



# NATIONAL FINCH & SOFTBILL SOCIETY

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THE JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL FINCH AND SOFTBILL SOCIETY



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The National Finch and Softbill Society is dedicated to promoting the enjoyment of keeping and breeding Finches and Softbills to all interested parties, enhancing our knowledge of the proper care of these birds, encouraging breeding programs, and working with other organizations for the preservation of aviculture in this country.

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### **DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING ADS**

***ALL ADS MUST BE RECEIVED TWO MONTHS PRIOR TO PUBLICATION***

Jan/Feb issue must be received by November 1 • Mar/Apr issue by January 1

May/Jun issue by March 1 • Jul/Aug issue by May 1

Sep/Oct issue by July 1 • Nov/Dec issue by September 1

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT JOURNAL EDITOR**

***EDITOR@NFSS.COM***





## President's Message

Rebecca Mikel

***"... no age lives entirely alone; every civilization is formed not merely by its own achievements, but by what it has inherited from the past. If these things are destroyed, we have lost a part of our past, and we shall be the poorer for it."***

-British Monuments Man Ronald Balfour  
Draft lecture for Soldiers, 1944

I wonder, many, many years from now, if the achievements we made and the activities we promoted and participated in as an avicultural society were put on display, what they would say about us? How would they identify and define us in illuminating the past? Did we make our part of the world (the hobby) a better place? What are we doing to cement that "connection" to ensure it remains a part of the lives of generations after us?

Sadly, membership numbers are dropping in all hobby groups – yes, NFSS too. Bird clubs across America who previously hosted shows, fairs, and other avicultural events are fading into non-existence. Records since 2006 verify our "Junior" membership numbers in NFSS never exceeded "11". FinchSave, a worthy program for working with rare species, has several groups without "Species Captains" and we've had little luck in attracting individuals interested in serving in those leadership roles. At one time there were very close to 100 NFSS sanctioned shows across the U.S. each year -we are at half of that, or less. Current legislation combined with the agendas of extreme animal welfare groups threaten our ability to continue to keep the birds we work with.

I'd like to share just a few of things the NFSS Board is undertaking in attempt to try to change those trends:

The NFSS Board recently agreed to award a one-year free NFSS membership to persons who agreed to be an Afternoon of Aviculture speaker at our future NCBS National events. We believe there is a strong likelihood there are pockets of aviculturalists who know "of" NFSS, but never officially became a member. We are hoping this "hand of friendship and gratitude" will result in new (and "RE-newing") members who share their NFSS experience with others in their corner of the country.

The BOD also recently agreed to help support a first-ever Finch and Softbill show at the upcoming 2014 AFA Convention in conjunction with the Lorry League. Some of our well-seasoned NFSS members (Sally Huntington, Paula Hansen, Roland Cristo, Scott Golden) reside in the area in which that event will be held and have agreed to help. If you are able to help out or support that event in ANY way please contact one of them.

Scott Golden is our new 3rd VP in charge of FinchSave and the Census While Vonda Zwick will continue to assist behind the scenes with software issues, Scott will be assuming responsibility for the more visible aspects of that program. He has relevant experience, some great ideas, and plenty of enthusiasm which I believe will impact the growth and success of that program. FinchSave, as much or more than anything we do as a group, has the potential to have a great impact on the legacy we leave behind in this hobby. If all of those groups were up and operating with active and engaged participants under the direction of dedicated "Species Captains", there is no question the resulting success with many of those species would speak loudly and clearly to those who may look back on us someday.

Michelle McKenzie, NFSS Member, graciously created a FaceBook page for NFSS – another platform for providing heightened exposure for this society and the hobby and another "record" of our actions.

Additionally, please remember the option for making a donation to "Save the Gouldian Fund" available on the NFSS website and stay tuned for information and updates on the Red Siskin Project. Both are very worthy projects and deserving of our support.

This BOD would ask each of you to thoughtfully consider ideas you may have for ensuring the continued success of this Society and the hobby in general. We ask that you strongly consider ways in which you may personally get involved to help with supporting and promoting the hobby we care so much about.

Respectfully  
Rebecca Mikel  
NFSS President

(The Monuments Men, Robert M. Edsel, with Bred Witter, Little, Brown and Company, Hachette Book Group, 237 Park Avenue, NY, NY 10017, copyright 2009 by Robert M. Edsel)



# NFSS 1st QUARTER 2014 BOD Meeting

**BANK BALANCE:**

1/1/13: \$28,292 74  
10/1/13: \$35,440 63  
12/1/13: \$35,547 85

MEMBERSHIP: 386

RESIGNATIONS: Jody Lewis/Awards-Affiliations; Katie Goins/Advertising  
APPOINTED: Laura Bewley/Awards-Affiliations; Bob Peers/Advertising

- Laura Bewley will compile 2013 Show Reports and submit report for Journal; followed by transfer of points data base to Vince Moase
- Vince Moase/4th VP/Judge's Chair, will work with Debbie Eaton/NCBS to make arrangements for the accommodations NFSS needs during 2014/Dayton NCBS
- Red Siskin "Donation" button approved for NFSS Website
- Scott Golden/FSS will conduct trend comparisons of prior census results with goal of establishing new species groups; Vonda Zwick will continue to assist with software issues
- Bill Parlee will conduct 2nd audit of 2012 Financial Records
- No changes to the NFSS Classifications for the 2014 NCBS

## The National Finch and Softbill Society Special Election Ballot

NFSS Membership Number

*This must be included or the ballot will not be counted*

Dual members will each have one (1) vote and are allowed to copy this ballot

Ballots must be post-marked **NO LATER THAN May 31, 2014**

Mail Ballots to:

Paula Hansen  
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Awards-Affiliations

