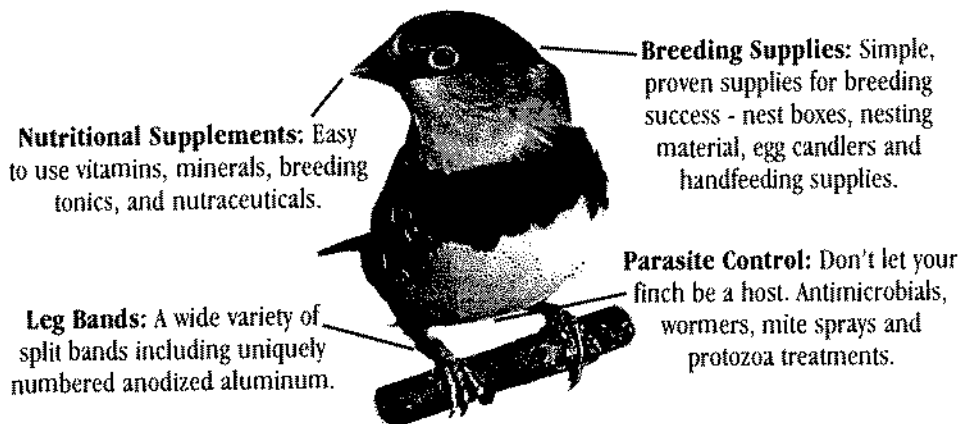


Special Points of Interest:

- ◆ 2d & 3d Quarter Board Meeting Minutes
- ◆ Regional Map
- ◆ Breeding the Blue-breasted Parrot-finch (Vince Moase)
- ◆ Avian Conversations (Tom Riggs & Ross Bishop)
- ◆ The Kindness of Strangers (Catherine Reynolds)
- ◆ The Painted Firetail Finch (Kerri McCoy)
- ◆ Food for Thought (James R. Casey)
- ◆ The Future of Birdkeepers (Bobi Cooke)

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The NFSS Bulletin

Home Office
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<http://NFSS.net>

Publisher: The National Finch and Softbill Society
Editor: Steve Poe

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Volume 1. January/February	January 1st	February 1st
Volume 2. March/April	March 1st	April 1st
Volume 3. May/June	May 1st	June 1st
Volume 4. July/August	July 1st	August 1st
Volume 5. September/October	September 1st	October 1st
Volume 6. November/December	November 1st	December 1st

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From the Editor

Please note the change of address as indicated below and make sure any correspondence gets sent to the new address. This change pertains **especially to judges** who send show results.

Steve Poe
4310 Ascot Road
Hephzibah, GA 30815
stevepoe@mindspring.com

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Second Quarter 1999 NFSS Board Meeting

Ft. Myers, FL

May 29, 1999

a.

Roll Call:

The following Board members were in attendance but the entire Board had the opportunity to vote on all motions and seconds by E-mail,

b.

Ron Castaner

Dale Laird

Eileen Laird

Steve Hoppin

Reports:

1. Treasurer report - current balance \$ 7874.90. NFSS 1998 tax return has been filed.
2. Fourth Vice President report - judge's fees and reports filed for 1999.
3. Band Secretary - over three hundred band orders have been processed to date. Band orders have surpassed previous year by over one hundred orders.
4. NFSS 2000/2001 Election Committee report - current slate and voting procedures reviewed by members present.
5. NFSS has a full-page promotional ad in the 1999 KT GABS catalog.

Business:

1. Discussion of lack of reports by regional Vice Presidents concerning their educational and promotional activities of NFSS in their respective region. No written reports received.
2. The following motion was made by Steve Hoppin and seconded by Dale Laird - In recognition of Mr. Ray Johnson's dedication and contributions to the entire field of aviculture, I make the motion that NFSS award him lifetime NFSS membership and Honorary Panel Judge status. Copies of motion to be forwarded to Board members

for vote.

3. Board members revisited a motion made by Bill Parlee. The motion presented an official NFSS Internet email policy. Copies of motion to be forwarded to Board members for vote.

4. A written concern was received questioning why exhibition and bird points are accumulated at non-affiliated shows. Board discussion followed and requested the Panel Chairman to research affiliation procedures and point accumulation for other National societies.

5. Panel Chairman reports Sally Huntington and he have made forward progress in developing criteria of a motion for procedures of an additional apprentice testing policy. It's anticipated this motion will probably be ready for inclusion in the Third Quarter NFSS Board Meeting "By Mail".

6. A request to the Board was made for show standards for the Mouse Bird, Touraco, and Red headed finch. The Board asked the Panel Chairman to provide details on the procedure for the selection of finch and softbill species for the creation of a standard. Panel Chairman reported that multiple birds of a particular specie consistently placing on top bench throughout the show seasons were top priority for selection process. The Board recommends all future inquiries and requests for standards be directed to the Panel Chairman.

7. Board member request for the Judge's Handbook to be up-dated and to include the present 1998 classifications. Panel Chairman reported 1999 NFSS budget included expenditure for revision. The Handbook is currently being edited and a Fall release is anticipated.

8. Board discussed several different ideas concerning a potential "Breeder Recognition Program" for NFSS' Finchsaves. Any and all suggestions for this program should be submitted to the Finchsaves Director, Daniel Almaguer.

9. The Board reviewed a proposal from a NFSS member requesting the Society become a distributor for his recommended products. The Board members in attendance discussed all submitted information, however, declined the offer.

Items requiring a vote:

c..

The following motion was made by Steve Hoppin and seconded by Dale Laird concerning a lifetime membership & Honorary Judge's status for Mr. Ray Johnson.

In recognition of Ray Johnson's many years of dedicated service to Aviculture and in view of his current health status to award Mr. Johnson a lifetime membership in NFSS and award him an honorary status as a Panel Judge .

Yes-13, No-0, Did not vote-2

The following motion was made by Bill Parlee and seconded by Steve Hoppin concerning NFSS Official E-mail Policy:

"All National Finch and Softbill Society Board member Internet E-Mail communications, between individual members, must be directed to the member or members involved. Communications to the whole Board should be directed to the President with copies to all Board members. E-mail directed in any other method will not be considered as official NFSS E-mail. Board sensitive E-mail or copies thereof may only be communicated between members of the National Finch and Softbill Society."

Yes-12, No-1, Did not vote-2

Submitted by:
Ron Castaner
NFSS President

Awards Manager

Ginny Allen has been the Awards Manager for more years than she originally agreed to, but has decided it is time for her to turn position over to another volunteer. If you think you may be able to help NFSS by filling this position please contact Ginny at gndallen@earthlink.net or (334) 749-7168. For more details,

Third Quarter 1999 NFSS Board Meeting

Held: By Mail 07/26/99

Completed 08/30/99

Documented by: Ron Castaner
NFSS President

Dear Board Members, (Friends) I would like to thank each of you for taking part in the 3rd quarter for the 1999 board of directors agenda. I would especially like to thank the Vice President Dale Laird for all of his help. Here are the final votes for items one and two. Items requiring a vote:

Item One: Change of policy of allocating \$400.00 to the trip expenses instead of air fair for the President

13 YES (AMEND "UP TO" \$400.00)

2 NO VOTES

Item Two: Amend the governing laws of the judge examination to admit the procedures discussed in the 3rd quarter of 1999 board of director agenda. (Done by mail).

9 YES

4 NO

2 NO VOTE.

Ron Castaner

NFSS President

NFSS Treasurer

You will remember the NFSS Ballot did not contain a candidate for the Treasurer position for the 2000/2001 Board. If you can help in this area, or know of another member who can, please contact any of the Board members.

What NFSS State Region is your State In?

