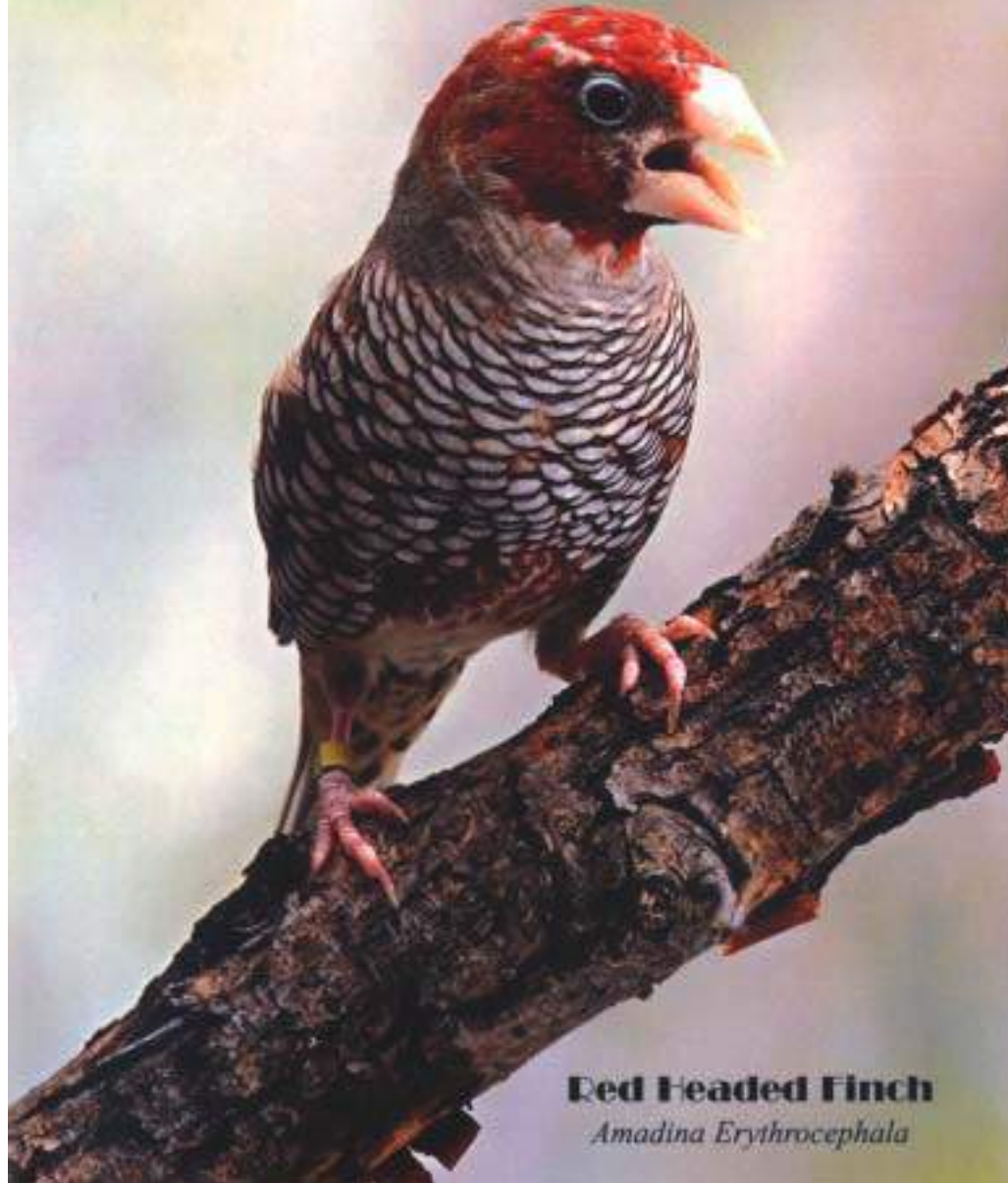


Journal of the

# National Finch & Softbill Society

Volume 21, No. 3

May/June, 2004



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## *Journal of the National Finch and Softbill Society*

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The National Finch and Softbill Society

### 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.

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### On the Cover

This issue's cover is another of Roy Beckham's spectacular photographs - one of his beautiful Red-Headed Finches (*Amadina erythrocephala*). You can learn more about the Red-Headed Finch in Sally Huntington's excellent article on Page 14.

Photo Courtesy ©Roy Beckham

## **NFSS President's Message**

### **May, 2004**



#### **A philosophical note on the philosophy of volunteers...**

NFSS is a multi-purpose organization that tries to meet as many NFSS member needs as possible. Recently, some members reported being 'offended' when their copy of the Journal was late or became lost. As NFSS president, I take responsibility for the overall operations of the society so I am responsible for the 'late Journals'.

I (we) rely on volunteers. The NFSS volunteer staff makes decisions bent on being the 'best that we can be', but at any given instant cope with the reality that: (1) volunteers can only do so much, (2) human nature is not perfect (paid or not), (3) money doesn't grow in seed cups and (4) members are not interested in things they aren't interested in.

With over 800 members, we moved from hand stamping and mailing NFSS Journals simply because we wore out volunteers. 'Professional mailing companies' do no better than our past volunteers did in getting it out on time, even though we do pay them. This sort of bureaucracy, human nature and the 'most efficient use of funds' delays our Journal now and again. We who cope with everything daily roll with these reality punches.

Where I said I take on all responsibility, volunteers take on the hardest part, the W-O-R-K part of keeping it all working as well as possible. Under the smoothness of the NFSS duck in the water, are fifty wildly paddling legs and feet. Things will go amiss. Whenever something 'goes wrong', it was NEVER intentional. It was because something got away from someone, a computer crashed, a machine broke down, someone became ill or was caught in the rain.

Our Journal might come late now and again but it will show up eventually and will be better with age. Without our volunteers there would be no Journal. . . no NFSS at all.

Warmest regards and tongue in cheek,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Sally Huntington'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Sally Huntington, President, National Finch & Softbill Society**



# Happenings: Finch and Softbill Save/Census

by Randy Taylor  
NFSS 3rd Vice President

This time of the year, most aviculturists are experiencing "Spring fever" and I am no exception. I have been spending so much time lately with my birds that this installment of the "FSS Happenings" column is about one of my "spring fever" experiences! My hope is that each and every one of you will have some similar experiences.

I recently obtained seven pairs of the feisty little St. Helena Waxbills. They went through a six week long quarantine period and then on March 20th, I placed five pairs into individual breeding enclosures in my aviary building. The aviary is built so that each inside breeding cage has a larger outside flight which the birds get to by going in and out of a small window that I can open and close as needed.

For the first week, I kept the St. Helenas confined to the inside flight so they could get acclimated to where their feed and water dishes would be and also the difference in their surroundings. The inside cages are approximately 20 inches in height, 24 inches in depth and 46 inches in length. The outside "flights" are 20 inches in height, 24 inches in depth and 72 inches in length. After about a week, on March 27th, I let them have access to these outside flights. This type of set-up sure seems to be very good in providing the birds with a sense of security. When I am feeding, they all just go out into the outside portion and act like they never feel threatened at all. I can hear them continuing with their singing and courting

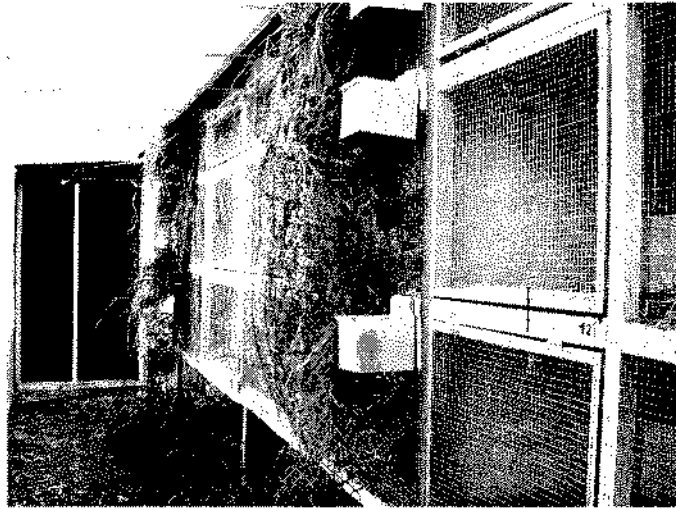
and they don't see me doing my chores.

By April 1st (in just five short days), four of the five pairs had already constructed nests in their outside flights. Three pairs built nests on the floor under dried Texas tumbleweeds (I just grab the ones I want to use as they blow across my property.....lol). The fourth pair built toward the top of their flight *inside* a tumbleweed.

All four nests measure between four and five inches in diameter. Each one has a very short side tunnel type entrance that has dried stems positioned so that the sharp ends would poke anything that tried to get into the nest. One of the nests that I thought was built on the floor isn't actually on the floor. It is expertly suspended from a lower branch of the tumbleweed and doesn't even touch the floor.

All four pairs used the same types of nesting materials. Three pairs used coarse dried alfalfa stems for a thick one to two inch base and all four pairs wove some of these stems into the outside wall portion of the nests. The major building block of all the nests was coconut fibers that were woven in and out - making a compact ball that reminds me of a ball of string. Dried bermuda grass stems were also utilized in the bottoms and sides and then the softer leafy parts were used as a lining in the interior of the nests. Interestingly, the alfalfa and bermuda were woven in at different angles from the coconut fiber. These different colored

and types of materials used on the outside of the nests made it very difficult to see them. I didn't even notice them until the birds were already pretty much finished building! It would have been very easy for me to have missed them totally.



**A View of Some of Randy's Outside Flights**

*Photo Courtesy ©Randy Taylor*

A couple of days after I found the nests, I gave each pair

a half dozen or so large white feathers. They didn't seem too interested in the feathers for the first couple of days, but eventually, all of the pairs used the feathers to further camouflage the nest entrances. They positioned the feathers so that the pointed shaft ends point away from the entrance hole.

Once the main nests were completed, three pairs additionally built "cock's nests" adjoining the real nests. Two pairs built the "cock's nest" on top of the original one and the third pair built two "cock's nests" - one on each side. Only the bermuda grass and a few feathers were used in the construction of the "cock's nests" even though they had access to more coconut fiber. The entrances of the "cock's nests" are much larger than the ones the main nests have. The fourth pair totally dismantled their completed nest and have started all over in the same location. The fifth pair still shows no interest in breeding.

Since they have had access to their outside flights on March 27th, afternoon temperatures have been averaging about 70 degrees with the range between the

upper 50's and lower 80's. The early morning temperature has dropped as low as the upper 30's but averages in the low to mid 40's. The inside cages are maintained at a temperature of 70 degrees. So far, all the birds are spending the night inside the building but they spend most of the day in the outside portion coming and going as needed to eat, drink and warm up on those cool days.

I don't raise "hothouse" birds and also don't believe in a "sterile" environment for them. Inside cages are cleaned once a month - whether they need it or not - and the outside cages are cleaned once a year. Of course there is only one pair to a flight that encompasses approximately 20 square feet of space (40 cubic feet) so this dramatically cuts down on the mess. The fewer disturbances that the birds experience will help to improve their sense of security.

I use a combination of alfalfa hay and bermuda grass as a substrate on the cage bottoms. The dried leafy parts of the alfalfa are eagerly eaten by them and they spend a lot of time "beaking" and searching through these grasses for



"goodies". All birds are provided with fresh water with vitamins and minerals added daily. Three times a week they get Calciboost in the water and once a week a probiotic is added. Free choice, they get a good quality finch mix which is offered from pint canning jars with the "planit" bases. Fresh soaked/sprouted seed is given daily. Each outside flight has a wire covered container (~one square foot) that holds growing spray millet as greens. They get 20-30 mealworms daily and I have active fruit fly cultures scattered around inside the building


and the outside "walkaround". I disturb the fly cultures every time I enter the aviary and this gives the birds something to chase. There are also all types of natural insects that abound in the "walkaround" like aphids, green-flies, spiders, ants and crickets.

I can't wait to see what results, if any, come from all this activity! I still get this excitement every time and hope you do too! Best wishes to everyone for a great new season!

*Randy Taylor*

**Randy Taylor, NFSS 3rd Vice President,  
Finch and Softbill Save Program (FSS) and Census Manager**

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# Propagating, Domesticating and Breeding Finches

by Michael Marcotrigiano,  
NFSS Science Editor

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There is much talk on the internet about raising finches. Some of it has to do with the techniques that can be used to get difficult species to raise their young. These animal husbandry conversations are key to the survival of captive breeding populations in many species that are rare in aviculture. Some internet chat has to do with choosing the best crosses to make specific color combinations. Less of the talk has to do with breeding methodologies for improving the conformation, color depth, body size, feather quality, and head shape of existing lines. In some conversations, the quality of American and European lines is compared and it is this point that motivates me to write this article.

In the past few issues I, as Science Editor, have limited my discussions to reviews of articles written by scientists who publish in peer-reviewed science journals. In this article, I stray into the field of personal observations and try to clarify important issues for American bird owners. While I am trained as a plant breeder and developmental biologist, most of the methods and definitions apply to animals as well. There is some opinion in the following, but most of it is based on observation and conversations with breeders here and abroad. I'll begin with some definitions.

"Propagating" is simply making more of something. For example, taking cuttings of a houseplant and rooting them to make more individuals is propagating. In birds, propagation could be putting ten Zebra finches in a flight cage and letting Mother Nature take its course, generation after generation, without selecting for any particular trait. For Zebra finches this is easy; for many other species it is not. Why? Zebra finches are "more domesticated", either because they are inherently tolerant to captive conditions, or because they have been in captivity for so many generations that natural (or better yet unnatural) selection has favored those individuals that tolerate and breed freely in captivity. If birds won't make babies in captivity, that tendency is soon weeded out of a population - assuming that the reluctance to breed in captivity is genetically controlled and the cause of failure. Once a wild species is easily bred in captivity, it can be considered domesticated.

"Domestication" is defined by dictionaries as "adapting an animal or plant to life in intimate association with and to the advantage of humans" and is necessarily linked to good animal husbandry.

"Breeding" has more than one acceptable definition. One is "the sexual activity of conceiving and bearing off-

spring". To me, this is a just different way of saying "propagating". Interestingly, if you look up the definition of propagating you get "to cause to continue or increase by sexual or asexual reproduction", a definition strikingly similar to the first simplistic definition of breeding. Breeding also means, "the production of animals or plants by inbreeding or hybridization". Please note that it does not say "interspecific hybridization". Any cross between different lines in the same species is a form of hybridization. Within serious breeding circles, what breeding is - that propagation is not - is "the willful selection of parents and the use of genetic principles to reach a desired goal".

In my opinion, there is not enough finch breeding going on in the U.S. There is much interest here in the products of European breeding efforts. I will talk in this paper about conditions in Europe that favor serious breeding and attempt to illustrate how these differ from conditions found here.

Europeans, because of their longer history of owning captive animals, have developed many more domestically bred forms than Americans. One look at the dog or the canary clearly proves this, with many breeds of each emanating from Europe. Why? One reason is that it takes time to develop new strains or breeds and the USA is a relatively young country. But another is cultural. While American maize breeders may rule in the world of field crop improvement, for most captive "pet" species there are few Americans dedicated enough to advance their lines to the next level, not to mention create new ones from scratch. Yet, we see many American finch lovers looking to buy "English Zebras" or "Euro Societies" because they like their appearance better than American birds. They are often larger, "softer", possess better body lines, deeper colors, larger eyes, rounder heads, etc. In many cases the ignorance of breeding principles displayed by American finch owners leads to the degradation of years of European breed-

ing accomplishments, instead of the gradual improvement - or at least maintenance - of already fabulous lines. The good European breeders understand that most of the conformation improvements come from "congregating" into one population the many genes needed to improve traits that are quantitatively rather than qualitatively inherited. I have watched some Americans chat about things like size, feather quality, head shape, etc. in the context of single gene inheritance. This simplistic approach to genetics underscores the difficulty that such bird owners will have trying to improve most traits in their birds.

