 years and heard about the group that trains their birds in the park. The group has been gathering in the east Scarborough Park for over 30 years, he says.

These birds are expensive, Andrew stressed. Some of the championship birds can cost more than \$5,000 and thousands of dollars a year to keep.

If a bird is good at competing, some guys will trade their birds or buy the birds from the owner, he said.

Annually there are shows held in the fall in Pickering, Etobicoke, Stoney Creek, York Region and Brampton.





*Lake, right, and Jason put their birds up for a little competition.*



*Birds cages are perched on sticks around Knob Hills Park Sunday August 15 while their owners socialize under the gazebo.*





*Jeff, right, has a laugh with Dar.*





*Rama feeds his bird before the ride home.*



*David and his bird head home after a morning at the park.*

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## Dan Pearce

Photographer

Dan Pearce is a photojournalist with toronto.com. He has worked in a number of Toronto newsrooms since graduating from the photojournalism program at Loyalist College in Belleville in 1992.