Region 1—Northeast

Connecticut
 Delaware
 Maine
 Maryland
 Massachusetts
 New Hampshire
 New Jersey
 New York
 Pennsylvania
 Rhode Island
 Vermont
 Virginia
 Washington D.C.
 West Virginia

Region 2—Southeast

Alabama
 Florida
 Georgia
 Mississippi
 North Carolina
 South Carolina
 Tennessee

**Region 3—Mid-Central,
Canada, Foreign**

Arkansas
 Illinois
 Indiana
 Kentucky
 Louisiana
 Michigan
 Missouri
 Ohio
 Wisconsin

Region 4—Mid-West

Iowa
 Kansas
 Minnesota
 Nebraska
 North Dakota
 Oklahoma
 South Dakota
 Texas

Region 5—Mountain

Arizona
 Colorado
 Idaho
 Montana
 Nevada
 New Mexico
 Utah
 Wyoming

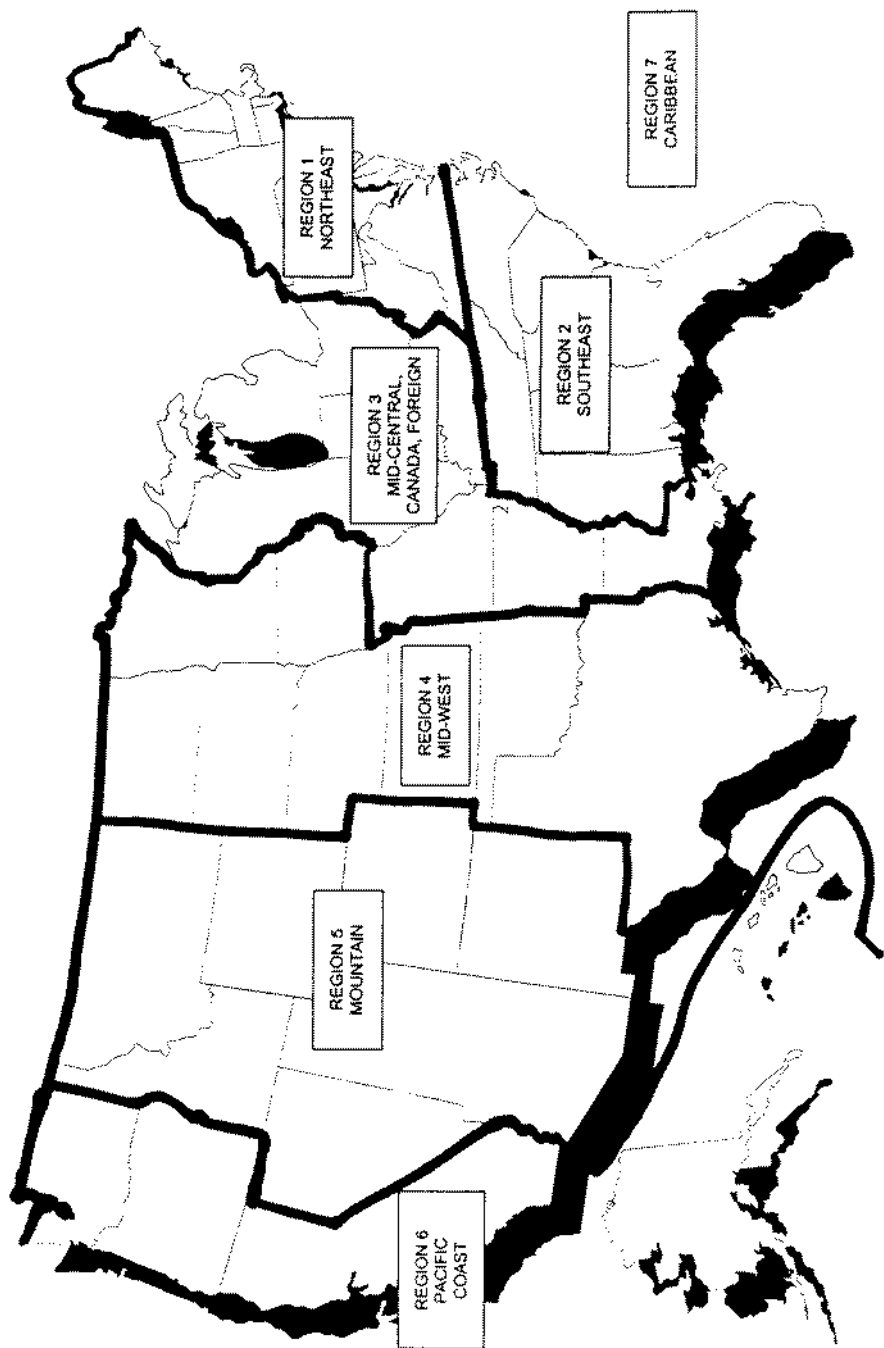
Region 6—Pacific Coast

Alaska
 California
 Hawaii
 Oregon
 Washington

Region 7—Caribbean

Puerto Rico
 Other Caribbean locales

As noted, Canada and foreign locations fall under Region 3.



Breeding the Blue-breasted Parrot-finch.

By Vince Moase

The Blue-breasted Parrot-finch, *Erythrura tricolor*, is also known as the Tri-coloured, Three-coloured and, more recently, the Forbe's Parrot-finch. (The name "Forbe's" appears to refer to birds that come from the Tanimbar Islands. It is the subject of great debate at present as to whether this is actually a different sub-species or not.) This is one of the earliest discovered members of the genus and was first described in 1817 by Vieillot. For many years, the Blue-breasted was considered by some to be the rarest finch in aviculture. Prices for a pair were often in the thousands of dollars, which was very unfortunate as, until recently, they have not been known to survive in captivity for any length of time.

Even authoritative books written in the last decades have been unable to offer any information regarding the care of this species. Estrildid finches of the world by Derek Goodwin has "No information" under the headings of "Feeding and general habits", "Nesting", "Voice", and "Display and Social Behaviour". The Parrot-finch breeder's "bible", Parrot Finches, The Aviculturist's Guide by Evans and Fidler can only offer, "The species is unknown in aviculture." While other books comment, "This species does not survive in captivity," and, "There are no recorded breeding successes."

In recent years, good breeding results in Europe, and the illegal export from Indonesia (by declaring them as totally different species), have contributed to increased availability and a reduction in the prices being demanded. The Blue-breasted Parrot-finch comes primarily from the island of Timor in South East Asia. Timor covers approximately 12,000 square miles, so this species has a very restricted range. (As a comparison, the US State of Maryland is approximately 10,000 square miles)

The forehead, face, throat and breast of the adult male is a dark cobalt blue, the lower breast and belly are a paler cobalt, upperparts are bright green, rump and upper tail coverts are red. The bill is black and the legs are flesh-coloured. Adult hens are paler versions of the

male, with the deep cobalt being replaced by turquoise, although some hens are almost as dark as the males. Young birds are easily identifiable as the breast is grey and the back is a duller green. The juveniles' bills are yellow/orange in colour.

Two years ago a local bird importer offered Forbe's Parrot-finches for sale. These birds had been imported from Europe, where they had been raised in Holland. We purchased two pairs and then had to decide what we should try feeding them. As usual with very rare birds, the reports often contradicted each other. "Do not feed rice as it will kill the birds." "Feed brown rice", "High protein diet" "No protein", etc. Reports coming out of Europe were saying the birds put on weight very easily and, once fat, would never be any good for breeding. Bearing this in mind we set about developing a diet. The diet offered does vary a little, depending on whether they are housed inside or have been transferred to an outside aviary to enjoy the summer.

The basic maintenance diet includes finch mix, wild grass seeds, duck starter, niger seed, canary seed, millet sprays and our own grit mix (includes cuttlebone and egg shells baked at 250 degrees for 20 minutes.) A selection of greens, spinach, dandelion, chicory and other dark-leaf vegetables, are added to soaked seed and fruit each day. Base minerals and vitamins are added to the water. The birds also receive white worms, small mealworms, and fruit flies and their larvae, although we have not witnessed them feeding on the latter. A very strict control is kept on the high protein foods as this species, particularly the males, are prone to getting fat. They are usually very active and require more room than their more common Blue-faced and Red-headed cousins.

We house these birds in communal aviaries or in pairs in breeding cages. We have found they breed much better in individual pairs housed in small aviaries measuring approximately 4' X 5' X 6'. This also avoids any competition for live food. Each flight has clumps of Canary grass going from floor to ceiling and cedar boughs are put in the corners, again from floor to ceiling to provide secluded nesting sites. Dogwood boughs are hung about half way up the flight and around the perimeter. One pair of Parrot-finches housed in a small communal aviary, with a pair each of Gouldians and Owl Finches, had 5 good eggs and then started to fight with the Gouldians. We had to pull the eggs of both pairs and foster them or risk losing both nests. The

Gouldians were also removed at this time. The female Parrot-finch went into a heavy moult and the male became really aggressive. There is not much doubt the hen would have been killed if there had been no cover in the aviary. The male took his frustration out on the Canary grass. The original clump measured approximately four feet high by two feet and was chewed in half! They also enjoy chewing branches, especially the Dogwood.

Our birds prefer to nest in wooden boxes as opposed to wicker baskets. A survey of three breeders showed the birds of only one breeder used wicker nests and that breeder did not have any wooden boxes available in their flights. Typical of most parrot-finches these birds build a very tight nest that has a tiny entrance hole, which is almost impossible to see into. They prefer to build with coconut fiber but also take some sisal, other white cotton fibers and long soft grass that we harvest locally.

When a compatible pair are housed together they sit next to each other, bobbing up and down in unison with their bills almost touching. The male gives a soft, very high-pitch trill, much like that of the Red-head, only softer. Any further display has not been observed. Copulation has occasionally been observed on the perch but the pair spends much time together in the nest, and it is believed that copulation usually takes place there.

When the pairs are set up for breeding the maintenance diet is supplemented with Sunshine 'Protein 25' egg food at the rate of 6 cups to 7 hard-boiled eggs. Cooked brown rice is also offered but is withheld during the rest of the year to avoid the obesity risk.

