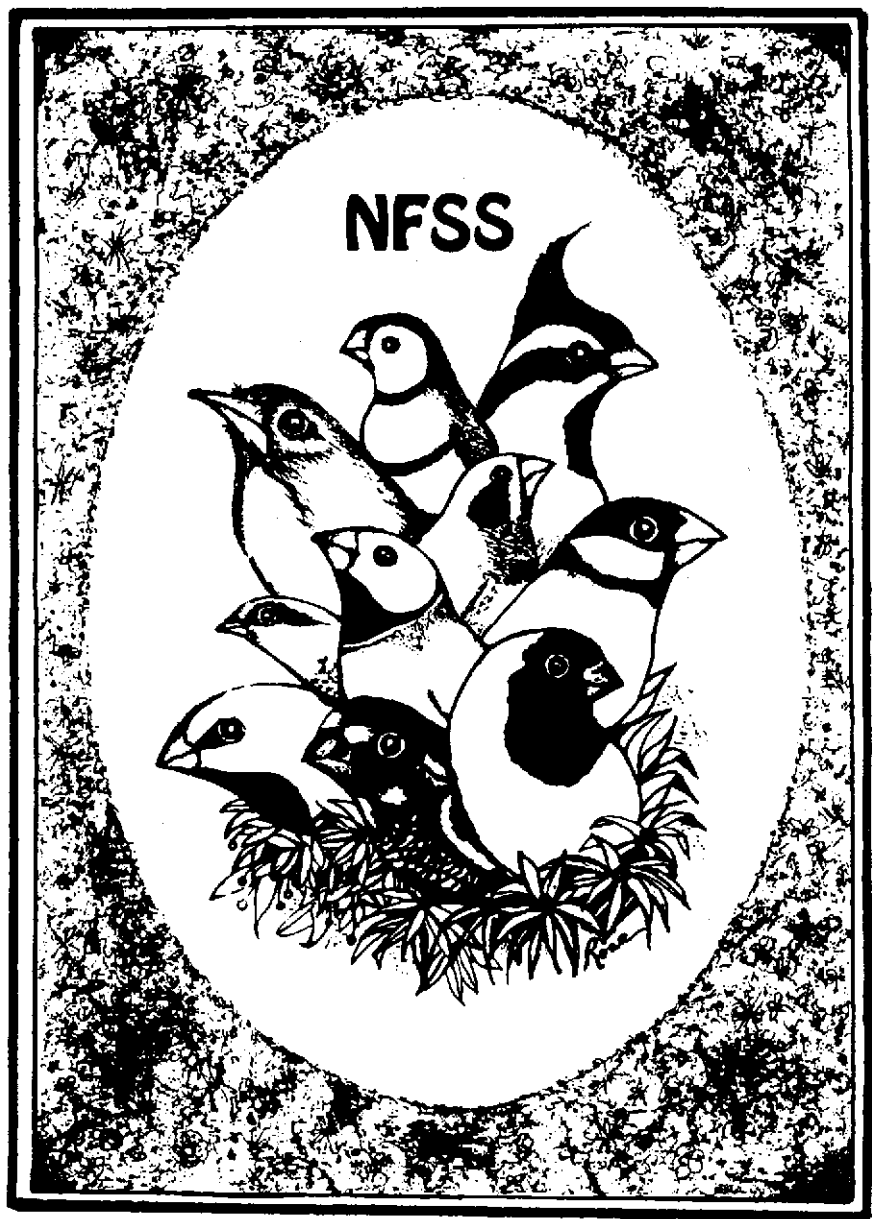


# The NFSS Bulletin

Vol. 14 No. 5



National Finch & Softbill Society

September—October 1997



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*Thank you to you all!!*

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## In this issue:

Part of this issue has somewhat of a focus. The first article is a delightful tale from the extremely knowledgeable Dale Laird. The second article is once again a fabulous piece about another of Europe's finch species from the informative Tim Roche. The third article is also from another regular writer, Ron Castaner. This issue Mr. Castaner writes about the Gouldian Finch.

The next five articles somewhat tie in together to explore the challenges we finch aviculturists are going to face with small captive populations since many species of birds are no longer going to be available from wild caught sources. The first article takes a look at the long term effects of shows. The second article is one of two workshops I gave at the 1997 AFA (American Federation of Aviculture) annual convention. The remaining three are from Australian sources. The Australians have had to deal with importation bans much longer than American and these articles truly complimented the two previously mentioned ones, and so I have included them here.