Laura Bewley

Write in Candidate

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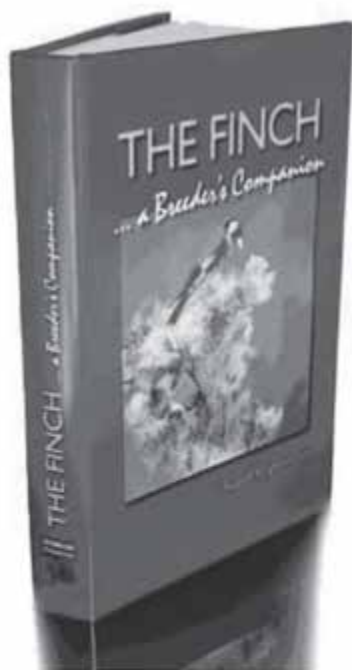
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# Chitting Seed for Softfood - My Method adapted from Mike Fidler's Method

By Kristen Reeves

For chitting seed, I follow the Mike Fidler "idea", but with a few modifications to meet my needs. I use the following. Mike's exact directions will follow!

- **Two large plastic bowls**
- **Two large mesh strainers with handles**
- **Virkon S, Dr. Rob Marshall's KD Cleanser, OR Citric Acid crystals. I use whatever I have on hand at the moment. PICK ONE - DO NOT MIX THEM!!! This is the soaking solution.**
- **A gallon sized container to mix the soaking solution.**
- **"Black", dark oily seed mix (providing the protein portion – any good "black" mix will work)**
- **"White" carbohydrate seed mix (providing carbohydrates and some protein – any good light colored mix will work)**
- **A large Rubbermaid container on which the lid DOES NOT seal completely so that air can circulate while the mixture is in the freezer.**

\*\*\*NOTE: Be sure that whatever mixes you use do NOT contain colored bits or milled oats! These items WILL mold

I mix the soaking solution with HOT water (not boiling, just hot out of the tap). I use 4 TEASPOONS PER GALLON of whichever product I am using at the time I've tested the effectiveness using Mike Fidler's recommendations (below) and



*Use ONE - do NOT combine any of these together!*

have found that 4 TSP works best for my water pH and environment. While the additive is dissolving, I prepare my seed.

Since the seed mix is approximately 1:2, I use 1 cup of my own black mix to 2 cups white mix. If I want to make more, I just adjust those numbers - 2:4, 3:6, 4:8, etc. I usually mix up 4:8 each time because it will last

in the freezer up to 1 year after the process is complete and mixed. 4 cups black mixture to 8 cups white. During breeding season, 4:8 will feed 34 breeding cages of parents and chicks plus 3 flights of "other" birds for approximately 3 weeks.



*Strainers and Bowls - measuring seed 1:2*



*Pour enough soaking solution over the seed to completely cover it. Mix frequently.*



*Time to drain - I use the solution to rinse the bowl and pour any loose seeds back into the strainers.*

The thing I do that is VERY different from Mike's method is that I soak the seed on top of the clothes dryer while it is running. The combination of HOT water and HOT dryer help to soften the hulls of the seed and chit it faster. Because most seed we purchase from seed suppliers is NOT "Grower's Seed" like the Birds R Us seed, it takes a bit of heat to get the hulls to crack. Using the hot water gives it a boost. Soaking while on top of the dryer, the water stays hot longer and softens the hulls quicker. My dryer takes approximately 30 minutes per load, so if I run 3 loads (and even with only 2 kids left at home, I can easily do 3 loads per day!), I know I've soaked the seed for a minimum of 15 hours.

Once the soaking is done, I drain the seed over the sink using the solution to rinse the bowl back over the strainer and capture any seeds that may have fallen through while still dry. I tip the strainer up so that the handle is at a 45 degree angle. I mix the draining seed every time I walk passed it to make sure all water is draining out - I leave it to drain over night.

The following morning, I dump both strainers of seed into a Rubbermaid container - it is one that the lid does NOT completely seal. I mix it well so that the two different seed mixes are completely combined.

Once the seed is combined, I add in my other items. Obviously the BRU Complete Soft Food is no longer available, so I've created my own approximation. I add the following to a 4:8 ratio soaked seed.

2 Cups Morning Bird's Miracle Meal or Vetafarm's Golden Song (one or the other, not both)



*After draining, I tip the strainers up at a 45 degree angle to allow for best drainage, then allow to drain over night.*



*Combined seed - well mixed.*

WARNING: And finally let me add. This is a SAFER way not a FOOLPROOF way to sprout seed You should still not take liberties or take silly risks There are a tremendous number of variables which could not be considered in our trials How dirty is YOUR seed, what is YOUR local climate compared with mine, how clean are YOUR feed pots compared to ours etc, etc

3 Tablespoons MLFAS Breed, Beak & Feather Tweak (a finely ground spirulina, wheatgrass and cuttlebone powder)

4 Tablespoons Dr Rob Marshall's ePowder

2 1/2 Tablespoons Dr Rob Marshall's Turbo booster OR Cod Liver Oil - depending on what I have on hand

I "mash" this all together then place in the freezer - stirring FREQUENTLY to keep the seed from freezing into a single mass Most days it won't do that because it has drained well, but if it hasn't, stirring frequently helps

I store this mixture in the freezer with NO LID if I have breeders and/or chicks in the nest because I'll use the entire batch fairly quickly But if I am only feeding for the resting season or no breeders, I place the lid on the container

I follow Mike's recommendations for feeding While preparing to breed and/or while breeding BEFORE chicks hatch, I offer them 1/2 tsp per bird per day Once chicks hatch, I offer them as much as they can eat in a 24 hour period And while I have tested and cultured this mixture created with Virkon S, KD Cleanser and Citric Acid, and have found it will stay bacteria free for up to 7 days, I change it DAILY

Mike Fidler offers the following as items you will need to chit seed and how to go about it (the portions shared from Mike's information may be found at <http://fabulousfinch.com/how-to-sprout-seed-for-birds.html>):