The average clutch contains 4-6 tiny white eggs and both birds share the incubation duties. Eggs hatch after 13 days. The chicks have the four reflective papillae typical of the genus. These papillae, at the junction of the mandibles, open into a square when the chicks beg for food and assist the parents in knowing where to place the food in the dark confines of the nest. The papillae of this species are blue. The chicks fledge at around 18 days and are dependent on their parents for a further 3 weeks, although they can be seen picking at seeds a week after fledging. We usually leave the young with their parents until the next clutch of eggs is about to hatch. This avoids competition between the two clutches for the rearing food. The sexes can be determined between 10 and 12

weeks.

Our goal is always to have our birds rear their own young if possible. We set up 5 pairs of Blue-breasted Parrot-finches at the beginning of this breeding season. Three pairs were housed in communal flights while the remaining two pairs were housed by themselves in the small aviaries.

We realized the importance of increasing the number of these rare birds as efficiently as possible. To assist us in this goal the eggs from the first three pairs were fostered to Bengalese and the other two pairs were allowed to raise their own young. The season is just winding down and we have over 30 current year birds, about half of which were parent-raised. Next season we will concentrate on having all pairs raise their own young.

Two of the young from a late nest appear to be dilute in colour. The parents are normal-coloured but the chicks' backs are blue and the normally red rump is a pale tan colour. This mutation has appeared in Europe but very little is known about it. We hope to be able to continue with these new coloured birds next year and see if the gene is sex-linked or autosomal (normal) recessive.

It is important for breeders to share their experiences and for us to learn from each other. I would like to thank Dave Smith for sending me some of his observations and opinions relating to the display and breeding cycle of his birds. Also to Grant Rishman for compiling all the information and organizing it into a legible format.

Work cited:

Evans, Stewart and Mike Fidler. Parrot Finches, the aviculturist's guide. London, England. Blandford. 1990

Fidler, Mike. Personal communication, 1999.

Goodwin, Derek. Estrildid finches of the world. Ithaca, NY. Comstock Publishing Associates. 1982

Vriends, Matthew. The complete book of finches. New York, NY. Howell. 1987

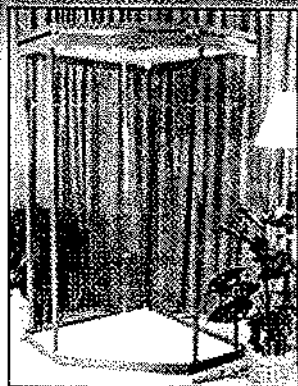
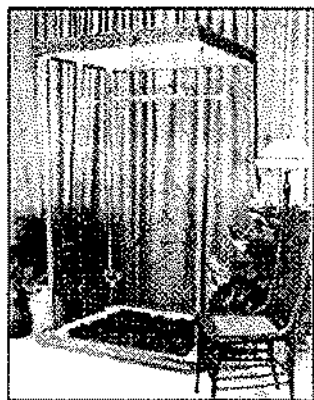
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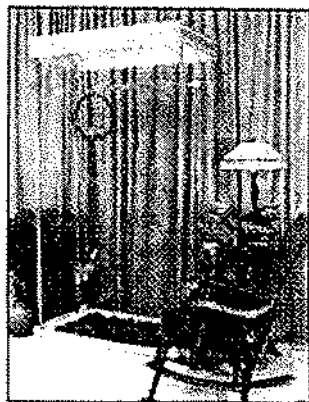
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Avian Conversations
(Formerly "Basic Bird Care")
By Tom Riggs and Ross Bishop

Editor's Note: The authors have decided to change the name of this series of articles due to the premise that they will cover far more than Basic Bird Care. We hope you enjoy the series and invite your questions and comments (see end note).

KNOW YOUR BIRDS

Ross: This may sound a little strange, but I think that dogs and cats are a problem for new bird owners. Not, as you might expect, because they threaten or scare birds, but because they set a standard of care that people project onto birds. Dogs and cats are largely self sustaining creatures. You feed them, occasionally open the door for them, take them for shots once a year and occasionally clean the cat's litter box. That's about all you have to do unless there is a problem. I think this creates an unspoken expectation in people's minds - they expect birds to be like cats and dogs, and that is not the case. And frankly, pet stores don't tell people the truth when they sell them birds, either.

Most people see a bird at a show or a pet store or a friend's house, fall in love with it, take it home, and then try to figure out how to care for it. If you were going to give the novice bird keeper some basic advice, what would be the most important thing you would say to them?

Tom: The most important thing that I would suggest is to research the literature and find out as much as you can about the birds you are intending to buy. But in the real world very few people do this, including many experienced aviculturists. Trial and error seems to be the most popular form of bird education, much to the detriment of the unfortunate birds being experimented with. If you are a beginner I would certainly suggest that you buy a good general book on Finches and Softbills before buying any birds. Also, start with birds that have flexibility and hardiness. I'd certainly recommend Zebra Finches, Societies, etc. But, also I find that many experienced aviculturists will add a bird to their collection without really knowing about the bird, either in nature or in aviculture.

Ross: When you see a bird that you want, I can understand the motivation to have it, but I am just not sure that to just buy it on the spot is always the smartest approach. Pet shops will hold a bird for a day for you. If you are at a show find someone there, other than the seller, who knows about the type of bird you are considering and ask questions. Bird people are usually willing to help and they are always full of opinions. Get at least

some basic information so that you are not creating problems for yourself or your flock. Find out about things like compatibility, diet, aggressiveness, space requirements, etc. of the birds you are considering.

Tom: I could not agree more. The literature of aviculture is fascinating to me, and we do have a long history with birds, so there is a good deal of information available if you are willing to look for it. Our knowledge goes back a long way. Montezuma had 600 slaves that did nothing but tend the birds in his aviaries, and of course, we know that the ancient Egyptians kept birds.

The books in my library go all the way back to the 1800's, starting with Beckstein's *History of Cage Birds* and right on up to the present with books like *Estrildid Finches of the World*, and Ross, I know you use Russell Kingston's *Keeping and Breeding Finches and Seed Eaters* which is also a very good book.

It is fascinating to see how aviculture has changed and to find the history of birds in aviculture. You must remember that at one time, Lories were fed bread soaked in milk and that was it! They had a very high mortality rate! And people kept birds like Dippers and sky larks and they kept them in rooms. Outdoor aviaries were rare. People kept birds in large rooms where the birds were either kept in cages or allowed to fly free.

Anyway, there are a lot of good books out nowadays and I want to mention some of them. The classic, and it may be out of print, is *Finches and Soft-Billed Birds* by Bates and Busenbark. I have a quarrel with the book in that the illustrations for the most part are terrible and the information on care of the birds is in the front of the book separated from information on the specific species, but it was and is, and excellent book. In its day it was the most comprehensive book available. Also, just for history, Carl Naether's *Softbill Birds* was for a long time the only book published on softbills, and is still very good. Derek Goodwin's *Estrildid Finches of the World* is another excellent reference, but it may be hard to find today. There is another interesting book called *Foreign Birds for Garden Aviaries* by Alan Brooksbank of the famous Keston Bird Farm in England. My copy was written in 1939. The book focuses on the building of planted outdoor aviaries and the birds suitable for them. Also, one of the standards for finches many years was a book simply called *Finches* by Ian Harman. Ian is an Australian, and this is an excellent book. More recently, two books have come out on softbills both of which I like very much: David Alderton's, *A Birdkeeper's Guide to Softbills* and Martin Vince's, *Softbills. Care Breeding and Conservation*.

In addition to some of this established literature, it is very important to get the most up to date information available. I find the articles by various breeders in publications like *The Bulletin* of the National Finch and Softbill Society. The American Federation of Aviculture's *Watchbird*, etc. to be very valuable. These are generally articles of recent breeding and

rearing techniques that have been successful.

Some people might say, well then, what is the use of a book, particularly this old stuff? Well, the fundamentals don't change that much, and this information is at least going to get you started on the right path. This is not to say that I agree with everything that has been written, because I don't, but you will at least get the basic concepts like: caging, basic diet, things like not to put parrots together with finches or not to house weavers with goldbreasts. Simple basic things like that. If you are not familiar with birds it is unlikely that you will know these things. And despite what the pet shop tells you, Pekin Robins will not live well on a seed only diet.

Ross: There is one other piece of advice I would like to pass on to new bird keepers. Make sure your birds are banded. If they are not banded when you buy them, get some split bands and band them. It's not that hard to do. Then get yourself a notebook and note any information you have about your birds: when they were fledged, who you bought them from, etc. Then record every clutch, band colors and numbers.

The reasons are simple. Finch babies don't take long before they look exactly like their parents. After a while you won't be able to tell who is who. If you use a different color for each clutch and get numbered bands you will be able to tell your birds apart. One trick Tom and I both use is to band clutches from the same parents with related (and numbered) colored bands. For example, one set of my Gouldian parents have blue bands. I band each of their clutches with bands in the "blue" family: light blue, navy, purple, violet, etc. Another pair of parents have red bands and I use "red" colors like: red, dark red, light and dark pink, orange, etc. for their offspring. The third group gets the greens and yellows. The reason I do this is that I can look in the aviary in an instant and know exactly which genetic line a particular bird is from. It makes things a lot easier.

