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National Finch & Softbill Society

Volume 22, No. 5

Sept/Oct, 2005



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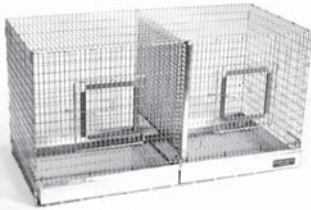
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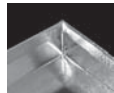
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NFSS Mission Statement

The National Finch & Softbill Society is dedicated to the introduction for 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 cooperation with other organizations for the preservation of aviculture in this country.

On the Cover

This issue's cover photo of a Blue-gray Tanager was taken in the wild by James Ownby. Visit his website at <http://www.ownbyphotography.com/> to see more of his stunning pictures.

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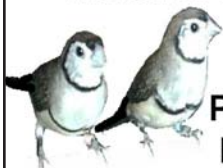
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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Welcome to our "softbill" issue! And just what is a softbill? I think Dick Schroder of "Cuttlebone Plus" < <http://www.cuttleboneplus.com> > probably explains it the best:

"The description 'softbill' leads one to believe the bird would have a soft bill. Nothing is farther from the truth, as anyone who has had a toco toucan grab his ear, or a barbet rip flesh from a finger, can attest to! The name refers to the diet of this large group of birds. Soft food. It will be argued that many seed eaters also consume softfood. This is certainly true, but softbills usually refers to species other than parrots, finches, pheasants, quail, and waterfowl. These are mainly grain-eaters. Softbills can be divided into several groups dietarily: frugivores, the fruit eaters; insectivores, the bug eaters; nectivores, the nectar feeders; and omnivores who eat a combination of things.

To feed a large mixed softbill collection would seem to be a momentous task, but not necessarily so. There are a variety of prepared diets on the market that are excellent. Pelleted foods, insect and egg foods, as well as nectar pre-mixes are available. It's not too difficult to prepare a diet that has something for everyone, then just provide the specialty items on the side to those who require them. A mix of various chopped fruits, such as apples, pears, melons, papaya, tomatoes, grapes, berries (I use avocado too, but only for the softbills), and mixed vegies, coupled with a large portion of soaked mynah/softbill pellets will provide a good basic diet. We offer mealworms and crickets, dusted with a calcium/mineral powder, to those that require it, especially when rearing young. We provide a nectar mix in addition to the above for the nectar feeders in our collection, leafbirds, honeycreepers, etc. Except for the time spent dicing fruit, feeding softbills is really not a whole lot different than feeding parrots."

We also extend a big welcome to NFSS life member Robert Black, who will be writing about various interesting topics in his new column "Finches in Aviculture" starting this issue.

I hope that you enjoy this special issue. And, as always, please consider sharing your knowledge and experience with others by submitting an article for publication in our Journal. The growth of NFSS over the past 20 years has been nothing short of spectacular and owes a great deal to our membership contributions.

On page 61 of this issue, you will find a listing of our various officers and department members. If you have any questions or suggestions on ways to improve the NFSS, please contact the appropriate officer or member. Our Journal is your magazine, so please let me know what you think of it, especially any changes that you would like to see, the types of articles that you would like to read, and sections that you would like to add.

Until next issue

Harry Bryant
NFSS 2nd VP/Editor



NFSS President's Message September/October, 2005

“ . . . we will have this finished by Thursday, Mrs Huntington.”

Of course you just don't know which Thursday! Maybe you can tell our enclosed avaries are not finished yet. We have birds in study-designed rather make-shift aviaries everywhere. I mean everywhere: Two in the living room, one in spare room, one even in our bedroom, (a 5' by 6' by 30-inch 'flight' housing 14 waxbills being tested against a new type of firm plastic 1/4 x 1/4 mesh) and ten in the garage. (Good thing Vince is a good sport!)

The 24' by 24' garage looks like a quarantine station. We finally caught the seven Mousebirds that managed to get loose in the garage (scratch that type of netting as Mousebird-proof). We also know why they are called 'mousebirds'; they 'skitter' and dart and hide just like mice, their little heads always scanning!

Amazing what we learn, however: some of the birds (Bulbuls, Crimson Finches, Fruit Doves, Societies, and even a Pekin Robin) have decided to nest in spite of the chaos. Go figure. I decided to foster the Pekin Robin egg in a Bulbul nest of 2 eggs and it hatched along with a Bulbul, and is now into the 4th day. (More later on this first-time try.)

We have designed it such that members are to receive the NFSS Journal every other month. At times it sure seems as though we're not sure WHICH 'every-other-month' as we are often a casualty of the printer's equipment failure, mailing house employment levels falling, or our own computer failure (No! computers never fail?)

Our editor, Harry Bryant has done some major regrouping, and in spite of the production problems he is determined to get the Journal out on time without losing his real job - the one that pays his bills. By the way, Harry is always in need of new articles no matter how short or long, something you might know that we would all benefit from.

This is a volunteer organization. Thanks to volunteer Ginny Allen who so diligently orchestrated the special election to approve the by-laws revision and elect the pro tem volunteers to the board.

The general election for the Board of Directors is this fall. This is a 2 year commitment. The ballots for this election go to an accounting firm not affiliated with NFSS, and the results are announced at the general meeting at NCBS and published in the NFSS Journal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Sally Huntington". The signature is fluid and cursive.

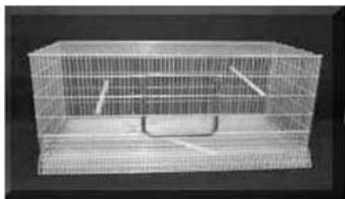
Sally Huntington, President, National Finch & Softbill Society

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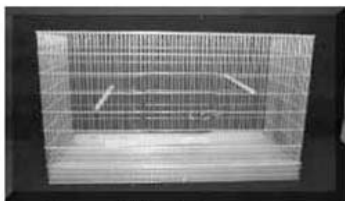
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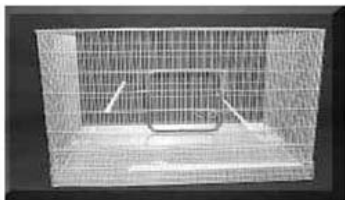
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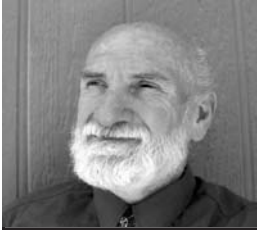
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Finches in Aviculture

by Robert Black

Brooding in the Gouldian Finches

The Gouldian Finch is one of the true gems of aviculture. The cost of a pair of these birds, however, is a good indication of the difficulty we have in raising them successfully. Derek Goodwin in his *Estrildid Finches of the World* offered the advice that anyone who is not rich with lots of spare time every day would be wise not to keep Gouldians. Many successful breeders of Gouldians are successful only because they foster all of the eggs to the more dependable Society Finches. The Gouldians are native to northern Australia in tropical Queensland and the Northern Territory. This is a very warm area, and the Gouldian Finches breed primarily in the hottest months of the year, from January through April. When we attempt to breed these birds in Europe or North America, the Gouldians' habits, developed for thousands of years in tropical northern Australia, work to our severe disadvantage. Many breeders have resorted to "Hothouse" conditions in order to breed their Gouldians successfully, though this causes a disastrous mortality rate when the birds are transferred to breeders having normal temperature conditions.

These birds are susceptible to the same microorganisms and dietary nutritional problems that are common in all of the other finch species. However, I have found that an additional problem is nearly unique to the Gouldians and causes nestling deaths that are worse than those from all other causes put

together. This is the natural tendency of the Gouldian parent birds to stop brooding their nestlings after they are about one week of age. In tropical northern Australia, this causes no mortality, as the night temperatures remain high, probably over 90 degrees Fahrenheit.

However, under normal European or North American temperature conditions, night temperatures are much lower than this, particularly during the Gouldians' chosen breeding periods. If the night temperatures go much below 80 degrees Fahrenheit after the adult birds stop brooding, the nestlings will die of exposure. They are unable to generate enough of their own body heat at this age to compensate for the lack of parental brooding. Once the babies have reached the stage where pinfeathers are fully formed and breaking out into the first juvenile feathering, the nestlings will be able to generate their own body heat and will be safe even if the night temperatures should go as low as 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

In order to compensate for the lack of parental brooding, an additional source of heat for the nest is indispensable. I have used a 25 watt red incandescent light bulb directed at the back of the nest to increase the ambient air temperature to over 90 degrees, beginning at about the fifth day after hatching. The adult birds become used to this new feature in an hour or two, and will then continue to feed and brood their nestlings regularly. When the parent birds stop brooding as the babies

are about one week of age, the additional heat will keep these nestlings alive and healthy until they reach the stage where they can generate their own body heat. The red bulb does not interfere with the birds' normal sleep, and the 25 watt bulb will never become too hot for the health and comfort of the nestlings.

I began using this additional heat source after losing a nest of five

beautiful, healthy babies when the parent birds stopped brooding, and the night temperature went below the temperature that the nestlings needed to survive. Since then, no nestling has died from lack of parental brooding. If you have also encountered this problem, perhaps not realizing its cause and solution, this information may aid you in raising more young Gouldians in the future.

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



Linda Castaner manning the NFSS Booth at the 2005 AFA Convention in Miami. Lots of interest was shown towards the NFSS there. A very big thanks to both Ron and Linda for taking their time to represent us at one of the largest bird conventions in the country. (photo by Ron Castaner)



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Early Detection Through Home Fecal Smears

by Vonda L. Zwick

In the spring of 2005, I lost a Blue-capped Cordon Bleu waxbill to a *Candida* yeast infection. Treatment with Nystatin worked to an extent, but failed to completely eliminate the infection. When off the medication, the bird returned to her former state. The vet then put her on Ancoban with Pektamalt, and I saw the same pattern: it helped, but could not eliminate the yeast completely. The yeast had likely become systemic and the medications could not reach all areas of infection.

Prior to the onset of symptoms, the bird had shown a lack of interest in her mate and lack of song. However, other factors besides illness sometimes account for those symptoms. Had I been able to definitively identify the cause as a physical problem in the earliest stages, I might have been able to bring her in before the yeast had become systemic. Unfortunately, cost, distance, and scheduling factors make it impractical for me to take a bird to the vet unless I am certain there is a problem.

My vet diagnosed the problem via a fecal smear and he invited me to look at the yeast under the microscope. They were clearly identifiable, even to my untrained eye. The vet told me that I could screen for this myself with any microscope capable of 400x magnification, and gave me some brief instructions. Had I known this earlier, perhaps I could have saved my bird.

What Special Skills Do I Need?

You do not need any special skills or training to do your own fecal smear. I have no training in biology, microbiology, or veterinary medicine. Prior to this, the last time I had used a micro-

scope was high school science. No dyes or dangerous/hard-to-acquire chemicals are needed. The skills you need you will acquire with practice.

What About My Avian Vet?

Performing a home fecal smear does not replace your vet. Your vet's experienced eye will enable him or her to see things that you do not. He/she can make connections between the symptoms and the microscopic findings. Some findings, such as yeast infections, may occur as a secondary problem to another condition, and treating the secondary problem is useless if you do not also eliminate the cause. Your vet can provide you with the most appropriate medications and proper instructions as to dosage and administration. Thus, home fecal exams should always be used in conjunction with your vet to provide your birds with timely and appropriate care.

Why Should I Do My Own Fecal Smears?

The greatest benefit to doing fecal smears from home is early detection. Using selective testing or routine screenings, a problem may be identified in the early stages before symptoms have surfaced and, perhaps, before it has spread. Early detection is critical to successful treatment, especially in small birds. Some finch keepers do not use a vet because the bird frequently dies despite costly treatment. The problem usually is not the fault of the vet; the problem is that by the time significant symptoms surface in a finch, it is too late. Since learning to do my own fecal smears, I have had great success treating those illnesses that I've detected early.

Home fecal smears allow you to monitor a bird's progress daily. You can provide your vet with more accurate phone updates, perhaps even eliminating the need for some follow-up visits that might further stress the bird. You can assess the effectiveness of the treatment regimen and institute medication changes early on if you do not see any results. You can monitor birds that may have been exposed to the ill bird, and ensure those who were infected receive treatment.

Fecal screenings can prove valuable when buying or selling birds. At a recent event, I purchased eight new birds showing no signs of illness. I tested all birds and found that two had Avian Gastric Yeast infections. One of the two also carried Coccidia and small numbers of motile flagellate protozoa. These problems were easily handled because they were caught before symptoms appeared and before the birds were introduced to my flock. As a seller, you can screen sale birds to reduce the risk of selling a carrier bird or a sick bird with no symptoms to an unsuspecting client, thus increasing customer satisfaction and boosting your reputation.

What Can A Fecal Smear Identify?

A fecal smear can identify many types of worm eggs (100x), yeast organisms like *Candida* and Avian Gastric Yeast (Megabacteria) (400x), motile flagellate protozoa like *Trichomonas*, *Giardia*, *Cochlosoma*, and *Hexamita* (400x or greater), and *Coccidia* (400x).

What Can't A Fecal Smear Identify?

Bacterial organisms are visible, but too small to be identified via a microscope. Instead, Gram stains or cultures are necessary to get information about the bacterial content of a dropping. Viruses also cannot be identified via a fecal exam, nor can respiratory problems.

Therefore, just because you consistently find nothing irregular, you cannot assume the bird is healthy, but you can make a reasonable attempt to rule out some possible problems.

How To Perform a Fecal Smear

What Do I Need?

A Microscope – While a microscope can be quite an investment, if you shop around you can get a good deal from vendors on eBay. A new full-featured binocular (two eyepieces) microscope can be had for about \$300; a monocular (one eyepiece) microscope, for between \$100 and \$200. If you can save a few birds and prevent others from becoming infected, the cost is easily justified, especially if you have a large flock or care for expensive or rare birds.

The microscope should be able to magnify up to 400x. The total magnification of a microscope is calculated by multiplying the power of the eyepiece by the power of the lens. A microscope with a 10x eyepiece and a 40x objective lens produces a total magnification of 400x. Some high-end microscopes can magnify at 1000x or higher, but these high magnifications require the use of an oil-immersion lens. To use the oil-immersion lens, a drop of immersion oil is placed between the slide and the objective lens so that air does not distort the image at these high magnifications. Once oil has been placed on the slide, you cannot switch back to a regular objective. I have, on occasion, used my oil-immersion lens, but have found that it has not contributed significantly to the identification of the problems described below, so one can easily do without this feature if the budget is tight.

Nice-to-have features include an electronic light source and a mechanical stage. An electronic light source will provide more consistent illumination

than a mirror. A mechanical stage can move the slide in small, even increments by turning knobs, making it easier to canvas the slide at high magnifications. I highly recommend this feature if it can be afforded. It is nice to have both a coarse and a fine focus control. Coarse focus is used to bring the slide into focus the first time. Fine focus can then be used to examine the depths of the smear.

Slides and Cover Slips – Slides are small rectangular pieces of glass that hold the fecal sample. A cover slip is a very thin square piece of glass that is placed on top of the sample.

Saline Solution – The fecal smear must be diluted with a drop of normal (isotonic) saline solution. Plain water will destroy some protozoa. Normal saline is .9% (mix 9 grams of salt to a liter of water), or you can buy isotonic saline solution like that used for rinsing contact lenses.

The Process – Scrape up a freshly passed dropping and place on the slide. For waxbills, the entire dropping can be used. For finches with larger droppings, you may need only about half the dropping. For larger birds, it is best to take a small sample from various parts of the dropping and analyze them individually on separate slides. You only need a small amount – 2 or 3 square mm.

