

Journal of the

National Finch & Softbill Society

Volume 24, No. 1 January/February, 2007





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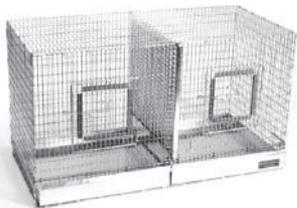
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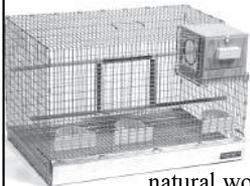
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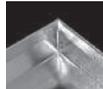
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Journal of the National Finch & Softbill Society

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NFSS Mission Statement

The National Finch & Softbill Society is dedicated to the introduction of the enjoyment of keeping and breeding Finches and Softbills to all interested parties, enhance the knowledge of our members in keeping and care of these birds, encourage breeding programs, and cooperate with organizations for the preservation of aviculture in this country.

**On the
Cover**

Java Rice Birds (*Lonchura oryzivora*)
taken by Ron Salem - www.javafinch.com

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In this Issue

NFSS Editor's Comments - Harry Bryant 4

NFSS President's Message - Sally Huntington 5

Finches in Aviculture (Green Singing Finches) - Robert Black 7

Java Rice Birds ((Lonchura oryzivora) - Bill Fiorini 18

Stewarding: Are you doing a good job? - Marilena Salmones 25

NFSS Journal Index to Articles 1984 through 2006 30-51

NFSS 2006/2007 Board of Directors/Appointed Officers 59

NFSS 2006 Panel of Judges 60

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events 61

FORMS! Awards/Affiliation 64-65

Bands 66-67

FSS Application 68

Membership Application 69



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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Happy New Year and I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday. On Christmas Day I was thinking to myself what a wonderful hobby this is as I stood with my hands deep in the white worm culture while my wife called down to me that it was time to go to the inlaws for dinner. Decisions, decisions Birds or family peace ... what to do?

Santa was very good to me this year. Under the tree, along with the socks, ties and other wonderful gifts, I found a copy of "*The Birds of Africa - (Sparrows to Buntings) Volume 7*" by C. Hilary Fry and Stuart Keith. For those of you who are not familiar with "The Birds of Africa" series, the first volume was published in 1982 as part of a four (later increased to seven) volume set covering the entire avifauna of Africa. These books are big, measuring 9.8 x 12.5 inches and 600 + pages. Volume 7 covers the sparrows, weavers, whydahs, waxbills, finches and buntings. It includes an exhaustively researched and referenced text with data on identification, ecology, distribution, behaviour and status of the species covered. It is illustrated with color identification plates and line drawings. This series is without a doubt one of the most authoritative and comprehensive works ever published on the Birds of Africa.

The series consists of:

- Volume 1 - Ostriches to Falcons, published in 1982
- Volume 2 - Gamebirds to Pigeons, published in 1986
- Volume 3 - Parrots to Woodpeckers, published in 1988
- Volume 4 - Broadbills to Chats, published in 1992
- Volume 5 - Thrushes to Puffback Flycatchers, published in 1997
- Volume 6 - Picathartes to Oxpeckers, published in 2000
- Volume 7 - Sparrows to Buntings, published in 2004

These books are available from the Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey, USA, 08540-5237 (1-800-777-4726) < <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/7722.html> >. The list price of Volume 7 is \$235.00 but if you order online it is currently on sale for \$175.00.



Happy Reading!

Harry Bryant, NFSS 2nd VP/Editor



NFSS President's Message

January/February 2007

The end of 2006, a great bird year, and the beginning of 2007 and another great bird year.

In mid November the NFSS fourth annual *Afternoon of Aviculture* (held the day before the judging at the National Cage Bird Show (NCBS) in greater Chicago) was another well received educational experience. Members Vince Moase, Grant Rishman and Harry Bryant each presented exceptional quality photo-assisted seminars on their areas of expertise. Those who attended were very pleased. In 2007, the NCBS will be held in centrally located Denver, Colorado. Please plan now to attend, arriving in time to attend the noon Thursday *NFSS Afternoon of Aviculture*.

Thanks to very generous donations to the NFSS Silent Auction by members like Vince Moase (2 young Forbes finches), Harry Bryant – (pair of owl finches), Jim Heffernan- (4 society finches), and Steve Hopman, (Unique case of switch grass, and bird print fabric) and many other anonymously donated aviculture friendly items. The NFSS gathered over \$600.00 profit from the auction. I sincerely appreciates that kind of generosity, especially during these times where the budget is somewhat strained.

As we begin 2007, there have been changes on the NFSS Board . We say good bye and THANK YOU to Wick Goss, 1st VP and Finch Shop pro tem, and to Jim Heffernan, Region 3 VP and Executive Secretary. New board members acting pro tem until the election in May 2007 are Bob Peers, 1st VP, Rebecca Mikel, Executive Secretary, Bill Fiorini, Region 3 VP, and Sharon Dvorak, Finch Shop manager. These individuals have come forward to assist NFSS when some officers and helpers had to step back due to busy personal and professional lives.

Please return when you can. We are now looking for NFSS members to bring new faces forward to these pro-tem jobs above. Please contact me privately by email < Sallych@san.rr.com > or telephone (858) 452-9423 to take on the challenge and pleasure of serving with the

NFSS. The nominating committee is being formed now for the first quarter 2007, as it is time to nominate persons to run for the 2008 NFSS Board of Directors.

Have you noticed the cost of birds lately? Have you have tried to purchase any birds other then Zebras and Society finches? The prices have doubled and tripled, that is if you can find them. This reconfirms the importance of the NFSS Finch and Softbill Save program. In the coming year one of my priorities, is to get Finch and Softbill Save online and user friendly. Another major goal for 2007 will be to get NFSS more financially solvent. If every NFSS member would make it a priority to sign up just one member or family, Wow! NFSS also needs volunteers for projects and board seats, and, we always need plain factual articles for our fine journal. NFSS welcomes suggestions and direct comments to improve your organization.