How is a good breeder recognized? In Europe, some of the luck of winning first place at a show is removed by rules that do not exist in the USA. For example, in the UK, Society (i.e. Bengalese) finches must be shown as matched pairs in one show cage where they are both judged for uniform superiority. It would be difficult to win with "beginner's luck" if you had to place two birds of excellent quality in one show cage. So, in order to continue winning it is necessary to learn how to produce many good birds. As Bob Rittman and Jim Warburton explained to me, in the Netherlands and most of Europe only current year birds are shown so that winning over and over again each year with the same bird is impossible. This drives the breeder to produce as good or better birds each year.

I am not proposing that the NFSS copy European style show rules to force Americans to become better breeders. Many American bird owners are happy just propagating birds and showing the best ones they come up with by random chance or minimal selection. That is their choice. But we should stop goggling over European birds if we do not have the willingness or patience to learn the good breeding practices (and I mean breeding, not propagating or husbandry) that lead to line improvement.

The stiff level of competition, the large number of events, and the proximi-

ty of the countries, all contribute to good breeding in Europe. According to Jim Warburton in England, he can acquire top quality birds anywhere in his country in only 24 hours. There are shows year round and travel and importation from adjacent countries is much easier than in the USA. Our large country can make it difficult to obtain the desired lines needed to improve an existing line. If a breeder does not ship, the distances one must travel can be discouraging. Shows are often so far apart they require the difficult mode of air travel.

Another difference in Europe is the higher percentage of breeders that like showing show-quality lines that took years to develop. For many species, there are lines that are "named" after the breeders and people brag about having, e.g., fawn Zebra finches derived from the "Harrison line". This is rarely true in the US, and when it exists, it is more likely a phrase heard in guppy circles where lines exist that have their origins with early European emigrants to the US. In my bird room, I have Society finches from Bob Rittman's importation of the great birds of Fred Panjer in Holland. Fred won Best in Show in the European World competition more than once for his Society finches. In Europe, Fred Panjer's lines are well-known and highly sought after. In contrast, I won Best in Show at the US Nationals (all finches) with a descendant of Fred's line last year. Yet, even with that win, I had no inquiries about the origin of my line and few requests for it. Perhaps Americans are fixated on obtaining a better *individual* bird, not a better *line* of birds, when they attain new stock.

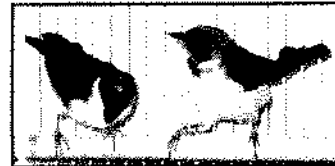
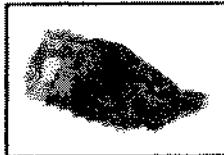
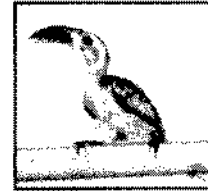
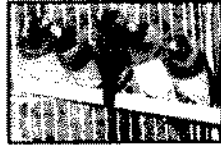
Europeans seem fascinated with going beyond simple domestication to actually breeding for changes in appearance of the species - in addition to finding

as many color mutations as possible. The English Budgie and Border Canary come to mind. In the US, I have heard arguments against mutation breeding, line breeding, or even domestication, because doing so will ruin the birds forever - making them unable to be released into the wild if they are needed to boost a sagging population. Yet, releasing captive raised species in the wild is a tricky and specialized science that historically is not achieved by government cooperation with pet owners. The more relevant reason to save rare or unusual finch species in captivity is that the importation and capture of most rare species is either difficult or non-existent. When a species disappears in captivity it may never return to captivity. So why not develop superior show lines of these birds too?

I will conclude by saying that I hope more American aviculturists take the time to learn the necessary breeding methodology and principles of inheritance to take a line of birds and bring it to the next level. Without such knowledge we will continue to see breeders resorting to strict inbreeding in an attempt to maintain type, or losing type altogether by "trying this" and "trying that". Admittedly, there is luck in all breeding programs, but with strong knowledge of breeding principles, skill wins over luck and the good breeder wins more shows than the lucky breeder. In the end, a great breeder has a sense of pride in the accomplishments made and the patience it took to make them.

In the next issue of the Journal I will define some breeding terms and make recommendations for readings that can help a novice breeder gain more knowledge about breeding methodology. The end result could be a few less years to reach "Best in Show".

*NFSS member and Journal Science Editor, Michael Marcotrigiano (www.exoticfinches.com) breeds and exhibits show-quality Society finches and a limited number of Zebra finches. He is a faculty member in Biological Sciences and the Botanic Garden Director at Smith College in Massachusetts.*



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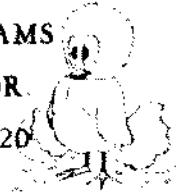
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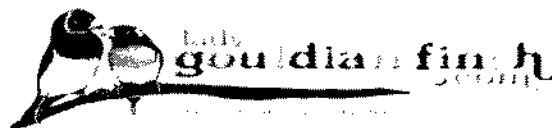
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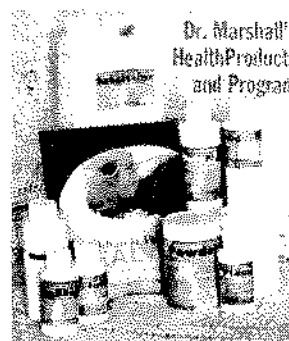
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# “A Finch Has a Word For It.”

## The Red Headed Finch

*(Amadina erythrocephala)*

a.k.a. Aberdeen Finch, Paradise Sparrow, Red Headed Weaver, Red Headed Amadina

by Sally Huntington

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*As presented at the Fourth Exotic Bird Breeders Symposium, 2003, California*

### **What is in a Name?**

The Red Headed finch (*Amadina erythrocephala*) claims two sub-species - *dissita* and *erythrocephala* - which, though referred to in articles, are scarce, and hard to find photos of or information on. Paraphrasing Matthew and Tanya Vriends (9), the *Amadina* is a large sub-family of the dull colored estrildidae - dull because of the dry country they inhabit (African and Indian Silverbills are other examples).

Birds in this group are also referred to as weaver finches because they seem to share a common origin with the “true” weavers, who weave complex nests. While the Cut-throat and Red Headed finch may be close in appearance to these weavers, both, however, have a poorly developed nest building drive compared to the “true” weavers. In the wild, the Red Headed finch (and others) use old weaver nests: re-lined and altered some to make the entrances smaller.

### **An Aviculturist's Dream (or maybe, Nightmare?)**

*Amadina*, only two in the class under Estrildid, have been regarded as a distant offspring of the Mannikins - of which Red Headed finches resemble - all because they share the large Mannikin bill. But, *Amadina* chicks more closely resemble the *Pytilia*, because the lower half of the *Amadina* mouth is black in color; they have a similar amount of down; and the voice and behavior of the *Pytilia*. We can wonder why the *Amadina* do not twist their necks in usual Estrildid begging fashion. (3.8.9)

Native to Southern Africa, where temperatures range from 50-90 degrees Fahrenheit, this hardy little red headed nomad of a bird can be found in open country - making its way around farm buildings and suburban dwellings, feeding on seeds and small insects. Lucky residents and visitors to South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and



southern Angola are used to seeing these birds daily.

#### **Well, How big is it?**

A large finch, as finches go, the Red-Headed weighs in between 22-27 grams (one ounce or about the weight of a hard-boiled chicken egg sliced in half) and is about 13 cm (five inches) from tip to tip.

#### **Girls and Boys?**

Dimorphic finches, the bodies of males and females are nearly identical in color - being grayish brown with delicate dark brown and white sculpting on the breasts of both sexes. The white sculpting is in small half-moon shapes.

The male, beginning while still in the nest, boasts red feathers on its head (hence, the species name). This "red" varies in color density from dark, blood-red to a clear scarlet. Developing colored feathers early, then, you can tell males from females because of the red male's head. The females are lighter and duller in color and (in few cases) may have a *very slight* red tinge to their heads. To support the Friends comments above, I have found the Red Headed finch does have the similar, albeit larger, body type of the mannikins and munias, including the beak, but lacks the overall agility of the mannikins.

#### **Caution: Relatives**

The Red Headed finch is a larger cousin to the Cut-Throat finch (*Amadina fasciata*) and they should not be housed together as they will cross breed.

#### **Would you invite them to your party?**

The Red Headed finch is a relatively non-aggressive bird, and can be housed in mixed collections in larger (mine are 7' x 4' x 7') planted flights. However, they are curious, and I have seen them take over the nests of other birds, until I realized what they wanted. Since providing them with larger box nests, mounted five feet or higher above

the ground, they no longer bother the smaller (waxbill-wicker) type nests that are mounted lower in the flight.

#### **Housing Overall**

I have housed the Red Heads in colonies and in pairs in outdoor flights in San Diego (40 - 95 degrees Fahrenheit). While the flights are not heated, we do clip in plastic windbreakers from October to April on the windward side of the aviaries. The well-planted flights (three to four five-gallon plants, some hanging ferns, etc.) have one to two inches of (easily changed) sand spread on top of cement pavers. I use "Sweet PDZ" brand of horse stall refresher, mixed with the sand for odor control.

No more than 20 finches are housed in any flight at any one time. I have housed Red Heads with colonies of Tri-Colored Munias or Masked Grass finches, and with numerous other pairs such as Orange-Cheeked Waxbills, Lavender Finches, Owl Finches, Scaly-Crowned Weavers, Red-Cheeked Cordon Bleus, Red-Faced Crimson Finches, Red-Eared (Black-Rumped) Waxbills, Yellow Legged Honeycreepers, Zebra Finches, Chestnut Breasted Mannikins, Bourkes, Mousebirds, Pekin Robins, and the White-Eared Bulbul. They get along well.

#### **Food Overall**

Red Headed finches pretty much eat what all finches eat. I use a portable metal gravity-fed hopper filled with *Higgins Nederlands Vita Finch Seed Mix* - added to as required. ...Cuttlebone aplenty. A Lixit brand quart bottle for drinking water, placed three feet high on the side of the flight - water added as needed. In addition, a backup source of water (changed daily) is kept in a plant saucer on the flight bottom - which most use for bathing *and* drinking.

Daily, I remove and replace two food cups for each of eleven flights. One cup is for egg food and the other for soaked food. The egg food is smushed hard-boiled eggs (including crushed shell)

mixed with Vionate brand vitamins (1 teaspoon per egg) - about two tablespoons per flight. I feed a few (20-30) mealworms in the smushed egg cup and let the birds sort out who gets them. For *most* finches, these few mealworms and this balanced diet seems to be enough to encourage breeding. While I keep the diet consistent, most parents "rest" on their own - usually after fledging three to five clutches.

In a second cup, I feed one Zupreem primate biscuit and approximately one tablespoon of *Zupreem Cockatiel Fruit Blend Breeder Pellets* soaked in Gatorade. (Note: for one cup of Zupreem, one and a half cups of Gatorade are absorbed in an hour or so to a consistency the birds favor - i.e. can be easily squished in their bills.) I usually soak the mixture overnight in the refrigerator. It maintains the same relative consistency. I add to the Gatorade mix one tablespoon of Quiko multiple vitamin and one tablespoon Quiko mineral powder per quart of Gatorade. In the winter (40-60 degrees Fahrenheit on average), I also give generous spray millet weekly for added "fat". I will add more mealworms and/or soaked food as required if/when they are feeding a lot of chicks. Red Heads begin feeding the soaked food to chicks rather quickly.

#### Lessons learned...

My first Red Heads were purchased in mid-1997 for \$75.00 for the pair. They laid a few clutches through the first year of three to six relatively large (3/4 inches long) white eggs. None of the babies lived, but this is not unusual for a new breeding pair. The hen died of egg-binding in mid-1998. (Note: These hens seem susceptible to calcium deficiency resulting in egg-binding. A calcium supplement - Quiko mineral powder - has eliminated the problem.) It took six months to locate another hen. By November, 1999, they produced a clutch of three. By day five, only one baby was alive and the nest was extremely foul-

smelling. I removed and hand-raised the single chick.

#### Raising babies, again?

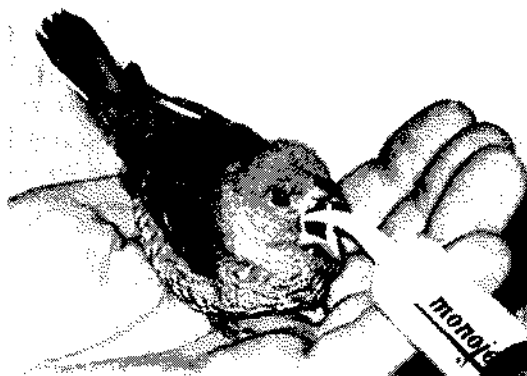
Using Hagen hand-feeding formula by their directions, via eyedropper, much like when raising a Zebra finch. I kept it warm in a small Kleenex-tissue-filled ceramic bowl, on a plug-in reptile hot-rock. (Note: I change the Kleenex when I feed, which is every hour throughout the day and into the evening, but have learned it is not necessary to feed at night. I stop feeding around 10:00 p.m. and resume at 8:00 a.m. or so. This has worked with numerous types of finches and softbills over the years.) See chart below on weight in grams vs. time passage.

#### Chart for "Turkey" NFSS 99 G-19

| <u>DATE</u> | <u>Weight in Grams</u>            |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 11/22/99    | 9.3 (Est. 5 days old)             |
| 11/23/99    | 11.0                              |
| 11/24/99    | 12.5                              |
| 11/25/99    | 14.5                              |
| 11/26/99    | 16.2                              |
| 11/27/99    | 19.0                              |
| 11/28/99    | 22.3                              |
| 11/29/99    | 23.2                              |
| 11/30/99    | 23.0                              |
| 12/01/99    | 23.7                              |
| 12/02/99    | 24.6                              |
| 12/03/99    | 23.8                              |
| 12/04/99    | 24.3                              |
| 12/05/99    | 24.1                              |
| 12/06/99    | 24.6                              |
| 12/07/99    | 24.5                              |
| 12/08/99    | 24.1 (Fledging)                   |
| 12/22/99    | 23.4                              |
| 01/09/00    | 20.6 (Flying - Eating on his own) |
| 04/20/00    | 21.7                              |

#### A Different Kind of Finch

The Red Headed finch babies are very dark skinned, near charcoal-gray, and are covered with a light gray down. They are assertive beggars with a very loud (70 - 75 db) begging cry, opening



**Young Red Headed Finch being Hand-fed**

*Photo Courtesy of Roy Beckham*

their mouths *very* wide, more like some softbills, than like other finches. Ben Cooper (8), noted aviculturist and hand and foster breeder, said he was unable to foster Red Heads. He believed that to the foster parents, the large gaping-begging mouths were too much like a small snake as it strikes.

**Thanksgiving Names a Bird**

Because I brought this chick in around Thanksgiving, 1999, I off-handedly named him "Turkey". He is now over three years old and has provided much insight on the behaviors of Red Headed finches. For instance, I set him up to breed at 1 1/2 years. This hand-raised male and domestic (but not hand-raised) hen quickly produced two clutches of eggs. Turkey exhibited immature behavior. He would stay in the nest, but instead of incubating the eggs in a productive or responsible fashion, he would exhibit his mating display over and over. During these months, Turkey remained a "pet" bird, assertively finger and shoulder sitting, coming to me when I entered his flight, taking food from my hands, at times exhibiting mating behavior on my hand, overall, staying so imprinted at first, I thought his ability to produce offspring in a responsible way had been hampered by being hand-raised.

**...But NOOOOO!**

By Spring of 2002, Turkey and his hen produced a three-egg clutch that they parented exceptionally well. Then, a four-egg clutch, successfully, and then a six-egg clutch. Red Headed eggs incubate for 12-14 days. Chicks fledge beginning on the 20th day. After this pair successfully fledged their fourth clutch, I removed them from the community flight to a smaller flight, without a nesting setup, to give them a rest. Once in the smaller flight, without a lot of exercise and young to raise,

Turkey became overweight, developing a lipoma (a benign tumor of chiefly fat cells) about the size of a quarter. The lipoma diminished when he was returned to the activity of a community flight.