Add a drop of saline solution to the sample. Using a toothpick, mix the dropping with the saline solution to break it up. Place the cover slip on top of the dropping, and press down gently on the center. Slide the cover slip around on the slide, to distribute the sample into a very thin layer through which light can penetrate. Make sure no debris prevents the cover slip from laying flat on the slide. If solution leaks on top of the cover slip, dab it dry with a tissue.

Place the slide on the microscope stage and bring the contents into view with the coarse focus control. Use the fine focus to examine the different layers of the smear. You may miss something if you do not adjust the fine focus throughout the depth of the smear. I've found that Avian Gastric Yeast sometimes hides on a focal plain slightly



askew from that of the other background material. Canvas the slide.

If your entire slide consists of plant material and fecal debris (brownish/yellowish color), you won't be able to see very much. A smaller, more dilute fecal sample is needed. Most organisms show up in the clear solution portions of the slide (white background), rather than in the colored debris.

How to Get Started

I recommend taking some time to look at the droppings of healthy birds. Try to identify the various artifacts that you see, such as feather fragments, plant material, air bubbles, urate crystals, and starch granules. Knowing what is considered normal will help you to recognize something that is out of the ordinary. However, be aware that seemingly healthy birds can carry pathogenic organisms; thus, not everything you see may actually be a "normal" finding. When illness strikes, get a positive diagnosis from a veterinarian if possible. If the veterinarian finds something on a fecal smear, ask if you can see the results under the microscope. This will help you to identify the organism on your own. If your veterinarian is uncooperative, look for a picture of the

causative organisms in a medical reference (I highly recommend the book by Dr Brown referenced on page 32) or on the Internet. Then, before beginning treatment, do your own fecal smear and attempt to identify the causative organism under the microscope. Continue to do fecal smears as you treat the bird. If the treatment is working, with time, you should see the number of causative organisms found decrease and eventually disappear altogether.

After doing this for a while, you will become good at distinguishing normal and abnormal findings. When you see something you don't recognize, it will stand out. Frequently, in a heavily infected bird, it will stand out simply because of the number of unusual organisms present (one or two artifacts I don't recognize in a symptomless bird may be nothing, but if they are found throughout the smear in an ill bird, chances are good that something is up).

Microscopic Findings

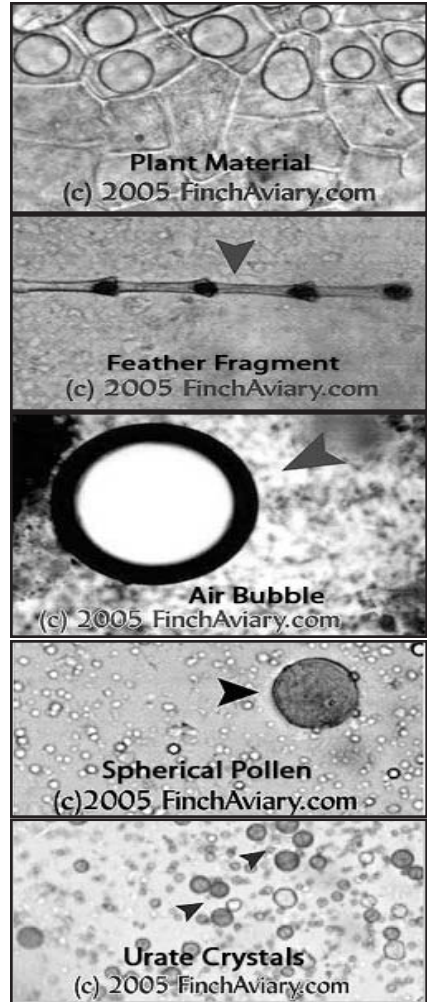
The following photographs illustrate some of the normal and abnormal microscopic findings that I have come across thus far. Unfortunately, my microscope camera takes grainy, low-resolution images. It also crops the field of view to roughly a quarter of what is normally visible, so these images represent only a portion of the entire frame visible through the eyepiece at 400x.

Normal Background Material

Plant material, feather fragments, air bubbles, spherical pollen, and urate crystals all may be found in healthy bird droppings and are considered normal. Plant material can range in color from shades of yellow/brown to clear. Spherical pollen is usually a golden yellow/brown color. This helps one to dis-

tinguish it from oocysts and worm eggs, which are usually colorless.

Normal Movement



Most of the time, the things you see under the microscope are sedentary. However, sometimes you might notice movement. The following movement is normal:

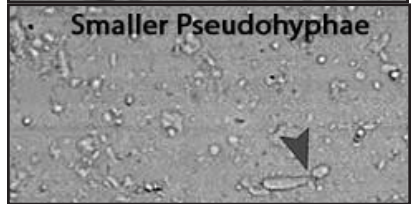
Flowing Motion – Sometimes you will see material traveling in the same direc-

tion at the same speed, much like objects floating together down a river. This is most evident when a new slide has just been created or when you accidentally bump the cover slip, and it is caused by saline solution flowing beneath the cover slip. Once the saline solution settles, this motion should stop.

Brownian Motion – Brownian motion is what causes the very smallest bacteria and background material to appear to jitter and move as if of their own accord in a very random way. In actuality, the particles are not moving of their own volition, but instead are being pushed around by bombarding water molecules. In my limited experience, Brownian motion has been restricted to the smallest particles that can be seen at 400x and does not usually have much effect on larger, heavier particles, like urate crystals.

Abnormal Findings - The following photographs illustrate some of the problematic organisms I have discovered under the microscope. All samples were collected from finches. Absent from this section are pictures of worm eggs, a problem I have been fortunate enough to avoid thus far.

Candida (Budding Yeast and Pseudohyphae) - *Candida* can be identified by detecting budding yeast (two small oval-shaped clear organisms joined at one end) as well as by detecting pseudohyphae (longer branching emerging from yeast organisms). A 400x magnification is required for identi-



fication. Small numbers of this organism can be considered normal. Always check for yeast before administering an antibiotic, as antibiotics will actually allow the yeast organisms to multiply and thrive and are even considered to be the original cause of some yeast infections.

Avian Gastric Yeast (Megabacteria) - Avian gastric yeast can be seen as long, thin, clear rods at 400x magnification. Unlike *Candida*, there are no budding yeast organisms or pseudohyphae. They can be unloaded in large quantities in a single dropping, then subsequent droppings may only contain one



or two. Some regard the presence of very small numbers in a symptomless bird to be normal, but I would advise multiple retests to ensure the numbers don't increase. The presence of multiple organisms in a single frame is a clear indication of a problem.



Coccidia - Coccidia is a protozoan organism that can be detected by finding oocysts in the smear at a magnification of 400x. Oocysts are similar to eggs. They are round or oval, colorless,



and contain masses (sporocysts) in the center. *Isospora* spp contain two masses; *Eimeria* spp contain four that overlap to look like one large mass.

Motile Flagellate Protozoa - Motile flagellate protozoa can be detected by observing unusual movement in the background material (eg, jittering or spinning urate crystals). To rule out Brownian motion, view at 400x or greater and use the fine focus adjustment to carefully focus in the area of movement until you find the causative organism, which is very nearly transparent and may move in and out of focus. If you are lucky, you might see the flagella, a hair-like structure that whips

around and causes it to move or spin. Protozoa do not survive long outside the body, so you need to analyze a fresh dropping quickly in order to detect them. The organisms may be shed sporadically and may not be present in every dropping.

Photographing protozoa is difficult because they are nearly transparent and it is through their movement that they are recognized. Video of a variety of protozoan organisms can be found here: <http://homepage.mac.com/exoticdv/bird/Menu99.html>. My own low-quality video taken from a smear that was nearly cool can be found at <http://www.finchaviary.com>.

Further Reading

Under the Microscope: Microscope Use and Pathogen Identification in Birds and Reptiles by Dr. Danny Brown is geared specifically toward aviculturists. Its quality photographs of potential findings make it a must-have. (www.ladygouldianfinch.com or www.avianpublications.com)

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NFSS Member Vonda Zwick created and maintains the website "FinchAviary" < www.finchaviary.com > and can be reached at: webmistress@finchaviary.com

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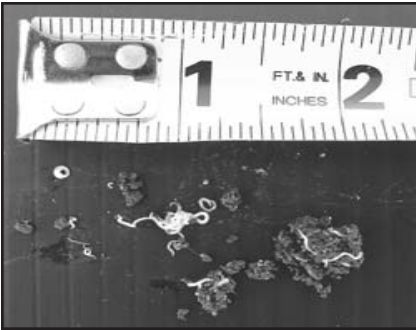
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White Worms

By Shelley Ortman



Have you ever seen a Robin triumphantly fly to its brood with a big fat wriggly earthworm in its beak, and think, "Gee, I bet my birds would love a tasty treat like that?" Whatever you do, don't even dream of feeding them a wild earthworm! The worms themselves could carry parasites or diseases that could devastate your flock.

There is however a tasty treat that you can provide to your feathered friends that is safe, inexpensive and easy to grow, provided you're not squeamish about messing with dirt and worms!

These worms, commonly known as white worms, belong to the Class Oligochaeta which also includes earthworms (LarvaTech). They look like one-inch-long pieces of white thread. They live in moist, neutral to slightly alkaline soil and are really easy to cultivate, provided you follow a few basic guidelines.

First you will need a good waterproof shallow container. Any plastic sweater box or any plastic tub will do. Fill the container with about 4 inches of a good quality sterile potting soil. You can use your own garden loam, but make sure to sterilize it first to kill any fungus, parasites or foreign insects that

could be lurking within. To sterilize, you should bake your soil in the oven for about an hour at 250° or until the very center of the soil reaches 250° for at least 20 minutes. Since cooking dirt in the oven may not be very popular with your family, (and it smells unpleasant) just buying the sterile potting soil is usually easier.

When the soil has cooled, add water so that the soil is almost wet. You will know when your soil has enough water in it if you squeeze it in your fist and it stays balled up with finger marks when you open your hand. You should almost be able to wring water from it.

Now here is the most important part of raising these worms: keep your culture in the basement or in the coolest part of your house. If the worm culture gets warmer than 72° for more than a day or two, the worms will die and get smelly and your whole family will be mad! I have a basement that is cool enough even through our blazing subtropical mid-Atlantic summers. I have also heard that a culture can be kept going in the refrigerator, but I've never tried it.



You will need one more thing for the worm culture, and that's a cover. I use a piece of corrugated plastic cut just smaller than the inside diameter of the box. There is a gap of ½-inch or so along the edges for the air to circulate and it is just resting lightly on top of the soil, not pressed into it. Other possible covers include a piece of glass, or even wet newspapers. Just make sure that the cover will keep out most of the light and yet allow some air circulation. Don't worry about the worms escaping. They won't. The important things a cover provides are darkness, and slowing down the rate of water evaporation.

So where do you get a white worm culture to start? Local aquarium shops often have cultures as they are popular live food for fish and reptiles. I first got my starter culture from Wings Aviary in Pennsylvania. You can also do a Google search on the Internet for white-worm suppliers. The problem with ordering them online is that they must be shipped in cool weather. If you happen to know me, and live nearby I will give you some to start you out!



Wherever you get them, they should be pretty inexpensive. A pint-size starter culture usually costs less than \$5 in my part of the country (NorthEast). Once you get your initial culture, just dig a hole in your previously prepared worm tub and dump it in.

Your worms will need to eat. I feed them stale bread that has been soaked in milk. Just break up the bread, add milk until it is all soaked, dig a trench about an inch deep in the soil and lay the wet bread down in a line or a spat; the worms won't care. Cover the wet food with an inch of soil. Some people feed them human infant cereal, commercial egg food, or dog or cat food. Since I don't want to waste money on my worms I feed bread as it is by far the cheapest. Whatever you feed them though, make sure it is completely sopping wet before you add it to the culture or the worms can't eat it. I feed my worms about once a week and they have been thriving for 3 years now.

If you follow this routine, in about six weeks you should have a really nice colony of white worms growing and you can take some to feed the birds. If you can remember where you last plopped down the worm food, a worm ball may have formed in that spot. Just scoop out enough to cover the bottom of a feeding dish (worms, dirt and all) and put it in your bird cage. I have found that the waxbills figure out quickly that those white threads are a delicious food source. My Lavenders go crazy for them, and although it took them a little while, the Parrot Finches really like them now too. Birds are copy-cats and if one species figures it out, the others will quickly try tasting them. I also think the birds enjoy flinging the dirt around a little bit too. I feed them to the birds about once a week, and more often if I feel like it. Usually how often I feed the

white worms depends on how motivated I am to make the extra trip up and down the basement steps!

You can even neglect your worms! Sometimes whole weeks go by and I just haven't checked on them, or fed them. They may thin out a bit in their tub, but they always reproduce quickly when given more food.

Some things you want to watch out for: If your worms start to migrate up the sides of your container your soil is probably too wet, and if your culture starts to smell there is a problem and you should start a fresh culture. I once had a big ugly hairy spider that lived on top of my worm culture and it really freaked me out, so I bought a pest strip and

attached it to the top of the worm tub, but not touching the soil or the worms. That was the last I saw of undesirable critters around my worm culture. Let's also revisit some things to avoid that will definitely kill your worm culture. First, keep them cool; second, keep them moist. Failure to attend to either condition could mean curtains for your worms!

The next time you see a wild bird enjoying a juicy wriggler, give a thought to providing your own beloved flock with a safe, healthy and (for a bird) delicious snack. It is kind of fun to keep a worm culture and especially fun to thrill and disgust your non-bird friends with the question, "Hey guys, Wanna see my worms?"

Shelley Ortman breeds & exhibits finches & softbills, concentrating on the tiny African waxbills. She is also a full-time 7th grade Teacher of the Handicapped.

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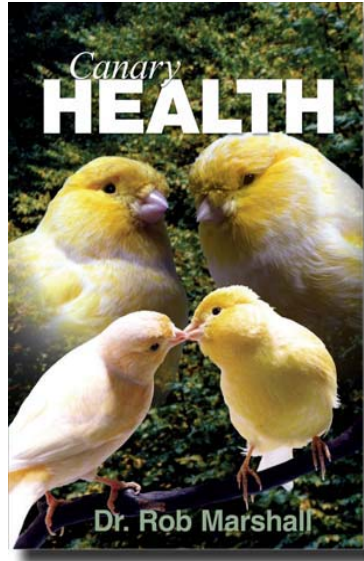
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KEEPING TOUCANS AS PETS AND BREEDERS

by Jerry Jennings



2005

Toco Toucans

Cecilia Tragarak

Toucans and their smaller cousins, the toucanets and aracarís, are among the most curious and comical birds in aviculture. Their long, colorful beaks have attracted attention since the time of the first Spanish conquistadors, whence they were taken to Spain for the idle pleasure of the King and his court. Since the early 1500s toucans have continued to mesmerize those fortunate enough to have them. Today they are no longer the proprietary interest of royalty, but available to those whose tastes and interests extend to the truly exotic.

Toucans, toucanets, and aracarís, which will be collectively referred to hereinafter as toucans, are members of the family Ramphastidae, a new world group of birds found exclusively in the

tropical regions of Central and South America, from southern Mexico south to northern Argentina. While most are lowland rainforest species, a few (the Mountain Toucans) have adapted to the high altitude mountainous areas of the Andes, where they may be found as high as 9,000 feet!

Toucans are known in aviculture as softbilled birds, due to the nature of their natural diet, which consists of a large variety of fruits. In some areas of the rainforest, they are known to take advantage of over 170 species of fruiting trees, shrubs, and vines. During the breeding season toucans also consume insects, which they feed to their rapidly growing young, whose protein requirements exceed that found in available fruits.