The record book is important. A year or two and 15 birds later you will not remember who came from where and who is related to whom. This information is essential if you ever want to pair your birds up to mate or to sell. If you don't do it from day one, the information can be very difficult to go back and recreate. It is also surprising how fast things can develop. I started out with 3 pairs of Gouldians and after their first breeding season they had become 23 birds. I cannot keep all that in my head. I record lots of information on my birds because I want to be able to go back and see if changes in diet and whatnot have made any difference in clutch size, appearance, health, etc. The computer is great for that sort of record keeping.

BASIC BIRD NEEDS

Tom: What a bird needs is essentially what it has in nature. It needs good light, fresh air, cool, clean water to drink and bathe in, space to fly, minerals and an appropriate diet. I prefer to give birds as large a flight

space as possible. My two breeding flights are 12 ft. and 9 ft. Long and that is the smallest that I have. I also like to leave fledglings in the flight as long as is possible because in that important growth period it develops their flight muscles and other organs.

CAGE SIZE

Ross: One thing that bothers me is the idea of housing a bird in a small, "canary" sized cage. In my view, birds are built for flight - that is what they do. They need space to move. I think it is cruel and unhealthy to permanently confine birds to a small cage where they cannot get proper exercise. Would you care to comment on that?

Tom: Well, I guess we got into this habit because canaries could tolerate it, and small cages don't take up much space in city apartments. That doesn't mean that it was good for the birds, though. I consider a 24" x 14" x 20" inch cage to be the absolute minimum for small birds, and no more than 4 to 6 birds in it depending upon their size and aggressive tendencies. Nothing smaller. Larger flights of eight feet or more are better. Outdoor flights are ideal if you can do it.

In regards to design, a cage or flight should be longer than it is tall. Although a taller cage may be visually appealing, birds need to fly, and flight is a horizontal thing. And, don't confuse "hop space" with "flight space."

Round cages are typically tall and narrow, and in my opinion, should be banned. It is impossible to keep food and water dishes clean in these cages because the perches sit right above them. Flight space in these is also minimal.

On a related note, some cages come with wire grates on the bottom. I recommend removing these. Most finches like to spend time on the ground and it is important to make the cage floor amenable to their needs. Over the years I have come to believe that all birds are aviary birds and I try to use cages only for quarantine and temporary housing.

TEMPERATURE

Ross: What about basic bird temperature requirements? Most of the birds we keep are tropical. I'll go into my aviary on a hot summer day and be almost dying of the heat, and the birds are soaking it up!

Tom: Birds have varying requirements, of course. Some are quite tolerant of cold even though they are tropical in origin. Others have very specific temperature requirements and cannot tolerate anything below a 60 nighttime temperature. It is very important that you be aware of each bird's temperature needs. I am not interested in experimenting with just how cold a particular species can endure and survive. I think that is cruel.

A common mistake inexperienced aviculturist's sometimes make is to keep a cage right next to a window. The problem is that all windows leak when it gets cold, and drafts are very rough on birds. Also, direct sun for a long period of time can also induce an artificial molt or heatstroke. It is best to place a cage next to a wall at about eye level. If you have a living room that gets cold at night you can always drop a heat light into or near the cage.

Regarding aviaries, the question is what species you house in them. For instance my outdoor aviary, which is planted and has a shelter, houses tropical birds. The shelter is maintained at night with a heater at a minimum of 50 . It seldom goes that low here and the temperature is more likely to be between 55-60 at night. I also have a standard 7 watt red utility light that serves as a night light. All lighting is controlled by a system that automatically dims them at night and brings them up gradually in the morning.

The planted flight has two, 750 watt radiant heating elements at the back at the roof line. I have a perch 2 feet from the heater. The temperature in the flights must be at least 50 before I will release birds from the shelter. The heaters will bring the flight to this temperature from 30 in about an hour, plus providing an even warmer place if the birds desire it.

Some softbills can be acclimated to considerably lower temperatures than their origins would indicate. Pekins, Silver Eared Mesias, many of the Jays, etc., can take quite low nighttime temperatures and seem comfortable. Some drop in nighttime temperature is important for birds. Almost all tropical birds experience cool nights, in fact some places in the tropics can become downright chilly at night. Otherwise birds can become soft. But we must remember that at the latitude of North America, conditions are considerably colder than these bird's native habitats.

During the cool periods, my flight is covered with insulated plastic panels that slide into place. This works very well, except in our intense sun here at 7,500 feet in Santa Fe, the flight can overheat quickly and then the panels must be opened for ventilation. I don't worry a lot about temperature highs in this climate. Some birds enjoy the heat, others retire to the shelter when it gets hot.

My aviary is misted at least twice, sometimes three times a day, depending upon the ambient temperature. Indoor birds are provided with fresh bathing water several times each day, beginning about 2:00 in the afternoon. Treated drinking water is withdrawn at that time and not replaced until the following morning.

PERCHES

Ross: It seems to me that one of the most overlooked areas in bird keeping is that of perches.

Tom: Perches should be kept clean because birds sit on them, clean

their beaks on them and rub their eyes on them. If a perch is dirty it is just an invitation to infection. And foot and eye infections can be really hard to treat. The perch is the bird's living space. Would you want to stand around barefoot in feces all day, day after day? Then don't expect your birds to! How often have you seen cages where the paper has been changed and yet the birds are sitting on filthy perches? I see this a lot in stores, and it bothers me.

Regarding perch placement, some people over-perch their flights. I believe that a cage or aviary should be perched as minimally as possible, encouraging the birds to stretch out and get exercise. Otherwise they will mostly hop. As a standard, I recommend one perch at each end of standard flight cage at a high level and a third in the middle at a lower level. This encourages the birds to fly. The idea is to place perches to maximize flight space.

Lower perches are important, too. Sometimes a bird that is introduced to a flight will be nervous about going down from a high perch to eat, or whatever. A low perch gives them a place to hang out and decide when they want to go down. Perches should always be placed so that the birds' tails clear the sides of the cage.

I like to use natural branches for perches. I especially like fruit tree branches. Branches have varying diameters so the birds get good foot exercise. The drawbacks to natural branches are that they can be difficult to clean and they become brittle with time and must be replaced more frequently. It is essential to sterilize natural branches (either with a disinfectant or in the oven at 350 for 1/2 hour) before putting them into a flight.

Ross: One thing that is not well understood is perch diameter. People tend to use perches that are too thin. Ideally, a bird should not be able to wrap its foot around a perch. They should only be able to rest on its top half. This is much better for foot exercise and perching safety.

Tom: Doweling is easy to remove and clean. I use doweling mixed with natural branches in my in holding cages. But doweling is hard and smooth so I like to soak it in hot water a little and then take a serrated knife and score it to rough the surface up a bit. This gives the birds more traction and is more comfortable for them. Birds need foot exercise. That is why having different diameter perches is important.

Ross: When I started out, like many bird keepers, I went out and found some gorgeous branches to put in my flights - they looked great. the aviary looked so natural! Then I had to start to regularly clean the darned things, and the complex branches soon got drastically pared down. Now we're down to basically a single stem with no side branches. I do that for two reasons: First, I found that my birds weren't really flying. They were hopping from branch to branch because there were so many perches available. The birds needed all the exercise they could get, and my desire for a "natural looking" environment was giving them a way to avoid exercise.

Secondly, the natural branches were rough and they just didn't clean as easily as dowels.

Incidentally, many people do not realize that doweling comes in both hardwood and softwood. Softwood dowels are much better for perches. Perches made with serrated plastic are soft and also work well. They allow for good traction. I understand, though, that they can splinter with exposure to the sun, so that would be something to consider.

Tom: Some aviculturists use lengths of rope for perching. I have never used it, but rope is soft and comes in many diameters. But, it must be kept clean and I have always wondered if it wasn't too smooth to help wear down claws.

Ross: How often would you suggest that people remove and clean their perches?

Tom: Often! Perches should of course, be cleaned when they are dirty, but I prefer to see them not get dirty at all. This depends somewhat upon the species you are working with and the number of birds in the cage or aviary. My rule of thumb is: don't let the dirt accumulate.

Ross: I think it is also important to treat perches with a disinfectant after cleaning them. I scrub my perches with Oxyfresh Cleansing Gel and then treat them with Dent-A-Gene disinfectant. I like to dry mine in the sun before returning them to the aviary. You use a different technique don't you?

Tom: I use boiling water to sterilize them and then scrub them with a wire brush. However, scraping perches doesn't disinfect them. You have to wash and treat them. Make absolutely certain that perches are dry before returning them to the flight. You can dry in the oven (don't overcook!) or dry them in the sun. Putting damp perches in a cage can cause chilling and lead to bird colds and other problems.