**Deadline for the next issue is  
November 1st 1997**

# The NFSS Bulletin

Vol. 14, No. 5  
Sept—Oct 1997

## Features

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| 7 Hatching a Touraco   | <i>Dale Laird</i>      |
| 9 European Linnet  | <i>Tim Roche</i>       |
| 11 Gouldian Finches  | <i>Ron Castaner</i>    |
| 13 Show Standards: Do They Really Create the "Perfect" bird?                           | <i>Mary Rue</i>        |
| 17 Genetic Drift, Mutations and Artificial Selection of Finches in American Aviculture | <i>Robert Petrie</i>   |
| 23 The Dangers of Mutations, Inbreeding and Genetic Drift                              | <i>Michael Johnson</i> |
| 26 Maintaining Rare Finches in Captivity   | <i>Benj Whitworth</i>  |
| 29 Breeding Finches  | <i>Bevan Ruhland</i>   |

### **Cover Credit**

**NFSS Logo, adopted Fall 1994**  
by Rose Gianferrara, Bonita Springs, Florida

Winners of the 2nd annual All Zebra and Society Finch Show  
held in Kansas City, Missouri — August 2, 1997

Judge: Paul Williams



Best Zebra Finch in Show  
Normal Grey cock  
exhibited by Harold & Margie McBrayer  
League City, Texas



Best Society Finch in Show  
Self chocolate  
exhibited by Bob Vargo  
Mountainside, New Jersey

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## From the Editor's Desk



The first couple years you take your child to the pediatrician for regular checkups, they typically compare your child's height and weight to a couple of charts. These charts are graphs representing the height and weight of 100 randomly picked children. The graphs start at birth and go to somewhere around 5 years of age and they're chopped up into percentages, 10%, 25%, 50%, etc.. So say your child's weight was at the 50% mark for their age, that means that

your child is at an average weight. If you randomly picked 100 children exactly their age; half would probably weigh more and the other half would weigh less. If your child was at the 75% mark for height, that would mean your child is taller than the average, out of 100 children they would be taller than 3/4 and shorter than 1/4.

These same types of growth charts are available for many species of birds and other animals. The purpose of these charts is to use them to monitor the growth of a child, or other animal, to make sure they are within a certain range. If the measurements are outside of these ranges that may indicate a problem.

People quite often use these charts; though, to brag about their

child or pet. When a pet or child ranks high on any of these charts many people consider this a good thing. Something to be proud of. I know I've been guilty of this at times. Not to pick on macaw breeders, but several that I have known always bragged up those babies that weighed considerably more than the average.

Is taller or heavier something to brag about? It is if we perceive it as being better. Studies have shown that the majority of women find taller men more attractive. Taller men seem to have it a little easier in life than shorter men. So having a taller son could truly be a good thing. But what about a heavier macaw? Does that mean it is healthier, or somehow better, than the average sized one?

In zoos many animals have a tendency to become overweight. Lions and Orangutans are two classic examples. They get obese not a little fat, yet zoo visitors, and even some zookeepers, frequently comment, "that's a well fed animal." They perceive their increase size as something positive. Is it?

We are finding out that overweight animals tend not to have as long of life spans. A wild Lion in his prime is really a very lean animal. Some of those obese Lions in zoos are like Greyhound dogs fattened up to the shape of Bulldogs.

As a society I think we are becoming more and more aware of the

dangers of obesity and are steering ourselves and our pets toward a leaner path. Finches and softbills are such active animals that overweight ones have never been viewed as good ones. But what about just an overall increase in body size?

If we have a choice between two birds, they are equal in every aspect except one is a hair bigger than the other, I think we all would take the larger one. Is this the appropriate judgment?

It is good to question ourselves. The majority of this *Bulletin's* articles examine the effects of having small captive populations of birds and our choices of what we select to breed. With increase import restrictions, new genes from wild caught birds of many species are not going to be available and we will have to face these challenges.

Just food for thought, but as I was research information for one of the AFA workshops (Mutations, Genetic Drift . . .), I started to notice something with the show Budgies and Canaries. Looking at a lot of pictures ranging from the wild type birds to some of the top show Canaries and English Budgies, it seems to me that we might be selecting for characteristics that make them more human in shape. More upright stance, larger chest, taller body, bigger forehead, etc. Look at profile shots of the wild types, show types and humans. See what you think!