Sally Huntington



President National Finch and Softbill Society

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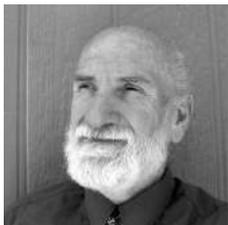
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Finches in Aviculture

The Green Singing Finch

by Robert Black

The Green Singing Finch is one of the very few serins found very commonly in aviculture. A serin is any bird that is classified scientifically in the genus *Serinus*. There is no more active finch to be found in any cage or aviary. Their beautiful blend of green and yellow with their small size and reasonable price makes them a good choice for beginners in the keeping of finches. This species is also known by several other common names in different areas. The accepted common name in ornithology is the Yellow-fronted Canary. The South Africans call this bird the Yellow-eye Canary. In other areas, it is known as the Mozambique Serin, the Icterine Canary, the Shell or the Shelly. In the United States, however, we all know this little bird as the Green Singing Finch.

Philipp Ludwig Statius Müller assigned the original scientific name for this species in 1776 in Linné's *Natursystem* supplement, on page 163, as *Fringilla mozambica*. Further study of the finches and their interrelationships resulted in a change of the generic name, so ornithologists now classify this species as *Serinus mozambicus*.



Singing Wings Aviary

Through its wide range in Africa, there are eleven recognized subspecies of the Green Singing Finch. The nominate subspecies, *Serinus mozambicus mozambicus*, is found from south-eastern Kenya as far east as eastern Zambia and south to South Africa. *Serinus mozambicus granti* is from South Africa and southern Mozambique. *Serinus mozambicus somaliyae* is found from southeastern Zaire and Zambia though Malawi to southwestern Tanzania. The fourth subspecies, *Serinus mozambicus tando*, is native from northern Angola to western Zaire. *Serinus mozambicus barbatus* is found from southern Sudan south to Uganda, western Kenya, and northern Zaire as far as Rwanda

and northwestern Tanzania. *Serinus mozambicus grotei* is from eastern Sudan and western Ethiopia. The seventh subspecies, *Serinus mozambicus gommeaensis*, is found in Ethiopia. *Serinus mozambicus vansoni* is found from southern Angola to western Zimbabwe and south to northern Namibia and northern Botswana. *Serinus mozambicus santhomae* is found only on São Thomé Island. *Serinus mozambicus punctigula* is native to central and southern Cameroon. The last subspecies, *Serinus mozambicus caniceps*, is found from Senegal, Gambia and southern Mali as far east as the western Central African Republic.

For years, many ornithologists classified these finches under the traditional passerine family Fringillidae. However, the work of Charles G. Sibley, Burt L. Monroe, Jr., and Jon E. Ahlquist in the 1970's and 1980's in protein electrophoresis and DNA analysis made major changes in the taxonomic structure of the finch families. This research has resulted in the redistribution of the various traditional genera and families of finches into only two passerine families: Fringillidae, and Passeridae. In the reorganized Sibley-Monroe check-list of the birds of the world, the Green Singing Finches have been placed in the greatly expanded passerine family Fringillidae.

Sexing the adult Green Singing Finches is quite simple. The males have a breast of clear, bright yellow, while the hen's breast is a lighter yellow with an indistinct necklace of dark gray spots on the upper breast. The mature males have no dark spots on the breast, and this characteristic alone is enough to sex adult birds accurately. All young birds resemble the hens, though their plumage is duller in color until they go through their first molt. The young males lose their necklace of dark spots when they go through this first molt. As soon as you can see bright yellow breaking up the spots of the necklace, you can be sure that your young birds are males. The color of the young hens changes little when they go through their first molt. Since many imported birds are young, a supposed true pair may turn out to be two males after a young bird in juvenile plumage molts.

Keeping this finch in good health is not difficult, since it is quite hardy. The basis of its diet should be a seed mixture of millets and canary seed, with at least two of the fatty seeds to complement the cereal grains. Niger, flax, poppy, rape, or shelled sunflower seed are all good. I have always offered them shelled sunflower seeds, since these are by far the cheapest of the oily seeds, and there is little or no waste. Green Singing Finches are fond

of greens, cuttlebone, and fruits such as grapes, apples, or oranges. Even this variety is not a complete diet for these finches, however, but the high-protein foods normally recommended for canaries will also supply Green Singing Finches with the protein they need, plus other vital nutrients that are not found in the items from vegetable sources.

The commercial crumbles for cage birds now on the market are ideal for Green Singing Finches, if you can get the birds to eat these new feeds regularly. They contain a wide variety of ingredients with the balance of nutrients necessary for the birds' health. Getting finches to learn to eat these prepared foods can be difficult. If you place the food scattered on the floor of a clean cage, removing all other foods at the same time, when the birds get hungry, soon they will begin searching around for anything that looks like it might be food. Sooner or later, they will test anything, including these crumbled foods. After they have eaten a little, return their normal foods along with some of the crumbles. Within a few days, most of the birds will be eating these prepared commercial foods regularly, along with their other usual food items.

You may have to feed them mealworms or some other live food to get them to raise their

own young. Mealworms are very worthwhile if the birds will eat them. I have also kept the imported Green Singing Finches very successfully on a diet that included the Lesser Mealworm, *Alphitobius diaperinus*, which is only ½ inch long when mature. In Europe, these are called Buffalo Worms.

The easiest and cheapest high-protein food for Green Singing Finches is mashed, hard-boiled egg. All wild-caught or domestically bred Green Singing Finches will accept this food in time, and it will keep them in ideal health. Imported birds may not be willing to feed this to their own young, however. Young birds that are raised on the egg mix will be willing to feed it to their own young once they begin breeding.