**Stinky-poo Nests**

I learned that there is a foul smell in the Red Headed finch nest box when chicks are about ten days old. At first, I thought this to be because of hidden dead chicks. However, over time, I noticed and have agreement from others (4,5,8,9), Red Headed finch nests "stink". Unlike some of the neat and tidy waxbills, the Red Heads flunk basic nest cleanliness. They poop in their nests and on one-another. They do not appear to remove any fecal matter, nor seem to care. Baby "burp" remains where it falls. While the nest smells worse than any other I have experienced, the rate of survival, health of chicks, attitude of parenting, etc., compare with or exceed other finches (and softbills). My practice has become to inspect the nest on the eighth day and usually close-band by the tenth day, when I usually decide - putting my cleanliness standards on their messy nests - the nest must be cleaned. For about half of parents, (until they seem used to me being around) any nest checking or this nest cleaning behavior of mine causes them to refuse to continue

raising their young. I've learned to not check the stinky nests of first or second-time parents, unless I am ready to hand-raise, should the babies be ingored. My hypothesis, yet to be proven, is that the smell and the unkempt appearance may well be a primordial leftover design to keep away certain dry country predators - especially snakes - which smell and sense heat - and rodents, which are easily confused by chaos or clutter.

#### **The Turkey Who Came for Dinner**

Turkey became an excellent father. He became assertive, but not aggressive. He was always actively involved when sitting eggs or feeding the chicks. Red Heads take turns sitting eggs and feeding chicks although Turkey seems to dominate both of those departments - being a true "stay-at-home Dad". Though he continued to have "pet behavior" toward me on a daily basis, he'd hiss and "bite the hand that feeds him" when I ventured to inspect his nest while he was in it, as though determined to keep me away. Other, non-pet Red Heads were always quick to fly away from the nest when I checked. Overall, Turkey, the hand-raised "pet" has remained a socialized pet, and has *also* developed into a socialized breeding bird among his species.

#### **A Talking What?!!!**

Turkey also taught himself to say his name. (He was exhibited at the AFA convention in Los Angeles where numerous AFA members witnessed this attention-getting behavior, "Turkey, Turkey do" and "Turkey, Turkey, Turk"). His announcing his name is usually (but not always) accompanied by mating behavior. This fact, and the fact a young Tri-Colored Munia, who lived with Turkey during Turkey's "resting" days, also learned to say "Turkey-Turkey-turk-turk", incorporating it into his mating song. This observation keeps the door opened for more study on just what is the window of language acquisition for birds and what does each sound mean to them - and WHY

would they mimic another species? And - do they even realize it is not a song or chirp, but is actually a human "word"?

#### **A White-Eared Bulbul Chimes In (11)**

While some studies have been done (10) on sound and song nature/nurture arguments, there is more *unknown* than *known*. Turkey's behavior coupled with the Munia and the *recent* (November, 2002) language offering by a similarly raised White-Eared Bulbul (Ali Bulbul), is exciting. Ali has had two "language patterns" since he was a few weeks old:

- a) He learned to offer - "What-what"
- b) He would repeat back my whistle-sounds in exchanges of whistles as I moved about the house.

On learning patterns: When birds that are being hand fed begin to fledge, it is not unusual to have one or two of them fly out and go hither-thither across the room. Ali's cage is nearby, and the flittering young birds would get his full attention. Because he seemed so excited, I went about asking, "Where'd they go - Where'd they go?" After only a week or two, Ali clearly joined me in wanting to know, "Where'd they go - Where'd they go?". The point being - while it was clear Ali and Turkey had a phrase since early on, Ali has shown us you "can teach an old bird new tricks". What does this mean?

What "turkey" means to Turkey, we'll likely never know. However, once he was babysat for three weeks by my youngest son, an avid bird person, Turkey did not speak for him beyond an occasional, rather typical, Red Headed "chirp". Upon return, however, he flew straight to my shoulder - ran rapidly about - crying out "Turkey-Turkey-Turkey". Was it because I used the word "turkey" when he was begin fed as a chick? Was this only one of his many kinds of connections to me, the imprinted mother? Is "speaking" to me in "turkey talk" the same as the audible chirps and beeps he uses to other finches?

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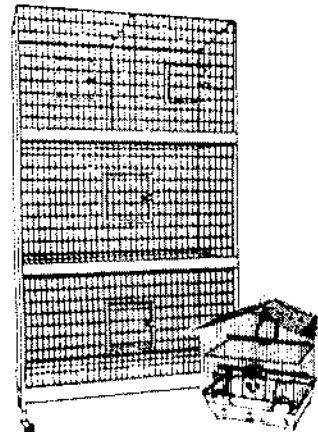
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# Raising the Peters' Twinspot

(*Hypargos niveoguttatus*)

By Harry Bryant

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Peter's Twinspot Pair (Female on left, Male on right)  
Male in "alarm" posture with raised tail.

Photo Courtesy © Harry Bryant

The Peters' Twinspots (*Hypargos niveoguttatus*) are one of the first birds that people seem to notice in my birdroom, commenting on their bright red plumage and active behavior. Their crimson red and black colors with the bright white spots make this a very distinctive bird. My personal experience with them over the last several years is that they are hardy, easy to keep and not especially hard to breed.

#### OTHER NAMES

Peters' Ruddy Waxbill; Peters' Spotted Firefinch; Red-throated Twin-

spot. Five subspecies are recognized and are more geographical than in plumage differences.

#### HABITAT

Eastern central Africa including Eastern Zaire, Angola, Kenya and Mozambique. They inhabit lowland bush, grasslands and acacia scrub, sometimes in cultivated areas, often near water.

#### DESCRIPTION

They measure 4 3/4 to 5 inches (120 to 125 mm) in length, and are a sexually dimorphic species. The male has a bright



red face to breast and rich brown upperparts, while the female has duller brown upperparts, pale face and chin but rich rusty or orange on breast. Both sexes have the characteristic spotted underparts of all twinspots (twinspots take their name from the 'paired' white spots, one on either side of the feather shaft).

#### VOICE

The standard close contact call is a soft and very variable 'tseet' or 'tsee-et'. The distant contact call is similar but louder, longer-drawn out and more emphatic. A rapid-tempo trill, very similar to the trilling call of the Purple Grenadier, seems also to be used as distant contact call. The alarm call is a harsh 'tschee'. The nest call begins with the close con-



**Male Peter's Twinspot**  
Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant

tact call and then follows a quick series of notes that could be described as 'beet-beetbeetbeet', repeatedly interrupted by contact calls. The song begins with a trill, which is followed by a series of both pure and gurgling whistled or fluting notes. (2)

**Adult male:** Forehead to crown deep grey to lead grey (faintly tinged with olive in fresh plumage), becoming warm brown or light reddish-brown on lower nape, mantle, back, scapulars and upper rump;

lower rump, uppertail coverts and center of base of tail deep or rich crimson, rest of tail and outers black or blackish-brown. All wing coverts, tertials and edges to flight feathers warm brown or light reddish-brown as scapulars; flight feathers otherwise dull brown. Lores, over eye, sides of neck to upper breast rich red or bright crimson. Belly and flanks black, heavily spotted with large circular spots, most heavily on flanks and sides of belly; vent and under-coverts black, unspotted.



**Female Peter's Twinspot**  
Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant

Bill is black, blue-black or tinged purplish, pale blue-grey at base. Eye brown or reddish-brown, with white or pale blue eyering. Legs and feet grey or grey-brown. In worn plumage, grey on head and red on breast much paler.

**Adult female:** A pale and more washed out version of the male, with grey or pale grey-brown upperparts (yellowish or pale brown on some); rump and uppertail-coverts to base of tail duller or deeper red. Face is pale yellowish-buff from lores over eye to ear-coverts, occasionally tinged with grey on lores and ear-coverts. Chin to lower throat and sides of neck the same, but often suffused with grey on lores and ear-coverts. Chin to lower throat and sides of neck the same, but often suffused with pink or orange; lower throat and breast reddish or rusty orange-brown. Belly and flanks dark grey-black, heavily spotted with white (each spot emarginated with black),



**Juvenile Male Peter's Twinspot**

*Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant*

spots heaviest or largest on flanks and sides of belly; undertail-coverts dark-grey or black. Bill dark grey-black or bluish-black, with paler blue-grey at base. Eye-ring same as male but thinner.

Juvenile: The fledgling Peter's Twinspot is very much similar to female, but browner on the top of head, with face buff and throat, sides of neck and breast russet-brown; belly to undertail-coverts black or greyish-black with some pale tips to feathers. (1) Male fledglings seem to show more red on the head and chest.

#### **COURTSHIP DISPLAY**

The cock performs a "stem display" on the ground, where the cock "dances" around the hen. As described by Goodwin in *Estrildid finches of the World* (2):

"The courtship display has been described in detail by Harrison & Dormer (4). The male with a feather or other nest material in his bill, and spread and partly angled tail, uttering a faint song sequence. He performs a bobbing movement, the head being alternately pointed upward at an angle of about 70 degrees and bowed to about 30 degrees every

second during the display. He starts with his head in the elevated position and body low to the ground. He next bows, then throws it up and at the same time hops about half an inch off the ground. His head is then slowly lowered to the slightly bowed position and the sequence repeated. He does not hop until his head is in the lowest position, so that he can throw it up again simultaneously with the next hop. The hen may remain quiescent or, occasionally, perform slow hops, without nesting material in the bill. If the female responds by soliciting with quivering tail, copulation occurs."

Harrison & Dormer (4) state that "in the wild this species indulges in a form of communal display. Toward evening, a number of pairs congregate in a patch of thick undergrowth. Here the males hop around, keeping several yards apart, and display, as if to each other, uttering a sharp 'chip' followed by a long musical trill on a descending scale. The females simply sit and watch."

#### **FOOD AND FEEDING HABITS IN THE WILD**

Feeds mainly on the ground, usually in pairs, but sometimes in family groups, in open areas, on paths or the sides of the road, on grass seeds and small insects.

#### **FOOD AND FEEDING HABITS IN CAPTIVITY**

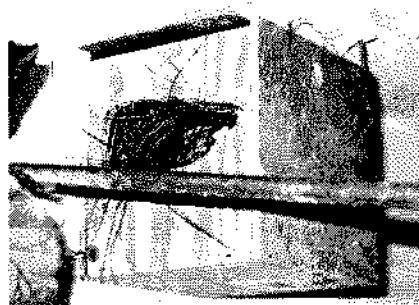
My birds always have access to a bowl of standard finch mix, a dish of Birdcare's "Feast Insectivore" and a bowl of clean water. Every day they are given a portion (about a teaspoon for each pair) of soaked (sprouted) seed or egg food (my eggfood consists of crumbled hard boiled eggs - with the shell, plus 2 tablespoons of RichLife Vionate Vitamin mix, and 1 tablespoon of Japanese millet). I also add a calcium supplement (Calcivet) to the drinking water once a week, and give them a slice of apple, which they

greatly enjoy.

Spray millet is provided two or three times a week, and they also receive mealworms and/or wax worms twice a week, unless they are feeding babies, when they receive unlimited mealworms and/or wax worms daily. (They also relish small crickets and grasshoppers, which are offered when available.)

**AVIARY NOTES**

Peters' are tropical birds, and are reported as not handling low temperatures well. Living in northern Ohio, my

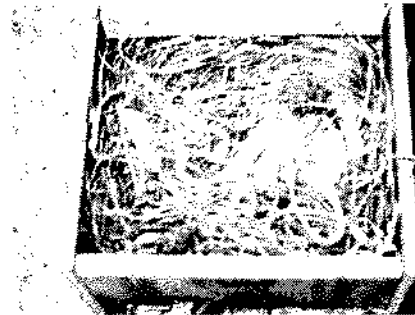


**Nest Box**

*Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant*

birds are kept indoors, in a basement bird room. My Peters' seem to breed best in large box cages. These cages measure 2' x 2' x 5' (or 6') long. The cages have a 4' shoplight on top and are lighted fourteen hours a day. Temperatures in the bird room range from 68° F at night to 78° F during the day. Two or three standard wood nest boxes are provided, and they will often build nests in several boxes before deciding to use one. The same nest site is usually used multiple times, though they seem to "freshen" up the nest with a little additional nesting material.

In the wild, nests are usually found low in a bush, sometimes on the ground. My birds have



**View of Nest with Top Removed  
Showing Material built overhead.**

*Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant*

used all types and sizes of wooden finch nest boxes, and both sexes build a large, thick woven nest from long grasses, plant wool, feathers, shredded paper, and almost anything else they can stuff into a nest box! The nest has a small entrance hole, sometimes with a short entrance tunnel.

I provide soft grasses for nesting materials; I try to find an abandoned house in the country where the lawn grass has become overgrown. Tall grasses can also be found along roads or in parks. The most important thing is that the grass is "fine", and not "coarse".

They are usually good parents (if you do not disturb them), and a typical clutch will consist of three to five white



**Peter's Twinspot Eggs**

*Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant*

eggs (approximately 12mm x 16mm), with incubation being 12 to 13 days. Both sexes share in the incubation, and usually the female remains on the nest at night. The chicks are flesh-colored when hatched but darken to dark-grey or black with a few greyish tufts of down in their first day of life. (2) The gape is bright yellow. They will leave the nest about two weeks later, and the parents will continue to feed them for another two weeks. At this stage their plumage is dark brown with a slight red wash on the back and wings. The throat is light brown and the yellowish nodules at the corners of the gape are retained for a few days. The males usually have a brighter breast and are a little more reddish in color.

They will breed all year round, however, by removing all of the nest boxes from the cage. I limit each pair to only three broods a year.

#### SPECIAL NOTES

Once they come into breeding condition, Peters' have been reported by some (5) to become aggressive towards each other and/or any other species, even if they are larger. I have kept a number of juveniles together with no problems in a large flight cage, however they were separated before they had begun to pair off.

My twinspots do not tolerate nest inspections, and will throw out the babies if bothered. Therefore, I don't even try to check inside their boxes. I usually know they have laid eggs when the female disappears and doesn't show up when I feed eggfood or soaked seed in the morning. When both parents give alarm calls, trilling calls, and try to divert your attention away from the nestbox, you can be sure they have babies.

Peters' are very intelligent, and will often greet you by hanging on the wire waiting for their mealworm treat. Mine have learned exactly where the door to the cage is, and one or the other will often fly out under my hand when I open it to change water or add food. They make a

game of flying from cage to cage, all the while calling back and forth to each other. After about five minutes of visiting the other birds (especially the other twinspots), they allow themselves to be netted and returned to their cage, greeting each other like they have been away for days.

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Young Peter's Twinspot  
Photo Courtesy ©Harry Bryant

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# Homer Hits a Homer ....a Story

by Christine ACY Kumar

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**Homer**

*Photo Courtesy - Christine ACY Kumar*

It was one of the last days of Indian Summer when I first saw Homer at Stewart's Bird Farm in Harleysville, PA. He was in a six foot flight cage with about fifty other specially mutation Zebra Finches that had just arrived. He was enormous, perhaps even titanic. I looked at him and my lower jaw just dropped. Was that REALLY a Zebra Finch I was seeing? He looked more like a guinea pig or a miniature sheep dog to me. I considered purchasing him. Crystel Stewart and I discussed him at length. My main concern was his size - he was just too huge.

Bigger isn't always better. I'm working on a line of zebras for the show bench. While I really would like to breed my penguins up in size, I told myself I was NOT that desperate to get a large Zebra Finch.

The second concern was his coloring. He looked an awful lot like a pied, but I was pretty sure he was actually a poorly marked Gray Cheek (GC), which can sometimes appear as though pied. Pied and GC are completely different Zebra mutations, but regardless, I didn't really want either in my flock. The only redeem-

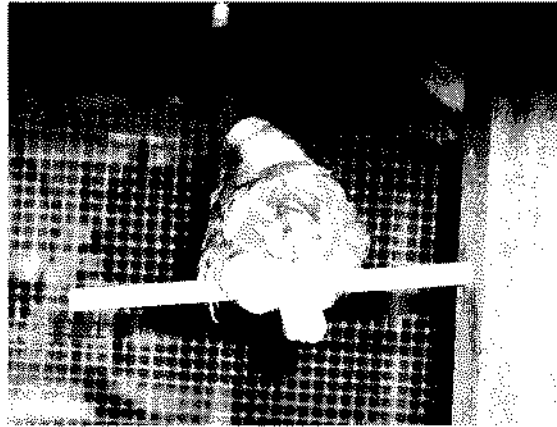
ing quality I could see was that he was also a Black Face.