# Hatching a Touraco

*By Dale Laird  
Winter Park, FL.*

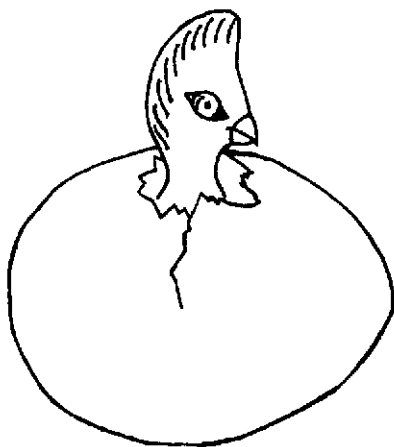
My wife, Eileen, and I raise a couple of species of Touracos. Both Persa and Red Crested. The Persa have been inactive so far this year, as we had to replace the male this year. The Red Crested though have given us a couple of chicks. This particular pair have been a challenge. They do not raise their own so we have to incubate the eggs.

The story I am about to tell is the hatching of one of the Red Crested and our 5 year old Grandson Dylan's description of what happened. The children are used to seeing us incubate eggs and hand feed chicks so it was nothing new to them.

About 51 hours ago a Red Crested egg we have been incubating for 20 days began to pip. It did not

penetrate the egg, but did crack it outward with a little dent at the air sack line. 12 hours after the first crack the chick cracked it again just above the first one. Dylan came running in to tell me the egg was done cooking and the chick was trying to get out. He wanted me to peel the egg and let the chick out. It still did not penetrate the egg.

In the past I have gotten anxious and opened a small hole for the chick thinking it needed to breathe. Big mistake. The chick hatched early and came out with the yoke outside the body. Not good. There would be no danger of that happening this time.



By now I can candle the egg through the air sack, whistle through my teeth, and have the chick respond. I find

this amazing. It is now 36 hours since the first pip and there is a third crack, but still no penetrating hole. Dylan thinks it will stay in the egg forever and wants to know how it can eat. Trying to explain the egg yoke concept is beyond his comprehension. Besides that, Dylan proclaims he hates egg yokes.

Forty-Eight hours have passed, a fourth crack appeared and the chick is very active but still totally encased in the egg. It is still not time to worry yet. I do not want an exposed egg yoke. Dylan likes to look through the shell into the air sack with the candling light to see the chick's head bobbing around inside.

It is now 51 hours and the first penetrating crack has appeared between the second and third original crack. Dylan said it just wanted something to eat so it was coming out. In 30 minutes the chick has cut a long line across the top of the egg and is stretching to get out. The bottom portion of the egg pops off and Dylan

announces the bird's butt is sticking out and it is really big.

Twenty four hours after the chick hatched and it is all dried off, the eyes are open, it hears and sees me, and is eating small amounts of blended food every 30 - 40 minutes. After 10 days the bird is starting to get wing feathers, has large feet, and eating like a bird. Large amounts of soaked Softbill pellets, chopped bananas, papaya, mango, canned fruit cocktail, and chopped grapes. At three weeks it will start to eat on it's own and will be weaned by four weeks. A truly amazing bird. Sadly Dylan has returned home and will never see the bird mature. Maybe his mother will read him this story.



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# European Linnet

## (*Carduelis cannabina*)

by Tim Roche  
Tewksbury, MA



From afar some may call the Linnet drab and dull looking, but close inspection reveals a very different story. A generally sleek 5 inch male will be brown primarily with a chestnut coloured back and faint streaking all over. In the breeding season the bird will partially moult and obtain a crimson head patch and corresponding breast, with the bill turning a bluish black. The female is duller brown all year the penciling seeming more pronounced. Both male and female possess white wing and tail feathers. Aviary kept males tend not to show the same red colouration as wild

birds, making sexing difficult. When the red fails to appear altogether through dietary neglect, definitive sexing can be accomplished by examining the flight feathers of the wing. In the male, the white will run all the way to the feather shaft, making it only half way in females. This method can also be used to sex young from the nest.

What it may lack in colouration, in song is where the Linnet excels.

Natural range of the European Linnet, from *Finches & Sparrows: An Identification Guide*. by Clement, P., Harris, A. and Davis, J..