I have always used mashed, hard-boiled eggs as a high-protein food for finches. Eggs are cheap, highly nutritious, available anywhere, and they are easy to prepare. Also, eggs contain a nearly perfect balance of vitamins, minerals, and fats. Once any bird learns that this is a food item, the bird will eat it regularly and willingly. In order to prepare this egg mixture, simply boil an egg for about ten minutes (a couple of minutes longer for extra large eggs). Cool the eggs in cold water, and then peel the shell off. You'll find that the shell peels off very easily, because the

egg absorbs the water as it cools, and this additional water keeps the shell membrane from sticking to the shell and makes the egg much easier to shell. Once the shell is off, dry the egg gently in a paper towel to remove the excess moisture.

Once the egg is reasonably dry, mash it thoroughly with a fork to mix the white and the yolk uniformly. The resulting mix will be an appetizing, uniform, light yellow color. If the color is leaning towards olive, you have boiled the eggs too long. Longer boiling begins to tie up the free sulfur in the egg, which then forms these dirty green compounds, making the egg mix appear rather unappetizing. You can add a slightly heaping teaspoon of any commercial powdered vitamin-mineral supplement to the egg for even better results. I have always used and recommended Vionate[®] for this purpose. If you can find soy protein isolate, a teaspoon of that added to the mix and blended thoroughly will increase the protein content of the egg greatly. When mixed with these dry supplements, the egg will not spoil during the day unless it gets wet. Mashed, hard-boiled egg prepared in this manner will dry out and harden in the feeding dishes if the birds don't consume all of it. These birds will not touch anything that is wet and mushy, and an egg mix that is too wet will be spoiled and rotten within a matter of hours. Any food that is this

ideal for birds is also an ideal food for bacteria and other microorganisms. Also, remember that it is the white of the egg that is the protein, not the yolk! The yolk contains all of the other vital nutrients that a growing bird needs. Break up the leftover eggshell into smaller pieces and feed it separately as an excellent and free calcium source for your finches.

All finches and other birds in my experience will eat this egg mix daily and eagerly, once they become accustomed to it, and it will supply all of the complete protein necessary for raising any of the finches, doves, quail and small psittacines. If you don't need the entire egg for one feeding, it is safe to refrigerate the remainder for a few days. For longer periods, you can divide the finished mix into daily portions, wrap each portion in any clear freezer wrap, and freeze enough for each day's feeding in a separate package. Thaw one of these each morning for use in your day's feeding. Freezing results in very little nutrient destruction, and this method works very well when a friend is caring for your birds during trips and vacations. Freezing does change the texture of the mix, however, so it is always better to feed the mix fresh if you can.

In my experience, Green Singing Finches have very strong territorial requirements. They will

always be posturing and fighting to establish their own territory. When coming into breeding condition, they will tolerate no other pairs of their own species in the same enclosure. Even in a large, open aviary, two pairs will spend all of their time fighting over territory and will never breed. One pair alone will settle down rapidly and will begin nesting as soon as they come into breeding condition. For most pairs of these birds, this territorial aggressiveness applies only to members of their own species. They tolerate birds of other species in quite close contact with no aggressive chasing or fighting.

Some sources indicate that this finch's territorial needs are minimal and that it will even breed in loose colonies, but this is completely in disagreement with any observation I have made of their habits in cages or aviaries. Though they certainly can be quite sociable and may stay in flocks in the wild when not breeding, the advent of the breeding season is a time when you should keep only one pair to an enclosure.

Since these birds are from the tropics and areas south of the equator, their breeding season is reversed from that of the birds of North America, Europe, and Russia. Green Singing Finches will come into breeding condition in September and October, and they will breed during our late fall

and winter. Nothing will convince them that spring in North America is the best time to begin breeding. You can't fight this built-in breeding timer, so you may as well accept their autumn breeding schedule. Just keep them warm and add a few hours of artificial light to make up for our short winter days, and you will have few problems with these finches.

Whether you breed the Green Singing Finches in a cage or an aviary, they must have a hidden spot for nesting. They prefer to have their nesting site in a hidden location surrounded with greenery, and they have been known to accept the privacy offered by an open-fronted nestbox or a covered wicker nesting receptacle. The hen builds a very small, cup-shaped nest. Their nest is similar to a canary's nest, but less than half the size of the canary's nest. I have known them to build in the bottom of a standard, wire canary nest, though this is much too large for them. The best receptacle for the Green Singing Finches seems to be an ordinary metal tea strainer. This is a perfect size for them, and when wired solidly in a hidden location, they will accept a tea strainer immediately. Most of the Green Singing Finches that I have raised have been raised in tea strainers!

Again, my experience with the nesting of these birds is quite different from that reported in some of the current books that describe

the nesting habits of this species. The descriptions I've read of their large, bulky nests cannot possibly refer to the nest of this same species that I've called the Green Singing Finch. Even the large natural range of this serin and its numerous subspecies could not account for such a difference in nesting habits.

For breeding the Green Singing Finch, a flight cage is about as small as you should go for them, and an aviary is far better. Mine bred a number of times in a flight cage, however, and others have also had success in this way. I prefer to fasten some greenery around an upper corner of the flight cage. Artificial, plastic vines are fine, and the birds won't eat the plastic. Fasten your tea strainer in the corner, about three inches from the top of the cage. Make sure that it is solid, so it won't tip later when the birds are nesting. A pile of fine grasses, small pieces of string, and some shredded burlap will give them adequate building materials. They also like fine plant roots. The root systems from grass or weeds that you've pulled up, washed off, and dried are ideal. When the nest is about finished, they might appreciate a few seedling heads from dandelions if they're available for lining their nest.