I selected out a few hens and other cockbirds, all of which were gorgeous birds and carried mutations I worked with or had been searching for - passing on the enormous mottled white and gray bird with the black black breast and face. I almost felt guilty when I said goodbye to him before I left, wishing him Godspeed in finding a happy home. As I turned to leave, he tried to fly up to the perch, flapping for all he was worth only to plop right back down again onto the cage bottom with a pathetic dull thud. He had completely missed the perch. "What a dork!", I thought, shaking my head in pity, and left.

The next day on the Zebrafinch Yahoo list, a member posted regarding a faux pas he had made in confusing a GC for a pied. That got me thinking about that fat funny looking finch again, so I did some research on GCs to assure myself that he was in fact GC. In my mind, being GC wasn't that much better than being pied, since a small proportion of GC chicks are born with a genetic defect resulting in blindness and usually the eventual death of the bird. So I just tried to stop thinking about him - but I couldn't.

The next day, unable to resist the temptation any longer, I rang up Jamison Stewart, the owner of Stewart's Bird Farm, and asked that he put that gargantuan Zebra Finch aside for me. Upon returning to the bird farm, I took one look at that miniature winged sheep dog and thought, "I must be insane to bring this bird home. He's too fat. He cannot even fly. His body type is no good. He cannot even stand up off of the perch. He pants

when he breathes. He's definitely GC, and I don't even breed GC." But then I got to talking to Jamison about this colossal Zebra again, and finally he said to me, "Look Christine, nobody's EVER going to buy this bird. You are the only one that has even looked at him. If you promise to give him a good home, you can just have him. He doesn't appear to have any tumors, he's just fat. Perhaps you can slim him down some. It's probably his only chance."



**Homer from the rear...**

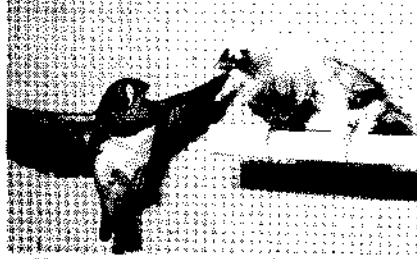
*Editors Note: Perhaps this photo could best be summed up in Christine's own words in the e-mail she sent along with it - "Look at that rump! I Yi Yi Yi!"*

*Photo Courtesy © Christine ACY Kumar*

And so I brought home that fat, so-ugly-he's-cute zebra cockbird and put him in the quarantine cage with the birds just purchased previously. I posted photos of him on the web, confirming he was a GC BF. Someone suggested he looked a lot like the cartoon character, Homer Simpson. And he did! Now Homer not only had a home but he also had a name. Things were looking up.

I pulled Homer's entire tail since all the feathers were snapped off. Being that he's a '00 closed banded bird, I assumed he had been a breeder in his past life, and his tail was abused from the nest box. I was hoping a rudder would help

him fly better. After a bit over a month in the quarantine cage, his tail had grown completely back. It was time to move Homer to more spacious accommodations. He felt even fatter in my hand. Sure enough, I put him on the gram scale only to discover that he had gained three grams! Oh No - how could this be? What kind of birdkeeper am I? He was getting even fatter on my watch! So I made the



**Homer and Normal Grey Zebra**

*Photo Courtesy: Christine ACY Kumar*

decision to put him in the four foot flight cage immediately.

This sounds like a simple enough task, however, the Zebras in that flight are 14-18 grams of lean muscle and lightning quick reflexes. Homer was pushing 26 grams of flab and fat. He could barely fly; wheezed while resting his immense belly on the perch; his rump was twice as wide as a normal Zebra's; and he was pretty much afraid of his own shadow. However, I knew that if he continued to gain weight at the rate of three grams/month, he wasn't going to live much longer. So into the flight cage he went with an unceremonious kerplunk.

The first five minutes were a total fiasco. The younger, leaner, sleeker, jet-fighter, agile-bodied zebras attacked instantaneously, dive bombing him, growing ferociously at him on the way in and taking the prize of a beak full of feathers on the way out. They terrorized him mercilessly, beaking him and crowing right in his face as well as trying to mount him. How humiliating for poor Homer. At first he tried to escape, Homer's dispro-

portionately small wings thwacking like the blades of a whirlygig in a hurricane force wind. He also got about as much altitude and distance as a whirlygig, too, which is to say that he went absolutely nowhere - all show and no go.

As soon as his wings ceased pumping uselessly, immediately the Zebra minions were back on him again, like a pack of ravenous rabid hyenas, continuing their taunts and jeers and further denuding his flesh of its feathers. Within moments, poor Homer was cowering in the corner, panting, beak wide open, pie eyed in terror, crumpled into a heap of mottled feathers and completely unable to protect himself while the smaller Zebras swarmed on him like a column of African flesh eating ants - tormenting him relentlessly, taking their pound of flesh. He became delirious from exhaustion and probably a lack of oxygen to his brain.

A tattered heap in the bottom of the flight, raspy breathing, growling and beaking out at any bird who came near him, I just couldn't leave Homer there like that. I was truly frightened that they'd badger him to death. So I reached into the flight, shooed the other Zebs away from him and easily scooped up the shivering, cowering, hyperventilating feather duster I had come to call Homer. I returned him to his two foot breeder cage. In five minutes, after he got his breath back, the trauma was over (how quickly finches get on with their lives), and he had his wide body plopped right back down in the seed dish, happily shucking millet for all he was worth. I just sighed and thought to myself that getting Homer in better shape was going to be a major project.

With each new day, I returned Homer to the four foot flight cage, his stays increasing in duration with each fresh attempt at introducing him into the larger flight. Despite the antagonism on the part of the other Zebras, I persisted because I knew the only way to trim



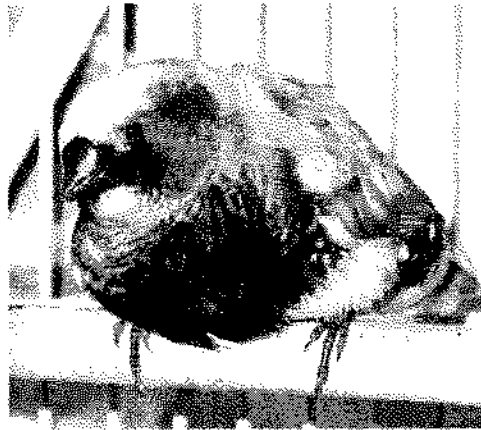
Homer down was to get him airborne again. With time, they seemed to resent him less and less, or at least they slowly began to lose their fervor in harassing him. That is not to say that they didn't still chase him 'till he was blue in the gums, because they did! They just stopped pulling as many feathers, probably because he didn't have too many left to give any longer.

Then, a curious thing happened. Homer befriended a penguin male in the flight cage. Or should I say, Tribbles befriended Homer. Tribbles bothered Homer endlessly, not picking on him like the rest of the Zebs, but rather wanting to be right there by Homer's side, preening him and being his friend. If Homer ate, so did Tribbles. If Homer flew across the flight

like a helicopter - wacka wacka wacka - then Tribbles silently shadowed after him like a Stealth fighter. If Homer started to preen his own feathers, Tribble's beak appeared suddenly, doing the preening for him. Afternoon nap time found Tribbles snuggling right up with Homer at the PRIMO perching spot. And when Homer was pushed to the limits of his endurance in warding off attacks by the other unruly zebras and once again took his defensive huddle in the flight corner; there was Tribbles chasing off those rogue zebras, losing his own flank feathers, growling in aggression and squealing when another zeb got a hold of his wing. Tribbles fought like a true hero to help and defend Homer!

At first, Homer was not sure of what to make of this one bird who showed so much affection and dedication while all the others were kamikaze dive bombing him. I'm sure Homer didn't trust Tribbles at all at first, especially when it came to preening. However in a few day's time, Homer finally relented and accepted Tribbles as his friend and body guard (I mean, there was plenty of Homer that needed protecting). The two bonded very strongly to one another becoming fast buddies. By the end of the week, Homer

had found his final home, staying permanently in the four foot flight cage. With solidarity between Homer and Tribbles realized, so too did the other zebras want to be Homer's companion rather than to ridicule him. The political battle was won! And Homer was suddenly an instant Zebra Finch celebrity.



**Homer takes a break...**

*Photo Courtesy © Christine A/C Kumar*

In a month's time, I took Homer out to weigh him, and he WAS losing weight, FINALLY. He had grown back most of the feathers that were torn from his flesh. He was also starting to fly better and was able to make a landing without falling off his perch. Now that Homer was in better shape, despite his poor flying skills, he became the undisputed heavyweight champion of that flight. Make no mistake about it. The other Zebs in there are much smaller and much faster than he is, no doubt, but Homer knows how to throw his weight around and dominate when it is required. Homer really has a very kind benevolent nature and seldom needs to assert his superior position in an aggressive manner. Usually one belly bop will

suffice to set the wrong door straight. I've never seen him beak another Zebra ever, no less tear out feathers. Whereas all the Zebs in that flight were extremely aggressive and three quarters picked prior to introducing Homer, now it's a more harmonious flight cage with all the inhabitants being fully feathered, taking their

aggression out on inanimate objects rather than each other. Homer doesn't tolerate bickering.

If you could see him as he runs along the cage bottom, you'd almost surely visualize a miniature shaggy sheepdog. I know I almost expect him to bark or see his tongue hanging out of his beak wet with saliva as he bounds along. I suppose it's his buff feathers, combined with his lack of aggressiveness unless pushed to his absolute limits, that makes me think of him more as a small winged puppy dog rather than the Zebra Finch that he is.

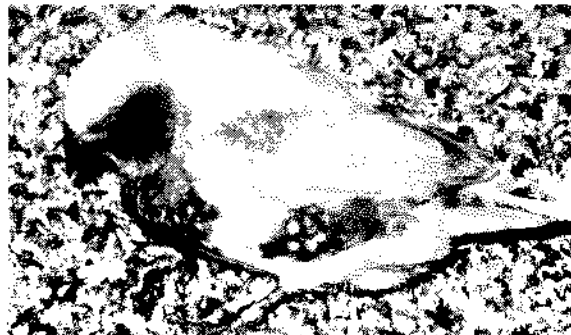
Spring has arrived, and Homer's totally adjusted to living in his flight cage now and still has his best friend Tribbles perpetually by his side. After a few



**Homer, Tribbles and the "Minions"**

*Photo Courtesy of Christine ACY Kumar*

months with more space to flap his wings, Homer has thinned down five grams and is actually two grams lighter than his original pre-quarantine flight cage weight. I'm not sure how much thinner he will ever get. I laugh and say that Homer just has really big bones and really buff feathers. He will never be svelte or have a gorgeous rump, but he does have a certain charm and charisma to him that appeals not only to me but to others as well. Since bringing him home, I've come to treasure Homer, the Zebra Finch with a weight management problem who was named after a befuddled cartoon character. Homer pigeons are famous the world over for their uncanny ability to navigate, and so, too, Homer found his destination - Homer, the cartoonish Zebra Finch, who hit a home run straight into my heart.



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# The Swee Waxbill

(*Coccopygia melanotis*)

by Ian Hinze

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## *Coccopygia melanotis*

*Fringilla melanotis* Temminck. 1823, *Pl. Col. livr.* 37, pl. 221, fig. 1.

3 subspecies: *C. m. melanotis* - generic name adapted from *Loxia astrild*; and from the Greek *melas* black; *-otis*, eared. *C. m. kilimensis* - After Kilima N'jaro, an alternative spelling of Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanganyika (Tanzania), the highest peak in Africa.

*E. m. bocagei* - After Jose Vicente Barboza du Bocage (1823-1907), Portuguese ornithologist, father of Angolan ornithology, and author (*Ornithologie d'Angola*, 1881).

## DESCRIPTION

Length 9.5 cm (3 fl in). *C. m. melanotis* has the forehead, crown, nape and hind neck dull slate gray. The mantle, upper back and lesser and median wing coverts are light yellowish olive-green, with faint darker cross-barring (visible only at close range). The greater coverts, inner secondaries and the outer fringes of the outer secondaries and primaries are olive-green, usually with some slight wash of dull red on the greater coverts and inner secondaries. The rest of the wing quills are blackish brown. The under wing coverts are buff. The lower back, rump and upper tail coverts are orange-red to bright red, fading to pale orange in worn plumage. The central tail feathers are black and the outer ones are dull drab. The face, throat and ear coverts are

black, bordered with white on the lower throat and the sides of the neck. The breast is pale gray to buffish gray, darkening to grayish olive on the flanks. The center of the belly, ventral area and under tail coverts are buffish fawn. The irides are bright red. The bill has the upper mandible black and the lower mandible red with a pinkish area at the base. The legs and feet are black or brownish black. The female has an entirely gray face, which is a little paler than the top of her head, and her throat is whitish. Her belly is also paler than that of the male. The juvenile is like the female but with much duller upperparts and without cross-barring. The rump and upper tail coverts are pale, brownish-orange and the bill is blackish.

*C. m. bocagei* is without any reddish wash on the wings and the olive-green upperparts are less yellowish in tone and have more pronounced fine, dark cross-barring. Similar cross-barring is also apparent, though less pronounced, on the head and breast. Its breast is more bluish gray and its belly is deep yellow or greenish yellow, becoming paler around the ventral area and yellowish buff on the under tail coverts. It has pale yellowish buff under wing coverts and the rump and upper tail coverts are of a darker red, fading to orange in worn plumage. The irides are red, reddish brown or brown. The female, as in *melanotis*, lacks the black mask and has a gray face. She is also paler below.

*C. m. kilimensis* is very similar to the East African Swee *C. q. quartinia* in that

the male has no black mask but a gray head like the female. Its belly is deep yellowish buff, frequently washed with orange and shading to buff on the under tail coverts. The female is similar to the male but is normally paler underneath and has no orange on her belly. The juvenile is like the female but without any cross-barring. It has a brownish orange rump and a blackish bill.

#### FIELD GUIDE

It is a tiny bird with a gray head, greenish back, buff belly, reddish or orange rump, and a black tail. The black mask of *melanotis* and *bocagei* are very distinctive.

#### VOICE

The contact call is a gentle-sounding, weak *see-see* or *swee swee* but, at higher intensities, this changes to an explosive *tswee!* The song is a single penetrating *teeeeit* or *tuuuueet* and there is a sharp *teerrr* alarm note. The begging call of fledglings is a 'wheezy and not unmusical...ss-ss-see', which is somewhat loud for the size of the bird. Maclean (1993) gives a sonogram of the song.

#### DISTRIBUTION

*C. m. kilimensis*: highlands of south-east Sudan (Didinga and Dongotona Mountains) to highlands of eastern Zaire, Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania to eastern Zambia, northern Malawi (south to Nyika plateau) and northern Mozambique.

*C. m. bocagei*: Pungo Andongo south to Mossamedes district, western Angola.

*C. m. melanotis*: Matopos and south-eastern Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe Ruins), the Lebombo Range in Mozambique, Swaziland, Lesotho and the South African provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, eastern Free State (Van Reenen),

southern Eastern Cape to Transkei, southern Western Cape and the North-West. There are also isolated populations in northern Namibia, Angola and Zimbabwe.

#### STATUS

Common or locally common.

#### INTRODUCED DISTRIBUTION

Introduced unsuccessfully to St. Helena. *C. m. melanotis* was released on the island around 1929 by H. Bruins-Lich, an agricultural officer, but failed to become established.

#### HABITAT, GENERAL BEHAVIOR AND FEEDING

It frequents the edges of evergreen forest, exotic plantations, gardens, bushy hillsides, farmyards and thick streamside bush. Usually it is found in pairs during the breeding season, otherwise in small groups. It is fairly quiet and easily overlooked, but often tame and confiding. When feeding it becomes conspicuous as it spends a great deal of time foraging off standing grass tops and also searches for fallen seeds on the ground, especially in fallow lands near dense cover. It feeds on the seeds of *Compositae* (thistle and daisy family), Guinea grass, Natal redtop and Blue finger grass; it also takes insects.

#### COURTSHIP DISPLAY

Believed similar to other *Estrilda* species. Information poor.