2 plastic containers that fit inside each other and one lid. The container needs to be big enough to hold 1kg [1 litre] of sprouting seed

Make lots of small holes in the bottom and part way up the sides of one of the plastic containers - 1/16th inch or in metric 1.59 mm

Put in 1kg of sprouting seed into the container with holes [a 1 litre measure full]

Put this container with seed inside the container without holes

Add a minimum of ½ teaspoon of Virkon S

Add approx 1.25 litres of water and stir to disperse the Virkon S

Leave to soak for a minimum of 1½ hours to a maximum of 2 hours, soaking for longer makes it soggy, slower to dry & increase risk of pathogens

Separate the containers and leave the seed to drain, put the lid loosely on the top for about 12 hours to retain humidity & then remove so seed will start drying

Within 14-30 hours, dependent on the seed-mix type and ambient temperatures, the mix will have 'chitted' This is the correct stage to feed it at. A longer sprout means it has lost a lot of its nutrient value

**DO NOT RINSE AT ANY TIME - THERE IS NO NEED - YOU CAN FEED IT STRAIGHT TO THE BIRDS OR FREEZE TO BE USED LATER. SPROUTED SEED CAN BE KEPT IN THE FREEZER FOR UP TO ONE YEAR**

The only thing you need to remember if you are going to freeze your sprouted seed, is that it needs to be reasonably dry when you put it in the freezer otherwise it will come out as a solid block of ice!

About half way through the sprouting process, I have the habit of raking the bottom to the top and leave the lid off, so that it will dry out a bit. It needs to be just moist, not wet and when it comes out of the freezer, if you have got the moisture content right, it will be nice and friable and easily crumble. Frozen seed may be fed directly to the birds or mixed in with your soft food, it does not need to be defrosted.

To determine the optimum amount of Virkon S you should use under your conditions, we would suggest setting up a little experiment. Set up a container as explained above and add 2.5mls [1/2 teaspoon] of Virkon S, leave it on a bench top for 4 days and then take it to your local vet for analysis. If it fails the test, double the amount of Virkon S, do exactly the same as the first test. If that one fails the test "I would eat my hat"! However, if it did, carry on increasing the amount until you reach optimum. In our management system, we make up a large batch of sprouted seed, enough to last approximately two months, and put it in the FREEZER [not fridge]. This is taken out and mixed into a batch of soft food once a week and again stored in the FREEZER ready for daily use.



Each morning, the ready mixed soft food is taken out of the freezer and fed directly to each cage without first thawing. The birds are fed only enough to last them the day. The following morning, anything which is left in the feed pots is thrown away and the pots changed for clean ones which have been through the dishwasher and are therefore pathogen free. The only risk we take [and are getting away with!] is that any surplus we have left after the mornings rounds goes back in the freezer, even though it is partially thawed. In the good old bleach days, we used to feed it to the wild birds. However, another WARNING, this may not be safe if you use a different brand of soft food to the one I use!

Incidentally, in case you are wondering, why sprout seed anyway? Well, the reason is that the sprouting process enhances the nutritional value of a seed by up to 300%! Furthermore, the process increases the amount of fructose and glucose creating a high energy package also making it easier for small nestlings to digest.

We use two different sprouting mixes as both germinate at different speeds. The Black Mix consists of 'oily' seeds and is important as it provides the LIPID content of our diet. Why do we need lipids? Well, the birds endocrine and hormone system will not work properly without, so this means, amongst other things, that they would not breed very successfully!

The White Mix consists of a different range of seeds which contain micro nutrients and some of the carotenoids. Again, all important in the maintenance of healthy, free breeding stock.

To complete the diet supplement, we mix in a concentrated soft food which has all the items missing from the rest of the diet, at the ratio of 20% soft food to 20% Black Mix sprout and 60% White Mix sprout and feed 5ml per day to breeding birds - ad lib once they have nestlings.



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# Breeding Cissas and Other Asian Corvids

Roland Cristo

Family – Corvidae

Sub-family – Corvinae

Tribe – Corvina

"Cissa are perhaps the most beautiful of the whole family" (Delacour) Of all the birds in the Corvid family, Cissas are perhaps the most sought after in aviculture

There are three species of Cissas with 12 sub-species The Green Magpie (*Cissa Chinensis*), also known as the Long-tailed Hunting Cissa in aviculture, comes from the Malay Peninsula up into Annam (Vietnam) and as far north as China Four (4) sub-species are on the mainland with one (1) sub-species *C c minor* coming from the islands of Sumatra to Burma We have the mainland sub-species *Cissa c Klossi*, and *Cissa c Minor*, the island sub-species, which is smaller than the mainland birds

The Short-tailed Hunting Cissa (*Cissa Thalassina*) comes from two islands, Java and Borneo We have a female of the Javan sub-species *Cissa t Thalassina* The Short-tailed has quite a musical song much like a songbird's The other species we keep don't seem to

Three sub-species of the Yellow-breasted Magpie (*Cissa Hypoleuca*) come from Annam (Vietnam), Laos and Thailand There are two isolated sub-species in China The Yellow-breasted have a longer crest and display it far more often than the other species The species we keep are the nominate *Cissa h Hypoleuca*

## **Habitat**

---

Cissas live along the border of the subtropical and tropical forest from sea level to 1800+/- In their natural habitat, they spend most of their time in the lower shrubs and are generally not seen but heard When not breeding they gather in small parties and move through the forest, joining forces with laughing thrushes They feed close to or on the ground consuming small insects, small reptiles and birds

They are solitary nesters, the nest being described as a 'large, rather flat platform of twigs interwoven with leaves bamboo and roots, cup lined with finer plant material, built in low shrubbery, bamboo thickets, vine tangles in the canopy of a small tree'

Cissas are a little larger than the American Blue Jay (13"-14") They are a beautiful light green color with chestnut red colored wings, a black mask and red / orange beak, feet and eye ring The green color seems to fade to a light blue color in captivity if the birds are exposed to too much sunlight and perhaps not given enough carotenoids in the diet The males seem to turn more bluish than the females The young we have raised all had bluish or turquoise feathers Interestingly, Lynn Hall,



*Short tailed Cissa*

Fruit Dove breeder and expert, informed me of seeing recently caught birds that were entirely blue at bird markets in Singapore. They do seem to spend most of their time in the aviary shelter or in the shade of the plants in the aviary.