Their clutches are small, and the Green Singing Finch hen will

usually lay only three eggs. Frequently, they will lay only two eggs in a clutch, though field guides indicate that in the wild they may lay as many as four eggs. The eggs are usually fertile, however, and they will hatch successfully if the diet is complete so that the eggs have been formed properly, with a complete complement of the nutrients required for the growing embryo.

Once they hatch, the young look like tiny, baby canaries, and they beg for food in the same manner as canaries. They grow very fast and usually leave the nest before they are three weeks of age. While the young are growing, they need a large quantity of high-protein foods. One pair of my imported birds that preferred Lesser Mealworms for feeding their young would consume hundreds of them each day. Each baby must have eaten at least a hundred Lesser Mealworms every day. The babies thrived on these, and invariably fledged in perfect health and condition. Once they leave the nest, the adult birds will feed them for about two more weeks. As soon as you're sure that they are fully on their own, you should remove the young ones to another cage. The territorial demands of the parent birds will not tolerate these maturing youngsters for long while they're still breeding and are beginning another nest.

Green Singing Finches are safe with other small finches in a large cage or aviary, though overcrowding can lead to problems. They will also be safe with Diamond Doves, and with ground dwellers such as the Button Quail. Though they are usually fast enough to stay out of the way of larger finches, cardinals, or similar birds, when the larger birds are in breeding condition, it is not safe to keep them together.

Green Singing Finches have a very odd habit that sets them apart from most other birds. They will land on the side or top of the cage and will twist their heads completely backwards, or upside down, depending upon their position. This habit gives them the appearance of going through a seizure or suffering from a severe nutritional deficiency. However for this species, this is a perfectly natural and normal action, and it is nothing to be concerned about.

When attempting to breed a pair of imported Green Singing Finches, the most crucial time is when the eggs hatch. If the parent birds can't find what they are seeking to feed the hatchlings, they often will simply toss them out of the nest and will abandon them. This is a very common occurrence in imported finches. The cause is probably the lack of the natural insect foods, especially the mound termites, that are available in their native haunts. Imported birds were raised in the

wild, of course, and many had already bred under their native conditions. When the foods they are accustomed to are not available, instinct signals a famine, and the birds instinctively end the breeding cycle at this point.

The best way to circumvent this type of disaster is to make use of foster parents to hatch the eggs of the Green Singing Finches and raise their young. A small, dependable canary hen would be the best possibility for this purpose, but most canaries will be breeding at a different time of the year. You also might be able to use a breeding pair of one of the South American siskins, as their breeding season is the same as that of the Green Singing Finch. Once, and only once, was able to get a pair of Society Finches to hatch and raise a nest of these finches; most Society Finches will not accept these babies because of their begging characteristics that are so different from the mannikin babies.

Problems can occur at any time during the nesting or fledgling stage, but they most often occur at the pinfeather stage. At this point, the body growth and feather development together require relatively huge amounts of complete protein. If that protein is not available constantly and in adequate quantity, the nestlings will die at this stage. There is no substitute for complete protein in the diet.

Bacterial contamination also occurs frequently in nestlings. Human surroundings are always good breeding areas for a variety of microorganisms that are deadly to the birds in any concentration. If you live in an area of chlorinated water, it is less common to encounter this health problem. The most effective, fast, and complete treatment I've found is simply to add one drop of sodium hypochlorite bleach to each two ounces of the finches' drinking water for a day or two. Except in the rare cases of fungal infection or poisoning through fungal aflatoxins, this treatment will cure any intestinal infection in the young birds as the parent birds feed them the treated water.

There are few species that will

add more life and interest to an aviary than the Green Singing Finch. Their colorful, lively activities are always a welcome addition to the aviary. They will also do well in a cage in a small apartment, though breeding in this circumstance is most unlikely. As this species is listed in Appendix III of the CITES Convention, importation of the Green Singing Finch into the United States is no longer permitted. Some get through in shipments of other similar African serins, but a concerted breeding effort is needed if this species is not to die out in American aviculture. If you are looking for a pair of finches that will make an interesting addition to your home and surroundings, try a pair of Green Singing Finches.



NFSS life member Robert G. Black lives in Keno, Oregon, and breeds finches, doves, budgies, button quail, pheasants, pigeons, and ducks. Bob has written seven books on finches and cockatiels, their care, feeding, and breeding, and is working on several more books on the subject of aviculture. You can reach him by e-mail at robertgblack@aol.com.

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JAVA RICE BIRDS (*Lonchura oryzivora*)

By Bill Fiorini



The Wild Color Normal Java Rice Bird is a large silver grey munia with a black head, black tail, black brown flight feathers, white cheek patches, dark brown eyes, red eye ring, pink brown lower breast and red beak. The legs and feet are red cream colored. The Java is approximately 5 ½" long. There are other mutations in captivity such as the Fawn or Cinnamon, Agate, Normal Pastel, Pied in Normal and Fawn, Red Eyed and Black Eyed White, Saddleback Pied, Cream, Silver, Light Silver, Opal Isabel, Black Headed and Ivory. In the U.S.A. there are only a few of the mutations of this beautiful bird due to the import laws regarding Java. Another problem that breeders have in this country is related again to the import laws. The breeding stock is so diluted from not having new gene pools that breeders are having problems getting good quality colors. A lot of Java in the U.S.A. were bred for mutations such as Red Eyed White Java; thus breeders are getting a majority of pied markings on a lot of the Fawns and Normals.

The Java Rice Bird was originally found in Java and the adjacent island of Bali. Now the Java Rice Bird is found in a number of locations in the wild including Indonesia, China, Thailand, Philippines, Fiji and Hawaii.