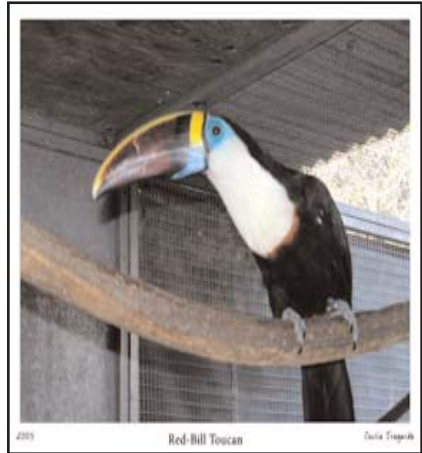
TOUCANS AS PETS

Toucans can make wonderfully entertaining and affectionate pets, providing they are handreared as babies. They will cuddle, ride around on your shoulder, and learn to play in a variety of ways, including playing catch with small balls or objects and they can do somersaults from a standing position or 360-degree rolls and end-over-end maneuvers while in flight. Toucans have even been trained to free fly and entertain audiences with their antics. At one time they were a part of the Animal Actors Theater at Universal Studios, and today they can be seen free-flying at Disney World's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida, where four Toco Toucans perform in nine shows daily.

While toucans are unable to talk, unlike a parrot, they also do not make loud noises, cannot chew up the house or furniture, and they do not shed feather dust making your house look like it was hit by a small snowstorm.

HOUSING YOUR PET TOUCAN

Housing a pet toucan is similar to that of a pet parrot. The size of the bird determines the size of the cage. A large toucan, for example, should be kept in a macaw size cage. A toucanet, on the other hand should be kept in a cage appropriate for an Amazon or African Grey. These birds should be let out to play, just like a parrot, and are readily trained to stay on a perch stand, either on top of the cage or nearby. The perch stand should be equipped with appropriate food and water bowls. Toucans also will enjoy playing with "toucan appropriate" toys. These should be made out of things that cannot break, or if they should come apart, not into small pieces easily swallowed. Mardi Gras beads, for example, are out. They do like to pull and shake things, so items made from rope and leather work well.



Every toucan should be given the opportunity to leave its cage to exercise more than the cage would normally allow, and the owner is encouraged to interact with their toucan much in the same fashion they would interact with a parrot. Toucans hop, rather than walk one foot in front of the other like a parrot. They also cannot use their beaks as a "third hand" to assist in climbing, so they are best left full flighted. If their wings are to be clipped, perches must be arranged so they can readily hop higher, lower, or horizontally.

Full-flighted toucans can be taught to come to their owner on command and are easily "potty trained" to a specific location, such as their cage.

DIET FOR YOUR PET TOUCAN

The diet of a toucan is relatively simple. If you have cared for a parrot, then you will have no trouble with a toucan. Toucans, as mentioned earlier, thrive on a diet primarily consisting of fruits, which fruits are also an important component of wild parrot diets. Toucans should also be fed a pelleted ration, which contains an appropriate composition of proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals.

There are a number of pellet products on the market from which you may choose. The key concern in choosing a pellet is to feed one that is low in iron. An appropriate iron level is less than 100 parts per million. While it is important to check manufacturer's claims on the package (or call their customer service number on the package), most claims are based on a generalized computer-generated analysis, which is usually way off the mark. The only reliable low-iron pellet is manufactured by the Mazuri Division of Purina Mills. Mazuri devotes itself to manufacturing wild diets for a variety of zoo animals, including toucans, and the specialized diet they make for toucans is known as Mazuri Low Iron Softbill Diet 5 MI2.

Since we are unable to provide the types of fruit toucans eat in the wild we must go to the grocery store in search of alternatives. We have found that nearly all commercially available fruits are suitable for toucans. We rely heavily on papaya, bananas, blueberries, and grapes for the foundation of the diet, which may be supplemented with various melons, apples, pears, peaches, apricots, etc.; in short, nearly everything except citrus. Citrus fruits are very high in acid and should be avoided, since the acid helps the intestines absorb iron more effectively, which we want to avoid.

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Toucans are very hardy birds that will live as long as 25 years, while the record lifespan for a toucan kept at the San Diego Zoo was 32 years. They are resistant to viruses, which have rarely been documented in a captive toucan to date. They are also resistant to Psittacosis, which has never been reported in a toucan (Dr. Amy Worell, DVM, personal comment). Toucans, however, do get intestinal parasites such as roundworms, capillaria, etc., and occasional bacterias common to

other birds; i.e., E. coli, etc. Therefore, as with any new pet bird, it is advisable to take your new toucan to your veterinarian for a wellness check.

Toucans also occasionally develop iron storage disease, or hemochromatosis as it is technically known. Iron storage disease occurs in a variety of animals including humans, and is found in birds, most commonly in Birds of Paradise, Mynahs, Toucans, and Tanagers. It is a metabolic problem associated with the malabsorption of dietary iron. To avoid this problem, toucans (and other softbilled birds) should be fed a diet low in iron and low in acid as mentioned above.

BREEDING TOUCANS

In the wild toucans nest in hollow tree cavities, usually those left abandoned by woodpeckers and parrots. Toucans do not have a great ability to carve out their own nests like woodpeckers, so they move into someone else's digs. They will make some effort at remodeling, but their beaks are not hard enough to remove wood material, unless the wood is very soft. In captivity, toucans have nested readily in hollow



nest logs carved from lengths of palm tree trunks, other hollowed tree species, and to a lesser extent in wooden nest boxes. The nests should be 8-11 inches in diameter for the large toucans, and 4-6 inches for the smaller toucanets and aracarís. Entrance holes in the side of

the nest should be relatively small, allowing the bird a tight squeeze on entering. Diameter of the entrance for a large toucan should be 4 inches and for a toucanet or aracarí only 2½ inches. Nests should be 2-3 feet deep inside for all species and if a nest box is used, the walls should be lined with a wire ladder for the birds to climb up and down. Their toenails are sharp enough to climb the interior of a natural log.

Nest logs should be placed high in the aviary as close to the ceiling as possible. In the wild, these birds prefer to nest very high up in dead trees, so height will encourage them, and low nests will discourage them.



2005 Baby Toucans Jerry Jennings

All toucans lay elliptical, pure white eggs three to a clutch with the occasional clutches of 4 –5 eggs for the smaller toucanets and aracarís. Incubation lasts sixteen days for all species and the babies hatch naked with their eyes closed. First feathers appear at three weeks accompanied with the opening of their eyes. Large



2005 Toucan Babies Jerry Jennings

toucans fledge at 6½ to 7 weeks of age and the toucanets and aracarís fledge at 6 weeks of age. They take 1-2 weeks to wean under parent care and less time under handfeeding conditions.

THE AVIARY

Toucans make wonderful aviary birds, where they enjoy flying about with a great deal of energy. Compared to a parrot they are more active and will engage their owner in a variety of ways with their courting, nesting, and playing behaviors. They enjoy planted flights, and unlike parrots will not damage the foliage. Plants also provide perching opportunities and shade which is very important, especially in warmer climates (fruiting plants such as grapes also provide dining and entertainment opportunities). In fact, temperatures in excess of 95 degrees Fahrenheit require that plenty of shade be present, and over 100 degrees mandates the use of misters. Cold, on the other hand, is less of a concern as toucans will adjust to temperatures close to freezing. In fact, I have photographed captive toucans sitting on perches covered with snow! Needless to say, when toucans are placed outdoors, they need to be acclimated slowly to abrupt changes in the temperatures to which they were previously accustomed.

Most species of toucans may be housed together with other toucans and/or with other birds of similar or larger size. Cage size is the all-important consideration: the larger the cage the greater the opportunity. Large toucan species may be housed in pairs alone in cages as small as 8 feet by 12 feet by 6-8 feet high. However, if you have an extremely large flight, many pairs may be successfully kept together. Such a situation may be seen first hand by paying a visit to the Dallas World Aquarium in downtown Dallas, Texas, where they have on exhibit many pairs

of Keel Bill Toucans, Swainson's Toucans, Red Bill Toucans, Spot Bill



Chestnut Eared Aracari

Toucanets, Collared aracaris, and Black Neck aracaris and Green aracaris in a large free flight, nearly an acre in floor space and nearly six stories high. There are a number of other birds in this enclosure including Spoonbills, Ibis, Flamingoes, and even Tanagers, along with two species of monkeys! There is also a much smaller flight there with several species of toucans housed together.

When breeding toucans is the primary concern, the probability of success will be increased proportionally to the fewer birds sharing the flight. The best results, of course, will be obtained when toucans are housed alone in pairs.

BREEDING DIETS

The diet for breeding toucans is the same as for pet toucans with a few exceptions. Once babies have hatched, the pelleted portion of the diet must be moistened, so it does not have the affect of dehydrating newborns. Fruit must be diced in pieces no larger than three-eighths of an inch, and grapes must be diced—not fed whole.

While the toucanets and aracaris do not require live food to successfully rear young, many of the larger toucans will not feed their young aggressively

unless they are offered live food. We have found that the large toucans will not take mealworms, but love crickets. Crickets are readily available from commercial sources and may be kept in large plastic tubs, such as garbage cans. They should be fed live. Contrary to myth, toucans do not need and should not be fed live baby mice (pinkies), since mice are common carriers of Salmonella and Yersinia, two bacteria to which toucans are vulnerable, and not otherwise exposed to except through contact with rodents. Keeping rodents and their feces and urine out of the toucan cage is important, as it is with any other bird

HANDFEEDING TOUCANS

Like most birds, toucans may be easily handfed. The methods employed in handrearing parrots are similar. Toucans are best fed via syringe, using a commercial handfeeding formula, such as Kaytee Exact. However, it is very important to add some fruit to the handfeeding formula, otherwise the babies will have a difficult time digesting. Gerber's manufactures a variety of suitable fruits, such as Papaya (most important), Mango, Apple/Banana, apples, and blueberries, etc. These should constitute 10-20 % of the hand-



Toucan Toucans

feeding formula. The formula should be mixed with distilled water, as it is the least likely water source to be contaminated with bacteria. Tap water, no mat-

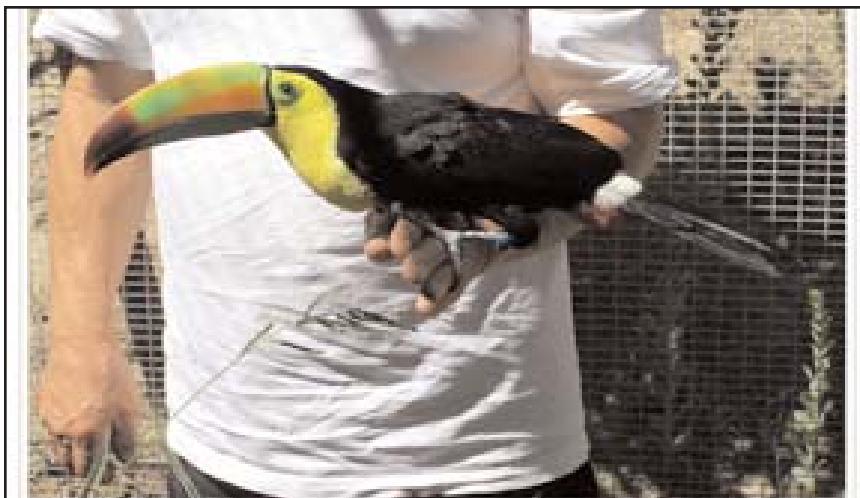
ter the source, should never be used! No other food should be offered to baby toucans until they are ready to leave the brooder and enter their weaning cage. Once in the weaning cage they should be offered the same diet offered the adults, while continuing to be handfed until they wean, a process that can be sped up by handing them pieces of food from their food bowls.

Like baby parrots, artificially incubated toucans start out in a brooder. The brooder temperature should be maintained at 97 F degrees for the first 2 weeks of life, then gradually reduced as with any baby bird.

CONCLUSION

Keeping toucans, whether as pets or aviary birds, is a very rewarding endeavor that will enchant the owner as no other group of birds can. They are delightful and entertaining, and much easier to keep successfully than one would suspect at first glance.

Unfortunately, there has been little available reading material on toucans, which has led to the perpetuation of a lot of misleading information and myth. No books have been written on the husbandry of toucans, though there have been a number of journal articles appearing during the past twenty years. There are several books in the scientific literature available that describe natural histories of toucans. Most important of these are "Toucans, Barbets and Honeyguides" by Lester Short and Jennifer Horne, and the "Handbook of Birds of The World, Vol. 7". There are also several Field Guides to the birds of various countries, such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Venezuela. Further information on toucans, their care, photos of all the species available in the United States, and a lengthy bibliography of further reading material may be seen by visiting our web site on the internet at www.emeraldforestbirds.com. If you have additional questions, please feel free to e-mail us.



©2005

Keel Bill Toucan

Jerry Jennings

Jerry Jennings was the founding Director and the first President of the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA). He currently owns and manages Emerald Forest Bird Gardens (www.emeraldforestbirds.com) in Fallbrook, CA and a toucan breeding facility in southeastern Peru.

Green Honeycreepers or Sugar Birds

by Debbie Huff

There are five different honeycreeper species. This article will detail the Green Honeycreeper.

Scientific name: Chlorophanes spiza

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Emberizidae or Thraupinae (recent view)

From: Forests and mountain forests of Brazil. The Green Honeycreeper is found from southern Mexico to the Amazon Basin with a disjoint-population in southeast Brazil. They favor forest and secondary woodland, normally high in the canopy but they do come out in clearings and forest edges. The honeycreepers seem to have no fear and are very friendly. That is why they get eaten by the monkeys in the wild.

Size: 4 to 5 inches and 18 grams.

In my opinion, the Green Honeycreeper does not seem to fit into the same group as the Red-, Yellow-, and Pink-legged Honeycreepers. Unlike Purple and Red-legged Honeycreepers, the Green Honeycreeper does not have a long decurved bill. They act and seem more like a Tanager to me. They are bigger and eat differently.

Male



2005

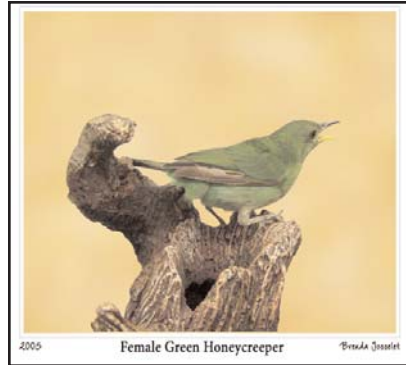
Male Green Honeycreeper

©Brenda Sussler

Although described as green, the color of the male changes from sea-

green in bright sun to a bluish green in the shade and it is very difficult to portray the true green color in a photograph. It also has a black face and crown and has a redder eye than the female.

Female



2005

Female Green Honeycreeper

©Brenda Sussler

The female is apple green in color with darker wings and straw yellow in strips on the throat and on the belly. The bill is slightly decurved and is yellowish below. The iris is reddy-brown.

I cannot tell any differences between my domestic and wild-caught except they are really sneaky!!!! You can tell they are used to getting away from predators. It makes me realize even more how important it is to keep our domestic birds from getting loose. They can hide from the bird room net. They go for the hard places for me to get to, like behind the cages and between the cages. They wait by the doors because they know the doors go some place else. My net never fits were they land. Honestly, I catch them by leaving their cage open and enticing them with fruit I know that they like. Catching a finch or parrotlet pales in comparison.