The word 'hunting' does describe the method the pair uses to capture their prey. When the prey (usually a feeder mouse) is

spotted in the grass; the pair of Cissas will stalk it together, (like a brace of dogs), on either side of the aviary until it is cornered. At that point the male will usually make the kill.

### **Housing**

We live at an elevation of 1200m and the temperature gets below freezing at night during the winter (down to 15 degrees). The birds are housed in walk-in flights, 3ft X 4ft wide and 16ft to 20ft long. The flight sections are 6ft high. The undercover sections are 8ft high and 4-6ft long and covered on three sides. The perch in this section is 2ft higher than the perch in the flight area. This protects the birds from any wind. We have automatic waters that continually drip. The central aisle way has a night-light. It provides just enough light if the birds were startled off their perches to allow them to see where they are going.

We have a mister system that is controlled by a 96 setting timer (timed for every 15 minutes) and a thermostat. Each one can override the other. When the temperature goes above the thermostat setting it will turn on the misters if the timer is at an on setting.

We try to plant at least one podocarpus plant in the aviary. In fact the long-tailed Cissas have built their nest in it 2 years in a row.

### **Feeding — Basic Diet**

The Cissas are fed 'soft food' mix (appendix A) daily along with ground beef heart (Chili grind) and mealworms. The soft food is a moistened mixture of the basic diet. Defrosted mixed vegetables are added to the soft food every other day. Dry food mix (appendix B or basic diet) is kept in their cage constantly. Ingredients for both are listed later in this paper.

Mice: We feed mice sporadically throughout the year. When the hen starts building her nest we feed mice daily in the early morning. Once the hen is setting, we

feed mice again in mid-afternoon. The mice are served alive in a mixing bowl. We believe this helps keep the male occupied. We have had males that predated eggs stop when fed mice every day during the nesting period.

In earlier years we fed mice four times a day when babies were on the nest. By the 21st day we were feeding 20-25 mice a day. Since then, once the young are half feathered or more, at about 12-14 days, we only feed mice in the early morning and in the evening. At noon, they get another serving of ground beef heart.

### **Breeding Cissas**

We have bred Long-tailed Cissas every year since 1997 and Yellow-breasted Cissas since 1999.



*Day 1 and eggs of yellow breasted cissas*

### **Nest, Nesting & Breeding**

We buy baskets from import stores and nurseries to use for nesting receptacles for the birds. The approximate dimensions vary from year to year. This year the baskets measure 9" inside diameter at the top and are 5" deep. What we look for after the nest is built is to only see the hen's head while she is setting. She is still able to see over the edge when she sticks her head up.

We mount the baskets onto an upside down 'L' shaped platform in such a way that eggs and young can be checked on a regular basis without any difficulty of taking down and putting back up. We place the basket up in a corner of the shelter section. We have had hens that nest from 4ft off the ground to 7ft (top of shelter).

We mount the baskets onto



*Baby Yellow breasted just off nest*

We use 'rushes' (appendix C) as nesting materials. We have had hens that built a neat nest in 1 day. We have found that if not enough material is provided at one time for the hen to complete her nest she will build and tear down her nest.

There are times when a hen will lay her eggs in a basket without constructing a nest. When we have a hen that doesn't build a nest we will construct a nest for

her out of rushes and mowed grass at the bottom of it. The birds will sometimes immediately lay in such a nest. But most of the time they will tear it apart until such time as they are ready to lay. Therefore it is a continual job of us rebuilding their nest until eggs are laid. Once eggs are laid they generally don't tear the nests apart. We have done this with Cissas, Blue Magpies, Treepies, and Jays with good results.



(right) Baby Yellow breasted Cissas.  
(center, left) Parents

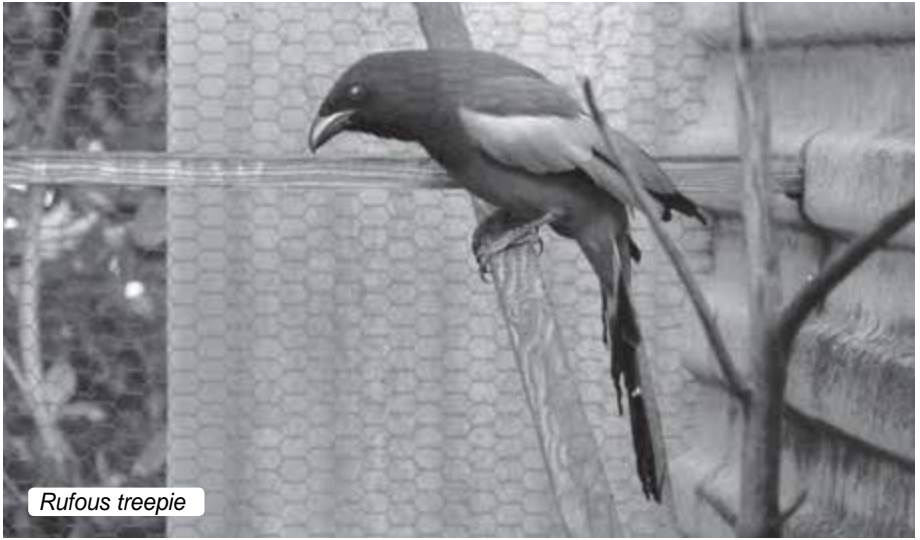
The hen will generally lay 3-4 eggs, one each day. She will 'set' between the first and the second egg. During incubation, there doesn't seem to be many problems. Incubation is 18-20 days. Chicks are hatched bare-naked and look like food.