Ross: When I built my aviaries I did not think about perch cleaning and disinfecting and so I simply wired my perches in. I thought I could adequately clean them in place. I was wrong! I had to redesign my perches so that they could be removed for cleaning. I find that a second set of perches is a really good idea. You can swap out one set with the second and then you can clean and disinfect the dirty set at your leisure. And, they then have plenty of time to dry thoroughly.

End.

Note: If you have suggestions, comments, ideas, or disagreements, we welcome your thoughts. You can send them to Ross Bishop, P.O. Box 6105, Santa Fe, NM, 87502 or email ross@dsrt.com. We will try to respond to comments in future columns.

The Kindness of Strangers

By Catherine Reynolds

Like many of you, I have found myself relying on the kindness, and research of strangers in my journey toward that title of Aviculturist". Recently, I have had the pleasure of making many friends via the internet. Some of these friendships have lead to phone calls, or even meetings face to face. All have been beneficial in some way or another.

One such friendship with an impish Irishman, Tim Roche, now living in Massachusetts, netted me a box full of Cage & Aviary BIRD magazine on loan (shhhh... Tim doesn't want anyone to know he is a nice guy). While perusing the pages of one issue I found a blurb by Robin Restall, about a DNA study being done at the University of Michigan, on the relationship of finches. The article was a year or so old but contained all of the information needed to contact Dr. Robert Payne, Curator of Birds and Professor of Zoology at the University. So, as brazenly as I bug some of you, I typed out a letter of introduction to Dr. Payne. I explained that I was a member of the NFSS and that if this study was still going on I would gladly enlist the aid of the club in getting the samples he needed. At the time I first wrote, Dr. Payne was in Africa studying birds and unavailable to answer my questions about the research study.

I soon forgot all about it. Then one afternoon quite by surprise, I saw a message from a Dr. Robert Payne at The University of Michigan pop up. Dr. Payne assured me that the study is still ongoing and will be so for at least one more, possibly two more years. He does have most of the Estrilid Finches but still needs samples from quite a number of other species. So following, is the list of species we could help him with, and the address to contact him at. All that he needs are FEATHERS, and the names of the species they came from, to do his DNA testing. I know there has to be at least one or two of us who can help him out so we can better understand our birds. I consider it a way to repay back all that "kindness of strangers" I've received... how about you?

Emblema (Stagonopleura, Zonaeginthus) oculata, red-eared firetail
Erythrura cyaneiventris, red-headed parrotfinch
Erythrura kleischmidtii, pink-billed parrotfinch, Fiji
Erythrura viridifacies, green-faced parrotfinch
Estrilda nigriloris, black-faced waxbill
Estrilda kandti, Kandt's waxbill
Estrilda charmosyna, pink black-faced waxbill
Estrilda poliopareia, Anambra waxbill
Estrilda (polionota) ochrogaster, Abyssinian waxbill
Estrilda rufibarba, Arabian waxbill
Lonchura caniceps, grey-headed mannikin
Lonchura forbesi, New Ireland munia
Lonchura (f.) nigerrima, New Hanover Munia
Lonchura hunsteini, mottled munia, Hunstein's mannikin
Lonchura kelaarti, rufous-bellied black-throated munia, hill munia
Lonchura leucogastroides, Javan munia
Lonchura melaena, thick-billed / Bismarck munia
Lonchura montana, snow mountain mannikin
Lonchura monticola, alpine mannikin
Lonchura stygia, black mannikin
Lonchura vana, grey-banded mannikin
Oreostruthus fuliginosus, crimson-sided mountain finch
Pholidornis rushiae, tit-hylia
Spermestes (bicolor) nigriceps, red-backed mannikin

All that needs to be done is to send feather samples in an envelope marked with the species they came from to:

Robert B. Payne Phone: 734-647-2208

Curator of Birds and Professor of Zoology FAX: 734-763-4080

3019 Museum of Zoology e-mail: rbpayne@umich.edu

1109 Geddes Ave.

University of Michigan

Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1079 USA

The feathers need not be fresh pulled. They can be dropped during a molt or pulled by another bird. You might wish to add that they are DNA samples of no monetary value on the outside of the envelope.

End

Shows/Events

November 27, 1999

Santa Clara Valley Canary and Exotic Bird Club
Wilcox School Santa Clara, CA
Panel Judge: Clarence Culwell
Delegate: Richard Pizzurro 408-927-0734

November 27 and 28, 1999

National Institute of Red-Orange Canaries
Holiday Inn Elk Grove Village, IL
Panel Judge:
Delegate: Stephan Hopman 815-469-8455
Birdhop@aol.com

December 3-5, 1999

Colorbred Canary Club of Miami
Days Inn 7250 NW 11 St. Miami, FL 33126
Delegate: Nora Trincado 305-255-2661

December 4, 1999

Organizacion Puertorriquena De Aves Exoticas
Guaynabo, PR
Panel Judge: Jacky Civitarese
Delegate: Jacky Civitarese 787-752-4433
Lix4me@aol.com

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AL/ FL/GA	Tri-State Bird Fanciers	Ginny Allen Gndallen@earthlink.net	334-749-7168
CA	Amer. Family Pet Expo	Sally Huntington Huntington-center@worldnet.att.net	619-452-9423
CA	Aviary Assoc. of Kern	Leon Harris LHARRIS887@aol.com	805-588-4511
CA	Capitol City Bird Society	Mariana Mejia	916-452-2037
CA	Central California Cagebird Club	Richard Pizzurro	408-927-0734
CA	Finch Society of San Diego	Sally Huntington Huntington-center@worldnet.att.net	619-452-9423
CA	Santa Clara Valley Canary And Exotic Bird Club	Richard Pizzurro	408-927-0734
CA	South Coast Finch Society	Edna McConnell	714-828-2607
CO	Rocky Mountain Society of Aviculture	Jim Norman JIMNSP@aol.com	303-427-6260
CT	CT Association for Aviculture	Laura Sherman	914-266-5617
CT	CT Canary & Finch Club	Alfredo Robles	860-956-9410
FL	Aviary and Cage Bird Society	Carrie Efstathion Carrie2@juno.com	954-432-3349
FL	Colorbred Club of Miami	Nora Trincado	305-255-2661

FL	Florida State Fair	Dale Laird Dalel2@prodigy.net	407-657-7989
FL	FL West Coast Avian Society	Joy Johnson Joyfeathers@yahoo.com	941-966-6238
FL	Greater Brandon Avicultural Society	Joy Pace Jpace97p@tampabay.rr.com	813-685-6324
FL	Suncoast Avian Society	Joe Ventimiglia	813-392-9391
FL	Sunshine State Cage Bird Society	Dale Laird Dalel2@prodigy.net	407-657-7989
GA	Georgia Cage Bird Society	Bill McElveen Billmcelveen@mindspring.com	770-926-3830
HI	Honolulu Canary and Finch Club	Kathy Perreira ALA1884@aol.com	808-839-2269
IL	Greater Chicaco Cage Bird Club	Jane/John Muscato JAMJDM923@aol.com	630-305-9043
IL	Illini Bird Fanciers	Tom Rood Tjrood@bmmhnet.com	217-774-5265
IL	National Institute of Red-Orange Canaries	Stephan Hopman Birdhop@aol.com	815-469-8455
IN	Indiana Bird Fanciers	Conrad Meinert BirdmanofWaaraw@kconline.com	219-269-2873
IA	MidAmerica Cage Bird Society	Rhoda Shirley	515-243-1511
KS	Kansas Avicultural Society	Chris Gunderson	316-685-9364
MD	Baltimore Bird Fanciers	Barbara Shannon	410-356-5858
MA	Aviculturists of Greater Boston	Laura MacDonald Laura.MacDonald.b@bayer.com	781-961-6952

MA	Massachusetts Cage Bird Association	Kathy Vieweg Kathy_vieweg@hphc.org	617-730-4821
MI	Great Lakes Avicultural Society	Diana Hugo Hugo@iserv.net	616-842-0163
MI	Motor City Bird Breeders	Ron Girling Parrotmcbb@aol.com	810-751-8265
MI	Society of Canary and Finch Breeders	Patrick Vance	248-443-0643
MO	Greater KC Avicultural Society	Nita Haas TJHaas@OasisKC.net	816-331-5285
MO	Heart of America Hookbill & Finch Society	Moses Linn Mosses43030@aol.com	816-423-4661
MO	Midwest Zebra and Society Finch Club	Nita Haas TJHaas@OasisKC.net	816-331-5285
MO	Missouri Cage Bird Club	Rich/Rose Dickman Skdatl@inlink.com	314-928-3444
NH	Birds of a Feather	Dr. Al Decoteau SPBE1@aol.com	603-672-4568
NM	New Mexico Bird Club	Gail Ranshaw	505-822-1483
NY	NY Finch and Type Canary Club	Stan Kulak Barstand@erols.com	718-967-6899
NY	Rochester Cage Bird Club	Patrick Goonan Patrick-Goonan@www.hotmail.com	716-288-5653
NC	Raleigh-Durham Caged Bird Society	April Blazich Aprilb@bellsouth.net	919-851-8079
OH	Cleveland Cage Bird Society	Annette Howard Sale_ah@ACCESS-K-12.org	330-337-7654
OH	Ft. Defiance Bird Club	Larry Endsley	419-263-2795