Sexing the Java is difficult because the cock and hen are basically the same in appearance. There are exceptions to this in the mutations. As an example the Fawn Cock has a darker brown crown than the hen. Breeders of the Java Rice Bird use a number of ways to determine the sex of the Java. Some breeders use visual means of sexing such as beak shape and color. The top of the beak on a cock bird has a definite rise or bump and the beak becomes a darker red color. Another color change is in the eye ring. It also becomes a much darker red color and the eye ring on the cock bird is wider than on the hen. The color change is a good way to determine if the cock bird is ready to mate. Some breeders say that when the eye is centered with the beak line the Java is a hen and if the eye is located above the center line the Java is a cock. I have looked at my breeding stock and find that this theory is about 85% true. The best way to determine sex with the Java is by the song. A cock bird will sing and the hen will not. Patience is the key to this determination. Breeders need to sit and watch their Java to identify the cock birds. The song is very beautiful and, to me, has a sound similar to the Red Cardinal. In fact, in the summer when Java hear a Cardinal outside they get very excited and answer his call.

Larger seeds are recommended for the Java Rice Bird. If you do not mix your own seed it is recommended that a combination of Finch Mix and Parakeet Mix be used. I mix Canary, White Millet and Red Millet Seed together as the main seed combination. Java love Oat Groat and Paddy Rice. The Java love these seeds and if breeders mix it with the other seed, Java will throw out all the seed to get to the Oat Groat and Paddy Rice. For this reason it is best to place it in separate treat cups. Dark Lettuce, Peas and Spray Millet are also given as a treat.

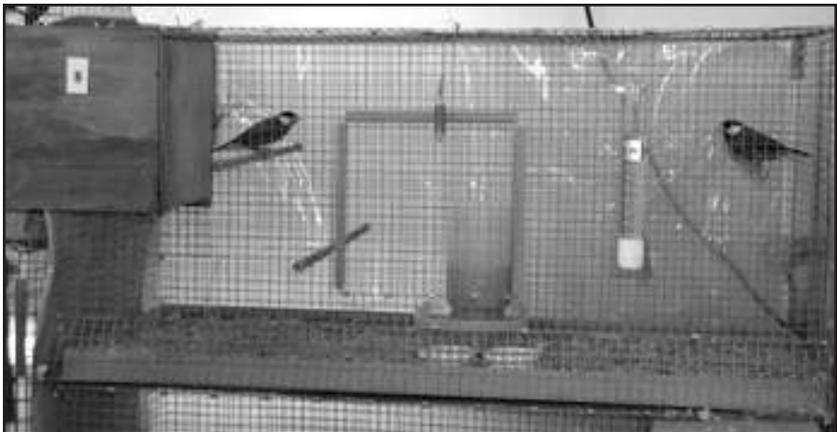
Another food that is give to Java is egg food. Most breeders give this only to their breeding pairs, but I prefer to give it on a daily basis to all of my Java. Make up a dry version of egg food so that spoilage does not occur. One mixture that is often used for egg food is a hard boiled egg, Organic Chick Starter, ground up Cuttlebone & Daily Essentials 3.

Change water on a daily basis. Use an antibacterial soap to clean the water containers and scrub them with bleach once a week. Breeders also add a variety of available products to keep the water from spoiling. Seed hoppers and trays should have the chaff removed daily also. The seed trays should be scrubbed each week. Java will contaminate food and water containers so it is advisable to clean them. If you use paper on the bottom of the flight, this needs to be changed

every other day. Aspen chips which are more absorbent can also be used but should also be changed at least one time each week. Also add Aspen chips daily where needed.

Breeding the Java Rice Bird is not as easy as some say. If the Java Cock Bird is not in breeding condition infertile eggs are a given. The cock and hen must be out of their molt and in good feather. In preparation for breeding trim the Java nails. Do not leave long nails that may pierce the eggs or accidentally pull an egg out of the nest. The cock birds' eye ring and beak must be bright red. The pair must also be compatible. Usually you will be able to tell if they bow to one another on the perch. This normally starts the cock to dance and sing as well as jump up and down on the perch. Sometimes he will grab a piece of nesting material prior to this activity. If the hen accepts his advances she will bow and flip her tail back and forth which ends up with a mating. Sometimes only the acceptance bow precedes nest building. The cock will build the nest and when he has done most of the work the hen will go into the nest to rearrange what he has done. After mating and nest building the hen will go into the nest for long periods of time a few days before laying her first egg. You should know if you have a compatible pair if they start to lay eggs within 10 to 14 days of being paired. It is a good idea to separate the pair after 20 days if there is no sign of nest building or eggs.

Breeding Java should not be done until they are at least 8 months of age. Most breeders prefer to wait until the hen is one year old and the cock is 8 to 10 months old. The hen may become egg bound if you breed her early. Most breeders also stop breeding the hen and/or cock when they are around four years of age.



36" x 18" x 15" BREEDING FLIGHT AND NESTING BOX

The breeding cage or flight and nest box for Java should be much larger than for most other finches. Minimum space for a breeding pair should be a flight that is 24" long x 18" high x 15" deep. This allows ample room for the breeding pair to exercise and space enough for a fledged group of chicks. The nest box is normally a half open box that is at least 7" square. Most nest boxes are located on the outside of the flight so that breeders can open the top of the box and check on



egg and chick progress. Do not worry about scaring the Java from the incubation process. If you see that one of the birds is not leaving the nest during the day it is a good idea to chase them off the clutch. Sometimes Java stay on the eggs so much that they do not come out of the box to relieve themselves and get bound up and possibly could die. It is better to lose an egg or two than a good breeding bird. The average clutch is from 3 to five chicks, but seven chicks in one clutch are not uncommon.