The male keeps vigil guard. At first the hen will come off the nest when hearing someone approach the flight. Shortly into incubation, she will 'set tight' unless someone comes into the aviary to drop mice in their feeding bowl. As the incubation continues, she will stay on the nest even after the flight door is opened, especially when the eggs are close to hatching. At this time, the male sounds an alarm or becomes aggressive; she may leave the nest temporarily always going to a high perch. (The Yellow-breasted always go to the ground). About two days prior to the eggs hatching, the male seems to become even bolder and more aggressive hitting me on the head as I feed mice in the mornings. Once chicks hatch they seem to be devoted parents.

In about 18-20 days, the eggs begin to hatch, showing completely naked, sightless and helpless chicks. The parents feed the chicks mealworms and pieces of mice for the first 3-4 days after hatching. After 3-4 days the parents stop feeding mealworms. After 5-6 days, the numbers of mice given the parents are increased to 3-4 per feeding and served 2-3 times per day. It appears that all parts of the mice are either fed or eaten by the parents. Remnants of the mice could not be found. The parents throw up castings much like a raptor.

Babies have pinfeathers at approximately 11 days. Their eyes open at 12 days. Up to approximately 12-14 days old, the parents are given 10-15 mice per day and served 3 times per day. The parents stopped eating soft food and beef heart for a while. It was quite hazardous serving the pair. The female would leave the nest calling and complaining and the male would scold and dive at the person entering the aviary. The offering of food meant nothing to him. He even drew blood from my ear.

The babies grow quickly and the food offered is also increased. At approximately 20 days the oldest or strongest (we assume) baby starts to perch on the edge of the nest. The rest perch shortly after, about 2-3 days.



At about 25 days the chicks are standing on the perches away from the nest. They could be found on the ground and are able to hop and scramble up the perches to the highest perching 'branch' and nest. During this entire time they are always fed soft food, and ground beef heart. At about 24 days old, the soft food mix and more beef heart start to disappear. We never actually see the chicks eat the food but the amount was increased and it always seems as though less was left. They also start to eat the dry mix as more of that disappeared also.

The amount of mice served is decreased and the amount of beef heart and soft food is increased. At 29 days, the chicks are increasing their activity and will fly to the 'outside' perches and hop along the branches and perches. They start to call and scold like the parents. The Yellow-breasted will fully display their crest feathers. At 31 days their landings are much more accurate. Soft food consumption increases along with ground beef heart.

The young have all feathered out a powder blue color. We presume this is due to the lack of carotene in the diet the young are being fed, as the basic diet for the first two weeks is meat. They don't become the same color as the parents until they go through their first adult molt yet. They appear to be a blue-gray color instead of the turquoise or light green of the parents. Their beaks are also grayish in color and their feet are a fleshy pink color instead of the adult orange color.

### Other Asian Corvids

Blue Magpie (*Urocissa erthrorhyncha*) and Rufous Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*)

**Blue Magpie** – These birds are very much the same shape as our common American Magpie. Body size is about twice that as our Blue Jay with a long graduated tail, total length 26 +/- inches long.

Their head, neck, upper mantle, and upper breast are black. There is a large pale whitish area from near or mid crown to nape and hind-neck. The breast is off-white to white in some birds. The upper parts are a dull medium blue washed mauve; upper tail coverts scaled black; wings, mantle, and upper-tail mauve blue with each feather tipped white. The bill and legs are red. No obvious sexual dimorphism is apparent. There are five races recognized.

### **Habitat**

They can be found in subtropical and temperate foothill evergreen forests between 300m ascending to as high as 3,000m in the summer. They range from Eastern and S Eastern Asia along the Himalayas, Foothills north and east through most of eastern China.



*Long tailed cissa/green magpie*

Blue Magpies are arboreal birds, moving in small parties, frequenting clearings and ravines. Their diet is much the same as Cissas to which they are closely related.

### **Breeding**

It is very interesting to watch the male display to his mate. He will face his mate and approach her walking along the perch. He will tip his body to one side. He partially spreads his wings and raises and spreads tail while singing a low pitch song to her. We have bred the Blue Magpie for several years. The ecology is comparable to the Cissas. We use a similar basket that is larger.

**Rufous Treepies** – Treepies are a little bigger than Cissas and smaller than Blue Magpies. They are 19+/- inches long including the tail. The tail is 11-12" long. The head, neck, breast and upper mantle are a sooty black to black (hens are normally less intense black). The mantle, back, and scapulars are a darker brown-rusty orange; wing coverts and tertials are a pale grayish white continuing with the brownish-black of the rest of the wing. Tail feathers are grayish white to white ending in a black terminal band. The two central feathers are elongated. Sexes are very similar.

### **Habits and Habitat**

The Treepies range from Pakistan east, through all of India to southern Vietnam. They are found in most habitats throughout their range and are considered one of the most common birds in India. They move about in pairs and small parties associating with pigeons and barbets.

They rarely spend time on the ground. Their diet includes invertebrates, fruit, small birds, lizards and rodents.



## **In Captivity**

During display the birds will face each other bowing and touching beaks. The call is fabulous. It is a loud metallic flute/bell-like sound done first by the male then female. We have bred the Treepies for three years. Their breeding requirements are similar to the Cissas although they are not as dependent on mice to feed their young.

## **Cissas, Blue Magpies, Treepies and Aviculture**

Corvids (crows, magpies and jays) comprise a family of more than 100 species. They are distributed world wide except in the Polar Region. As aviary subjects, they are fascinating and very intelligent. These three species, particularly so

They shouldn't be kept in a mixed specie aviary, unless the aviary is very large, well planted and the other birds are similar or larger sized. They are fascinating, kept as pairs. They are easy to care for and long lived. There have been accounts of Blue Magpies living for more than 20 years.