OH	Toledo Bird Association	Rick Yunker	405-382-7066 OPRRLY@UOFTO1.UTOLEDO.EDU
OK	Bird Fanciers of OK	Don Lackey	405-948-3349
OK	OK Cage Bird Society	Laura Bewley	918-622-8511 LBEWLEY@yahoo.com
OR	Finch Connection Bird Club	Paula Hansen	503-584-8208
PA	Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society	Margie Jonnet	412-795-1904 MJONNET@katz.pitt.edu
PR	Organizacion Jacky Civitarese Puertorriquena De Aves Exoticas		787-752-4433 Lix4me@aol.com
SC	Aiken Bird Club	Don Haller	Donsbirds@scescape.net
TN	Middle TN Cage Bird Club	Darlene McDonnell	615-355-4250 R211MCD@aol.com
TN	Southeast TN Aviculture Society	Janet Burrell	423-472-1306 SQUAWK_Talk@webtv.net
TX	Canary and Finch Society	Margie McBrayer	281-338-2814 UlmSPAatz@evi.net
TX	Fort Worth Bird Club	Clarence Culwell	817-220-5568 Culwell5@flash.net
TX	TX Bird Breeders and Fanciers Association	Clarence Culwell	817-220-5568 Culwell5@flash.net
TX	Texas Canary Club	Pierre Ata	281-448-1188
VA	Peninsula Caged Bird Society	Dick Ivy	757-898-5090 Dickivy@two-rivers.com
WA	Cascade Canary Breeders Association	Kenneth Foster	206-938-6072 Kenneth.r.foster@boeing.com
WS	Badger Canary Fanciers	Sue Feldstein	414-965-5362

CANADA	Durham Avicultural Society Of Ontario	Bob Yake	905-433-3944
Essex-Kent	Cage Bird Society	Alfred Mion	519-948-6398
Australia	Queensland Finch Society	Gavin Dietz	P.O. Box 1600 Coorparoo DC 4151 Queensland Australia
Australia	The Avicultural Society of Australia, Inc	Graeme Hyde	52 Harris Road Elliminyt, Victoria 3249, Australia
Great Britain	The Estrildian	Howard Robinson	10 Gable Terrace Wheatley Hill Durham DH63JT England
Great Britain	The Waxbill Finch Society	Buzz Hope-Ingilis	10 Litchfield Close Plympton, Plymouth PL73UU, England
Great Britain	Zebra Finch Society	Margaret Binns	97 Bent Lanes Davyhulme, Nr. Urmston, Manchester M418WZ, England
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New Judges Handbook Now Available!

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The Painted Firetail Finch (*Emblema picta*)

**By Kerri McCoy
Burlington, Ontario**

Looking for an addition to your mixed aviary community? Look no further. The Painted Firetail Finch is an outstanding subject to consider due to their non-aggressive demeanor and social nature. Due to their rarity in U.S. aviculture, hobbyists will find the purchase of these species to be costly. At the time of this writing the Painted Firetail is gaining in popularity here in the states and domestic stock is able to be located with some effort.

The Painted Firetail geographically resides in the dry regions of Australia. A map showing the extensive range in which the Painted Firetail originated is available in "Keeping and Breeding Finches and Seed-eaters" by Russell Kingston¹. They are definitely considered desert dwellers. Their long pointed beak was designed for their natural habitat due to the necessity to seek out grass seed heads and insects dwelling in the rocky area in which they reside.

The bird is an overall rich brown color. The upper mandible is black, the lower red. The chest and belly area of the bird is black and is decorated with small white dots. The Painted Firetail is sexually dimorphic. Cock birds have bright red coloring in the center of their chest. The amount of red coloring on the chest of the hen is considerably less. On the cock the face itself is bright red around and above the eyes and this red extends down the throat area. The concentration of red on the face and chest can vary from bird to bird. The hen has less concentration of red on the face, that is limited to around the eye area. The white dotting on the chest increases in concentration on the throat area. The tail feathers are brownish-black and the rump feathers again show the bright red coloration seen on the chest and face. Upon fledging young Painteds also have noticeably red rump feathers.

My first Painted Firetails acquired were imports. At the time of my search locating domestic stock was difficult and my interest in obtaining these birds led me to try some imported stock. They required considerably acclimation and "TLC" but adjusted fully to

their new environment quite nicely after their three-month quarantine period.

I have read with great interest several articles written on the Painted Firetail by Australian aviculturists. I have however found that the characteristics of the stock in my possession behaved and bred in a completely different manner than expressed in their writings. Perhaps the origin and the domestication of the stock play some important role in the behavioral differences. I am at present unable to offer a further explanation.

While in quarantine I allowed the Painteds to pair off at will. I have found that allowing all species that I keep (save the zebras) to choose their own mates to provide better breeding results. Once pairing had occurred, the pairs were set up in individual breeding cages housed indoors. The cages measured 3 ft long x 2 ft deep x 2 ft high. My experience with the Painted Firetail in its infancy I choose the cage breeding method to better control the monitoring of the birds characteristics, nesting interests and overall breeding habits.

Being ground dwellers, the breeding cages were provided with aspen shavings as the floor covering. Lava rocks and pieces of driftwood were also provided on the floor of the cage. The interior and exterior sides and front of the cage were decorated with silk greenery to necessitate a feeling of seclusion. Three perches per flight were provided. One at a high level to provide a good roosting spot, one at the middle level of the flight in front of the nest provided and one lower to the floor of the flight. All three are readily used by the individual pairs.

This is where my experiences begin to differ from those provided by several Australian aviculturists. I have read that Painteds prefer to build nests using chunks of charcoal and small twigs as preferred materials. My Painted Firetails readily accepted a commercial "twig material" closed nest. Nesting materials of choice were coconut fiber, down feathers, and Bermuda grass. Although charcoal was provided it was not used in the nest construction. I have however found that my pairs will line the nest with small pieces of the aspen from the cage floor. The cocks bird have also been seen on many an oc-

casian courting the hen while holding small pieces of aspen in their beak.

The charming aspect of this specie is their early to rise nature. Well, that is depending upon whether the hobbyist is an early riser him/herself... My Painteds are *always* up with the sun. For lack of a better description the song of the cock bird resembles that of a squeaky windshield wiper. I have learned to close the door to the room where they are housed if I am going to attempt to sleep in.

Before I get into my experience with their breeding habits I thought I would provide information on the diet that I provide my Painted Firetails. They are provided a top quality seed mixture which is 50% Sunshine Finch Supreme (natural without vitamins added) and 50% Noah's Kingdom Finch Seed. They are provided spray millet at all times due to their voracious love of the stuff. Beyer's Minerals² with crushed eggshell and a sprinkle of charcoal is also provided at all times. Mealworms are provided 2x daily for breeding pairs, and 1x daily for resting birds.

An eggfood mixture consisting of Proteen 25³ and Bevo Universal Insect Food² is mixed in a large container. Added to this is hard boiled eggs, couscous, sprouted seeds, Soluvet⁴ vitamins from Veta-Farms, a powdered calcium supplement and on occasion a can of corn or peas and carrots. This is fed out daily to breeding pairs and every other day for resting birds. Vegetables consisting of: romaine, zucchini, cucumber, shredded carrots etc. are provided on alternating days. My experience has shown that my Painteds are slow to accept vegetables but with continual offering they will eventually accept and enjoy them.

Being ground dwellers they are wormed quarterly with Avitrol Plus and I have not noticed any adverse reactions to this worming product. Ivermectin or more recently SCATT⁴ is administered quarterly as a cautionary measure. Again, no adverse reactions reported using these products.

I found the Painted Firetail hens slow to begin the egg-laying process. Whether this was directly related to their acclimation or a trait of the species I do not know. However, once the process begins I

have been fortunate enough to have them behave like zebra finches!

The courtship display of a breeding pair is an endearing aspect of the species. The cock bird will hold a piece of something in his mouth (mine prefer small pieces of aspen) and begin singing to her. He will stand on the perch; stretching out his neck moving his head from side to side and commence his song. The hen will watch intently and will quiver her tail if she is so inclined and mating will occur on the perch. My cock birds sing incessantly from sun-up to sundown and this song is heard even more often by young maturing cock birds.

The cock bird will bring material to the nest and the hen spends the majority of the time in the nest "arranging". I have however found cock birds inside the nest making "adjustments" to its interior.

The hen will lay between 3-4 eggs and incubation commences usually after the 2nd or 3rd egg is laid. I have had no problems to date with egg binding in this species. Both cock and hen will share incubation and contrary to what I have read I have found both cock and hen sharing the nest at night. During resting times my Painteds prefer to settle on the floor of the flight or aviary in a corner at lights out. Hatching begins in 13 days after start of incubation. Normally one sometimes two chicks hatch per day.