Java breeders usually supply Sisal, strips of butchers paper and Coco Fiber for nest building. In preparation build the first nest and then place ample material in the flight for the Java pair to continue the building process. The male Java will do the initial building of the nest and when he is finished the hen will redo the nest to her specifications.

When the Java pair builds their nest there is usually two chambers built in an L shape. The first chamber is in the front and higher than

the egg chamber. Eggs are laid in a second chamber, usually at the bottom of the nest box and to the right of the first chamber when looking into the box. This chamber is rather stark of building material and in most cases the eggs sit right on the wooden floor of the nest box. They are also concealed with paper strips when all of the eggs are laid. The pair will start to sit on the eggs for brooding when 4 eggs have been laid. It takes approximately 18 days for the hatch to begin and the eggs normally hatch, one each day until all fertile eggs have hatched. Ten to twelve days after hatching, start to close band the chicks. After removing fledges from the flight most breeders place a colored family band on fledges and when the sex of the bird is determined, a colored sex band is also used.

Baths and humidity are also very important during the incubation period of the eggs. Breeding pairs should have bath water on a daily basis. Humidity in the bird room is also important. Keep the humidity from 60 to 70% during incubation of eggs. Otherwise you will have a lot of dead in shell chicks simply because the eggshell is too hard for the chick to open. Some breeders candle eggs. If you do, not picking up the eggs is advised. Use a light that can be placed alongside the eggs for verification of fertility.



If you compare the photo of the three Normal Java chicks with the seven eggs in the previous photo, more bedding has been added and there were only three fertile eggs in this clutch. For a young pair this

is common but as the pair continues to breed there are more fertile eggs. When you find a compatible pair of Java you should always pair them when breeding. Keep very good records of your breeding. Keep a breeding record book, an inventory book and also a large calendar for marking down date of the 1st egg, hatch date, close banding date and fledge date. The better you are at record keeping, the easier it is to keep track of your birds for breeding and color mutations. A nest box card is also a good record of the pair and clutch. Cards are numbered and match the number on the nest box. Some breeders place them on the nest box but others keep them in a note book for easy access. The card has the number of the box, species in the nest box, color of the cock and hen, close band number and colored bands, when first egg is laid, number of eggs, hatch date and number of chicks.



FLEDGED NORMAL JAVA CHICK

In approximately 25 to 31 days after hatching the Java chicks will fledge. In another week removal of the nest box is suggested so that the Java pair does not start a new clutch before fledges are weaned. The weaning takes two weeks after the chicks fledge. When you know that all the chicks are weaned remove the chicks from the parent birds and return the nest box for another breeding. The fledges are placed in a flight with other young Java or an older hen so that they have a chance to mature. The Java already in the flight show the new fledges where to find food and water. Fledges will start to molt at 4 months of

age. At approximately 5 to 6 months of age the molting is just about finished into adult colors and the cock birds are starting to sing.

Java can be kept in flights by sex or in a general flight. A lot of breeders keep their Java in flights by sex, cocks in one large flight and hens in another. Using this method the only time Java should be paired is during breeding. If you have a pair that has been compatible, always match that same pair for breeding purposes. You will have more success in the breeding process this way. Some breeders keep their Java in a large general flight for breeding. The only problem with this method is identifying which fledges belong to what pair of Java. There is also the problem of inbreeding.

The Java Finch is a great finch to keep and breed. It is also one of the few finches that can be hand trained without going through the hand feeding of the chick from a very young age. Remove chicks for hand training when their quills start to open and feather out. The most exciting time in the bird room with the Java Rice Bird is during breeding season. This makes working with Java very rewarding. Consider breeding and working with this fantastic Finch.



Bill Fiorini, NFSS member living in De Soto, Wisconsin. Bill is our Region 3 VP Board Member. He can be reached at smallflowerlonchura@yahoo.com

STEWARDING: ARE YOU DOING A GOOD JOB?

by: Marilena Salmones

Bird shows are hard work not only for the exhibitors but also for the volunteers who work all day doing the secretary's job or being the Steward.

Being a Steward or an assistant to the Steward is not an easy job and those of you who are reading his and have done this job will agree that it is a very important part of the show.

If the Stewarding does not go smoothly and timely the show becomes a disaster. Most judges will tell you that they dislike to be kept waiting which in the long run, delays the show.

If you are a regular Steward or you are planning to become one, there are a few things which may help you be a more efficient as well as conscientious.

RULE # 1

Arrive at the show early.

When exhibitors arrive, be prepared to accept the birds, do not assume they know what to do. Be prepared to answer questions about classifying, filling out forms, etc. This may be their first show and they may not be familiar with how to classify their birds or fill out their tags.

Start classifying as soon as the birds start arriving and place them in the order as they will be brought up to the bench.

Example: Section 1: Softbills, class 100 through 151, Section 2: Zebras classes 200 through 239, etc.

Once all the birds are checked in and classified, you may ask the judge if he wants to do a "walk through." This is when the judge checks to see if all the birds are in the correct classes before the show begins.

While the judge is doing this, you can write down the amount of birds in each class so there will not be any confusion later on if a bird gets left behind.

Always verify how many birds in a class on the bench with the amount you wrote down during the "walk through."

RULE # 2

Very important:

Please DO NOT engage during the walk through in any type of personal conversation with the judge about your birds. If the judge asks any questions about a specific bird and it is your bird ... do not acknowledge it is your bird. Sometimes judges will pick up a bird and ask the Steward what he/she thinks about the bird's color. Answer the question as if the bird was not yours.

If an exhibitor enters a bird in a class that it is wrong you may ask the exhibitor about the bird. If he/she is a novice they may not know what type of birds they have.

However, if the bird is entered in the wrong class and the exhibitor insist to have it in that class just leave it as the exhibitor entered it and let the judge make the final decision.

Allow the judge to decide for himself/herself where the bird should be placed and do not suggest or give your opinions.