Information on keeping and breeding Cissas is sparse and inaccurate. For example, in our research, the information on Cissas states that they are reclusive. Our experience from working with the three species is that they are bold and curious. Unlike the Blue Magpies and the Treepies, the Cissas are at the feed trays every morning as we place the food in the aviary.

In captivity, the Blue Magpie is the most commonly kept bird followed by the Cissas then the Treepies.

The basic problem with these species is the lack of communication between individuals who keep them. This is true with many species though. Without communication through some kind of forum and studbook set-up, aviculture in the United States will lose most of the fascinating birds it has known.

For several years a group in the AFA has tried to start a 'Softbill Society' with no success.

The National Finch and Softbill Society has been around for many years. It's about time that those I'll call the 'AFA Softbill' people join NFSS and start working with their birds in the Finch and Softbill Save program.

My fascination with Corvids began when at the age of 12 I helped my brother hand raise 20+ native magpies and some crows. Through the years, I have found that the Corvid family is far more intelligent than any of the birds I have worked with, including any psittacines. Plasse & Angell write 'Of all birds, Corvids have the largest cerebral hemispheres, relative to their body size. Under operant conditioning methods, crows have been found to be superior in intelligence to all other avian species tested'.

Ilana's fascination with Corvids began in 1964 when she hand raised an Eastern Blue Jay. It proved to be an intelligent, mischievous clown. It kept itself busy and amused by causing chaos and teasing all the other birds in the house. It was very bold and always stole objects from pockets and various places in the house to hide them somewhere else. This is a natural behavior but none the less frustrating and comical. It was later acclimated back to 'nature' and set free.

### **References and Additional Information**

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Delacour, J.; 1936 Aviculture Volume 1, Stephen Austin and Sons, LTD., Hertford.

Madge, Steve and Burn, Hilary; Crows and Jays, 1994, Houghton Mifflin Company.

Plasse, Chelle; 1992 AFA Proceedings, Corvids.

Sunset Western Garden Book, Sunset publishing

Woolham, Frank; The Handbook of Aviculture, Blandford Press.

### **APPENDIX A**

Soft Mix

1 part Kaytee Mynah pellets

1 part Purina Nutriblend Green pigeon feed

1 part Dog food

1 part game bird chow (crumbles)

2 parts defrosted frozen mixed vegetables

Soak each of the parts above, except game bird chow, individually in one part water each, when the soaked parts are softened, mix all parts together

### **APPENDIX B**

Dry Mix

1 5 parts Purina Nutriblend Green pigeon feed

1 0 parts Kaytee Mynah pellets

1 0 parts Science Diet light cat food

### **APPENDIX C**

Rushes ' Juncus

'Rushes somewhat resemble grasses, with leaf like, cylindrical stems and tiny, inconspicuous flowers clustered near stem tips. Specialists usually suggest planting them with grasses or aquatic plants at the edge of a pond or stream, in water'



# Breeding the Blue Rock Thrush (*monticola solitaries*)

By Robert Jewiss



Early in 2009 I was offered a pair of blue rock thrushes from holland I had always liked them since looking after a pair a few years before for Ron Owen who now sadly doesn't keep birds

The pair duly arrived in February, I placed them in one of my back flights, which are 21ft long and 4 ft wide I found the birds like the added security of the length and can have a good fly to help condition.

I kept a close eye on the pair for the first few days and both seemed in excellent condition, the pair had been in their new flight for a week when I missed the hen, a search of the floor found her body wedged in a small space behind a bush and in a corner of the flight. I made a guess that the male had been chasing the hen as she must of been hiding from him I had made an error keeping them together thinking February would be ok I have since found out they can breed really early in fact on checking their aviary today I've found a new nest (written Feb 2014)

For a few months the male remained on his own Luckily a friend who keeps and deals in birds found a hen in Belgium. The hen arrived and she was a fine bird. The male was aware of this and sang continuously

I placed the hen in the flight I had previously bred large niltavas in 2004. She seemed to love her new home making use of the waterfall for a bath on placing her into it I let her get used to her aviary on her own for 3 weeks before I placed the male in a large "buddy" cage These are handy for species that have a sometimes fatal pairing like redstarts, shamas, etc

You can see if the hen is ready if she starts carrying nest materiel or paying the caged clock bird a lot of attention It may require you sitting and watching for a while, but timing is everything Pairing too soon before a hen is ready can cause bad fights and possibly the male killing the hen.



I checked the pair daily and on day three I missed the hen My heart sank as I thought here we go again It was while I was on my hands and knees looking for her body I looked up at one of the nest boxes and she was looking over the edge at me I thought she was just hiding but when I got near she came out, revealing a nest about 80% finished.

I later checked a nest after all breeding had stopped and found the base of the nest was comprised of big twigs leaves and lumps of dirt The center was coconut fiber neatly done.

The hen went on to lay 6 light blue and elongated eggs She sat for 14 days and two young hatched The chicks were quite dark with dark down The parents were excellent feeders and reared on small, brown crickets, white mealworms and waxworms with the heads cut off I do this because young chicks can't digest the mouthparts of waxworms After all they are designed to chew through honeycomb in bee hives. I find once the chicks are over 15 days they will be ok with whole waxworks I dusted the livefood with nutrobal and within 17 days the 2 chicks fledged. I could tell they were a cock and hen even at that age as there is a difference with cocks being darker

I did have trouble with the eyes of the chicks and subsequent broods and later found dusting the chicks livefood every 4th time with ace high in conjunction with nutrobal gave me very nice chicks I still have the breeding pair and they have already made a start for this season





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An advertisement for the Save the Gouldian Fund. It features a stylized illustration of a Gouldian finch in profile, facing right, with a dark shadow beneath it. Below the illustration, the text "Save the Gouldian Fund" is written in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by the website "www.SaveTheGouldian.net" in a smaller font. The entire advertisement is enclosed in a black rectangular border.