#### NESTING

It builds an oval nest complete with a side entrance out of dried grass and lines it with grass inflorescences which project through the entrance tube. The nest is situated up to about 2 m above ground in the fork of a tree, bush or creeper, or in more conspicuous loca-

tions, such as a pergola, in the gardens around houses. Eggs usually number 4-5 and are incubated by both birds alternately for 12-13 days. The young are fed by both parents and fledge at 19-22 days. Independence is achieved 14-16 days later.

In South Africa it breeds in November to January in the Eastern Cape, November to April in KwaZulu-Natal and November to December in the Northern Province.

### CAPTIVE OBSERVATIONS

It is extremely rare in aviculture and breedings are virtually non-existent. The first UK-recorded breeding was by Miss Elsie Robinson, of Camberley, Surrey, in 1934. The nest is believed to have been built around 5 1/2 feet from the ground at the side of an old tree stump overgrown with hops. For extra protection Miss Robinson placed pieces of heather (a piece at a time) at the back of the nest whilst one of the birds was sitting. It is amongst the most peaceful of all waxbills, even becoming quite friendly towards people and, occasionally, takes food from the hand. Temperatures must not be allowed to fall below 17-18°C (63-65°F). In South Africa the seeds of Natal reedtop, Guinea grass, Blue panic, hay, Golden setaria, Dropseed grass and Blue finger grass are particular favourites of captive birds. Breeders in that country also provide the following livefood: moths, aphids, fishmoths (*Thysanura*), Thrips-nymphs (*Thysanoptera*), mealworms and termites. Livefood is considered essential for this species, especially during the breeding season.

Koepff (1984) reports the bird's nest is constructed out of grasses and coconut fibers and padded with feathers or cotton wool. It is usually situated in bushes or climbing vines. During incubation the slightest inspection of the nest is likely to cause its abandonment, no matter how

friendly towards people the birds were previously.

The nestlings have long, light-colored downy feathers and for their survival must be supplied with ample amounts of small soft-bodied creatures, such as aphids, ant pupae, whiteworm and fruit-fly larvae. Once independent, the youngsters should be moved to new accommodation otherwise they will continue to roost in the nest and interfere with the next round.

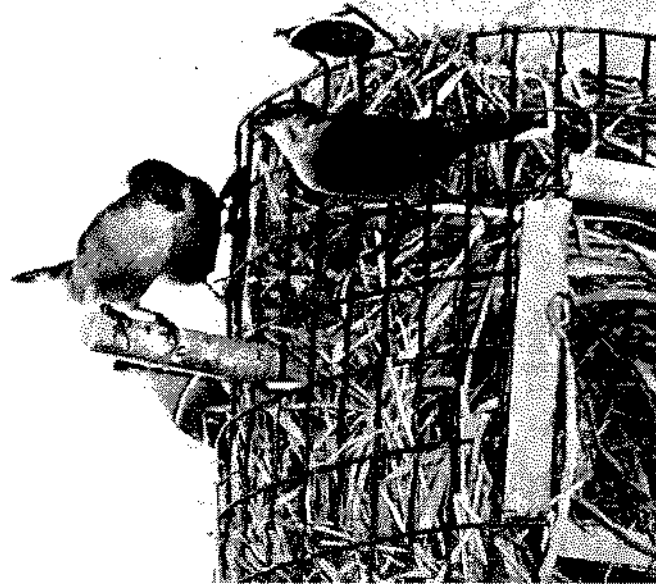
Considering the species' rarity and the difficulties encountered it is best left to only the most experienced keepers.

### OTHER NAMES

(Black-faced races only) Black-faced Swee, Dufresne's Waxbill.

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Top: Sweet Waxbills on nest of straw encased in wire.  
Bottom: Closeup of Sweet nest built in an artificial  
Christmas tree in the aviary.

*Photos Courtesy of NFSS member Candice Cranmore and taken in her aviaries.*

# East African Swee Waxbill

(*Coccopygia quartinia*)

by Ian Hinze

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***Cstrilda quartinia*** Bonaparte.  
1851, *Consp. gen. avium*.

2 subspecies: *C. q. quartinia* - generic name adapted from *Loxia astrild*; and from the Latin *quartus*, the fourth; this was the fourth species of waxbill described by Bonaparte.

*C. q. stuartirwini* - after M. P. Stuart Irwin (fl. 1960), keeper of vertebrate zoology, National Museum, Bulawayo.

## DESCRIPTION

Length 9.5 cm (3 3/4 in). The sexes are alike. *C. q. quartinia* is similar to the female Swee Waxbill *C. m. melanotis*, having the head and breast gray (the throat is whitish in the Swee). The back is golden olive, the rump is red and the tail is black. The rest of the underparts are light orange (pale buffish gray or pale buffish fawn in the female *C. m. melanotis*; pale yellow in female *E. m. bocagei* and female *E. m. kilimensis*). The juvenile is similar to the adult, but the bill is all black and there is less red on the rump.

## FIELD GUIDE

Tiny bird with a gray head, greenish back, yellowish belly, red rump and a black tail.

## DISTRIBUTION

*C. q. quartinia*: Ethiopia south to Kenya (where widespread in the west and central highlands, with smaller popu-

lations on Mt. Kulal, Mt. Nyiru, the Ndotos, Mathews Range, Mt. Marsabit, and the Nguruman, Chyulu and Taita Hills), northern Tanzania (from Loliondo and the Crater Highlands south to Mt. Hanang; also in Arusha NP, on Mt. Meru, Kilimanjaro, and in the Pare and Usambara Mountains) to southern and eastern Zambia.

*C. q. stuartirwini*: Southern Mozambique.

## STATUS

Locally common.

## VOICE

The song is a variable jumble of notes, *tee-tee-tee-tuuueeh*, *teeku-teehleeeke-hleekee*, or *tsee-tsee-tsee-tsueeeee*. The call-note is a weak *sree* or *swee-swee* and there is a sharp *teer-r* alarm note.

## HABITAT, FEEDING AND GENERAL HABITS

It is found at 750-3000m frequent- ing bracken-brier and other dense mon- tane vegetation, edges of highland ever- green forest and regenerating exotic pine plantations, rank herbage along forest margins and streams and in grassy areas in wooded and forest country, grassy clearings, fallow fields and gardens. It has similar habits to the Swee Waxbill and is usually observed in pairs or small groups of up to twelve birds, and often with other estrildines. It forages on the



ground or from standing grass tops in open patches of forest, and when disturbed flies twittering into nearby bushes, but soon returns to feed. Its food consists of seeds and insects. It is tame and rather conspicuous.

### COURTSHIP DISPLAY

The courtship display is believed to be similar to other *Estrilda* species, especially the Swee Waxbill. Information is poor.

### NESTING

The nest is a ball built out of dry, coarse grass, with a side entrance, and lined with fine grass inflorescences and some feathers. It is situated in the leafy branch of a tree, 2-5 m above ground, and constructed in 7-10 days by both sexes. Eggs number 4-6 and are incubated by both sexes for 12-14 days. Fledging takes place after 14-16 days and the young are fed throughout by both parents.

Birds breed December to January in Zimbabwe and December to April in Mozambique.

### CAPTIVE OBSERVATIONS

Spasmodically available, it is a wonderfully active and captivating bird too often proving delicate and short-lived. Information, as for the Swee Waxbill *C. melanotis*, is scant. In accomplished hands, it has proved to be no less hardy than other *Estrilda* species providing the temperature is kept above 18°C. (65°F.). Those birds that have thrived in captivity were provided with mixed millets, canary seed, soaked seed, grated greenfood and plenty of home-cultured insects, such as small waxworms and fruitflies and their larvae. Wild, indigenous seeds should be considered essential, such as annual meadow-grass, rough meadow-grass, chickweed and dandelion, etc.

Dried grass, feathers and cotton wool have proved to be useful nesting materials and finch-type nest-boxes and wicker baskets may be utilised. The most bizarre nest to date must surely be that which was constructed in the cup of a bra, which was hanging on a line in a free-flying birdroom/drying room. The birds in question, belonging to a Mr. Chris Glanfield, from Kent, were already adult when purchased and went on to live for a further seven years (pers. com.)! This is a remarkable achievement considering the difficulties keepers have had with the species over many years and, indeed, are still having.

This species should only be kept by the most experienced aviculturists.

### OTHER NAME

Yellow-bellied Waxbill.

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# The Black-Hooded Nun

aka Chestnut Munia, Black-Headed Nun,  
Black Headed Munia/Mannikin  
(*Lonchura atricapilla*)

## A Cage-Breeding Experience...

By Martie Lauster

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It seems that at every bird mart and in many pet stores, there are cages full of Black-hooded Nuns. Often they are dull, scruffy-looking birds as they are well-traveled and crowded in small spaces. Needless to say, they are very commonly found in large numbers and are very inexpensive to purchase - costing on average about \$20.00 apiece. Although native to Asia, they are often imported to the U.S. mainland from Puerto Rico where they are an introduced species in the wild. While I am not aware that any are imported from there, I have observed many flocks of them in Hawaii, where they are commonly found on lawns and in other open grassy areas. This was quite a thrill for me. I can tell you.

Their wide availability, low price, and often unattractive condition at the bird marts doesn't offer much to recommend them as breeding projects - but bring some home and a whole new story unfolds! With a little TLC and adequate accommodations, these birds are absolutely gorgeous. In the few years I have had them, I have found that outside of the molt, which they complete fairly quickly, they are sleek, shiny and fairly glow with rich, deep color. They also provide a bit of a unique breeding challenge as few breeders work with them and there is little information available on their breeding requirements.

The Black-hooded Nun is a shiny, deep black over the entire head and neck - very much like a "hood" as one of its common names suggests. The beak is a light steel with hints of pale blue. In sharp contrast to the "hood" the entire body of the bird is a very rich chestnut color becoming more rich with a rufous red as the eye progresses through the rump and tail, where there is often a hint of deep reddish-gold. The wings are somewhat darker in color. Legs and feet are similar in color to the beak - but a bit darker and more of a gray shade. They are fairly small birds and may be somewhat minimized in this day and age when so many are breeding for large, robust specimens in other species. These are not your show Zebra type! They are "wimpy" in comparison, but elegant, sleek and beautiful in their own right.

Fledglings are a very attractive cinnamon color - darker on the back and wings - and almost a deep gold color on the underparts. I admit that it is possible they might actually be considered by some to be very plain in appearance, but I found them attractive as they were so welcome! The darker cinnamon color over the head, neck and upper breast marks where the glossy black is to follow when the young molt to adult plumage in a few short months from hatching.

As with many other *Lonchuras*, the BH Nun is prone to long nails, which grow very quickly, and this must be regularly attended to. They can sport long, curling nails in what seems no time at all!

While I have had some small success in breeding these birds, I do not consider myself to be an "expert" in any sense of the word and still have a very long way to go. I will, however, relate my own experiences to date with them here in the hope that others may look at all those crowded cages of BH Nuns with new eyes, to possibly save others the time I spent discovering some of the things I did - and maybe to offer ideas for those few of you who may also be working on breeding them. I would love to hear from anyone who is working with these birds to compare notes and share experiences.

All my birds receive pretty much the same diet and the Nuns are no exception. I feed a good quality finch mix, soak seed, and an "everything but the kitchen sink" egg food. The finch mix is Clifford's Finch Booster. My soaked seed is soaked for 24 hours and consists of a 50-50 mixture of Herrmann Brothers' E.M. Special Soak Seed and Clifford's Soak Seed and Grain. Because I am cage breeding, I try to keep everything as uniform and consistent as possible in order to minimize all the work involved. Standard cage setup also includes a mineral mix, charcoal (taken by Gouldians, but not too many others) and cuttlebone. Youngsters also receive millet sprays and occasionally I will offer this treat to the others. This diet has worked for me over a broad range of species. I find that some birds eat more of one thing than another depending on their species and whether they are molting or feeding young, and I adjust quantities where needed. The egg food truly consists of a huge variety of items and there seems to be something for everyone as all my birds enjoy it. It contains hard-boiled eggs with shells, of course, riced carrots, dried greens - which "reconstitute" in the moisture of the

mix - insect food, dry egg food, Soya Musca, bee pollen, and a variety of other things like miscellaneous vegetables, vitamins, etc. I make a large quantity ahead of time and freeze it in bags which each contain enough for one day's bird room requirements. I have also been recently sprouting paddy rice for the *Lonchura* species I keep. This is particularly relished by my Societies.

Of the food items available to them, the Nuns here have a definite ranking of favorites. Number one is the soaked seed. The egg food is a close second and the dry seed mix is taken least of the three. Soaked seed and egg food are taken in fairly equal quantities when feeding young. While they do eat it, they do not seem as enamored with paddy rice as my Societies are.

I am not so fortunate as to have aviaries - and cage-breed all my birds. I collected a small group of six a few years ago and put them in a wire cage 24" deep x 36" long x 20" high. They had two nests installed in the upper back corners of this cage with some cover provided and had a wonderful time flying around, eating, and interacting with each other. This was, for sure, a celibate group as I saw absolutely no interest in the nests and no attempts at breeding - just a bunch of community and good living. As time passed, their condition improved and they became truly gorgeous birds.

BH Nuns are sexually monomorphic so I had no idea of what mix of males and females I had - and only hoped there were some of both. I did know that a couple of them were males as I observed them singing - but their song is soft - they do not sing often when I am around - and I have found it difficult to catch them at it. Some *Lonchura* breeders say that sexing can be accomplished by observing the size of the beaks when viewed from above and below, etc. - but I have never been successful with these methods. The differences are very slight - and I may not have good enough observation-

al skills - or maybe not enough experience to do this successfully, so for me - this is not a reliable means of sexing them. It is fortunate that they are relatively inexpensive and plentiful, allowing one to purchase a number of them to find a good mix.

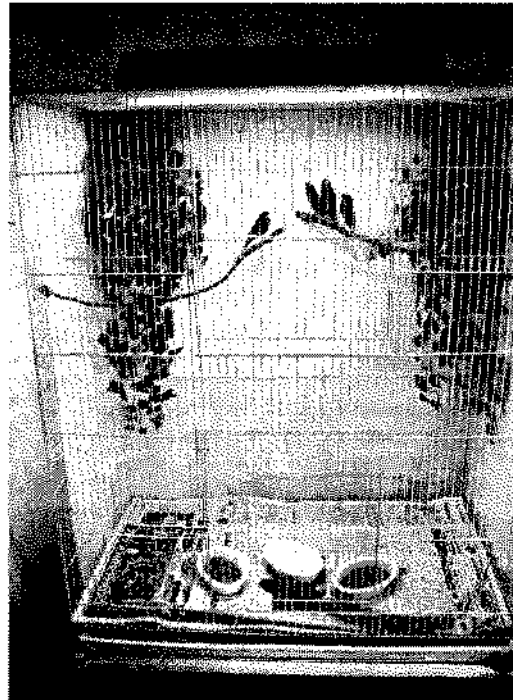
After about a year(!), I came to the conclusion that these birds were not going to breed in their current setup and began to think of how I might better accommodate them to encourage breeding. As is the case in many of our bird rooms, there is always a lot going on and I just allowed them to stay in this setup for longer than I might have if I were really concentrating on them. This, while not planned, I think was a good thing as I was really sure that the setup they were in was not conducive to stimulating breeding. I just enjoyed them during this time and came to truly appreciate their classy good looks and peaceful interactions.

I began to think about how I might better understand what they needed and how I might provide them with it. I knew I might have more success in aviaries, but was unable to accommodate them in this way. I thought about my observations of them in Hawaii, where I so often saw them in groups feeding on the ground. They seemed to spend a lot of time there and when disturbed would fly high up to the trees for safety - to return to the ground again once the disturbance was removed. I observed them feeding on lawns or areas of shorter grass where they were very exposed. This is not to say they might not feed in other areas where I couldn't see them - but it was a bit remarkable that so many were found in the open. When disturbed, they did not choose to retreat to low bushes

as some others - but went high up in the trees - seeming to disappear. I wondered if height was the reason that aviaries are more successful and if I could somehow provide this kind of environment in a micro form.

With all this in mind and having seen for myself in Hawaii that they feed on the ground - using high places for safety - I set up a new cage which I hoped would better accommodate their instincts.