The second thing is that they like to stay up all night and sing. Of course they are in a bedroom next door to me. I have actually gotten used to their nightly singing. At first I was panicked and thought something was wrong. I think they are nocturnal. They have a great song — a lot of metal tones.



2005 Female Green Honeycreeper Brenda Janssen

I have read in several places that they stress real easy when first imported. That was my experience as well. I almost lost one of my males twice. He would go to the bottom of the cage. I would then take him to the open garage and let him sit in a cage on the desk. Where I live in Houston, Texas, it is extremely hot and humid. He loves it. He actually has become very friendly. He has been to the vet twice. He is as well as the other birds I have gotten from the Amazon which have bacteria that are not real common here. He was treated with Amoxicillin and two other



2005 Male Green Honeycreeper Brenda Janssen

meds. But what worked the best was attention. They are extremely friendly little birds. Two of my females will perch on my finger and they are wild caught.

Reproduction

Mating occurs usually from May to July. The male occasionally feeds the female while she is sitting in the nest. The incubation period is 13 days and the clutch size is usually 2 eggs. The young take their first flight after 21 days but remain dependent on the parents for some time. They need to be fed meal worms or bugs of some sort the first week after chicks hatch. Always use a plastic washable nest box that hangs from the outside of the cage. The nest box will become a sticky mess!!!! They sleep in the nest box at night when not incubating.

Debbie's Diet for Green Honeycreepers

They are picky eaters and don't eat a lot in comparison to my other tanagers. I want to state that I am not sure if we really know what should be given. For all my birds I like to know what they eat in the wild. In the wild they feed mainly on fruit but they also look for nectar from flowers and occasionally eat insects. My Green Honeycreepers are not real big on bugs but my other honeycreepers love them. I am not convinced the bugs are vital or even necessary. I give variety, variety, variety.

I use separate dishes given daily (Martin Vince and others say it should be one dish):

50% nectar (dry or wet), 25% fruit
25% canary and finch ZuPreem® pellet (Great advice from Floyd Barnett). Ozarka® Water in separate dishes and always in cage:

25% ZuPreem® pellet of diet herbs, Cliffl® fruit and vegetables Dried (Fine grade) insectivore diet with (Mine do not eat much of it. They will eat a one ounce container each week).

Dried small mealworms; or dried small waxworms or quarter-inch size crickets.

You should feed fruit flies and fly maggots. I am not going to do that as mine are in house but there are plenty of fruit flies with their fruit. I haven't seen them eat the flies.

I made the mistake of feeding in separate dishes and now mine won't eat any other way. They are stubborn little things. They eat the red pellets out of the ZuPreem® Canary and Finch Pellets. I don't use the softbill pellets as they were full of bugs when I purchased them. While bugs are fine, I am worried about bacteria. Others have told me to make a fruit salad and mix everything in the first group. Mine would not eat the mix. I know it is a matter of training. All of my softbills do the same thing and are in the same room so I am sure it is an aviary thing.



2005

Male Green Honeycreeper

Jason J. Crease



2005

Male Green Honeycreeper

Brenda Goodlet

Cleaning:

Honeycreepers are very messy birds! Everything in the cage gets sticky. I provide new food dishes daily and wash all the food cutting tools and dishes in the dishwasher. Their cages get cleaned once a month. I also put paper towels under their perches to catch the mess and dispose of daily.

Floyd Barnet has told me to remove the cage grate and put a plastic garbage bag around the pan. It sounds great to me. I haven't taken the time to cut the floor grates out of my cages. But I think about it every time I clean.

Green Honeycreepers like the same fruit as Paradise Tanagers. Mine love papaya, mangos, pear, cassada melon and halved oranges.

I keep one pair each in cages 30 x 18 x 18. I have read that in the wild the Green Honeycreepers are fairly aggressive and will run other birds off, unlike other honeycreepers.

Mine are kept in the house with a temperature range of 65 to 75 degrees. They also have a ceiling fan in their room.

NFSS member Debbie Huff is from Houston, Texas and breeds Tanagers, Honeycreepers, Peters Twinspots, Zebras and Gouldian Finches as well as a large collection of parrotlets. She can be reached by email at: dhuff3@direcway.com.

Paradise Tanagers - by Debbie Huff



2005

Paradise Tanagers

Brenda Josselet

The Paradise Tanager is a beautiful 6" tanager from South America. The bird has many neon colors: green on its head, black on its mantle, turquoise-blue on its belly and purple on its breast, yellow on its tail coverts and red and orange on its lower back.

Scientific name: *Tangara chilensis*

Order: Passeriformes

Family: Emberizidae or Thraupinae (recent view)

From: Common in the wild they inhabit Colombia to Brazil and Bolivia.

Size: 4 to 5 inches and 18 grams.

Paradise Tanagers are very standoffish birds, unlike the honeycreepers and other tanagers I keep. However, when I have to handle them they love to have head rubs like any other bird. These tanagers, although brilliantly col-

ored, are said to have little or no song. They have only a slight squeaky song or chirp. I cannot sex them by their song. I am sure that more experienced breeders like Floyd Barnett can do it. I know he sexes them by visually watching the birds.

Both sexes are alike in general appearance and have the same song, and they must be sexed by their behavior or in my case by the DNA. I cannot sex them by their behavior. DNA sexing is extremely hard to do. I have had them sexed via feathers and that did not work. I ended up sexing them with blood. Their blood is extremely hard for me to get. I had Charles Collins from Seeds ETC., helping me as he does it weekly on other types of birds. We tried toenails and they would not bleed even when cut to the flesh. We tried

under the wings and got little blood. Finally we got a little out of the balls of their feet. The people at Avian Biotech also had trouble with the samples and took longer than normal.

Reproduction

Mating usually occurs from May to July. But when you research their habits in the wild the months are all over the board. The incubation period is 13 days and the clutch size is usually 2 eggs. The young take their first flight after 21 days but remain dependent on the parents for some time. Many people say they need to be fed spiders. But mine either get meal worms or bugs of some sort the first week after the chicks hatch. A plastic washable nest box that hangs from the outside of the cage is a must or else the nest box will become a sticky mess because they sleep in it at night.

Nesting Material

"In the wild they use long, stringy bright green staghorn lichen-like moss and the fungus *Rhizomorpha corynephora* is added to the nest, with the green moss still being predominant.

Additionally, the birds used a fluff similar to dandelion seeds and possibly spider web in smaller quantities. Near the end of the construction period straw-like grass was used to line the nest. Nest construction was last observed on 1 July. Both members of the tanager pair were present during the nest construction."¹

Based on that article¹, the females seem to do all the feeding and incubation while the male stands guard. But they indicated that it was hard to tell as they look alike. There may have been times that the males helped out. You would have to put different colored

bands on the legs for male and female to determine if this statement is true. Mine have been banded with numbered bands.

My diet for Paradise Tanagers is about the same as I outlined in my Honeycreeper Article in this issue of the Journal, except they will eat anything and everything. They can almost eat you out of house and home! It is also my understanding that the Houston Zoo has them and they eat and feed big wolf spiders and roaches to their babies.

The one thing I learned from my research of birds in the wild is that both members of the pair brought spiders, orthopterans, and caterpillars to the nest. YUCK! YUCK! YUCK! Now how to get spiders? And are they really



necessary? These tanagers will eat everything else you give them.

I am going to attend a talk at the AFA Convention in Miami this year about feeding softbills and that will be one of my first questions. I have wild caught and domestically raised paradise tanagers and both act the same.

A lady who was helping me out once accidentally put the finch's egg

food in the Paradise cages. The egg food was gone in a half an hour. Since then I feed them bird bread and egg food as well, maybe once a week.

I have read in several places to feed dried currants and raisins, grapes and bananas but my tanagers will not touch them. Mine won't eat dew mellow or pineapple either. I have had several people tell me to mix them together in a fruit salad. Mine will still pick and eat around them and actually eat less fruit when I mix it.

My tanagers do love papaya, mangos, pear, cassada melon and halved oranges. Mangos and Papaya are cheap in Houston (8 for a \$1) so they get their share in when in season.

I keep one pair each in cages 30 x 18 x 18. Although in the wild they are in flocks and don't seem to mind being together, I have heard they can be aggressive during breeding. However, I have not observed any aggression between mine.

The tanagers are in the house with a temperature range of between 65 to 75 degrees. They also have a ceiling fan to circulate the air in their room.

Footnotes:

1 "Observations at a Paradise Tanager Nest" - Wilson Bull. 104(2), 1992, pp. 360-362 <http://elibrary.unm.edu/sora/Wilson/v104n02/p0360-p0362.pdf>.

NFSS member Debbie Huff is from Houston, Texas and breeds Tanagers, Honeycreepers, Peters Twinspots, Zebras and Gouldian Finches as well as a large collection of parrotlets. She can be reached by email at: dhuff3@direcway.com.

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Blue-gray Manna from Heaven By Shelley Ortman



2005

Blue-Gray Tanager

James Owen

Luscious. Pristine. Untamed.

The Blue-gray Tanager (*Thraupis episcopus*) is a delightful inhabitant of tropical and subtropical habitat from southern Mexico to the south of the Amazon basin (Grosset). This remarkably adaptable bird makes its home in "a broad spectrum of essentially non-forest habitats including all kinds of settled areas, plantations, city parks, various stages of second growth and forest edges from dry to very wet regions (Brown & Hilty 622)." This versatility, in addition to its interesting character and gorgeous appearance, makes the Blue-gray Tanager a wonderful addition to any aviary.

At about 6-1/2 inches, the Blue-gray Tanager has a pale sky-blue head with a darker back and body, closer to the color azure. The wings become

dark blue toward the tips of the primaries, and several subspecies also sport white wing bars. The color is subtle and spectacular; like a puff of bluish smoke as the Tanager flits from perch to perch, often peering head down to see what you are up to. The genders are indistinguishable except by behavior and that requires some serious bird-watching.



2005

Tanager Nest in a Ficus

Shelley Ortman



2005 Babies - 1 Week Old Skellig Ostroma

Observing the rich social interactions of these birds is quite compelling. Only mated pairs can be kept together as they are very protective of their territory, but watching them together gives new meaning to the terms fidelity and devotion. The male courts his hen by carrying pieces of choice fruits and insects to her. He sings his loud screeching shrieking song. She loves it! Mating takes place out of sight, and before long nest-building begins.

Typically among birds it is the cock bird that builds the nest, but I cannot determine the nest-builder's gender in this species. In any case, the nest builder prefers using long coca fiber, long shredded paper strips and wood straw to begin construction. The bird takes a long piece of fiber to the chosen location. It prefers an area in which the nest is hidden from obvious prying eyes about 6 feet off the ground. My birds' preference has been to nest in a hanging Boston fern, a wicker basket of nesting material located on top of a shelf, and the top of a breeding cage.

With the fibrous material in its beak the bird begins a circular dance trailing the fiber until it is then arranged satisfactorily around itself. The Tanager then fetches the next piece of material. Within a day they build a cup-shaped nest approximately 3-inches wide and 2-inches deep has been constructed. The interior is lined with softer shredded burlap and feathers. The hen lays two

or three eggs a day apart and begins to brood her eggs. The male sits close by and vigorously defends the nesting area from interlopers, whether human or bird. He does not help with the brooding, but brings food to his hen in his beak. Just a few brief times a day the hen leaves the nest for a drink, a bathroom break and to stretch her wings. She sits very tightly, occasion-ally calling to her mate with a shrill "chee... chee" He often visits her on the nest with a morsel of fruit or a mealworm for her. Sometimes he just pops in for a brief parley. They exchange soft squeaks and jabbers. What are they saying?

In about 2 weeks the chicks will hatch. The hen remains sitting tightly, but now the male's work is doubled and even tripled. He brings food to the hen and the new chicks almost unceasingly throughout the day. At night he sits close by his family. Beware the unwary interloper; it will be chased off or worse. After only a few days the hen leaves the nest. She and the male spend the next two weeks feeding their chicks. The chicks stay quietly hidden in their cozy cup unless they spy a parent bringing food. Then they pop straight up with an enormous gape and loud squawking. Amazingly cute before fledging, they resemble fat, fuzzy blueberries with shining black eyes. They fly very poorly when they first fledge, and the parents continue to feed them until the chicks can follow them around with relative



2005 Baby - 2 Weeks Old Skellig Ostroma



2005 Baby - 3 Weeks Old Skellig Orliman

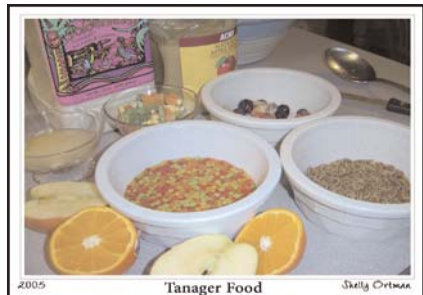
ease. Then the male bird takes over the care of the fledged chicks. They beg and beg, but he will only occasionally feed them. Instead he calls them over to the food station. They had better figure out how to feed themselves soon, because a new nest has already been built and the hen is beginning her next clutch of eggs. As the new chicks hatch the older chicks must be self-sufficient and find a new territory. The parents will not tolerate them in their territory much longer. Now is the time to cage them safely away from their parents. Even when they can eat independently the male will feed them through the cage bars for a while. Failure to separate them may result in their death. To separate them before the parents feel threatened and after they are able to feed themselves is the trickiest part.

Tanagers are part of a loose classification of birds known as softbills. This is not a scientific classification, but refers to the food that they eat. Hookbilled birds and finches consume hard-shelled nuts and seeds that must be shelled or cracked open to extract the nutrients. Softbills however can only eat food with the nutrients readily available. Interestingly enough, if you've been bitten by a determined softbilled bird, you will notice that the bill is not actually soft and can inflict some pain! All softbills eat soft foods, but within the classification "softbill", there are specific categories of diet to consider as you prepare their food. Some birds are omnivores: they will eat everything.

Insectivores rely on insects for their main dietary requirements; frugivores eat mostly fruits and vegetables, while nectivores eat or sip nectar. These classifications are also loose and many softbills will eat more than just one type of food. Blue-gray Tanagers are opportunists and will eat or taste almost anything although their dietary emphasis is fruit.

My daily feeding routine is quite extensive and unless you are prepared to allot a fair amount of time shopping and preparing food for your Tanagers, they may not be for you. Every day the birds are given a serving of chopped fruit, such as apple, orange, kiwi, baked sweet potato, blueberries, cherries, raspberries, grapes, and whatever is in season and looks soft and sweet. I usually freeze a big bowl of chopped fruit and thaw a portion overnight in the refrigerator to cut down on prep time. I also provide a few pieces of select halved fruit daily for them to peck at. This includes halved oranges, apples, bananas, pears, and plums.

It is also recommended to feed them papaya and mango, but it is prohibitively expensive here in the Mid-Atlantic States. Fresh or frozen mixed vegetables are provided daily. Corn and peas are a favorite but they will also nibble cooked carrots, green beans, and lima beans. A staple of their diet is ZuPrem® Cockatiel Breeder Pellets soaked overnight in lemon-lime flavored Gatorade. They also enjoy Lory nectar



2005 Tanager Food Skellig Orliman



2005

Baby - 3 Weeks Old

Shelley Ortman

that is mixed with applesauce. Live food is always available and is taken in quantities at some times and seldom at others. This includes mealworms, white-worms, fruit flies, occasional waxworms and crickets. They seem to enjoy chasing the crickets! I have also seen them sample insectivore pellets, egg food (chopped hard-boiled egg with the shell) and sprouted millet in small amounts. The parents feed the chicks the same food they eat, so no special diet is required when breeding, and feeding nestlings. I recommend avoiding foods with a high iron content such as dog or cat food due to the danger of iron-storage disease (Hemochromatosis). Although causes, cures and prevention of this disease are still being studied, a low iron diet does not hurt the birds and could save their lives.