The Gouldian Fund was established in 2005 to promote awareness and to fund valuable research into the decline of the Lady Gouldian Finch. Now considered endangered in the wild, recent estimates suggest there are fewer than 2,500 Gouldians remaining. A precious life is waiting and we ask you to please make your donation to Save the Gouldian Fund, a non-profit charity. All donations are used for research and conservation management, thus helping the Fund continue its important conservation efforts. For additional information, please go to:

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#### **Central California Cage Bird Club**

Stanislaus County Agricultural Center off of Crows Landing Road  
Meetings—3800 Cornucopia Way #B, Harvest Hall, Modesto, California 95358-9492  
Contact—Jane Perez at janep plymouth@gmail com or 209-245-3582

#### **Finch Society of San Diego** [www.finchsocietyofsandiego.com](http://www.finchsocietyofsandiego.com)

Meetings—4th Sunday, 2-4 p m Poway Elks Club, 13219 Poway Road, Poway, CA 92064  
Contact—Sally Huntington—5634 Carnegie St , San Diego, CA 92122  
858-452-9423; sdfinchsociety@gmail.com

#### **West Coast Zebra and Society Finch Show**

Meetings—No club meetings, show committee meeting in July  
Contact—Sally Huntington, 5634 Carnegie St , San Diego, CA 92122 858-452-9423

### **COLORADO**

#### **Mountain States Avian Society**

Meetings—2nd Saturday, 1 p m at Animal Central, 8308 Church Ranch Blvd ,  
Westminster CO 80021  
Contact—Gary Morgan, 15341 Kingston St., Brighton CO 80602; 303-659-9554  
burdmn@aol com NFSS Delegate—Jesse Avila, 7910 Greenland Road, Franktown CO  
80116; 303-664-0399, pjbavila@aol.com

### **FLORIDA**

#### **Florida Canary Fanciers, Inc.** [www.floridacanaryfanciers.com](http://www.floridacanaryfanciers.com)

Meetings—3rd Sunday every other month, 2:00pm, Perkins Restaurant, Davenport, FL  
Contact—Ruth Ann Stearns 352-394-3668 or ra canary@gmail com

#### **Suncoast Canary and Finch Club** [www.suncoastcanaryandfinchclub.com](http://www.suncoastcanaryandfinchclub.com)

Meetings— Meetings every first Wednesday of the month at 7:00 PM at Collingswood  
Animal Hospital 1419 Collingswood Blvd , Port Charlotte, FL 33948  
Contact—Alexander Villarreal, 941-625-7500; info@suncoastcanaryandfinchclub.com

### **ILLINOIS**

#### **Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club** [www.gccbc.org](http://www.gccbc.org)

Meetings—3rd Friday, except Nov and Dec , at 204 S Villa Ave , Villa Park IL 60181  
Contact— Robert Wild, 305 Grosvenor Ct., Bolingbrook IL 60440; 630-980-4416,  
wild@comcast.net or secretary@gccbc.org

#### **Illini Bird Fanciers Inc.** [www.illinibirdfanciers.com](http://www.illinibirdfanciers.com)

Meetings— 4th Sunday of the month Noon to 4pm at 3233 Mathers Rd  
Contact — Karen Williams at 217-391-4648; contact@illinibirdfanciers.com

### **INDIANA**

#### **Hoosier Bird Buddies Bird Club**

Contact hoosierbirdbuddies@gmail.com, President—Eric M Clark, 260-452-7828,  
eclark1@orkin.com Secretary—Theresatzler, theresajetzler@gmail.com

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### IOWA

**Mid America Cage Bird Society** www.macbs.org

Meetings—4th Sunday, locations vary; Exceptions — No Nov. meeting — fair held 9/7/2014 at IA State Fairground Walnut Center, E 30th St and E University, Des Moines IA  
Contact — President—John Thielking, 239-851-8132, JThielking@comcast.net

### MARYLAND

**Baltimore Bird Fanciers** www.baltimorebirdfanciers.org

Meetings—3rd Sunday, 2 p m at Towson Library, 320 York Road, Baltimore MD 21204  
Contact—Christine Roberts, 11 Prettyboy Garth, Parkton MD 21120  
410-343-1807, compteacher@yahoo.com

### MICHIGAN

**Society of Canary and Finch Breeders of Michigan** www.scfbmichigan.com

Meetings— 3rd Saturday of month, location varies  
Contact— Mary Tarsitano 586-781-6429 or mtarsitano@gmail.com

### MISSOURI

**Gateway Parrot Club** www.gatewayparrotclub.org

Meetings—3rd Sunday, 2 p m at Varietees Exotic Bird Store, 60 Meramec Valley Plaza, Valley Park, MO 63088, (Exceptions: No meetings June, Aug, Dec )  
Contact — Christine A. Kinkade, 2412 Angela Dr., High Ridge, MO 63049; 636-343-8097  
Boardmember2@GatewayParrotClub.org or President@GatewayParrotClub.org

**Greater Kansas City Avicultural Society** www.gkcas.org

Meetings—2nd Sunday at Coronation of Our Lady Church, 13000 Bennington, Grandview, MO 64030  
Contact—Clay Behrman, 3523 NE 49th St., Kansas City MO 64119; 816-217-7263  
birdman79@live.com NFSS Delegate— Anthony Day, 800 S Butler Lane, Independence, MO 64056; 816-252-1120. dayforthebirds@aol.com.