The chicks are pale skinned and absent of down. Aside from the beak, which in my first experience looked so foreign to me, they resemble a society in terms of the absence of any down on their bodies. The most interesting aspect of the young is their silence. There are no begging sounds emitted from the young during the first two weeks of rearing. For those who intend to foster Painteds this must be taken into consideration. However, my experience has not called for the need to foster out this species so I am unable to offer guidance in terms of acceptable foster parents.

Mealworms are increased to 4 or so each 3x daily when there are young in the nest. Their interest in live food is moderate and not as voracious as one would experience with waxbills. My Painteds readily take to the eggfood mixture listed above and will feed this

mixture combined with the mealworms to the young in the nest. Both cock and hen share in the raising of the clutch. As the chicks mature spray millet is added to the eggfood and live food fed to the young. The young will fledge at 23 days and they are extremely nervous in their new environment and are easily spooked. But do not fear. As the young mature the hobbyist will note the very calm nature of these birds. Next to the Parson finch I have found them most peaceful and trusting of their keeper. And they will reward you with this trust by going about their business with you sitting within inches of them.

It is important to note that Painteds are not strong flyers. Not to say they will not use every inch of a flight that is provided. You will however not find them to fly stealthily from one side of the flight to the other as one would witness in parrot finches. Night frights are not uncommon. Bald tops on the head of juveniles can attest to that! A night light provided where Painteds are housed is most recommended!

I have found the young to be extremely hardy upon fledging and have not noted any tendency for them to "expire" during molt as can be experienced with Gouldian Finches. My experience with the Painted Firetail has afforded me the ability to determine sex of offspring upon fledging. Hens have considerably duller white spots on the chest area, almost crème in color. Both fledglings pictured with their mother turned out to be hens. Cock birds upon fledging although lacking the red coloring on the face, and throat area have considerably brighter white spots on the chest area.

I normally remove the fledglings from the parents right before hatching is to resume with the next clutch. The parents will allow the offspring back into the nest even when they have renewed their breeding and laying process. The young are then moved to a mixed community flight of other juveniles. I have successfully housed

juvenile parsons, gouldians, and red and blue faced parrot finches with painted juveniles without problems.

For those interested in showing the Painted Firetail you could not pick a better candidate. That is in terms of demeanor. They are eas-

ily tamed and make excellent specimens in a show cage. The only challenging aspect to showing them resembles that of showing parrot finches - feather condition. In my opinion the very best time to show Painteds is right after they have finished their adult molt. Their feather condition is unsurpassed during that time period. Occasional pin feathers and lack of "tight" feathering present on adult birds can prove more challenging for those interested in exhibiting them. My experience has also shown, contrary to what I have read is that they are avid bathers. No sooner do I introduce a fresh bowl of water, they are in it. That will greatly improve the feather quality for those interested in exhibiting them.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the challenges of keeping the Painted Firetails. Their personalities, beauty and bright coloring make them too tempting to resist. Their easy-going nature makes them excellent candidates for a mixed community aviary. My experiences with their excellent parenting skills make them all that much more enjoyable to keep. I hope that more aviculturists give them the consideration that is due them. Although, more costly in my opinion they are worth each and every dime spent on them.

For anyone with questions or requiring more information I am always available to share my experiences with you. You can reach me via email at: kerri.mccoy@sympatico.ca

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Food for Thought

by James R. Casey

This summer I had a very bad experience with one of my Female Gouldian finches and wanted to share the experience with all of you. I am new member to NFSS, but have been working with finches for the past 4 years and exotics for the past 2 years. My problem was that my Gouldian hen stopped eating and I found her on the bottom of the Aviary floor. I quickly rescued her and began to dropper feed a mixture of broad-spectrum antibiotics with amino acids. I revived her by that evening and she was sitting on a perch and eating millet. The next day I noticed she had a swollen area around the belly and I took her to the veterinarian. She had a ruptured air sac. He told me she might have fallen and bruised the sac in the fall. He proceeded to tell me about diet.

I wondered what that might have to do with this. First he did a fecal stain which revealed gram negative bacteria present in the feces and the gut. I was surprised to find out that the number one form of gram negative bacteria being introduced into the gut is through seed laced with rat droppings. I know many of you get your seed from reputable seed sources, but even the very best can have rat droppings. We also discussed that a diet like Exact from Kaytee contains all the essentials, which we try to offer to our flock without the hassle. It also has no husk to clean up too. I found that it cost about the same and the conversion was very simple. I even had Kaytee send me a one pound can for free to get me started. They also sent me \$5.00 worth of coupons for free. I am not going to list all the ingredients, but believe it has everything needed and is processed and sterilized to kill any gram negative bacteria. It also contains cultures of gram positive bacteria to keep the gut flora happy.

If you are not using a diet such as Exact I urge you to try it. You will immediately notice an improvement in the feces like a very firm dropping, very white Urates and minimal urine. You will also not have to spend as much time cleaning up the husks and that also reduces the chance of mice and rats at your outdoor flight or aviary. I strongly suggest if you have any questions to have a gram stain at

your veterinarian. Remember, once one bird in the flock has a problem he will pass it to the others as the finches have a bit of a nasty habit of eating anything sticking to the floor of their environment. I still offer in addition to the Exact diet a mixture of 1/3 sand (Hartz), 1/3 Bird Charcoal and 1/3 Sterilized Egg Shell. I also keep some Bevo insect mixture available. It is good because it is sterilized and my Blue Face Parrots love it! I suggest try Carol Heesen at <http://www.birds2grow.com> for the Bevo products.

I wanted to say thank you to all the members of NFSS who have helped me and provided me with excellent stock. Carol Heesen, Rose Ginaferrara and Steve Hoppin to name a few. I have e-mailed or talked on the telephone to almost every member and I am proud to be a part of such a respectable organization. I hope you all take some time to digest what I have said and read the labels on complete diets available. If any of you know of a better product or have any suggestions I would be glad if you e-mailed them to me at caseyj@webworks.net. If you would like to contact Kaytee the e-mail address to use is internet-customer-service@kaytee.com and tell them James Casey suggested you contact them. You can ask for Juli. She is very responsive to e-mails requesting free samples. You can also call 1-800-KAYTEE.

Thank you,
James Casey

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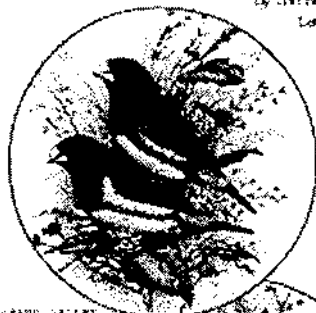
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Bobi Cooke

Editor for the Canary and Finch Society

Wow! What a wonderful time we had at our First Annual Kid's Bird Show. Of course, everyone was a winner.

We had some wonderful entries from our junior bird fanciers. But most of all, the kids learned how to improve the quality of their birds by our knowledgeable show judges who critique with words of encouragement.

We are already looking ahead to next year with great enthusiasm to the NEW Millennium with bigger and better ideas to encourage our next generation of bird fanciers. We hope this idea catches on and other bird organizations will be piqued to follow.

Judges: Finches—Margie McBrayer, Canaries—Debbie Eaton, Hook-bills—Barbara Gray

In our winner's circle:



Amanda Barefield, Katelin Carr, Stacey Carr, Kaili Espari, Kavon Espari, Joe Green, Jennifer Lankford, Linda Lovett, J.T. Lovett

FOR SALE**Books and Magazines**

Tim McCowan
4730 State Circle
Omaha, NE 68152-1957

My wife and I were NFSS members in the late 80s thru mid 90s. We sold all our birds and cages about 3 years ago. In cleaning house, I found 22 books (mainly finch, some general/other) and about 100 magazines (AFA Watchbird, Bird Breeder, Canary and Finch Journal, others) which I would like to sell. Some of these titles are out of print according to amazon.com. Essentially all these items (unless noted otherwise) show minimal wear (they were well cared for) and are in good to excellent condition. The buyer pays shipping/packaging/insurance (I suggest book rate parcel post; it's the cheapest). Email me and I'll send you a current list by email. Thanks.

tmccowan@home.com

I currently have the following items. If I know the listed retail price it is given. Some of these books are out of print, and some of the magazines are no longer published. The buyer will pay shipping/packing (I suggest US parcel post book rate in a bubble wrap mailer). I will combine items to reduce shipping costs. I have listed what I would like to get for each item. Email me with any questions.