I purchased one of the commonly available and inexpensive white wire cages - 18" deep x 30" wide x 36" high. In order to help the birds feel more secure, I wrapped three sides of the cage with a white sheet pinned to the cage with binder clips (a necessary item used for all kinds of things in my bird room). The



#### **Breeding Cage Setup**

*Next boxes underneath ivy sprays. This is the second setup where in a very short time, a new pair has emerged and is currently laying eggs.*

*Photo Courtesy: Mathew Lauster*

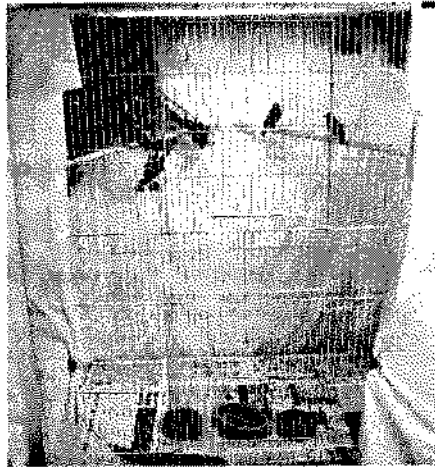
sheet extends a few inches across the front of the cage on each side as well. An 18" full-spectrum light fixture was placed on top of the cage as had also been on the previous one. (I use the very inexpensive under-cabinet fixtures available at Wal-Mart - changing the tube out for a full spectrum one and removing the frosted cover so the light is not diffused in any way.)

I installed two plastic nest boxes facing toward each other at the upper back corners and provided cover with silk ivy sprays, which work very well for this purpose. The "stem" of the spray can be jammed through the wire at the top of the cage and the ivy strands can be arranged over the box. Perches were placed diagonally from sides to back in front of each nest box and a couple of ivy strands were draped over these to enhance the secure feeling I was trying to convey. All food and water was on the floor of the cage.

It was my hope that I had provided them with a micro-environment that would better address their needs. The cage has access doors both near the top and at the bottom. I used only the bottom doors to feed and change papers - leaving the birds the upper portion as a "safe zone" as I had observed elevation to be in the wild. Much of the cage was covered to make it feel more secure for the birds and the upper portion where the nests were was made even more so by the ivy sprays.

The arrangement was a huge improvement from the previous one.

Rather than flying hysterically all over at feeding/cleaning times, they quickly learned that the upper part of the cage was safe. On occasion, as I approached, one or more of them would slip into a nest box or into the "tent" on top of the box made by the ivy spray draped from above. Soon they just quietly flew up and waited for me to finish my intrusion - flying back down as I moved away from the cage to find what I had left for them. They became quite used to me - but were easily disturbed by other people or unusual events in the bird room.



"Red" and "Green" with latest family

*Photo Courtesy © Mathew Lauster*

As the weeks passed and the birds became used to their new "digs", I began to note that two of them seemed to be bonded. They are not as obvious as some of the waxbill species are and I did not observe much if any allo-preening, but noted they were often found together. Each bird was banded with a different colored plastic band so I could tell them

apart. "Red" and "Green" seemed to be becoming an item!

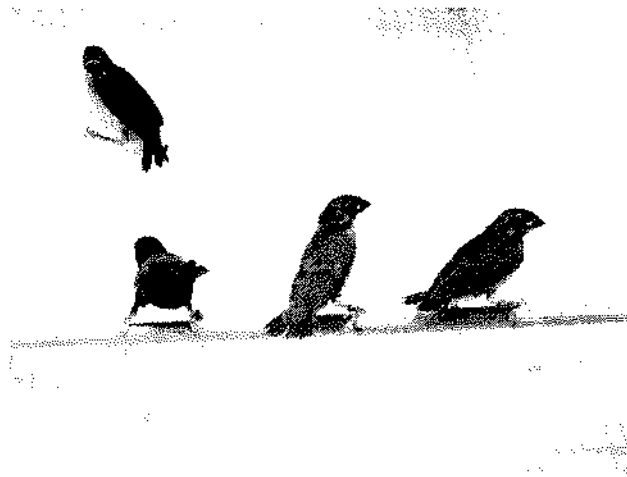
As more weeks passed, I noticed a few pieces of nesting material on the cage floor and once or twice one or two birds would be "missing". By stepping back a bit and observing through the ivy, I could see them extending their necks out of the nestbox to see what was going on. My observations were correct and these were the same two birds that I had suspected were bonding. As the days passed, one or both birds would be "missing" at all times - a very encouraging development.

I have found in my own short experience that the Nuns I have here seem not to prefer any particular nesting material. They have used coconut fiber, jute fiber, dried grasses and Quiko nesting material - which is a combination of many fibers - all with equal acceptance. I have given them "pre-made" nests which they

fighting - the other birds were a distraction.

I won't bore you - or embarrass myself - with the details - but let it be sufficient to say I was very excited and impatient - and lost a few clutches due to my interference. I think I am not alone in

this and at least used these experiences to learn what was not going to be tolerated by these birds. I managed to save two babies during this time by handfeeding them to maturity. What I did learn was that my birds are tolerant of a very quick intrusion of fingers to see if, indeed, eggs are being laid. However, once young have hatched - ANY intrusion or disturbance would cause them to abandon the clutch. This included visits by other people - and once when



**"Green" (left in unflattering pose)  
with just-fledged young.**

*Photo Courtesy: Mathew Lauster*

seem to be satisfied with as they only adjust them slightly by smoothing the floor and arranging a few strands of nesting material over the top.

Through this time, the other four birds also occupied the cage. I saw no interference between the nesting pair and the other four. There seemed to be no fighting or territorial behavior - and the four extra birds seemed to really understand their places and respect the breeding pair's space. I have since learned, however, (Thank you, Roy!) that once a pair is identified, it is best to remove any extra birds - leaving the pair to do their work alone. Once I removed the other four birds, I found the nesting Nuns attended to their nest much more diligently - and became more steady breeders - telling me that while there wasn't obvious

another bird became loose in the birdroom, my travels with a net in my hand (at which time I become to the entire bird room a huge and present danger!) caused an abandonment. Knowing their habits as I do from watching them for this time, I now do few if any nest checks at any time and can tell if eggs are being laid - or if chicks have hatched - by observing the behavior of the parents. These are not hands-on birds!

As I progressed in my education, I tried fostering eggs to Society Finches. This works very well as the young are so similar to the Societies' own. I was able to gain some "domestic-bird-raised" Nuns in this way. This is not a long-term solution for me, however, as my goal is to produce parent-raised birds - which I have since achieved.



As I mentioned previously, I recently removed the other four birds - so - what happened to them? I set them up in an identical cage and setup and in the same way, a pair has emerged among what had seemed to be a "celibate" group of onlookers. I sure don't have enough experience to know this to be a fact - but as is the case with many Society Finch groups, this is an indication to me that while breeding will occur in groups, it is possible that only a dominant pair will do so. My group is much too small to draw a definitive conclusion - but is an indication that I will continue to test out.

So - here I am today with several "home-bred" young NFSS-banded Black-Hooded Nuns. They are all related, but I am hoping the new group will produce young as well - which will give me unrelated stock to work with. At this writing, eggs are laid; the new parents - previously thought to be "celibate onlookers" - are behaving very well by the standards observed from the first ones, and it looks possible that I will be able to achieve this.

...and the saga continues. I am very interested in continuing work with BH Nuns. There are so many questions to be answered! Will the domestic-raised birds breed in a more "normal" setup? Will it make a difference if I combine some of my home-raised birds with wild-caughts? Will I find a "tried and true" method for breeding domestically raised birds and be able to begin to develop

lines of them that will reliably breed for others? Questing for the answers and challenging myself to find them, I know, will provide many more years of pleasure, discovery and enjoyment.

I and my Black-Hooded Nuns are members of the NFSS Finch and Softbill Save program and I sincerely hope any of you who may be interested in pursuing

the elusive prize of successfully breeding them will join me! Yes - they are certainly "common", but live with them for a while - you will find, as I have, that there is actually little common about them. They offer all the challenge and intrigue of many of the waxbill species. I will be back in another year or so to let you all know of any progress made with them here. While progress can be slow - I hope I have been able to shorten it with ideas for you about approaching work with this lovely specie. In any case, I do know you won't help but enjoy the

unique and rich beauty of a few Black Hooded Nuns in your own bird rooms.

While this article is composed of my own experiences, I offer the following reference as a strong recommendation to any of you interested in learning more about *Lonchura* species.

**Restall, R.** 1997. *Munias and Mannikins*. Yale University Press, Connecticut.



**Fledgling Black Hooded Nun**

*Photo Courtesy © Mathew Lauster*



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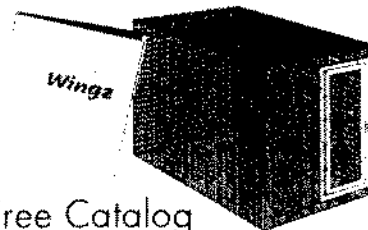
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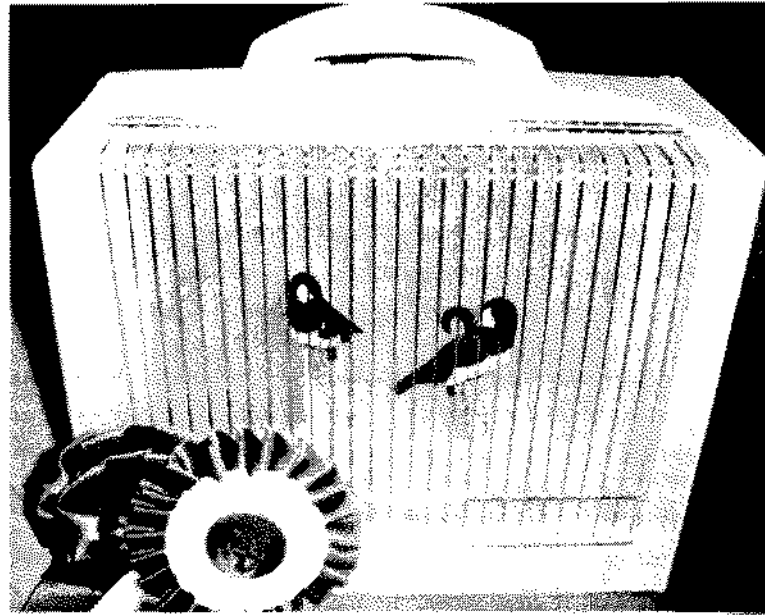
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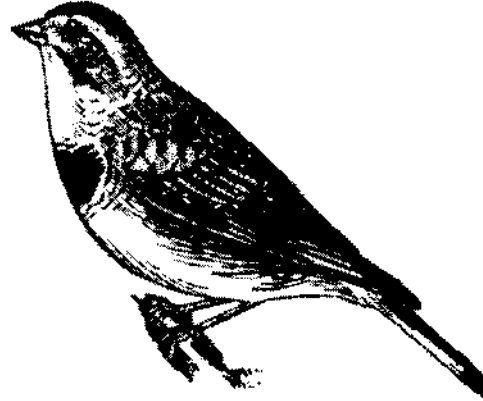
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## NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

| REGIONAL CLUBS  | FLORIDA   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>Southeast Bird Fanciers (SE U.S.)</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Ginny Allen (334) 749-7168<br/>           gndallen@earthlink.net<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 1st Sat. in Mar, Jun, Sep, and 2nd Sat. in Dec. at the Atlanta Farmers Market<br/> <u>Website:</u><br/>           http://members.tripod.com/sebfg/sebf.htm</p>  | <p><b>Aviary &amp; Cage Bird Society of South Florida (Ft. Lauderdale)</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Marcia David (954) 321-9229<br/>           marbilld@comcast.net<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 2nd Sun of ea. month, 2 pm<br/>           Flamingo Gardens Gallery, Davie, FL<br/> <u>Website:</u> www.feathers.org<br/> <u>Event: Annual Expo - Aug. 21, 2004</u><br/>           Omni Aud., BCC Campus, Coconut Creek<br/> <u>Event Contact:</u> Jane Tame<br/>           jane.tame@mcj.com</p>  |
| ALABAMA   | SUNCOAST AVIAN SOCIETY (PINELLAS PARK)  |
| <p><b>Central Alabama Avicultural Society (Montgomery)</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Margie Lanier<br/>           (334) 567-4073 margielanier@yahoo.com<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 2nd Sun of ea. month, 2:30 pm<br/>           Prattville Library, Prattville, AL.<br/> <u>Club E-Mail:</u> caasshow@aol.com<br/> <u>Website:</u> www.caasociety.com<br/> <u>Show: Bird Show &amp; Fair - Sept. 4-5, 2004</u><br/>           Governor's House Hotel, Montgomery, AL<br/> <u>Show Contact:</u> Margie Lanier (info above)</p> | <p><u>Contact:</u> Joe Ventimiglia (727) 392-9391<br/>           whoward7@tampabay.rr.com<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 1st Sun of ea. month, 2 pm<br/>           Leisure World Mobile Home Park<br/> <u>Show: Bird Show - Aug. 7, 2004</u><br/>           535 4th Ave N, St. Petersburg<br/> <u>Judge:</u> Miki Sparzak<br/> <u>Location:</u> 535 4th Ave N, St. Petersburg<br/> <u>Event: Bird Fair - Oct. 17, 2004</u><br/> <u>Location:</u> 6340 126th Ave N, Largo<br/> <u>Contact for both:</u> Mari Howard<br/>           whoward7@tampabay.rr.com</p> |
| CALIFORNIA  | GEORGIA   |
| <p><b>Finch Society of San Diego County</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Sally Huntington (858) 452-9423<br/>           sallych@san.rr.com<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 4th Sun of ea. month except Dec.<br/>           7849 Tommy Dr, La Mesa, CA<br/> <u>Club E-Mail:</u> onedeergranny@aol.com<br/> <u>Show: Bird Show - Apr. 25, 2004</u><br/>           7849 Tommy Dr, La Mesa, CA<br/> <u>Judge:</u> Sally Huntington<br/> <u>Show Contact:</u> Cathy Metivier<br/>           (619) 579-6414 onedeergranny@aol.com</p>       | <p><b>Georgia Cage Bird Society (Atlanta)</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Pat Miller (770) 425-9455<br/>           jandpmiller@mindspring.com<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 4th Sun of ea. month, 2:30 pm<br/>           Smyrna Community Center<br/> <u>Show: Bird Show - Nov. 6-7, 2004</u><br/>           Jim Miller Park - Marietta, GA<br/> <u>Show Contact:</u> Pat Miller (See above)</p>   |
| CANADA  | ILLINOIS  |
| <p><b>Essex-Kent Cage Bird Society (Ontario, CANADA)</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Julianne Mion (519) 948-6398<br/>           julianne@mnsi.net<br/> <u>Show: Annual Show - Oct. 16, 2004</u><br/> <b>NFSS REGIONAL SHOW - REGION 8</b><br/>           Fogolar Furlan Udine Complex<br/> <u>Judge:</u> Cecil Gimby<br/> <u>Show Contact:</u> Alfred Mion<br/>           (519) 948-6398 or julianne@mnsi.net</p>   | <p><b>Illini Bird Fanciers (Springfield)</b><br/> <u>Contact:</u> Patte Montgomery (217) 787-0399<br/>           illinibirdfanciers@yahoo.com<br/> <u>Meetings:</u> 4th Sun of ea. month, Var. Locations<br/> <u>Show: 19th Annual All Bird Show &amp; Fair</u><br/> <b>June 5-6, 2004 - Illinois State Fair-</b><br/>           grounds - Illinois Bldg. - Springfield<br/> <u>Judge:</u> Dennis Lewis<br/> <u>Show Contact:</u> Patte Montgomery (See above)</p>  |

## NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

### IOWA

#### Mid America Cage Bird Society (Des Moines)

Contact: John Thielking (515) 278-9159

Meetings: 4th Sun of ea. month, 2 pm  
Des Moines Botanical Ctr.  
909 E. River Drive, Des Moines

Events: **Cage Bird Carnival - May 23, 2004**  
**Feather Fair - Aug. 22, 2004**

Contact for both: John Thielking (See above)

Location for both: Des Moines Botanical  
Ctr. (See above)

Show: **Annual Bird Show - Oct. 2, 2004**  
Ramada Inn, 5055 Merle Hay Rd. Johnston

Contact: John Thielking (See above)

Judge: Laura Bewley

### MARYLAND

#### Baltimore Bird Fanciers, Inc.

Contact: Barbara Shannon (410) 356-5850

Meetings: 3rd Sun. of each month - Towson  
Library

Club E-Mail: drhaynesesq@yahoo.com

Event: **Bird Mart - May 15, 2004**

Show: **Show - Oct. 16, 2004**

**NFSS REGIONAL SHOW - REG 1 SOUTH**

Location for both: Tall Cedars Hall, Parkville

Contact for both: Dorothy Haynes  
(410) 256-9326 drhaynesesq@yahoo.com

### MICHIGAN

#### Great Lakes Avicultural Society (Grand Rapids)

Contact: Diana Hugo (616) 842-0163  
pdhugo@charter.net

Meetings: 2nd Mon. of each month - UAW  
Hall, 4269 Alpine, Grand Rapids

Website: www.angelfire.com/mi4/glas

Event: **GLAS Fair - Apr. 4, 2004**

Contact: Sue Rosin wrosin@i2k.com

Show: **Show - Oct. 16, 2004**

**NFSS REGIONAL SHOW - REGION 3**

Judge: Paul Williams

Contact: Diana Hugo (616) 842-0163

Location for both: The Delta Plex  
2500 Turner NW, Grand Rapids

#### Motor City Bird Breeders

(Detroit)

Contact: Pat Pickarz (586) 296-2957  
dpickarz1@comcast.net

Meetings: 1st weekend of each month at  
club members' homes.