From the moment I turned loose the Blue-gray Tanagers in my well-planted and spacious bird room they made themselves completely at home. This was an ideal environment for them. They took advantage of the free flying space, commandeered the best and highest perches, and were first at the feeding station and bird bath. They had virtually no competition from the other finches that shared the open space with them (mostly ignoring them), and so readily went to nest within a few weeks.

The first clutch fledged two healthy chicks, the next clutch one, the third clutch was again two, then two more, then one chick. Something had to be done before the health of the birds was jeopardized by their insatiable desire to procreate. I cut back on live food, stole their eggs, and provided no nesting material (which prompted them to become quite resourceful in creating newspaper strips ripped right out from beneath the breeding cages). As a last resort I caged them in a 4' tall by 3' wide by 2' deep breeding cage. For the last six weeks they have not been interested in breeding, but in truth this is not a good situation for them. These free-flying, active birds require a stimulating environment and I fear for their health when placed in confinement. Plan B involves moving them to the outdoor aviary for the summer and allowing them to have another clutch of chicks if they still have not slowed down. If need be I will then house them in adjoining enclosures; close enough to communicate, but not reproduce, at least for a while.

My experience with these delightful creatures has been heaven sent: like blue-gray manna from heaven. They were an unexpected gift from a dear friend, and have amazed and delighted me with their antics and behaviors, their strong pair bond, and inspired parenting skills. For anyone interested in success with softbills, both beginners and those with more experience, Blue-gray Tanagers are the perfect birds.

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Shelley Ortman breeds & exhibits finches & softbills, concentrating on the tiny African waxbills. She is also a full-time 7th grade Teacher of the Handicapped.

Experiences with the Yellow-legged Honeycreeper

By Brenda Josselet, Darling Aviaries



2005

Yellow-legged Honeycreepers

Brenda Josselet

"Are those hummingbirds?" This is probably the most frequently asked question when people first see this stunning little bird. Indeed, they do remind me of hummingbirds, and perhaps that is why I am so drawn to them and find them so mesmerizing.

Here at Darling Aviaries in the hill country of central Texas, we have the privilege of working with three pair of these little jewels. We hope to add a couple more pair to our breeding program in the not-too-distant future. I have become so interested in the small tanagers, that I have decided to try to concentrate a large percentage of my efforts on this beautiful group of birds.

For those not familiar with these birds, basic information is as follows:

Order: Passeriformes
 Family: Emberizidae
 Subfamily: Thraupinae (Tanagers)
 Other Names: Purple Sugarbird

Yellow-legged Honeycreepers (*Cyanerpes caeruleus*) are strictly a

Neotropical bird. Don't be confused by the word "Neotropical." The term simply refers to the geographical area to which tanagers are native. You will find Yellow-legged Honeycreepers and other species of honeycreepers in the forest areas and at the forest edges of South America, Central America, and Mexico.

The Yellow-legged Honeycreeper is a dimorphic species and it is very easy to determine the gender of these birds. The male is a bright purplish-blue with bright yellow legs. He keeps his coloring year-round and never fails to stop people "dead in their tracks." The female is completely different looking – she is green on the top of her head and back



2005

Male Yellow-legged Honeycreeper

Brenda Josselet



2005 Female Yellow-legged Honeycreeper Brenda Jessett

with buff around her eyes. She has a gold throat patch with a blue streak at the top of the throat patch coming off the back end of her lower bill. With the pale yellow and blue streaks on her paler green underside, she looks like she just stepped out of the beauty salon with a freshly highlighted hairdo. Finally, both genders have a long, slender, downwardly-curved, black bill.

In the wild, honeycreepers can often be found in a mixed group of tanagers. They are a small bird — 3.5 to four inches long — smaller than a Gouldian finch but larger than a Strawberry finch.

Honeycreepers at Darling Aviaries

Housing: Although honeycreepers will live happily in a mixed aviary, our birds are kept in individual breeding cages to avoid any possibility of aggression from other birds. While the birds, like any bird, love a large aviary setting, we have found that our pairs are perfectly happy in much smaller cages. Each pair is housed in a 30"x18"x18" cage which has had the wire grate removed from the bottom to allow easier cleaning. We have been somewhat successful getting these birds to breed in this size cage (see more information below on our breeding efforts).

Diet: Fruits & nectar are the main diet for these small but very active birds. They do also need small insects, particularly when breeding and raising chicks.

The recommended diet for this group of nectivores is:

In one dish – 50% nectar, 25% fruit, 25% sponge cake, bread, or primate pellet;

In a separate dish – fine grade proprietary softbill food with small mealworms, small waxworms, and ¼ inch size crickets.

Fruit flies and fly maggots should also be supplied. ¹

I usually try to follow the recommended diet but usually present the food items a little differently. Our birds receive the following:

- * Nectar – Avico SunBird Pre-mix
- * Nectar Diet or Nekton Nektar-Plus;
- * Fresh soft fruits – either in slices or in a fruit salad;
- * Pretty Bird Species Specific for Lories (constantly);
- * Orlux Uni Patee (constantly);
- * Bird Care Co. Feast Insectivore - finely ground (occasionally) ;
- * Purina Monkey Chow - finely ground;
- * Higgins Protein 25 – (occasionally);
- * Non-medicated game bird starter - finely ground (occasionally);
- * Wax worms, small mealworms, small crickets, and fruit flies;
- * Dehydrated fly pupae from Skipio;
- * Fresh water.



2005 Diet for Yellow-legged Honeycreepers Brenda Jessett

Except for the monkey chow, the dry food items are each provided in a separate dish/container either constantly or occasionally as noted above.

Recently I have been experimenting with providing nectar in a small dish with several types of fruits put through a food processor, mixed with vitamins, and frozen in ice cube trays (one cube to about 1/3-1/2 cup of nectar). The fruit cube and nectar is then sprinkled on top with some finely ground monkey chow. The Yellow-legged Honeycreepers seem to really like this – the Blue Dacnis are just starting to accept it.

Live food – wax worms, mealworms, and crickets – are provided in a plastic shoe box in each cage with sides high enough that the small crickets can't jump out. However, if the plastic shoe boxes are not cleaned frequently, the mess that the birds make on the side of the shoe box allows the crickets to gain a footing and thereby crawl out of the box. The dehydrated fly pupae were also put in the shoe box but the birds weren't that excited about them when presented that way. The fly pupae are accepted more readily when put in a separate, shallow dish.

Fruit Flies are cultivated using either fresh fruit or potato flakes with some yeast granules sprinkled over the top (mixed 1:1 with water). Fruit flies are the favored live food among our honeycreepers.

Breeding: So far we have had one pair go to nest for us. The birds are provided a 4" x 5" plastic nest box mounted on the outside of the cage. The nest was started for them using coconut fiber. They readily accepted this nest and finished it off by building a cup-shaped nest out of coconut fiber inside the box.



2005 Yellow-legged Honeycreeper Nest Brenda Joazelet

On May 5, 2005, 2 eggs were discovered. The eggs are white with brown speckles – larger speckles at the wide end of the egg. Only one egg was fertile. Unfortunately, the nest was abandoned and the fertile egg never did hatch. Both eggs were finally removed to allow the parents to start over.

On June 7, 2005, a new egg was discovered in the nest. A second egg was laid the next day and the hen started incubating right away. I was careful not to open the nest box and scare the hen off the nest. Live food was increased – especially fruit flies.

June 21, 2005 was a day of extreme excitement!! BOTH eggs had hatched. Twoheads are sticking straight up in the air with yellow-edged beaks open. It is a really nerve-racking time – trying to decide whether to let nature take its course and let the parents give it a "go" at raising them OR to pull them and put them in the "ready and waiting" incubator and hand-feed them. The decision was made to leave them alone and let the parents raise them.



2005 Nesting Site for Yellow-legged Honeycreepers Brenda Joazelet

Several times a day, the floor of the cage was checked to see if any chicks had been tossed. I couldn't help but peek into the nest box to make sure the chicks were still alive. Again, to my delight and surprise, they were still alive and seemed to be doing very well. I wondered each day if there was a way to tell whether the chicks were being fed other than NOT finding them dead. I still haven't found a good answer.

On July 1, 2005, I peeked into the nest box only to find both chicks dead. They already had pin feathers all over them! I don't know why this happened – did I peek into the nest box one-too-many times? Was the fruit fly supply just not keeping up with the demand? Could some type of disease or infection set in? I don't know that I'll ever have the answer to what really happened.

To help console me, some people on the Pekin Robin list I am on wrote to me to tell me that I had gotten further with these chicks than most people do. While that knowledge was some consolation, it is still very disheartening to see chicks get that far only to find them dead.

These little birds are very active and fast flyers. One of our females likes to give us fits by darting out the door at every opportunity she gets – no matter how small the opening is. The minute that door is cracked open, she darts out and takes off flying around the room. She loves teasing us while we are trying to catch her, darting back and forth right in front of us knowing that we won't swing the net at her for fear of hitting her and accidentally killing her.

One day I tricked her! She had

darted out of the cage and was playing her usual games with me, even swooping down and flying right between my legs. I decided to try to coax her back into the cage. I knew I was taking a



2005 Housing for Yellow-legged Honeycreepers Brenda Josselet

chance that the male would get out of the cage – but I propped the door up a couple of inches and placed a fresh dish of nectar right at the bottom of the door opening. To my surprise, it didn't take long for her to fly over to the cage door and begin drinking the nectar. As she was enjoying the nectar, I slowly walked over to the cage and put my hands out hoping she wouldn't take flight again. Thankfully, she hopped right back into the cage and just looked at me like saying "What's the problem here?"

One day I hope to be considered as an expert at breeding these birds as well as other tanagers. I hope others will try keeping these delightful little birds. Yes, they are a little more trouble than finches are, but they are well worth the extra time and effort. I know I am hooked and can't imagine not having them in our collection.

Works cited:

1 Softbills - Care, Breeding & Conservation. Martin Vince. Hancock House Publishers, Blaine, WA, USA. 1996

NFSS members Brenda and Ron Josselet, owners of Darling Aviaries, live in Austin, Texas. They are now specializing in breeding Gouldian mutations, Cuban Melodious, Forbes Parrot Finches, Yellow-face Stars and Tanagers (particularly the Honeycreepers and Dacnis).

The Aviarium

Building an Avian Paradise in My Own Backyard

by Jason J. Crean



2005

Inside the Aviarium

Jason J. Crean

They say, "If you don't like the weather in Chicago, wait 'til tomorrow." I cannot disagree with this since I have lived here almost all my life. However, I have never been able to allow my birds into a more natural, outdoor aviary because of our ever-changing temperatures. Also, with our rather unpredictable seasonal extremes, abundant predators, and security issues, we decided that our best option would be a

greenhouse-style structure. We decided to look into sun rooms and 4-season rooms but all were excessively priced. We also looked into actual greenhouses but managing the varying temperatures would have been difficult and expensive. After receiving several estimates, we decided to build the structure ourselves.

We had several types of finches and softbills that we wanted to allow to fly free in a larger enclosure. These included Turquoise tanagers (*Tangara mexicana*), Kikuyu White-eyes (*Zosterops poliogaster kikuyensis*), Brazilian red-crested cardinals (*Paroaria coronata*), Violaceous euphonia (*Euphonia violacea*), Society finches (*Lochura domestica*), White-backed mousebirds (*Colius colius*), Pekin robins (*Leiothrix lutea*), Blue-winged leafbirds (*Chloropsis cochinchinensis*), Green



2005

Blue-Winged Leafbird Pair

Jason J. Crean

honeycreepers (*Chlorophanes spiza*), and even Goldie's lorikeets (*Psitteuteles goldiei*). These individuals were quarantined and monitored for 6 months prior to being released.



2005

Green Honeycreeper Pair

Jason J. Green

We had an idea of what we wanted: a long structure surrounded with windows, a concrete floor that could be sprayed down, and a breezeway that would connect the structure to our home. We began planning and discovered a horrible nightmare: our village building inspector. Some of the perks we planned piqued his interest like the trench drain, hydronic (floor) heating system, and solar-powered roof fan. After explaining that I was a biologist that needed to keep plants alive, he began to understand. After nearly four months of submitting plan after plan, we were finally approved to pour the foundation.

A Strong Foundation



2005

Pekin Robin Pair

Jason J. Green

We decided to lay a concrete foundation that was color dyed. We chose a color that would offset any undesirable "additions" to the floor that the birds would leave us. We also made the choice for hydronic heating, where tubing runs through the concrete foundation and is heated by hot water. Forced air did not seem like a good idea as it would dry out the room faster and hydronic heating is much more affordable. We drew up the plans for a wing on the back of the house that was 12 feet by 24 feet and attached it to the basement utility room for easy access. The foundation included the structure itself and the walkway that would serve as a catch-all between the house and new structure.



2005

White-Backed Mousebird

Jason J. Green

We planned to have windows around the entire structure and purchased windows that were not "low-E" because we wanted both natural light and thermal energy into the room. The windows slide from side to side to make opening and closing them easier when reaching around plants. We also chose vinyl windows so that they could be sprayed down and washed as well. We also obtained our Wingdows™ from <http://www.wingdow.com/> so we could attach them to the windows for the birds to bask in the natural light. These were truly a great addition to the space and the birds really enjoy them, not to mention they make cleaning much more efficient.

Bird-proofing the Aviarium



Male Blue-Winged Leafbird

Choosing the wall paneling was a much easier decision than I thought it would be. FRP (fiberglass-reinforced paneling) was the perfect choice for the aviarium as it was indestructible, textured and could be sprayed down. We even found that it was already glued to the plywood panels in 8-foot sheets. We used the FRP to make up the walls and ceiling and it proved quite easy to clean. FRP is easily found at most major home improvements stores and these outlets also carry the accessories for this type of paneling. Durable plastic corners and seams were easily inserted where the panels met and then caulked to insure a water-tight seal. We installed skylights as well, all with eastern exposure so as to maximize morning and early afternoon sun. We chose skylights that did not open to minimize the chance of escape and found these to be helpful in keeping predators out.



Male Violaceous Euphonia

A heavy-duty screen door was installed as the entrance into the room which opened out into the walkway. This door was installed so that the external door could not be opened unless the internal door was closed, ensuring no escape for my feathered residents. So the walls were up, the windows were in, and the door was up. We were getting closer! The water heater and the plumbing was installed within a closet where hoses could be kept out of the way and sliding doors were put up to keep the birds out.

Here Comes the Rain Again



White-eyes, Lorikeets, and Tanager at Feeder

Humidity was obviously important, especially because of the tropical species we kept. The plumbing included a hose for watering and cleaning via a sprayer and a misting system. A misting timer was somewhat of a challenge but thankfully my colleagues at the zoo connected me with a supplier that sold timers that would allow misting as often as I needed. A PVC frame was constructed that would allow us to hang plants and the misting system. A pond complete with waterfall was set up in a corner as the water source and a 3-stage biological filter was placed in the pond. The pond itself was covered with fine, fiberglass mesh so none of the birds would drown and we have found the birds use the waterfall and small pockets in it for bathing and drinking.