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Paperback, 227 pages, \$10.95 list, \$3.00

Clinical and Avian Medicine and Surgery
Harrison and Harrison, Hardback, 717 pages
Veterinary textbook, \$75.00 list, \$10.00

The Proper Care of Finches, Phillip St. Blazey
Hardback, 256 pages, \$7.50

Guide To A Well-Behaved Parrot (Barron's), Mattie Sue Athan
Paperback, 144 pages, \$8.95 list, \$2.00

Cockatiels: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual (Barron's)
Annette Wolter, Paperback, 63 pages, \$5.19 list, \$2.00

Zebra Finches: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual (Barron's)
Hans-Jurgen Martin, > Paperback, 80 pages, > \$3.00

Gouldian Finches: A Complete Pet Owner's Manual (Barron's)
Matthew M. Vriends, Paperback, 79 pages, \$3.00

Cage and Aviary Birds, Richard Mark Martin
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All About The Parrots, Arthur Freud
Hardback, 303 pages, \$17.95 list, \$4.00

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The Complete Cage and Aviary Bird Handbook, David Alderton
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Canaries and Related Birds, Horst Bielfeld
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How To Build Everything You Need For Your Birds

Don Larosa, Paperback (bound photocopies), 55 pages, \$2.00

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Vol. 2, No. 2-4

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Please list other fairs or events hosted by your club for listing in the Bulletin. Please include dates, locations, and a contact member with phone number and/or email address: _____

AWARD ORDER FORM FOR SHOWS/EVENTS

Award order forms for shows and events will be sent to each affiliated club as soon as possible after the affiliation papers are processed by the Liaison Officer, Dianna Rubly. Allow a minimum of eight weeks before the actual show/event to process the order. The form and fee *must* accompany the order.

The prices remain the same, however, we have added a new rosette. Many clubs have indicated a desire to have an official Novice rosette with the NFSS logo. These have been designed and will be available for \$5.00. There are no NFSS rules regarding this award. Each club will set its own standard.

These are the 1999 awards available:

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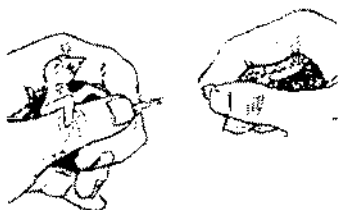
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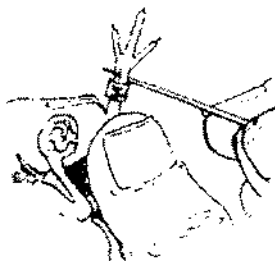
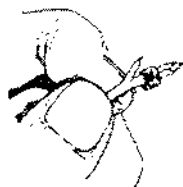
The National Finch and Softbill Society Banding Procedures

The important thing to remember when banding chicks is to do it over a counter or table so if the chick is dropped, it doesn't fall to the floor. The age to band varies between species but is generally between 5 and 10 days. You can tell by looking at the ankle joint (the joint where the toes come together) and the size of the band. Have the bands, a toothpick (or other small blunt instrument) and some lubricant ready. Be sure you have the bands "right side up" for easier reading. The band is generally placed on the bird's right leg. Banding just before the parents go to roost in the evening will help prevent them from picking at the band. By the next morning, they will have forgotten about it.



Hold the chick firmly, but in such a way as to not cut off its' breathing, and so that you don't harm it. Remember their bodies cannot tolerate compression.

Put a little bit of lubricant on the chick's foot and slide the band over the three front toes and finally over the ankle joint.



The back toe will probably have to be gently pried out from under the band with a toothpick.

The band should now be in the proper location between the ankle and the elbow joint.



Check on the chick the next few days to be sure that the band has not slipped off and that there are no scrapes or irritations on the foot or leg.

The National Finch and Softbill Society

Band Order Form

Mail form and payment payable to NFSS:
Eileen Laird
NFSS Band Secretary
P.O. Box 2459
Goldenrod, FL 32733-2459
(407) 657-7989

NFSS offers, to members only, closed traceable aluminum bands, available only in the NFSS color of the year. The bands are engraved with the initials NFS, size code, year and number. There is no choice of numbers. All orders are recorded for permanent reference. Bands are ordered in strings of ten, all the same size. New members may order before receiving their membership number.

Write "New" for membership number on the order form. Orders processed weekly as received. Please, no mail requiring signatures. **\$1.00 handling fee effective 3/1/99.** Please specify **1999 or 2000** year bands.

Band Size	# of Strings	Price per string	Total Amount
A		\$2.75	
B		\$2.75	
C		\$2.75	
D		\$2.75	
E		\$2.75	
G		\$2.75	
J		\$2.75	
K		\$2.75	
L		\$2.75	
M		\$2.75	
R		\$2.75	
S		\$2.75	
T		\$2.75	

Postal Insurance: Under \$50 = \$.85
From \$50 - \$100 = \$1.80 Over \$100 = \$2.75
If you choose NOT to include this sum, NFSS will NOT be responsible for replacement of bands lost in shipment.

Subtotal: _____
Insurance: _____
Handling \$1.00 _____
Total: _____

Name: _____ NFSS # _____
Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____
Zip: _____ Phone: _____
Email: _____

Please indicate 1999 or 2000 bands. (Circle one)

**The National Finch and Softbill Society
Guide to Ordering NFSS Closed Leg Bands**

Bird Species	Size	Bird Species	Size
Aracaris	S	Gouldian Finch	D
Black & White Mannikin	C	Green Singing Finch	C
Black Cheeked Waxbill	B	Green/Purple Starlings	R
Black Crested Finch	E	Grey Singing Finch	C
Blue Capped Waxbill	C	Heck's Shaftail	C
Blue Head Parrot Finch	D	Hornbills (small)	T
Bronze Wing Mannikin	C	Indian Hill Mynah	S
Cherry Finch	C	Java Mynah	S
Chestnut Breast Finch	D	Java Rice Bird	K
Cordon Blue Waxbill	B	Lavender Finch	C
Cuban Melodious Finch	B	Leaf Birds	M
Diamond Dove	L	Magpie Mannikin	G
Diamond Sparrow	E	Mannikins (most smaller)	D
Dove (other small)	L	Mannikins (other larger)	G
European Goldfinch	J	Nuns	E
European Greenfinch	E	Olive Finch	B
Fire Finch	B	Orange Cheeked Waxbill	A
Gold Breasted Waxbill	A	Owl Finch	A
Golden Song Sparrow	E	Pagoda Mynah	M

NFSS welcomes comments and suggestions for this Guide.
Contact the Home Office

Bird Species	Size	Bird Species	Size
Painted Finch	C	Silverbills	C
Parrot Finch (most other)	D	Siskins	E
Pekin Robin	J	Society Finch (Bengalese)	E
Peter's Twinspot	E	Softbills (other small)	J
Pictorella Finch	D	Softbills	L
Pileated Finch	C	Spice Finch	E
Pintailed Nonpareil	D	Star Finch	C
Plush Capped Jay	T	Strawberry Finch	A
Pytilias	C	Sunbirds (large)	M
Quail	L	Superb Starlings	R
Quail Finch	A	Tanagers (small)	G
Red Crested Cardinal	K	Toucanettes	S
Red Eared Waxbill	A	Toucans (small)	T
Red Head Parrot Finch	C	Touracos (small)	T
Ring Neck Dove	S	Twinspots (most)	D
Rufous Backed Mannikin	B	Waxbills (small)	A
Saffron Finch	K	White Tailed Jay	S
Shaftail Finch	C	Yellow Rumped Finch	D
Shama Thrush	K	Zebra Finch	D
Silver Eared Mesias	J	(intentionally left blank)	()

ITEM	SIZE/STYLE	EA.	Q T Y	TD L
New NFSS T-Shirt – Ten Colorful Finches in Stalks of Grass, White Only, 50/50 Blend	Circle Size: M L XL XXL	\$18		
Video: "The Wonderful World of Finches & Softbills: An Introduction	Members/Affiliates Non-Members	\$17 \$22		
NFSS Show Cage Plans	Circle Size: #1 #2 #3	\$4		
All Three Show Cage Plans	Save \$2 by ordering all three	\$10		
Eric Peake Lithograph The Diamond Firetails Signed by the Artist		\$35		
New Video! Finch Husbandry	Add \$3.20 S&H	\$25		

NFSS Plastic Water Bottle		\$6		
NFSS Zebra Pin		\$6		
NFSS Gouldian Pin		\$6		
NFSS Name Badge (Members Only) Comes with one line of engraving. Print name clearly.	Second line of engraving add \$1. For magnetic back, add \$1.50	\$7.50		
Past bulletins, 1994 and later issues		\$4		
Past bulletins, 1993 and earlier issues		\$3		
1998 NFSS Handbook Membership Yearbook		\$4		
NFSS Judges Handbook and Official Standards	NEW AND AT A LOWER PRICE!!!	\$10		

FINCHSHOP
The National Finch and Softbill Society Store
ORDER FORM

NFSS Membership # _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State ____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Shipping & Handling:

Total

Orders \$10 and under add \$2.00,

orders \$10.01 and over add \$3.00 \$ _____

\$ _____

Mail form and payment
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FINCHSHOP

Attn: Ms. Julie Duimstra

4201 NE 125th Place #163

Portland, OR 97230

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**New Judges Handbook
Now Available!**

The new NFSS Judges Handbook is now available. See details on page 61 of this issue.