When all the birds are in order and the judge has finished his walk through you can place the first section and class on the bench to start the show.

While the judge is judging, bring to the back of the bench, the next birds to be judged.

When the judge is finished with the ones on the bench, take them off but DO NOT take the time to put them back where they were. Instead, put the judged show cages off to the side and put the new ones to be judged on the bench.

While the new birds are being judged you can put back the birds he just finished judging and put the next batch behind the bench for the next class or section.

By doing this you are not keeping the judge waiting.

It is always good to keep a table off to one side to keep all the first, second and third places. This way you have fast and easy access when the judge asks for second or third places.

RULE # 3

DO NOT come around and watch the show from the front.

If you are working as a Steward you are working backstage and you should remain there until the show is finished.

You can pay attention to the comments the judge is making from where you are standing which it is right behind the show cage.

It is very annoying to watch the Steward bounce back and forth and it delays the process of the show.

RULE # 4

Treat the birds with extra care.

Remember the majority of the birds in the show ARE NOT yours, so treat them with care. You are responsible for all those birds, if you are carrying the show cages to place on the bench, be careful.

It is disturbing to watch the Steward shake your cage as he/she is bringing it to the bench but his/her own cages are not shaken.

Be kinder to other exhibitor's birds, by shaking other people's cages is not going to make you win over their birds.

RULE # 5

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER open a cage to check a band number, take an egg out, check an injured bird or any other emergency. Always call the OWNER before you touch a bird or open a cage door.

There is NO EXCUSE for anyone to open a cage door or touch a bird which does not belong to them ... NOT EVEN TO CHECK ON A BAND NUMBER. that is not your job!

RULE # 6

DO NOT put your show cages first.

In a class with multiple entries and where you have some of your birds, please do not place your show cages first on the bench. This is unethical, if you are working backstage it just looks really bad to put your cages first.

Other exhibitors and the judges notice this and it is very childish behavior.

Ethics is something that some people never practice but if you are going to work as a Steward please remember that how you conduct yourself backstage is part of your personality and how your friends view you and respect you.

It is very hard work but once you get the practice it can be a lot of fun. Being a Steward can improve your listening skills. Stay backstage and listen, sometimes we learn more from listening than from watching. If you want to watch the show consider being the show secretary who gets to be in the front.

Even though these are just bird shows, remember that ethics and conducting yourself in a professional manner make people comfortable bringing their birds to the shows.

Marilena Salmones, NFSS member residing in Plano, Texas. Has successfully bred many species of African and Australian Finches, Softbills as well as many species of Psittacines for over 25 years. She is a member of the Board of the African Love Bird Society and the North American Parrot Society. She has written many articles in several languages and published in several countries. Has a Rare Love Bird Consortium through the U.S. Dept of the Interior to import Rare Love Birds and research their breeding and nesting behaviors. She can be reached at AvianWnadow@aol.com

ARTICLES NEEDED!

Everyone (members and non-members) is invited to submit articles and photos for the Journal of the NFSS on the maintenance of, the diet, health, natural history and breeding of any finches or softbills.

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AFFILIATION

"NFS Affiliated Organizations, Delegates and Show Dates", 1st appearance 10/84, and included in nearly every issue.

"Affiliation Agreement", 1st appearance for each year: 1986-JF86, 1987-SO86, 1988-ND87, 1989-ND88, 1990-JF90, 1991-SO90, 1992-ND91, 1993-ND92, 1994-JF94, 1995-JA95, 1996-JF96, MA96, 1997-JF97, MA97.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE (AFA)

Anchor, Charlie, "Finch Breeders and Others", MJ95.

Anchor, Charlie, "No More Birds in Captivity", ND94.

Armstrong, Don, "A Letter to the NFS Editor Regarding AFA", MJ93.

Clark, Janis L., "Let's Join AFA", JF95.

Martin, Phyllis K., "A Letter from AFA President - Red Siskin Breeding Program", JA90.

Patterson, Yvonne, "Red Siskin Summit '93", MA93.

Rubin, Linda, "AFA Helps Fund Conservation Program for Softbills", ND89.

AFA Requests Comments re: Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), ND2006.

APPRENTICE JUDGE PROGRAM (see also JUDGING)

"1994 Revision to NFSS Apprentice Judge Program", SO94.

"Revised Version of the NFS Apprentice Judge Program", ND90, SO92, ND92, JF93, MJ94.

Rood, Tom, "Taking a Closer Look on Apprenticing", SO92.

Wigmore, Martha, "Have You Considered Judging?", MJ94.

AWARDS

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"Champion Individual Banded Birds Introduced", OND88.

Parlee, William, "Founders Awards", ND91.

Rood, Tom, "Overseas Patronage Project", SO87, SO90, JA91, SO91, SO92, JA95.

Rood, Tom, "To Promote Finches...Just An Idea", SO85.

Parlee, William, "Founders Award Recipients", JA95, JA97.

1984, JF85, MA85.

1985, JF86.

1986, JF87, MA87.

1987, JF88.

1988, MA89, 1989, SO90, 1990, MA91, MJ91, 2002, JF03.

1990 Honor Roll Exhibitors With 200 or More Points, JA91.

1st Champion Bird!, JA91, 2nd Champion Bird!, SO91, 1991, MA92, 1992, MJ93, 1993, JF94, 1994, MA95, JA95, 1995, JF96,

MA96, 1996, JF97, MA97, 1997, JF98, MA98, JF98 1998, JF99, 1999 – JF-2000, 2000 – JF-2001, 2002-JF-2003.

2003 Exhibitor Awards, JF-2004.

2004 Exhibitor Awards, JF-2005.

2005 Exhibitor Awards, JF-2006.

2005 NFSS Show Results, JF-2006.

Wigmore, Martha, "NEW – Bill Parlee Award for Best Finch in Show", MA-2005.