Show: **Bird Show & Fair - Oct. 23, 2004**  
Italian American Cultural Center, Warren, MI

Contact: Pat Pickarz (See above)

### MISSOURI

#### Greater Kansas City Avicultural Society (Kansas City)

Contact: Anthony Day (816) 356-9533  
sterryday@aol.com

Meetings: 2nd Sun of ea. month, Trail West  
Library - 11401 E 23rd St. - Independence

Events: **Summer Bird Fair - June 19, 2004**  
**Fall Bird Fair - Aug. 14, 2004**

Grandview, MO

Show: **Bird Show - Oct. 16, 2004**

Best Western, KC South,  
5701 Longview Road, Kansas City

Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau

Show & Event Contact: Maria Michel  
membirdsetcmichel@kc.rr.com

#### Mo-Kan Cage Bird Club (Columbus, KS)

Contact: Doug Willis (417) 358-7245  
dwillis71@cox-internet.com

Events: **Auction - June 19, 2004** - Crawford  
City Fairgrounds - Marvin Green  
Bldg - Girard, KS

**Bird Fairs - Aug. 1 & Oct. 10, 2004**  
Motel 7, Springfield, MO.

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

#### Birds of a Feather Avicultural Society (Manchester)

Contact: Ray Schwartz (603) 362-6106  
prismsdad@aol.com

Meetings: 2nd Mon. of each month  
Villa Crest, Manchester, NH

Website: www.boaf.com

Show: **Bird Show - Oct. 23, 2004**

Center of NH Radisson Hotel  
700 Elm St. Manchester

Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau

Show Contact: Ray Schwartz (See above)



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### NEW YORK

**Astoria Bird Club** (New York City)  
Contact: Dan Griffin (718) 994-1614  
 dgriffin11@optionline.net  
Meetings: 3rd Sun. of each month  
 23-18 29th St. Astoria, NY  
Club E-Mail: AstoriaBirdClub@aol.com  
Show: **Annual Show Nov. 6, 2004**  
**NFSS REGIONAL SHOW - REG I NORTH**  
 St. Jude School, Brooklyn  
Judge: Dennis Lewis  
Show Contact: Ivica John Begonja  
 (718) 423-8506 mostina@aol.com

**New York Finch and Type Canary Club**  
 (New York City)  
Contact: Stan Kulak (718) 967-6899  
 barstand@aaahawk.com  
Meetings: 2nd Sun. of each month except  
 Jul. & Aug. 1:00 p.m.  
 Averill Blvd. Pk. Elmont  
Website: www.newyorkfinch.com  
Event: **Feather Show - June 13, 2004**  
 Averill Blvd. Park Elmont  
Show: **Annual Show Oct. 16, 2004**  
 St. Jude Church, Brooklyn  
Judge: Laura Tinker  
Contact for both events: Stan Kulak  
 (718) 967-6899 barstand@aaahawk.com

### PENNSYLVANIA

**Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society**  
 (Pittsburgh)  
Contact: Jim Felix (412) 462-0969  
 justuff1@comcast.net  
Club E-Mail: mjonnet@katz.pitt.edu  
Show: **Show Nov. 6, 2004** Holiday Inn  
 RHD Park, Pittsburgh  
Judge: Martha Wigmore  
Contact: Margie Jonnet  
 (412) 795-1904 mjonnet@katz.pitt.edu

### PUERTO RICO

**Asociacion De Criadores de Finches Del Este**  
Contact: Victor Cordero 893-7723

### TENNESSEE

**Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club**  
 (Nashville)  
Contact: Lisa Mellies (615) 890-6906  
 tnma2@comcast.net  
Meetings: 3rd Sun. of each month 1 pm  
 Donelson Senior Ctr. 108 Donelson Park  
Show/Event: **Bird Fair and Show -**  
**Oct. 2-3, 2004** - Tennessee  
 State Fairgrounds, Nashville  
Judge: Cecil Gunby  
Contact: Wilma Crawford 615-890-6906  
 tnma2@comcast.net

**Southeast TN Avicultural Society**  
 (Niota)  
Contact: Janet Burrell (423) 472-1306  
 jgb2202@aol.com  
Meetings: 2nd Sun. of each month 2 pm  
 Niota Elementary School  
Show: **S.T.A.S. Show & Fair Oct. 23, 2004**  
**2 Shows in One-Day Special Event**  
**NFSS REGIONAL SHOW(AM) - REGION 2**  
 Niota Elementary School  
Judges: Clarence Culwell  
 Paul Williams  
Show Contacts:  
 Theresa Burnette tjburn@compfxnet.com  
 Marilyn Massey mklmass@cs.com  
 Janette Burrell jgb2202@aol.com

### Tennessee Valley Exotic Bird Club

(Knoxville)

Contact: Terri Bartow (865) 548-1966  
Meetings: 1st Tue. of each month - Church  
 of the Good Samaritan  
Club E-Mail: bggrass@hotmail.com  
Club Website: tvebc@kornet.org

### TEXAS

**Alamo Exhibition Bird Club Inc.**  
 (San Antonio)  
Contact: Nathan Durbin (210) 433-1840  
 taka@stic.net  
Website: www.aebc.org  
Events: **Fair - Sep. 25, 2004**  
 Live Oak Civic Center, Live Oak, TX  
 Just NE of San Antonio on Pat Booker Rd.

## NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

### TEXAS

#### Canary & Finch Society (Pasadena)

Contact: Helen Jones (281) 324-4100

Meetings: 2nd Sun of each month -  
Pasadena Town Square Mall

Show: **Bird Show - Sept. 17, 2004**  
Holiday Inn at JFK, 15222 John F.  
Kennedy Blvd., Houston, TX

Judge: Jerri Wiesenfeld

#### Fort Worth Bird Club (Fort Worth)

Contact: Clarence Culwell (817) 220-5568  
culwell5@a.flash.net

Meetings: 2nd Sun of each month - Fort  
Worth Botanical Garden - Azalea Room

Club E-Mail: circlm@swbell.net

Club Website: www.fwbc.org

Show: **Fort Worth 51st Annual Bird Show**  
**- Sept. 25, 2004**

#### NFSS REGIONAL SHOW - REGION 4

rapevine Convention Ctr, 1209 S. Main

Judge: Paul Williams

Contact: Jerry Cason (817) 237-5867  
jerrycason@amindspring.com

### VIRGINIA

#### Peninsula Cage Bird Society, Inc. (Hampton)

Contact: Bea Rogers (757) 484-6001

Meetings: 3rd Sun. of each month at 2 pm

Club E-Mail: dickivy@two-rivers.com

Website: www.vapeninsulacagedbirdclub.org

Events: **Bird Marts - Spring & Fall, 2004**

**Annual Bird Clubs of Virginia Convention**

Show: **Bird Show - June 12, 2004** Colum-  
bian Ctr. 12742 Nettles Dr. Newport News

Judge: Miki Sparzak

Contact: Chris Fairchild (757) 368-1881  
rcia@zebrasofz.com

### WASHINGTON

#### Cascade Canary Breeders Association (Seattle)

Contact: Janel C. Johnson (425) 226-8899  
katbird57@aol.com

Meetings: 3rd Sun. of each month at 2 pm.  
Keppler's Feed - 16442 SE  
Renton-Issaquah Rd. - Renton

### WISCONSIN

#### Badger Canary & Finch Club (Milwaukee)

Contact: Sue Feldstein (262) 965-5367

Meetings: 3rd Sat. of each month - No  
meetings in Dec. or Jan.

Club E-Mail: devanornum@aol.com

Club Website:

www.badgercanaryandfinchclub.org

Show: **Annual Bird Show & Fair -**

**Oct. 16, 2004** Ramada Inn Oshkosh

Judge: Martha Wignore

Contact: Evon Van Ornum  
devanornum@aol.com

#### Wisconsin Cage Bird Club (Oshkosh)

Contact: Dave Bluma (920) 428-4595

Davidbluma@aol.com

Meetings: 3rd Sun. of each month.

Show: **27th Annual Bird Show - June 26, 2004**

Ramada Inn, Oshkosh, WI

Judge: Dennis Lewis

Contact: Bernie Rahmlow (920) 231-8606

Event: **Fall Bird Fair - Aug. 29, 2004**

Columbus Club, Oshkosh, WI

Contact: Jack Vater (920) 206-8831

# 2004 AFFILIATION AGREEMENT

The basic affiliation fee is \$25.00.



Club Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Club City/St: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Club affiliation entitles your organization to receive all NFSS publications and to exercise the privileges of the Society. These include, but are not limited to:

- ***NFSS Journal***--- Our newly formatted bi-monthly publication connects you with other finch and softbill enthusiasts around the world. It includes articles on breeding, housing, diet, management, products, specific species, and experiences of other aviculturists.
- ***www.NFSS.org***--- Visit our ever-expanding website for the latest information on NFSS activities, officers, affiliated clubs on their websites, 2004 affiliated shows and events, archives, advertisements and Avicultural links.
- ***Finchshop***--- Looking for an unusual gift? Finchshop is our department store. Items and order forms are available in the NFSS Journal and on the website - [www.NFSS.org](http://www.NFSS.org)
- ***Finch Save***--- The goal of this restructured member participation group is to establish and maintain all finch and softbill species in American aviculture.
- ***Census***--- The annual NFSS Census can connect you with other breeders for the purpose of exchanging breeding stock.
- ***Affiliated Shows and Events***--- are advertised in the NFSS Journal and on the website.
- ***NFSS Panel Judges***--- are available for shows.
- ***Awards with the NFSS Logo***--- (plaques and rosettes) are available at new reduced prices!
- ***Annual Achievement Awards***--- are presented at the National Cage Bird Show.

Once we receive your application and fee, we will list your organization among the affiliated clubs in the NFSS Journal and on the NFSS website. Please write, email or phone me for an Affiliation Application and Awards Catalog!

Send your check for \$25.00  
made payable to NFSS to:

Darla Dandre  
NFSS Affiliations & Awards Manager  
PO Box 1231, Lisle, IL 60532  
Phone: 815-729-9789  
E-Mail: [Dbirdranch@aol.com](mailto:Dbirdranch@aol.com)

# 2004 NFSS AWARDS ORDER FORM

You may request a color catalog featuring our awards being offered this year or use the order form below.

Your show information must be submitted as soon as possible but no later than two months before your show

Circle me!

**YOU MUST BE AN AFFILIATED CLUB TO ORDER AWARDS**  
If you have not done so already, you may affiliate now.....\$25.00

- Plaques -**
- Best Finch or Softbill in Division . . . . . \$25.00
  - 2nd Place Finch or Softbill in Division . . \$25.00
  - 3rd Place Finch or Softbill in Division . . \$25.00
  - Best Finch in Show . . . . . \$25.00
  - Best Softbill in Show . . . . . \$25.00
  - Make your own Award! . . . . . \$25.00

Engraving Information: \_\_\_\_\_

- Rosettes -**
- Basic Rosette Set (1-10 + Best Unflighted) . \$25.00
  - Unflights Rosette Add-on (2nd & 3rd Place) \$6.00
  - Novice Rosette . . . . . \$3.00
  - Youth Rosette . . . . . \$3.00

**Please make check payable to NFSS and mail to:**

**Darla Dandre**  
**Awards Manager**  
**PO Box 1231**  
**Lisle, IL 60532**  
 815-729-9789  
 Dbirdranch@aol.com

Please, no express mail or parcels! - Thanks!

**Affiliation Fee \$** \_\_\_\_\_ **+ Awards Order \$** \_\_\_\_\_ **= TOTAL \$** \_\_\_\_\_

SHIP AWARDS TO: NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out ALL the information!

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ ST: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Club Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Show Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Judge: \_\_\_\_\_

Show Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ St: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail or web site: \_\_\_\_\_

Show Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

NFSS Club Delegate: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Publish this information in the Journal? YES** \_\_\_\_\_ **NO** \_\_\_\_\_

| NFSS MEMBER and NON-MEMBER ORDER FORM   |     |     |    |    |                      |
|---|-----|-----|----|----|----------------------|
| Split Plastic Band Choices: Red, Dk Green, Lt Green, White, Pink, Black, Purple, Yellow, Orange, Dk Blue, Lt Blue |     |     |    |    |                      |
|   |     |     |    |    | MINIMUM ORDER \$5.00 |
| SPLIT PLASTIC BANDS - \$1.50 PER STRING OF 10 BANDS   |     |     |    |    |                      |
| INDICATE QUANTITY BELOW AND COLOR   |     |     |    |    |                      |
| XF  | XCS | XCL | XB | X3 | SUBTOTAL             |
|   |     |     |    |    |                      |
|   |     |     |    |    |                      |
|   |     |     |    |    |                      |
|   |     |     |    |    |                      |

**NFSS MEMBERS ONLY** *Closed traceable aluminum bands available in only the NFSS color of the year. Aluminum bands are engraved with initials NFS, Size Code, Year, and Number. There is no choice of number. All aluminum bands are recorded for permanent reference. Bands are ordered in strings of 10, same size. New members may order before receiving their membership number. Write "New" for an NFSS Member #. Orders are processed weekly as received. Please, no mail requiring signatures.*

**The banding and marking of wild birds is very tightly regulated by the Federal government. It is illegal to use ANY band on a bird that is released to the wild except a Federal band issued by US Fish and Wildlife.**

| ALUMINUM BANDS - \$3.25 PER STRING OF 10 BANDS |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |          |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|
| INDICATE QUANTITY BELOW                        |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |          |
| A  | B | C | D | E | G | J | K | L | M | R | S | T | SUBTOTAL |
|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |          |

If you choose not to include this sum, NFSS will NOT be responsible for replacements.