We tried to elevate as much as possible to make the floor more accessible for cleaning. Heavy wire, powder-coated shelves were used as benches for the potted plants; two tiers were assembled on one side of the room to enable us to create layers of plants. The lowest layer consisted mostly of full-bodied ferns which do not require full sun. The next layer consisted of medium-sized palms, *Ficus* and *Schefflera*. The highest layer included taller *Ficus* and *Schefflera* that reached ceiling and allowed birds to nest as high as possible. Many of these tall plants grew up into the skylights which allowed another place for birds to bask in the warm light.

Colorful bromeliads and epiphytes which also do not require full sun were placed between larger plants to fill in spaces and add color to the room. Large willow branches were brought in



2005

Fairy Bluebirds

ROK CASLARY

as the birds seem to love using the leaves and bark for their nests. Ant traps and no-pest strips were placed in the room for a full-week prior to birds being introduced as to eliminate any pests that may have come in with the plants which were previously kept outdoors. All pest deterrents were removed twenty-four hours before birds were released and placed around the perimeter of the walkway.

Come and get it!



2005

Turquoise Tanager

JADA J. CREAM

Feeding stations were placed in hanging baskets so that they could be hung and moved when necessary. It also helped to hang them so that visual barriers like Fuchsia could be hung between them in order to keep aggression at a minimum. To be proactive against any territoriality, we wanted to be sure that the birds would not be able to view each other at each station. Within the hanging baskets were bowls that fit perfectly inside and could be removed nightly and washed. These feeding stations were also kept in “shady” areas under plants to keep fruits and other foods out of direct sunlight.

Two dry food stations were placed in dry locations that included egg food, dried and live insects, and lory powder. Four fresh food stations were hung and diced fruit, halved bananas, and nectar were placed within these hanging baskets. A seed dish was placed lower so that all seedeaters could find this food source.

A variety of nests were placed in a variety of locations, allowing many site choices. Empty blueberry and strawberry baskets were stuffed with nesting materials like coconut fiber, cotton fibers, and white cotton fluff to enable the birds to pull these from the holes in

the containers. Within the first week, many of the birds began nest building using the aforementioned nesting fibers.

Surprise, Surprise

We have had many surprises. We allowed birds to be released over a few days. We started with Society finches as our "canaries in the coal mine" to see how they did out in the new environment. Surprisingly, the societies could not fly as high because of the small size of their previous flight cage. Much to our surprise, however, the societies quickly adapted and began using every inch of the Aviarium. Also added to our surprise, within hours of releasing birds into the new structure, a pair of Cooper's Hawks who were feeding chicks in a neighboring tree began visiting the windows, frightening the birds. After a few visits over the first week, it seemed the birds of prey finally figured out the "buffet" was off limits. I was thankful that I had an enclosed structure and not a simple mesh aviary as this was a very determined pair!



2005 Cooper's Hawk Awaiting Escapees Jason J. Crean

We were also surprised that the birds would choose a dead *Ficus* for roosting instead of the beautiful green foliage that was so abundant in the Aviarium. This dead tree was stuffed with fake fern leaves and most of the

birds chose this as their favorite perching location. Now the birds have begun to spread throughout the room, choosing different places to spend their time. The euphonia and finches seem to dwell in the middle layer where the tanagers and mousebirds use the upper layer. The leafbirds and white eyes seem to be quite flexible, bouncing from one layer to another throughout the day.



2005 Inside the Aviarium Jason J. Crean

I never realized how relaxing this area would turn out to be. We have a couple of folding chairs in the room where we can sit and enjoy the birds, listening to their songs and the waterfall, and knowing that the birds are happy. We also, like every fellow aviculturist, are always learning more by watching our birds and how they interact in this new and exciting environment. We can watch the birds from outside as well and have mounted wireless digital cameras that transmit a signal to a monitor just inside the house. The birds are less shy in this space though, coming closer to us and even taking food from us when we visit. My original goal was to build something that would enable my birds to thrive and much to my surprise, it ended up becoming the same for me.

NFSS member Jason J. Crean wears many hats. He teaches biology and animal science at the high school and college level, teaches graduate courses for Brookfield Zoo, and does service work for the zoo's genetics lab. Of course, he also is an avid aviculturist who keeps many softbills and some hookbills. He is also the president of The Avicultural Society of Chicagoland (<http://www.tasc-chicago.org/>).

BREEDING THE COLLARED ARACARI (*Pteroglossus torquatus*)

By Jerry Jennings

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2005

Collared Aracaris Pair

Jerry Jennings

The Collared Aracari (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) is one of the more common and less expensive toucanets available to American aviculture. It is a smaller cousin of the large black toucans (Toco, Keel Bill, Swainson, etc.) measuring about twelve inches long from the tip of its three-inch beak to the tip of its three-inch tail. Adult Collareds weigh on average 180 grams.

Collared Aracaris are neotropical birds (as are all toucans), which range from the tropical dry forests of southern Mexico, throughout the moist forests of Central America to northern Colombia. They are the most commonly seen in the wild of all the Toucanets and Aracaris and they frequent orchards, fields and the edges of small towns and villages.

Collareds nest in tree hollows, usually the abandoned homes of woodpeckers and small parrots. They prefer trees some distance away from other trees and without attached vines or lianas, which affords them a clear view of approaching predators and humans, whose sounds they can hear at a great distance. These hollows vary in depth from a foot to several feet below the entrance hole and they are situated from twelve to fifty feet above the ground.

Since 1994 Collared Aracaris have been imported often and in good num-

bers and are still readily available. Both the wild-caught birds and the offspring of these imports make good breeders. Handfed Collareds also make good breeders, and they are excellent pets, showing affection and a desire to be handled and cuddled by their owners. They can be free-flown and trained to perform tricks including somersaults, catch and can be potty trained.

Collareds are fairly easy to breed and do not require a great deal of attention. We breed them in flights measuring eight feet wide by twelve feet long by eight feet high. Each flight houses only a single pair and no other species of birds. The rear portion of the flight is solidly enclosed on the back top, and exterior sides to four feet from the rear to provide shelter against the sun, rain and wind for the nest log and the feeding bowls. In all of our flights is a single guava tree, which provides endless perching opportunities and shade. Guavas are hardy and fast growing.

Because toucans are cavity nesters, we provide them a hollow tree trunk. While some birds will nest in boxes, suitable for parrots of similar size, they prefer a natural log. We use palm tree trunks, but any wood that can be hollowed works, such as aspen, birch. If you have the tools any type tree can be hollowed out. We dig the cavity to a depth of 20 inches and place a 2½-inch entrance hole (using a door-

knob saw attached to a hand drill) about five inches below the top of the log. We cover the top with a piece of plywood cut to fit. The log is placed so that the top of the log is 6-8 inches from the ceiling of the flight.



Toucans are generally considered frugivorous, but their diet is more omnivorous. In the wild, they take advantage of over a hundred different species of fruiting trees, shrubs, and vines. Some of these species consume only fruit on a seasonal basis, so their fruit diet is varied. In addition, they consume insects and the occasional babies of other small passerine birds.

In the wild, toucans naturally eat a diet very low in iron. In captivity, however, the opposite is the case. High iron causes Iron Storage Disease (ISD), so we feed a diet low in iron. We feed them a diet of mixed fruit (all fruits are low in iron) and the Mazuri Low Iron Softbill Pellet for proteins, vitamins and minerals. While any fruit except citrus are good for toucans, we offer papaya, bananas and blueberries. Citrus is not good for toucans because it is high in acid, which facilitates the uptake of iron. The Mazuri pellets were developed specifically to address the iron issue and is the lowest iron content pellet available on the market today at 59 ppm. Since we began to feed the Mazuri over five years ago, the problems with ISD have disappeared.

The breeding season for Collareds in North America begins in April and can extend through October, during which time several clutches of young can be reared. If the eggs are pulled for incubation, we have had as many as eight clutches in a single breeding season. When Collareds become romantically inclined, they begin a courtship ritual, which includes regurgitation of food offered to the mate, much as do parrots. If both birds engage in this activity, copulation soon follows and eggs are laid. The onset of incubation begins with the second egg and lasts sixteen days. Young are hatched with eyes closed and without any natal down, as occurs with finches. At 21 to 23 days of age the eyes begin to open and feather tracks are clearly defined on the birds' breasts and backs. By day twenty-eight, feathers have sprouted and by day 35 the bird is nearly completely feathered. At 42 days of age parent reared babies leave the nest, and hand-reared birds leave the brooder tub for a weaning cage. By 60 days of age the babies are completely weaned.



2005

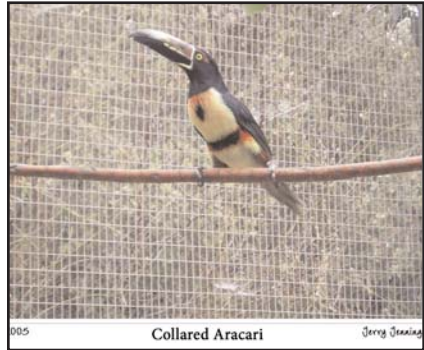
Green Aracari

Ron Castaner

The handrearing of baby Collareds is fairly easy. We feed them Kaytee handfeeding formula (Cockatoo formulation) and Gerber's baby fruits at a ratio of 2:1. They are fed through a syringe every two hours for a total of ten times per day from the day they hatch until four weeks of age.

From four to five weeks of age they are fed eight times per day, and from five to six weeks of age they are fed seven times per day. Then they are fed six times a day until they are beginning to eat solid food on their own, when the feedings are reduced to three times a day until weaned.

Brooder temperatures for day-old to three-week-old babies is kept at 97 degrees and then dropped very gradually over the next 2 weeks.



Collared Aracaris are a lot of fun to keep and will provide a lot of entertainment and pleasure for their owners.

For more information on the care and breeding of toucans and aracaris, please feel free to visit our website at www.emeraldforestbirds.com.

Jerry Jennings was the founding Director and the first President of the American Federation of Aviculture (AFA). He currently owns and manages Emerald Forest Bird Gardens (www.emeraldforestbirds.com) in Fallbrook, CA and a toucan breeding facility in southeastern Peru.

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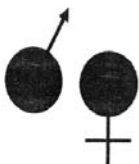
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NFSS welcomes any and all submissions for the Youth and Aviculture page. Please send your artwork, photos, jokes, riddles and any ideas to:

Raspberry, NFSS Youth Editor
535 SE 16th Avenue, Portland, OR 97214
(raspberry@europa.com)

or visit the NFSS Youth Forum (NFSS4KIDS@yahoogroups.com)

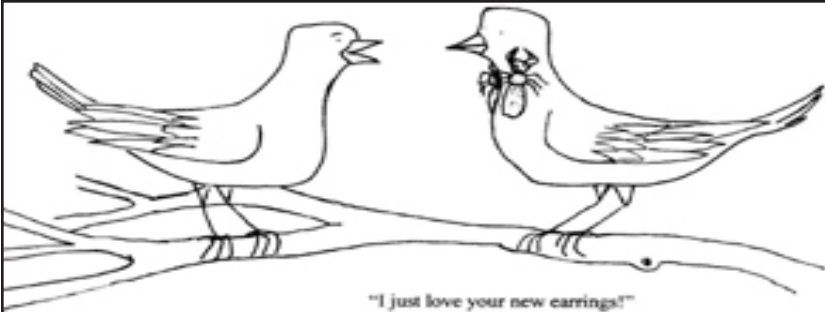
Anting

Anting is one of the strangest behaviors observable in a bird. When I first heard about anting I considered it more comical than practical. Nature does sometimes seem that way. But rest assured that in the dealings of nature there is always a method behind the madness.

Active anting is a process in which a bird will take a bath in the dust. Then it will lie on top or near an active anthill and patiently wait. The bird is waiting for the ants. And in time the ants will sense the presence of the intruder and will launch an attack upon its "enemy." The ants crawl on almost every part of the bird's body, biting as it goes. The bird makes no attempt to flee the jaws of the tiny insects. With every bite, the ants release formic acid, which acts as an insecticide, fungicide, and/or bactericide. Passive anting is a simpler process. In passive anting, a bird will peck at an insect and rub it in its feathers.

But in my opinion, anting is more behavioral than medical. It has been observed that when in a caged environment, one that is free of insects, mites, etc., the bird will still "ant" with whatever materials it can find. These materials include seeds, food pellets, and other small items. It may appear that the bird is "feeding its skin" but in fact its simulating anting. Anting may also have some social reasons. In one account, a bird owner observed that her bird will only try to ant when she is watching, otherwise the bird will stay in the same pose until the owner looks back again. It is also observed that wild crows tend to socialize during anting. One crow may be down at the anthill while others wait their turn whilst preening in a tree. When the crow is finished, it will fly up to the branch with the others and engage in an extended preening session. One crow may even help another preen a hard-to-reach spot in an almost social way. This form of "hanging out" is what leads me to believe that anting is behavioral.

Kellen Shanahan, NFSS Member 5093 (Age 13)



Summer 2005 - Finch/Softbill List

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Purple Grenadier -----	\$300.00/pr	English Zebra -----	\$50.00/pr
Blue-capped Cordon Bleu -----	\$100.00/pr	Shaft-tailed Whydah -----	\$175.00/pr
Peter's Twinspot -----	\$180.00/pr	White-Headed Nun -----	\$60.00/pr
Dybowski's Twinspot -----	\$180.00/pr	Black-Headed Num -----	\$60.00/pr
Star Finch, Red-Face -----	\$110.00/pr	Melba -----	\$140.00/pr
Star Finch, Isabell Yellow -----	\$150.00/pr	Black-Cheeked Waxbill -----	\$120.00/pr
Red Munia (Strawberry) -----	\$100.00/pr	European Goldfinch -----	\$79.00/pr
Owl Finch -----	\$190.00/pr	Siberian Goldfinch -----	\$99.00/pr
Yellow-Bellied Waxbill (Swee) -----	\$100.00/pr	European Greenfinch -----	\$99.00/pr
Giant Green Singer -----	\$120.00/pr	Himalayan Greenfinch -----	\$140.00/pr
Grey Singer - (Yellow-rumped) ---	\$120.00/pr	Linnet -----	\$140.00/pr
Masked Grass Finch -----	\$200.00/pr	Chaffinch -----	\$160.00/pr
Grey-Headed Silverbill -----	\$100.00/pr	European Serin -----	\$250.00/pr
Silverbill -----	\$50.00/pr	Rufous-Backed Mannikin -----	\$49.00/pr
Red-Face Crimson Wing -----	\$120.00/pr	Pintail Whydah -----	\$90.00/pr
Abyssinian Crimson Wing -----	\$100.00/pr	Sydney Waxbill -----	\$250.00/pr
Cherry Finch -----	\$140.00/pr	Paradise Whdah -----	\$200.00/pr
Fawn Cherry Finch -----	\$150.00/pr	Bay-Headed Tanager (1 pair) ----	\$450.00/pr
Shafttail Finch -----	\$110.00/pr	Paradise Tanager -----	\$1,100.00/pr
Isabel Shafttail -----	\$180.00/pr	Desert Finch -----	\$150.00/pr
Forbes Parrot Finch -----	\$250.00/pr	Trumpeter Finch -----	\$150.00/pr
Blue-Faced Parrot Finch -----	\$225.00/pr	Red-Fronted Serin -----	\$250.00/pr
Red-Faced Parrot Finch -----	\$250.00/pr	Red Headed Bunting -----	\$100.00/pr
White Shafttail -----	\$150.00/pr	Black Headed Bunting -----	\$100.00/pr
Parson Finch -----	\$180.00/pr	White-Bellied Canary -----	\$100.00/pr
Cuban Melodious -----	\$300.00/pr	Canary - Border -----	\$150.00/each
Diamond Firetail -----	\$180.00/pr	Canary - Frills -----	\$150.00/each
Silver Diamond Firetail -----	\$600.00/pr	Chestnut-Breasted Mannikin -----	\$175.00/pr
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Saffron Finch -----	\$100.00/pr		
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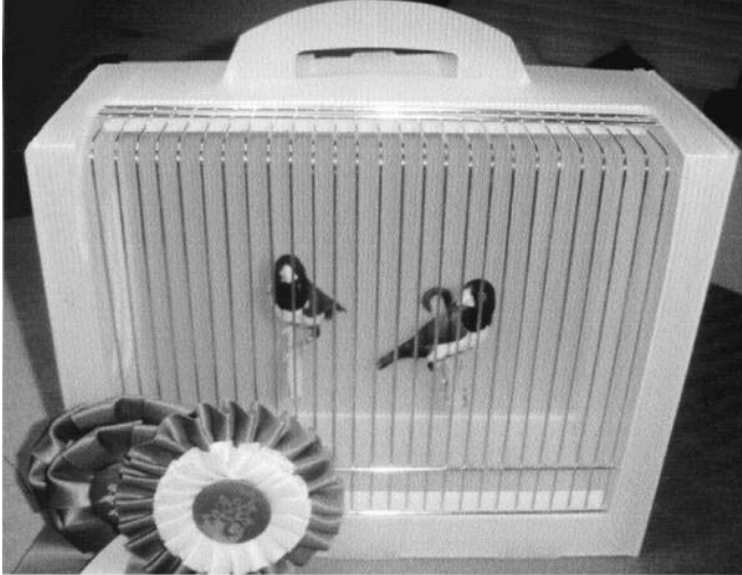
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Shafttail, Gray.....	\$ 65	American singer (hen).....	\$60
Shafttail, Fawn.....	\$ 75	Red Mahogany.....	\$95
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Star, Yellow Face	\$ 75	Red Mosaic	\$85
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3rd Quarter, 2005 NFSS Board Meeting

The 3rd Quarter NFSS Board Meeting began online 07/05/05, concluded 7/23/05.