BALLOTS - see "ELECTIONS"

BANDING

"Band Sales Growth 1989-91", ND91.

"D' Bands for Zebras and Goulds", ND87.

Capazzi, Denise, "A Summary of 1990 Band Sales", MA90.

Koontz, Hal M., "Banding Finches", ND87.

Kroner, Kris, "If The Band Doesn't Fit...", MA91.

Marcotrigiano, Michael, "A Leg Banding Method To Distinguish Over 180 Birds at a Glance", SO99.

O'Connell, Roger, "A Banding Update", AS88.

Szlachta, Rick, "...And The Band Goes On", JF90.

BIOGRAPHIES - see NFSS PEOPLE

BOARD MEETINGS - see NFSS MEETINGS

BOOKS

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Geesey, Brenda, "Source for More Books", SO92

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 "NFS Bylaws, adopted 3/15/87", JF87.
 "NFS Bylaws, amended Feb. 1994", JA95.
 "Proposed Revision to the NFSS Bylaws, Sept. 1995, SO95.
 "Ballot Regarding Revision to NFSS Bylaws", SO95.
 "NFS Bylaws Revised", ND95.
 "Proposed Revision to NFSS By-Laws", MA-2005.

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Beginner, "How To Sell Society Finches (and Computer)", MA93.
 Ackley, Denise, "An Unfortunate Learning Experience", JA96.
 Aleman, Jose, "Preparing a Bird Room for Breeding", MA94.
 Aleman, Jose, "Cage Breeding", SO95.
 Ayres, Marlene, "Warning About Wool!", MA91.
 Baptista, Luis, "Recording Vocalizations of Finches", SO98.
 Beckham, Roy, "Constructing Milk Carton Nest Boxes", MJ-2001.
 Bernard, Sandra, "Egg Repair", SO98.
 Black, Robert, "Temperature Conditions for Finches and Softbills", JF-2001.
 Black, Robert, "Finches in Aviculture (The Importance of Dependable Breeding Strains)", JA-2006.
 Black, Robert, "Stimulating Finches to Breed", ND2006
 Brill, Charles A., "City Life The Bird Room", MJ99.
 Brother Michael Anthony, "Nifty Tip", MA90.
 Burns, Jan and Russell, "A Tip from a Homing Pigeon Breeder", MA91.
 Castaner, Ron, "Dehydration in Birds", MJ97.
 Castaner, Ron, "Going Light: Wasting Disease in Finches and Small Birds", MA97.
 Castaner, Ron, "The Moulting Finch", JA97.
 Castaner, Ron, "Recovery from Shock", JF97.
 Castaner, Ron, "Treating Finches for Shock", ND96.
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 Claffin, Lainey, "General Care for Finches - Part One", SO95.
 Claffin, Lainey, "General Care for Finches - Part Two", ND95.
 Clinton-Eitniear, Jack, "About Finches Flying Express Mail", SO90.
 Cochran, Billy, "Securing Your Aviary from Outside Predators", MA-2000.
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 Cruce, Robert E., "Genetics 1", JF93.
 Cruce, Robert E., "Genetics 3", MJ93.
 Cryberg, Dawn, "Causes of Baby Deaths", JF97.
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 - 204-221, JA85.
 - 222-242, SO85.
 - 243-284, ND85.
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 - 343-368, MJ86.
 - 368-386, JA86.
 - 382-409, SO86.
 - 409-500, ND86.
 - 501-571, JF87.
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NFSS MEETINGS

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- 9/9/84, 10/84.
- 12/2/84, JF85.
- 3/10/85, MA85.
- 6/2/85, MJ85.
- 9/8/85, SO85.
- 11/15/85 & 11/17/85, ND85.
- 12/1/85, ND85.
- 3/9/86, MA86.
- 6/8/86, MJ86, JA86.
- 9/7/86, SO86.
- 12/7/86, JF87.
- 3/15/87, MA87.
- 8/12/87, SO87.
- 11/20/88, ND87.
- 3/13/88, MA88.
- 6/12/88, JAS88.
- 8/10/88, JAS88.
- 10/2/88, JAS88.
- 3/11/89, MA89.
- -6/89, JA89.

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SHOW AWARDS - see "AWARDS"

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- 1996, JF96, MA96.
- 1989, ND88.
- 1993, ND92.
- 1997, JF97, MA97.
- 1988, MJ88.
- 1990, JF90.
- 1993, JF93.
- 4/89, MA89.
- 3/90, MJ90.
- 2/93, JF93.
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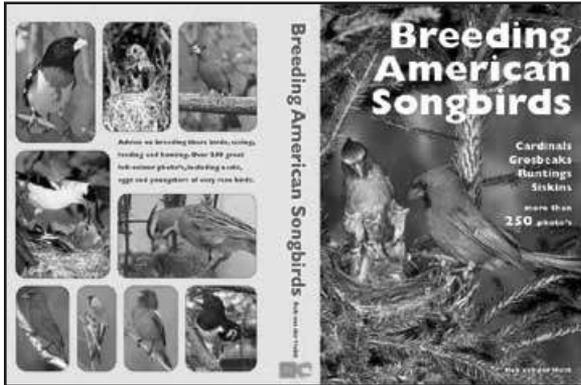
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or fill out the Affiliation Agreement located on page 65 of the Journal
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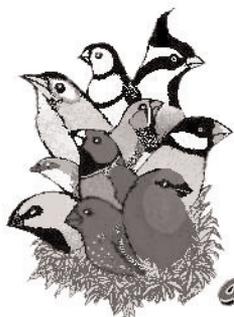
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YES ___ NO ___ If YES, what year(s) _____ Date of your 2006 show _____
Why would you like to host an NFSS Regional show? _____

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