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

**Birds of a Feather Avicultural Society** www.boaf.com

Meetings— 2nd Monday Villa Crest Retirement Home  
Contact—Ray Schwartz, 19 Olde Common Dr., Atkinson, NH 03811; 603-362-6106  
President@BOAF.com or Prismsdad@aol.com

### NEW YORK

**Colorbred Canary Club of New York** www.newyorkcolorbredcanaryclub.com

Meetings—1st Sunday each month, 50-21 193 St , Fresh Meadows, NY  
Contact—Jose Zelada, 20 N Goodwin Ave., Elmsford NY 10523; 914-345-5707  
JZelada@optonline.net

**Kings County Canary Club**

Contact—Kathleen Guise Schaefer, 5 Frank Ct., Brooklyn NY 11229; 718-332-3413, kanyarkate@aol.com Meetings—3rd Sunday, 5 Frank Ct , Brooklyn NY 11229

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### **New York Finch and Type Canary Club**

Meetings— 1-4 p m , 2nd Sunday, except July and August  
Contact—Stan Kulak, 17 Pembroke Loop, Staten Island NY 10309; 718-967-6899,  
barstand@verizon net

## **NEW JERSEY**

**Garden State Bird Association** www.gsbirda.com Meetings-  
Meetings—1st Friday of month, 7:30pm, 409 Route 1 and 9 South, Elizabeth, NJ  
Contact— Rui Goncalves, 908-868-1605; ruigoncalves65@icloud.com

## **PUERTO RICO**

### **Asociacion de Criadores de Finces Inc.**

Juan Alicea, 12203 Urb Serenna, Los Prados, Apt. L -302, Caguas, PR 00727;  
787-479-7405 juanalicea@yahoo.com Meetings—7 p m , Tuesday, Las Catalinaís Mall,  
Food Court Area Juanalicea@yahoo.com

### **Puerto Rico Zebra Finch Club** www.przfc.com

Meetings—Wednesday, Caquas in Plaza Centro Mall Caguas, Caguas PR  
Contact—Gene Perez Forte, Jardines Arecibo Q59, Arecibo PR 00612  
President—Jorge Mojica, Urb Lomas Del Sol, 175 Calle Acuario, Gurabo PR 00778-8930;  
787-550-3163 puchosbirds@yahoo.com

## **TEXAS**

### **Fort Worth Bird Club** www.fortworthbirdclub.com

Meetings— 2nd Sunday (except April & May) at Fort Worth Botanical Garden Center, 3220  
University Dr (North of I-30 in Fort Worth)  
Contact— Cheryl Burns fwbc@fortworthbirdclub.com or thebirdmart@fortworthbirdclub.com

### **Texas Bird Breeders and Fanciers Association** www.texasbirdbreeders.org

Meetings— March 29th and November 1st, Mayborn Convention Center, Temple, TX  
Contact—Barbara Irwin 817-572-6262

## **CANADA**

### **Essex-Kent Cage Bird Society** www.essexkentcbs.com

Meetings— Member homes, Windsor, Ontario, Canada  
Contact—Julianne Mion 519-948-6398; julianne@mnsi.net

## **NFSS IS PROUD TO AFFILIATE WITH THE FOLLOWING:**

### **American Federation of Aviculture** www.afabirds.org

P.O. Box 91717, Austin, TX 78709

### **Avicultural Society of America** www.asabirds.org/home.html

Contact—Steve Duncan, P.O. Box 3161, San Dimas CA 91773  
Founded in 1927, this is the oldest aviculture society in the United States

### **National Animal Interest Alliance** www.naiaonline

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# LEG BAND ORDER FORM

Prices effective February 1, 2014

► **XF only: SPLIT BROAD PLASTIC BANDS:** Purple/White, Yellow/Orange, Green/Red, Yellow/Black, Red/Yellow, Blue/Red, Orange/Black — **Split Broad Bands: \$4.75 per string.**

► **SPLIT PLASTIC ► ALL COLORS:** Light Green, Dark Green, White, Pink, Red, Purple, Yellow, Orange, Light Blue, Dark Blue and Black

(Check our website for updated availability sizes and colors.)

Strings of 10 bands only same color.					Indicate quantity and color below.
XF (2.3mm)	XCS (2.8mm)	XCL (3.1mm)	X3 (4.5mm)	XB(4.0mm),	<b>Subtotals:</b>
/	/	/	/	/	\$ _____
/	/	/	/	/	\$ _____
/	/	/	/	/	\$ _____
/	/	/	/	/	\$ _____

**Size A (2.20mm):** Gold-breasted Waxbill, Orange-cheeked Waxbill, Owl Finch, Red-eared and Strawberry Waxbill.

**Size B (2.34mm):** Black-cheeked Waxbill, Cordon Bleu, Cuban Melodious Finch, Fire Finch, Olive Finch, Rufus-backed Mannikin, Timor Zebra Finch.

**Size C (2.55mm):** Violet-eared and Blue-capped Waxbills, Cherry Finch Bronze-winged Mannikin, Green/ Grey Singing Finch, Pytilas, Red-headed and Forbes Parrot Finch, Silverbills, Star Finch, Red Siskin, American Society, Cuthroat Finch.

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**Size G (3.20mm):** Magpie Mannikins, Siberian Goldfinch, small tanagers.

**Size J (3.4mm):** Pekin Robin, Silver-eared Mesias, small softbills.

**Size K (3.50mm):** Java Rice birds, Red-crested Cardinal, Saffron Finch, Shama Thrush.

**Size L (4.30mm):** Diamond Dove, Mousebird, small doves, quail.

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<b>*HANDLING FEE: Must be included in all orders.</b>											
Under \$ 40.00		\$ 4.00		\$ 61.00 - \$100.00			\$ 8.00				
\$ 41.00 - \$ 60.00		\$ 6.00		\$101.00 - \$ 300.00			\$10.00				
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\$ 00.01 - \$ 50.00		\$ 2.10		300.00-\$500.00			\$6.75				
\$ 50.01 - \$ 100.00		\$ 2.60		<b>**TRACKING (US Domestic only)</b>							\$ 1.05
\$101.00 - \$ 200.00		\$ 3.30									
\$200.01-\$300.00		\$ 5.50									
<b>Total:</b>										\$ _____	

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