In attendance: Jim Heffernan, Randy Taylor, Sally Huntington, Patrick Vance, Raspberry, Bill Parlee, Darla Dandre, Alfred Mion, Ron Castaner, Armando Lee, Harry Bryant, Martha Wigmore, Mark Phelps, Robert Mehl, Shelly Ortman, Paula Hansen & Bob French.

Martha Wigmore and Armando Lee were appointed by NFSS president Sally Huntington to conduct an audit of the 2003 financial records and found everything to be in order. Martha Wigmore and Bob French have accepted the task of auditing the 2004 financial records.

Martha Wigmore stated she will be submitting to the board for approval the General Standard during our "special" Board meeting in Aug/Sep at which time we'll also look at changes to the NFSS Show Classifications.

Ron Castaner announced the Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club donated \$100 to NFSS to cover the cost of the NFSS table at AFA. Ron Castaner asked about the NFSS banner. Since it was in bad condition, Paula Hansen ordered one 3 ft x 5 ft for AFA and other events.

There was a discussion on politics on the Yahoo group. The BOD decided to have John Wilson look set up a second forum for business and politics leaving the original forum for bird husbandry only, thereby meeting all the needs of the membership.

Robert Mehl sent in a pic of a new bumper sticker the cost of which would be \$399 per 1000. Paula Hansen brought up the idea of NFSS exclusively carry the Finch book from Rob van der Hulst from the Netherlands in the Finch Shop.

Motion 2005-11 - motion that the junior fees be dropped to \$10 a year (any junior member joining within the last 6 months would get a pro-rated extent ion) submitted by: Robert Mehl - Membership Director, Pro Tem second by; Raspberry - **PASSED**

2005-12 - That a code of conduct be developed with consequences for violations and that such code be included on the opening page of each Forum and included in the initial mailing to new Forum Members. I further move that such a code be periodically posted on the forum. Submitted by: Shell Ortman, Second by: Robert Mehl - **DID NOT PASS**

Motion 2005-13 - Submitted the following item to be considered by the Board: I believe we should raise the affiliation fee for clubs from \$25.00 to \$30.00. Submitted by: Harry Bryant, 2 VP, second by; Raspberry - **PASSED**

Motion 2005-14 - I move that the NFSS donate \$500 to the Philadelphia Zoo for the Bird House Renovation Project. Submitted by: Shell Ortman, Second by: Robert Mehl - **DID NOT PASS**

Motion 2005-15 - Submitted the following motion to be considered by the Board: "That a new appointed position of 'Associate Editor' be created, whose job will consists of assisting (and/or filling in for the editor - if the need arises) the editor in the production of the Journal, and is such position is approved, that the NFSS purchase a second copy of the Quark software (\$525.00) that we use for the Journal to be used by the 'associate editor'". Submitted by: Harry Bryant, 2VP, Second by: Ron Castaner - **PASSED**

Special election results reported by Ginny Allen Total of 161 votes including 10 clubs.

Region 1 Vice President (total of 41 ballots) - **Shelley Ortman** 38, Bob French 3.

Robert Mehl was elected **Membership Director**.

Jim Heffernan was elected **Executive Secretary**.

The Revised Bylaws passed 154 for and 7 against. Seven voted against the revisions. Most cited specified articles. These were copied to the BOD and will be discussed by BOD.

Respectfully submitted
Jim Heffernan, Executive Secretary.

Department Reports

Band secretary Report: Paula Hansen- May total sales 453.00, June total sales 441.60, July total sales 362.13. The 2006 bands are on order. The manufacturer is changing from a metal stem with rubber stopper to cable ties which are lighter and will keep handling charges down .

2005 Second Quarter FinchShop Report: The FinchShop is now offering Finch & Softbill Mouse Pads and sales for that item have almost covered the expense to produce them. The logo cap is now back in stock and a long sleeve logo shirt and NFSS logo stickers (that would be similar in design and size to the country indicators seen on many cars) will be added. I hope that these products will be available before the National

Show. Sales are down slightly but I hope with the busy Fall Show season that we will be able to make or exceed our projected budgeted figures.

A Finch Shop table has been set up at many of the shows east of the Mississippi and I hope to continue to be able to do that in the Fall. I'd like to thank the clubs that have donated a table and space for the NFSS FinchShop.

Membership Report - Incoming renewals & new membership funds are up about 2% of the projected amount. If the current rate of new members continues we will have added 285 members. Renewal continue to be a bit problematic with over 200 not renewing in the first half of this year. Remember your benefits technically end on the last day of your membership. This includes the privileges to participate on the forum. N.F.S.S. does provide a 30 day grace period before removing members from the Forum. To assist members in knowing when they are due to expire that journal label will now include this information. If at any time you have questions or concerns please contact Robert Mehl at nfss-membership@verizon.net.

Current Membership Figures total single memberships 646 (includes one of each dual), Total Dual Memberships 95, Total Affiliate Memberships 41, Total: 782.

Subject: Region 2 V.P. Report (Ron Castaner)

July 20, Stuart, FL - Visit with Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club to the Harbor Place, a retirement house. The facility advertised our event as a Bird Show, and it was. We had all kinds of birds, from the small ones to the large Macaws. We had names like Coco, Buba, Nemo, Paco, Lili Bit, Tiki and many other bird names. We had so many smiles from the residents there, it was worth every minute of our time.

July 24, Stuart, FL - Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club members and the Board of Directors have donated the cost of the NFSS table at the AFA convention in Miami. I will talk to them about the importance of clubs and their members, why we need each others support, and give a lecture on the importance of quarantine new birds.

August 2-6 Miami, FL - I will be having a NFSS table at the AFA convention in Miami, with Finch shop items to sell, application for new members, I will be answering questions and hopefully gain new members.

August 14 Fort Lauderdale, FL - Speaking engagement at the Aviary & Cage Bird Society of Florida in Flamingo Garden Fort Lauderdale,

Florida. I will be talking about the care and the breeding of Finches, also disease and prevention. I am bringing my two talking Java Rice Sparrows, will let them loose so that all members get to see and play with Spot. They will steal anyone's Heart, I promise.

JUDGE'S PANEL REPORT - There are currently 24 members of the NFSS Judges Panel. I am happy to announce that we have an applicant to the NFSS Apprentice Judge program who has met the basic qualifications and will be taking the written Apprentice Judge examination at NCBS 2005.

RESEARCH AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
(1) Society Finch Standard Revision Committee. An in-depth review of the proposed revision to the NFSS Society Finch standard will be undertaken at a Society Finch specialty show in July 2005. Thank you to all who have contributed their knowledge and time to this valuable effort!
(2) Proposed General Standard - No additional comments from the NFSS membership have been received about the recent changes to the proposed General Standard published in "The NFSS Journal." The Board will be asked to approve the Standard shortly.

SPECIE CLASSIFICATIONS: Proposed class changes in some Sections will be submitted shortly to the NFSS Board for its approval. Watch "The NFSS Journal" for announcements of changes.

JUDGE CHANGE FOR NFSS NATIONAL SHOW AT NCBS 2005: NFSS has recently been advised that NFSS Panel Judge Dale Laird will be judging the Finch/Softbill Division at the National Cage Bird Show in Dallas/Ft. Worth this year on November 18. We are sorry that NFSS Panel Judge Julie Duimstra will not be able to attend. Thank you, Dale, for stepping in for us. Come and join us at NCBS for the FUN - and those great birds!

THANK YOU TO NCBS AWARDS SPONSORS:
A big thank you goes out to all of our generous award sponsors at NFSS' upcoming National Show, held in conjunction with NCBS! Thanks to Janis Clark for sponsoring the Finch/Softbill Division for us, and to the following Section sponsors: Robert Mehl, Softbills; Sally & Vince Huntington, Zebra Finches; anonymous donor for Gouldian Finches, Australian Finches, and Doves & Quail; Charles Anchor for both Indo-Pacific Finches and European Finches; Clarence & Ola Culwell, Society Finches; Chryoe Seeman, Finches of Africa; Clint & Cathy Harris, Finches of the Americas; and Denise Hofer, Pairs.

Respectfully submitted, Martha Wigmore

2004/2005 NFSS Board of Directors/Appointed Officers

President— Ms. Sally Huntington

5634 Carnegie Street, San Diego, CA 92122 (858) 452-9423 sallych@san.rr.com

Elected Officers

1st Vice President

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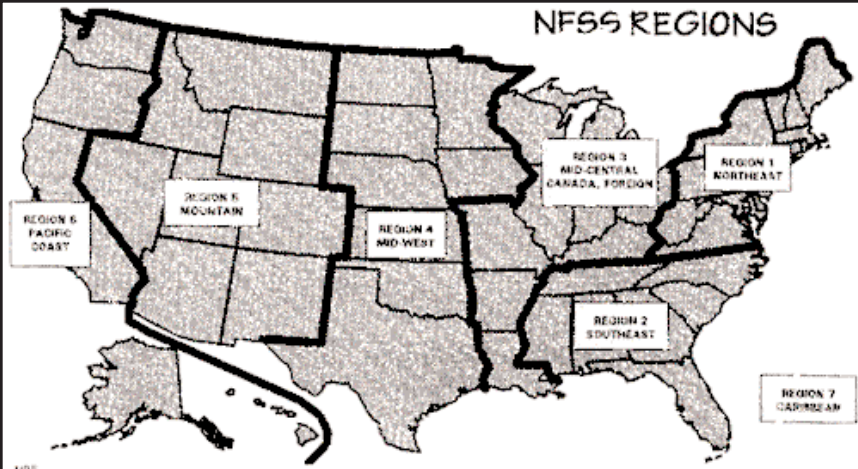
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REGIONAL CLUBS

SOUTHEAST BIRD FANCIERS [SOUTHEAST U.S.]

DELEGATE Ginny Allen, (334) 749-7168; gndallen@earthlink.net
MEETINGS 1st Saturday in March, June, Sept.; 2nd Saturday in December
 Atlanta Farmers Market
WEBSITE <http://members.tripod.com/sebfg/sebf.htm>

ALABAMA

CENTRAL ALABAMA AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

DELEGATE Margie Lanier, (334) 567-4073; margielanier@yahoo.com
MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: 2:30 p.m.
 Montgomery Zoo Education Building: Montgomery, Alabama
www.caasociety.com
WEBSITE
BIRD SHOW October 29-30, 2005; Saturday & Sunday
SHOW INFO. Margie Lanier, (334) 567-4073; margielanier@yahoo.com

CANADA

AMATEURS DOISEAUX CENTRE DU QUEBEC [QUEBEC, CANADA]

DELEGATE Jean Beliveau, (450) 564-2520; jeanbeliveau@sympatico.ca
MEETINGS 1st Sunday of month
WEBSITE www.aocq.org

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

CAGE BIRD SOCIETY OF HAMILTON [HAMILTON, ONTARIO]

DELEGATE Peter Webb, (905) 385-4706; PD4PINS@msn.com
MEETINGS Last Sunday of month, excluding July and August
 Valley Park Community Ctr.: 970 Paramount Drive, Stoney Creek
SHOW DATES October 28-30, 2005: Bird Show and Monthly Meeting
BIRD SHOW October 29, 2005; Saturday
JUDGE Alfred Mion
LOCATION Valley Park Community Center (see above)
SHOW INFO. Peter Webb, (905) 385-4706; PD4PINS@msn.com

CENTRAL ISLAND BIRD CLUB [VANCOUVER ISLAND, BRITISH COLUMBIA]

DELEGATE Bridget Malo, (250) 715-1373; bebadbirds@shaw.ca
E-MAIL centralislandbirdclub@shaw.ca;
CLUB WEBSITE <http://www.members.shaw.ca/centralislandbirdclub>
SHOW DATES October 21-23, 2005
JUDGE Alfred Mion
LOCATION Moose Hall: Duncan, British Columbia
SHOW INFO. Bridget Malo, (250) 715-1373; bebadbirds@shaw.ca

DURHAM AVICULTURAL SOCIETY [ONTARIO, CANADA]

DELEGATE Jacquie Blackburn, (416) 282-5997; jacquies.parrots@sympatico.ca
MEETINGS 2nd Tuesday of month: Rotary Park Pavilion, Ajax, Ontario
CLUB WEBSITE www.birdclub.ca
SHOW DATES September 17-18, 2005
JUDGE Vince Moase
LOCATION Pickering Recreational Complex; Valley Farm Road, Pickering
SHOW MANAGER Marianne Orlecki, (905) 623-4642; xtreme_babe2002@yahoo.com

ESSEX-KENT CAGE BIRD SOCIETY [WINDSOR, ONTARIO]

MEETINGS Monthly at members homes
DELEGATE Julianne & Alfred Mion, (519) 948-6398; julianne@mnsi.net
CLUB WEBSITE www.essexkentcbs.com
SHOW DATE October 14, 2005
JUDGE Patrick Vance
SHOW LOCATION Fogolar Furlan, Udine Building, 1800 E.C. Row
 North Service Road, Windsor
SHOW MANAGER Alfred Mion (see above)

CALIFORNIA

CENTRAL CALIFORNIA AVIAN SOCIETY [Fresno]

DELEGATE Gabriel Guillen, (559) 252-2447; el.viejo7@sbccom
CLUB E-MAIL hisbirds@sierratel.com
CLUB WEBSITE <http://www.ccasbirds.org/>
BIRD MART DATES June 5-6, 2005
LOCATION Fresno Fairgrounds, Fresno
INFO. Beth Marhenke (559) 226-4377

FINCH SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY [San Diego]

DELEGATE Mary Hibner, (858) 549-3705; mary37@yahoo.com
SHOW DATE October 8, 2005; Saturday