**POSTAL INSURANCE**  
 Under \$50.00 - \$1.30  
 \$50.00 to \$100.00 - \$2.20  
 Over \$100.00 - \$3.20 \_\_\_\_\_

**HANDLING FEE** \$2.00 \_\_\_\_\_  
**PLASTIC & ALUMINUM SUBTOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_  
**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>BANDS FOR YEAR:</b> _____                                      | <b>NFSS MEMBER #:</b> _____ |
| <b>NAME:</b> _____  |                             |
| <b>ADDRESS:</b> _____   |                             |
| <b>CITY/STATE/ZIP:</b> _____                                      |                             |
| <b>E-MAIL:</b> _____  |                             |
| <b>PAYMENT PAYABLE TO NFSS</b>                                    |                             |
| <b>MAIL TO: Paula Hansen, 2234 Juneau Ct. S., Salem, OR 97302</b> |                             |

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

- Size A: Gold-breasted Waxbill, Orange-checked Waxbill, Owl (Bicheno) Finch, Quail Finch, Red-cared Waxbill, Strawberry Finch, and other small waxbills.
- Size B: Black-checked Waxbill, Cordon Bleu, Cuban Melodious Finch, Fire Finch, Olive Finch, Rufous-backed Mannikin, Timor Zebra, Peales Parrot Finch.
- Size C: B&W Mannikin, Violet Eared & Blue-capped Waxbills, Purple Grenadier, Bronze-winged Mannikin, Cherry Finch, Green Singing Finch, Grey Singing Finch, Heck's Shaftail, Lavender Finch, Painted Finch, Pileated Finch, Pytilias, Red-headed & Forbes (Blue-Breasted) Parrot Finches, Shaftail Finch, Silverbills, Star Finch, Red Siskin, Society (Bengalese) Finch, Standard Zebra.
- Size D: Blue-faced Parrot Finch, Lady Gouldian Finch, Chestnut-breasted & most smaller mannikins, most other Parrot finches, Pictorella Finch, Pintailed Nonparceil, most Twinspots, Yellow-rumped Finch.
- Size E: Black-crested Finch, Diamond sparrow, European Greenfinch, Golden Song Sparrow, Nuns, Peter's Twinspot, Siskins, Spice Finch, European Goldfinch, European Zebra.
- Size G: Magpie Mannikin, Siberian Goldfinch, most larger mannikins, small tanagers.
- Size J: Pekin Robin, Silver-eared Mesias, most small softbills.
- Size K: Java Rice Birds, Red-crested Cardinal, Saffron Finch, Shama Thrush
- Size L: Diamond Dove, Mousebirds, other small doves, quail, softbills.
- Size M: Leaf Birds, Pagoda Mynah, large Sunbirds, Supcrb Starlings.
- Size R: Green/Purple Starlings.
- Size S: Indian Hill Mynah, Java Mynah, Ring-necked Dove, Toucanettes, White-tailed Jay.
- Size T: Small Hornbills, Plush-capped Jay, small Toucans, small Touracos.

*Banding instructions included with each order.*

## Guide to Ordering Open Plastic Leg Bands

- Size XF: Cordon Bleu, Fire, Orange-Checked, Red-Eared, Lavender, Blue Capped Waxbills, Owl, Cherry, Green & Grey Singers, Painted, Hecks & Masked Grassfinch, Gouldian, Most Parrot Finches, Zebra, Bengalese (Society), Stars.
- Size XCS: Nuns, Cutthroats, Diamond Firetails (Diamond Sparrows), most Twinspots, Siskins, (Canaries - Gloster, Fire, Miniature & Fancy).
- Size XCL: Red Faced Pytilia, Pekin Robin, (Canaries - Roller, Borders, Lizard, Norwich, Yorkshire, Red Factor).
- Size XB: Indian Shama, Diamond Dove, Chinese Painted (Button) Quail, Budgies, Grass Parakeets.
- Size X3: Lovebirds, Rosellas, Many Softbills.



# NFSS FINCH SHOP



**NFSS Tote bag:** Pressure applied NFSS logo in color on one side. Great for bird events or just shopping. 100% cotton washable denim in a neutral color...very sturdy. 14" high X 16" wide and 4" deep with two 22" heavy web handles. **\$8.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Logo Pin:** A multicolored, silk-screened lapel pin featuring the NFSS logo. The pin measures 1/2 inch (32mm). **\$2.50**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Zebra Finch Pin:** Multicolored, enameled lapel pin featuring a stylized design of a Zebra Finch. One inch (25mm) in diameter; imprinted with the words: "The National Finch and Softbill Society" around perimeter. **\$5.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Name Badge:** White plastic name badge with finely detailed black engraving. Each name badge is imprinted with the NFSS logo created by Rose Gianaferra. **\$8.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ Magnetic fastener - Add **\$2.50**

-----  
Name

-----  
2nd Line of Engraving: (Add \$1.00)



**NFSS Journal Back Issues:** (Formerly "NFSS Bulletin") Published from 1984 through the present. Specify year and volume. **\$4.00 Each**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Nest Boxes:** Wooden Nest boxes in kit form. 5" X 5" X 6" high. **\$4.99**

(Please allow up to four weeks for delivery)

Check style desired:

\_\_\_\_ Half-Open Front with \_\_\_\_ Side Mount \_\_\_\_ Rear Mnt

\_\_\_\_ Hinged Top Lid with hole in front and

\_\_\_\_ Side Mnt \_\_\_\_ Rear Mnt \_\_\_\_ Front Mnt

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**"Nature's Jewels" - Gouldian Finch Poster:** Beautiful poster (24" x 36") depicting the many mutations of the Gouldian. Thanks to the generosity of NFSS member, Laraine McGinnis, all proceeds from this product go to further the goals of NFSS. **\$20.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**Finch Note Cards:** 5- 1/2 x 4 - 1/4 Note cards (with envelopes) Artwork by Sally Huntington. See NFSS website for selections. **\$1.75 ea. or \$18.00 for ten.**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Logo Cap:** An adjustable (one size fits most) 100% cotton dark blue cap with the graphic in tan and green National Finch & Softbill Society lettering. **\$16.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



# NFSS FINCH SHOP



**NFSS Finch & Softbill Photo CD with Screen Saver:**  
 Compilation of nearly 500 photos provided by NFSS members and an MS Windows compatible screensaver comprised of more than 150 of the photos. **\$9.99**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Video - "Finch Husbandry":** This video (VHS Format) or DVD, by Vince Moase, formerly of the Metro Toronto Zoo, spans time and aviaries built in two different residences. **\$15.00** Specify: \_\_\_ VHS \_\_\_ DVD

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Finch Nets:** 5 1/4" spring steel hoop with vinyl binding to prevent trauma. 100% dark nylon netting with secure seams - 5" hardwood handle. Perfect for use in catching finches in cages. **\$8.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Judges Handbook & Official Standards:**

Select: \_\_\_ Full Handbook **\$13.00** \_\_\_ Update Only **\$3.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Show Cage Plans \$4.00 ea.**

Specify Size: \_\_\_ NFSS #1 \_\_\_ NFSS #2 \_\_\_ NFSS #3

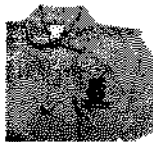
Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Set of all three sizes **\$10.00**



**Egg Candler:** State of the art xenon bulb. Includes a light bender for inspection of eggs in the nest. Uses 2 "AAA" batteries (included). Shipped with information on interpreting the results of egg candling. **\$20.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_



**NFSS Logo Polo Shirt:** A short sleeve, tan, 100% pre-shrunk cotton Polo Shirt with embroidered Logo over left chest. Bird graphic is blue with National Finch & Softbill Society in green. **\$28.00**

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Select Size: \_\_\_ M \_\_\_ L \_\_\_ XL



**Finchwear T-Shirts:** These are white, high quality, 100% preshrunk cotton T-shirts (Hanes Beefy-T). Original artwork was painted by Frohawk over 100 years ago and is SCREEN PRINTED in stunning detail on these shirts. **\$16.50** Select Size: \_\_\_ L \_\_\_ XL

Qty \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_

Select Art: \_\_\_ Gouldian \_\_\_ Society \_\_\_ Zebra

Total Item Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

+ Shipping/Handling: \_\_\_\_\_

Orders to \$9.99 Add \$3.85; \$10.00-\$49.99 Add \$5.80; \$50.0-\$99.99 Add \$7.70; \$100.00 or more Add \$9.90.

Total Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Send completed order with full name and address along with check **Payable to NFSS to:**

**Robert Mehl, NFSS FinchShop Manager**

11108 Hollowbrook Road Owings Mills, MD 21117





# Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Dual Membership 2nd Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member? \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal (List NFSS #) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

### Membership Dues (Select One)

|                 | <u>Single</u>                   | <u>Dual</u>                     | <u>Foreign</u>                  | <u>Junior</u>                    |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>1 Year:</b>  | \$30 <input type="checkbox"/>   | \$35 <input type="checkbox"/>   | \$35 <input type="checkbox"/>   | \$22.50 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>3 Years:</b> | \$85 <input type="checkbox"/>   | \$99 <input type="checkbox"/>   | \$99 <input type="checkbox"/>   |                                  |
| <b>5 Years:</b> | \$140 <input type="checkbox"/>  | \$165 <input type="checkbox"/>  | \$165 <input type="checkbox"/>  |                                  |
| <b>Life:</b>    | \$1500 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$1740 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$1740 <input type="checkbox"/> |                                  |

Mail Application  
and Check  
Payable to  
NFSS:

Ms. Linda  
Hughes  
P.O. Box 499  
Rhome, TX  
76078



## NFSS FINCH/SOFTBILL SAVE

### Information/Application Request

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Request to:

Mr. Randy Taylor

17801 Robin Road, Canyon, TX 79015

## The Classifieds

### **ROBERT MEHL & RAY GLINES**

Breeders of Zebras, Stars, Blue-capped Waxbills, Owls, RH & BH Parrot Finches and Button Quails. Owings Mills, MD, (410) 581-7955, e-mail: Robert.Mehl@verizon.net. Current list of available birdson website: <http://mysite.verizon.net>

**FOR SALE:** Gouldian Finches - All mutations - Owl Finches - Gold Breasted Waxbills - Societies. Healthy, Parent Raised; Kerri Pettey, Portland, OR. (503) 761-2371

**GOULDIAN FINCHES** For Sale: Most all colors. Breeder & Exhibitor of Quality. Will Ship. [www.homestead.com/gouldian/](http://www.homestead.com/gouldian/) Shirley Perkins, Portland, OR (503) 659-0229

**FOR SALE:** Gouldian Finches - most colors: Societies - Chocolate, Fawn Pied - Crested & Normal, Orange Weavers, BlueCapped Cordon Bleus, Canaries. Wilbur Avenue Aviary (508) 675-2045 or e-mail: [max02725@aol.com](mailto:max02725@aol.com)

**SUPERB STARLINGS:** will trade for Gouldian Finches; Call John Kilmer (Portland, OR) (509) 443-2505 [kilmjoh@quest.net](mailto:kilmjoh@quest.net)

**FOR SALE:** Gouldian Finches (Blue), Seagreen parrot finches (Pied), Diamond Sparrows (Fawn), Black-Cheeked Zebra. David Drumm, MI (517) 543-5335 or [ddrumm@core.com](mailto:ddrumm@core.com)

**FOR SALE:** Derek Goodwin's "Estrildid Finches of the World". \$175.00 each. Multiple copies available. Contact Steve Hopman (815) 469-8455 or [birdhop@aol.com](mailto:birdhop@aol.com)

**WANTED:** Silver-eared Mesias (*Sciothrix argentauris*) and Black crested finches (*Lophospingus pusillus*) email [jrsflor@aol.com](mailto:jrsflor@aol.com)

**WANTED:** Brazilian Cardinal or Red Crested Cardinals. Contact Robert Black (513) 367-6345 Harrison, Ohio

**LOOKING FOR BREEDERS:** of Cordon Bleus, Gouldians, and Golden Song Sparrows. Bill Strom - Email: [the187crew@comcast.net](mailto:the187crew@comcast.net)

**WANTED:** Rufous Bellied Niltava, Green Cardinal/Vermillion Cardinal, Red Whiskered Bulbul - Please call or email to Ken (602) 622-9591 or [klim-sprint01@earthlink.net](mailto:klim-sprint01@earthlink.net)

**WANTED:** 2-3 Male Red Billed Fire Finches and also looking for 1-3 pairs of Green Avadavats. Have 2 Female Red Billed Fire Finches to sell or trade. Please call Randy at work (408) 842-0313 or e-mail [franklin@garlic.com](mailto:franklin@garlic.com).

**FOR SALE:** Star Finches (yellow faced, normals and peds), shafttails (normals and fawns), diamond Firetails, Lady gouldians, show societies (chocolate, fawns and whites) all nfss banded. taking orders for spring hatch. Will ship. E-mail: [studioone@cox-internet.com](mailto:studioone@cox-internet.com) Darrin Hill, Species captain, Star and Shafttail finch, Finch and Softbill Save. NFSS.

*Advertising Rates: Inside Cover \$40.00/Issue or \$204.00/Year: Full Page \$30.00/Issue or \$153.00/Year: Half-Page \$20.00/Issue or \$102.00/Year: Quarter-Page \$10.00/Issue or \$51.00/Year. Classifieds: \$4.00 (Up to four lines of text). Free Classifieds to NFSS Finch/Softbill Save Program Members. All ads are posted on the NFSS website ([www.nfss.org](http://www.nfss.org)) at no extra charge. Contact Brenda Josselyn, PMB 279, 6705 Hwy 290 W, Suite 502, Austin, TX 78735. (512) 288-0891 [bjosselyn@austin.tx.com](mailto:bjosselyn@austin.tx.com).*

# Oregon Feeder Insects Corp.

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## New Product!

Introducing Bug'Mmms, a high-protein supplement to mix with seed blends. Great for your wild bird feeder too - it draws insectivores to your feeder.

**NEW 3lb. bags!**  
**Great savings for you!**

Other sizes available, call for details.

**Bug'Mmms™** Puffed millet, *M. domestica*, spirulina. Puffed grain, insect fortified to an amazing 18% protein. Mix with seed blend. Finches love it. **New Product!!**  
12 oz. \$19.95

**Soya Musca™** Soy concentrate, *M. domestica*, spirulina, calcium. Sprinkle on fruits and vegetables, fortify pabulum, bake in egg breads, add to nectars or gels. Not a "stand-alone."  
1 lb. \$15.95  
3 lbs. \$30.95

**Ova Musca™** Dried whole egg, egg white, *M. domestica*, spirulina, calcium. Use in egg breads or to fortify pabulums. Not a "stand-alone" or for sprinkling on wet vegetables or fruit.  
1 lb. \$20.95  
3 lbs. \$40.95

**Skipio's™ Egg Meal** Ground millet, canary seed, egg, soy, *Musca domestica*, spirulina, aniseed. Use moist or dry as breeding conditioner and baby food. High protein and high fiber content for intestinal motility.  
1 lb. \$12.95  
3 lbs. \$24.95

**Skipio's™ Finch Breeder Mix** Ground millet, canary seed, egg, soy, *M. domestica*, flax, alfalfa, spirulina, aniseed. High protein, high fiber, high insect. Feed to world's finches through courtship and breeding.  
1 lb. \$13.95  
3 lbs. \$26.95

**Skipio's™ Softbill Maintenance Mix** Ground millet, dried apple, suet, *M. domestica*, soy, whey, calcium, spirulina. Great for Starlings, Pekins, thrushes, bulbuls and many other softbills.  
1 lb. \$14.95  
3 lbs. \$28.95

**Skipio's™ Fruit and Insect Mix** Dried apple, *M. domestica*, spirulina. Birds benefit from fruit sugars and fiber plus insect derived proteins and fats.  
1 lb. \$13.95  
3 lbs. \$28.95

**Dried *Musca domestica* Larvae** Whole or ground. 4 oz \$24.95, 1 lb \$49.95

**Whole Dried *Musca domestica* Pupae** 4 oz \$24.95, 1 lb \$59.95

**Live *Musca domestica* Pupae** Up to 1 lb.: \$6.50 per order PLUS \$2.50 per ounce; minimum order two ounces.

\*\*\*\*\*

All prices include postage in USA. Major credit cards, checks, MO, PayPal accepted.

OFIC, PO Box 714 Tillamook, OR 97141-0714 USA  
www.oregonfeederinsects.com

TOLL FREE: 866.641.8938  
sales@oregonfeederinsects.com



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BRIDGEPORT, CT  
PERMIT #623

The EuroCage™ is based on a design used by many European bird breeders. The cages can be used singly or in stacks of three high, covering an entire wall or room. The cages are light, sturdy, have powder-coated fronts and durable white plastic sides. These opaque sides are an important part of successful breeding; they separate the pairs so they can hear each other without seeing each other. Each unit can be equipped with a fluorescent light to show the birds to their best advantage. Nestboxes can be placed on a platform inside the cages which assures that banks of cages can be neatly fitted together. The design of the cage allows for maximum hygiene with minimum effort, and the high quality aluminum tubing is designed for a lifetime investment. Any questions...

Call 1.800.456.6780

*We cage 'em, You raise 'em™*



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