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

FLORIDA

AVIARY & CAGE BIRD CLUB OF SOUTH FLORIDA [Fort Lauderdale]

DELEGATE Marcia David, (954) 321-9229
MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: 2:00 p.m., Flamingo Gardens Gallery,
 Flamingo Road, Davie, FL (954) 473-2955
CLUB WEBSITE <http://www.feathers.org>

CAGE BIRD CLUB OF CHARLOTTE COUNTY [Port Charlotte]

DELEGATE Godfrey Richardson, (941) 764-8129
MEETINGS 3rd Thursday of month: Port Charlotte Cultural Center
SHOW DATES Oct 8-9, 2005 - Host Club for Great American Bird Show [G.A.B.S.]
SHOW LOCATION Port Charlotte Cultural Center, Port Charlotte

EXOTIC BIRD CLUB OF FLORIDA [Palm Bay]

MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: 1275 Culver Road, Palm Bay
DELEGATE Ginny Heptig, (321) 952-9780; YngAtHrtt@aol.com
CLUB WEBSITE <http://exoticbirdclubofflorida.homestead.com/index.html>

GREAT AMERICAN BIRD SHOW [G.A.B.S.] [Punta Gorda]

DELEGATE Miki Spazak, (410) 687-8915; MJS5295@comcast.net
CLUB E-MAIL sandhilllexotics@aol.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.greatamericanbirdshow.org
SHOW DATES October 8-9, 2005: Annual National Show
JUDGES Dale Laird, Marion Spazak
SHOW LOCATION Port Charlotte Cultural Center: 2280 Aaron St., Port Charlotte
SHOW MANAGER David Dollar, (352) 799-7294; sandhilllexotics@aol.com

SUN COAST AVIAN SOCIETY [Clearwater]

DELEGATE Joe Ventimiglia, (727) 392-9391
MEETINGS 1st Sunday of month: Leisure World Mobile Home Park,
 Clearwater, FL
CLUB E-MAIL whoward7@tampabay.rr.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.suncoastaviansociety.org

TREASURE COAST EXOTIC BIRD CLUB [Stuart]

DELEGATE Timothy McCormick; donglo57@bellsouth.net
CLUB E-MAIL jim.dwyer@netzero.net

TRI-STATE AVIAN SOCIETY [Tallahassee]

DELEGATE Christine Maples, (850) 562-2800; christine@maplerun.net
MEETINGS 2nd Saturday of month; Leon County Agriculture Extension
 Office, 615 Paul Russell Road, Tallahassee

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

ILLINOIS

GREATER CHICAGO CAGE BIRD CLUB [Elmhurst]

DELEGATE Robert Wild, (630) 985-4416; r.wild@comcast.com
MEETINGS 3rd Friday of month: no meeting in November.
 American Legion Hall: Butterfield Road, Elmhurst.
CLUB E-MAIL resident@gccbc.org
CLUB WEBSITE www.gccbc.org
SHOW DATE November 5, 2005
EVENT LOCATION Park Plaza Hotel, 75 W. Algonquin Road, Arlington Heights

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RED-ORANGE CANARIES and OTHER CAGE BIRDS [NIROC]

MEETINGS 1st Friday of month, Corner of Bristol & Devonshire, Westchester
DELEGATE Steve Hopman (708) 235-0505; Birdhop@aol.com
SHOW DATE November 26, 2005
JUDGE Conrad Meinert
SHOW MANAGER Nancy Serchuk, (847) 437-5704; cserchuk@sbcglobal

ILLINI BIRD FANCIERS [Springfield]

MEETINGS 4th Sunday of each month
 1236 N. Oaklane Road #200, Springfield
DELEGATE Judith Wilson, (217) 492-1510; balu6960@sbcglobal.net
CLUB WEBSITE illinibirdfanciers@yahoo.com

AVICULTURAL SOCIETY OF CHICAGOLAND [TASC] [Downers Grove]

MEETINGS 4th Friday of month: Prairieview Elementary School
 699 Plainfield Road, Downers Grove
DELEGATE Jason Crean, (630) 985-8130; tascchicago@aol.com
CLUB E-MAIL tascchicago@aol.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.tasc-chicago.org

IOWA

MID-AMERICA CAGE BIRD SOCIETY [Des Moines]

MEETINGS 4th Sun of month: Des Moines Botanical Ctr, 909 Robert D Ray Dr.
DELEGATE John Thielking, (515) 278-9159; thielking@iowalink.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.midamericacagebirdsociety.org
SHOW DATE October 1, 2005
JUDGE Dale Laird
SHOW LOCATION Best Western Des Moines North, 5055 Merle Hay Rd, Johnston, IA
SHOW MANAGER John Thielking (see above)

KANSAS

ZEBRA & SOCIETY FINCH CLUB [Shawnee]

DELEGATE Charlie Anchor, 847-515-1090

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE BIRD FANCIERS, INC. [Baltimore]

MEETINGS Towson Public Library
DELEGATE Robert Mehl, (210) 581-7955; Robertmehl@verizon.net
CLUB E-MAIL baltimorebirdfanciers@verizon.net
CLUB WEBSITE <http://www.baltimorebirdfancier.org>

MICHIGAN

SOCIETY OF CANARY & FINCH BREEDERS [Farmington Hills]

DELEGATE Patrick Vance, (248) 445-0643; spartanfinchman@cs.com
MEETINGS 3rd Saturday of each month: Farmington Hills
SHOW DATE December 10, 2005; NFSS REGIONAL SHOW
JUDGE Conrad Meinert

MISSOURI

GATEWAY PARROT CLUB [High Ridge]

MEETINGS 3rd Sunday of each month: 2:00 p.m., Humane Society of Missouri
 Pet Training Center Bldg, 1201 Macklind, St. Louis
DELEGATE Christine Kincaid, (636) 343-8097; parrotsx10@aol.com
CLUB E-MAIL introfish@aol.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.gatewayparrotclub.org

GREATER KANSAS CITY AVICULTURAL SOCIETY [Kansas City]

DELEGATE Anthony Day, (816) 255-5068
MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: Coronation of Our Lady Church Grandview
CLUB WEBSITE <http://www.gkcas.org>
SHOW DATE October 15, 2005
JUDGE Dennis Lewis
SHOW LOCATION Best Western KC South, 5701 Longview Road, Kansas City
SHOW INFO. Maria Michel; mcmbirdsetcmichel@kc.rr.com

NEW HAMPSHIRE

BIRDS OF A FEATHER AVICULTURAL SOCIETY [Manchester]

MEETINGS 2nd Monday of month: Villa Crest Retirement Center
DELEGATE Ray Schwartz, (603) 62-6106; Prismsdad@aol.com
CLUB E-MAIL EDITOR@boaf.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.boaf.com
SHOW DATE October 29, 2005
JUDGE Dr. Al Decoteau
SHOW LOCATION Center of NH Radisson Hotel, 700 Elm Street, Manchester
SHOW MANAGER Katy Secor, (978) 251-3653; KatyS@netway.com

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

NEW YORK

EMPIRE FINCH & CANARY CLUB [West Hempstead]

MEETINGS 1st Thursday of month: 8:00 p.m., Averill Blvd Park, Elmont
DELEGATE John Lund, (516) 564-4692
SHOW DATE November 12, 2005
 5th Annual Empire Finch & Canary Club Show, St. Mark's United Methodist Church, 200 Hempstead Avenue, Rockville Center
JUDGE Laura Tinke
SHOW MANAGER Gabe Dillon, (516) 593-2841

NEW YORK FINCH & TYPE CANARY CLUB [New York]

MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month, except July & August
DELEGATE Stan Kulak, (718) 967-6899; barstand@aaahawk.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.newyorkfinch.com
SHOW DATE October 15, 2005
JUDGE Bob Vargo, Non-NFSS
SHOW LOCATION St. Jude School: Gyne Hall, 1677 Canarsie Road, 9401 Seaview Ave. [same building] Brooklyn
SHOW MANAGER Stan Kulak, (718) 967-6899 (see above)

ASTORIA BIRD CLUB [Astoria]

MEETINGS 3rd Sunday of Month: Bohemian Hall
 2919 24th Ave. Astoria
DELEGATE Robert Gallo, (718) 380-3935; robertgallo@earthlink.net

NORTH CAROLINA

RALEIGH-DURHAM CAGE BIRD SOCIETY [Raleigh]

DELEGATE April Blazich, (919) 851-8079; aprilb@bellsouth.net
MEETINGS 3rd Sunday of month: Glen Eden Pilot Park, Glen Eden Dr., Raleigh
CLUB WEBSITE www.rdcbs.org

OREGON

EASTSIDE FINCH CONNECTION [Portland]

DELEGATE Raspberry, (503) 233-4274; raspberry@europa.com

PUERTO RICO

ASOCIACION DE CRIADORES DE FINCHES DEL ESTE [Cagues]

MEETINGS First Sunday of month
DELEGATE Victor Cordero, (787) 893-7723; denise805@hotmail.com
SHOW DATES November 4-6, 2005 - Winter National Bird Show, Puerto Rico
JUDGE Cecil Gunby
SHOW LOCATION Chancha Raul Papaleo: Cagues, Puerto Rico

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

TENNESSEE

MIDDLE TENNESSEE CAGE BIRD CLUB [Nashville]

MEETINGS 3rd Sunday of month: 1:00 p.m., Donelson Senior Center, Donelson
DELEGATE Wilma Crawford, (615) 890-6906; tnma2@comcast.net
JUDGE Jerri Wiesenfeld
SHOW MANAGER Wilma Crawford (see above)

SOUTHEAST TENNESSEE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY (Niota)

MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: 2 p.m.; Niota Elementary School
DELEGATE Janet Burrell, (423) 472-1306; jab2202@aol.com
FAIR/SHOW DATES October 22, 2005: Fall Fair & Annual Show
FAIR/SHOW LOC. Niota Elementary School, Niota
SHOW MANAGER Theresa Burnette, (423) 337-4597; tjburn2000@yahoo.com

TENNESSEE VALLEY EXOTIC BIRD CLUB [Knoxville]

DELEGATE Lisa Murphy, (423) 263-0483; wlmurphy@usit.net
MEETINGS 1ST Tuesday of month: Church of Good Samaritan

TEXAS

ALAMO EXHIBITION BIRD CLUB INC. [New Braunfels]

MEETINGS 4th Sunday of month, 3:00 p.m.: Becker CPA Center
 8033 Pinebrook, San Antonio
CLUB WEBSITE www.aebc.org
CLUB INFO. (210) 657-0069; tkinsey1@satx.rr.com.

FORT WORTH BIRD CLUB [Fort Worth]

MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: Fort Worth Botanical Gardens, Azalea Room
DELEGATE Clarence Culwell, (817) 220-5568; COculwell@myfam.com
SHOW DATE September 24, 2005
JUDGE Laura Bewley
SHOW LOCATION Grapevine Convention Center, 1209 South Main, Grapevine
SHOW MANAGER Jerry Cason, (817) 237-5867; Jerrycason@mindspring.com

Canary & Finch Society [Houston]

MEETINGS 2nd Sunday of month: 2:00 p.m.; Town Place Mall, Pasadena
DELEGATE Alicia Baker, (281) 320-9936; aliciabaker@myway.com
CLUB E-MAIL aliciabaker@myway.com
SHOW DATE Saturday, October 8, 2005
JUDGE Cecil Gunby
SHOW LOCATION Holiday Inn, Houston Intercontinental Airport, 15222 JFK Boulevard
SHOW MANAGER Alicia Baker (see above)

Texas Bird Breeders Association [Temple]

DELEGATE Clarence Culwell; (817) 220-5568; Cculwell@myfam.com
MEETINGS 2nd Saturday of month, 12:00 p.m.; 3rd weekend, Feb & August
SHOW DATE November 5, 2005
SHOW LOCATION Mayborn Convention Center, Temple, [I-35, Exit 304]
SHOW INFO. Clarence Culwell (see above)

NFSS Affiliated Clubs/Events

VIRGINIA

PENINSULA CAGE BIRD SOCIETY, INC. [Hampton]

MEETINGS 3rd Sunday of month, 2:00 p.m.; Thomas Nelson Community College, Moore Hall
DELEGATE Bea Rogers, (757) 484-6001
CLUB E-MAIL dwilson786@aol.com
CLUB WEBSITE www.vapeninsulacagedbirdsociety.org
FALL BIRD MART Annual Bird Clubs of VA Convention (see web site for information)

WASHINGTON

CASCADE CANARY BREEDERS ASSOCIATION [Seattle]

DELEGATE Janel C. Johnson, (425) 226-8899; katbird57@aol.com
MEETINGS 3rd Sunday of month, 1:00 p.m.
 Kepler's Feed: 16442 S.E. Renton-Issaquah Road, Renton

WINGS OVER WASHINGTON [Seattle]

DELEGATE Doug White, (425) 870-7298; dwhite3511@msn.com

WISCONSIN

CENTRAL WISCONSIN CAGE & WILD BIRD CONNECTION [Pittsville]

MEETINGS 1st Saturday of month: alternating members' homes
DELEGATE Carolyn Belisle, (608) 427-6674; secretarybirdwi@yahoo.com
CLUB E-MAIL secretarybirdwi@yahoo.com
CLUB WEBSITE <http://www.cwwcbc.us/bc>
CONTACTS Dave Bluma: DavidBluma@aol.com;
 Marlene Minor: mminor@tds.net



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2005 AFFILIATION AGREEMENT

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 and 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
- **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!



The basic affiliation fee is \$30.00.

Club Name: _____

Club City/St: _____

Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Send your check for \$30.00 made payable to NFSS to:

Darla Dandre
 NFSS Affiliations & Awards Manager
 PO Box 4092, Joliet, IL 60434
 Phone: 815-729-9789
 E-Mail: Dbirdranch@aol.com

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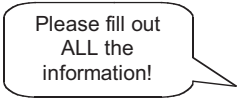
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SHIP AWARDS TO: NAME: _____



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 _____

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

- Size A: Gold-breasted Waxbill, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Owl (Bicheno) Finch, Quail Finch, Red-eared Waxbill, Strawberry Finch, and other small waxbills.
- Size B: Black-cheeked 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.
- Size D: Blue-faced Parrot Finch, Lady Gouldian Finch, Chestnut-breasted & most smaller mannikins, most other Parrot finches, Pictorella Finch, Pintailed Nonpareil, most Twinspots, Yellow-rumped Finch, Standard Zebra 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, Superb Starlings.
- Size R: Green/Purple Starlings.
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- Size T: Small Hornbills, Plush-capped Jay, small Toucans, small Touracos.

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Guide to Ordering Open Plastic Leg Bands

- Size XF: Cordon Bleu, Fire, Orange-Cheeked, 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, Fife, 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.

CLASSIFIED ADS

CLASSIFIED RATES: \$4.00/Issue (Up to four lines of text). Free Classifieds to NFSS Finch/Softbill Save Program Members. All ads are also posted on the NFSS website (www.nfss.org) at no extra charge. Contact Bob French, 100 Myrtle Ave #204, Whitman, MA 02382, (phone) (781) 630-3334, email: bobfrenchnfss@gmail.com

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YOUR AD COULD BE HERE!

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City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

Phone #: _____

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New Member? _____ Renewal (List NFSS #) _____

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Mail Application and Check Payable to NFSS:

Robert Mehl
11108 Hollowbrook Rd.
Owings Mills,
MD 21117-1379



NFSS FINCH/SOFTBILL SAVE Information/Application Request

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____

Phone #: _____

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