Its melodic song, delivered in chorus from gorse and heavy foliage in late spring, is sweet music to the avicultural ear. A popular cage bird back in Ireland, their song always reminds me of the rolling hills behind the house where I grew up.

---

**What it may lack  
in colouration,  
in song is where  
the Linnet  
excels.**

---

Linnetts have a great fondness

for rape seed. A basic yearly hard seed mixture of a good quality canary mix with additional rape will be appreciated. Being from primarily rough land in the wild, the birds natural diet consists of much seeding weed heads. Any available Shepherds Purse,

grasses, Dandelion and Plantain or Rat tail when in season, will be savored. Apple, lettuce and good quality eggfood should all be offered, with acceptance being on an individual basis, some like them, some don't.

When attempting to breed them, Linnets should be provided with much soaked and sprouted rape and wild seeding grasses, and any small insect life available, with again some birds choosing to ignore them and raise on the seed alone. They can be bred as single pairs or trios, with best results coming from aviary breeding. They will accept wicker nest baskets or may choose to build freely in bunches of conifers situated head height or lower in secluded area. Grass and moss, lined with hair, are the preferred materials. Three to five eggs will hatch after an incubation of 11-12 days.

Once enticed to breed, Linnets can be quiet prolific with our pair

raising four broods before the weather, and in sure exhaustion, told them to quit. Young are pretty independent at about four weeks and should be removed to allow the adults to recommence with the subsequent broods.

The one pitfall with this bird is its "unsteadiness", to put it mildly. Some wild caught specimens are absolutely uncageable. The lack of a certain virtue is why I eventually gave up keeping them, although for somebody with more patience than I was blessed with, most Linnets will sooner or later steady and reward their keepers persistence with their melodic serenade.

## **The 1997 National Birds Show**

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Dr. Al Decoteau

# GOULDIAN FINCHES

*(Poephila gouldiae)*

by Ron Castaner  
Palm Springs, FL

*Written specially for The Avairy and  
Cage Bird Society of South Florida.  
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Named by John Gould in 1844, in honor of his wife who accompanied him on his Australian exploration. Years ago living forms were named by the person who first published their description.

Playing with genetics is a lot of fun, because you really cannot be one hundred percent sure of the result, you can have an educated idea, but you can not wait until it fully colors to see the end result. It can also be very confusing and I will try to break it down a little for you. You must start with a very select group of birds. Breeding for quality, hardiness, size, and color. Excellent record keeping is also a must, you must know where each bird came from etc.

The two most common forms of Gouldians are black and red heads. In the wild the ratio is three black heads to one red head and one yellow/orange head to three thousand black or red headed Gouldians. Red headed Gouldians are sex linked and dominant over the black head.

Sex linked means that the genetic trait we are considering is located on the very same chromosome that also determines the sex of a bird. Here are a few terms that may help to understand a little better, recessive: a genetic trait that does not become evident unless two matched genes are the same. Dominant: a genetic trait that requires only one gene of a pair to make itself evident. Homozygous: pure for a particular genetic trait. Matched genes. A bird with no hidden color trails. Could be dominant or recessive. Heterozygous (or split): the pair of genes are not the same, unmatched. The dominant gene gives the organism its outward appearance, the bird carries a hidden color trail.

Red heads are dominant over black and yellow/orange forms. Red headed cocks can be split for black head, but hens can never be, So they only inherit the color seen on the head. In other words, the hens are homozygous. Such inheritance is known as a sex linked inheritance, the gene for red headed hens is attached to the sex chromosome and so the inheritance is sex linked.

There are visible and invisible factors, called dominant and recessive. In most cases one color factor is dominant. A red headed Gouldian male can be black headed at the same time, even though the black is invisible. That is because the red color is overpowering. In other words the red is dominant to the black and the bird is known as dominant red or

recessive black. The bird having inherited the black gene from one of his parents even though it is not visible.

Dilute only occurs in male Gouldians. Black heads are sex linked, meaning that black headed cocks and hens are pure, not split to red, though either sex may be split to yellow. Both red and black headed Gouldians of either sex may be split to yellow head. Black head can be identified as being visually yellow by the yellow tip on the beak. Split to yellow or double factor yellow:

Yellow or lutino body occurs in red or yellow orange heads only. Slate head occurs only when a combination of a dilute body mutation and a black head mate; of course as we already know, the dilute is always male. Blue bodied gets the typical black head plumage, but the red and yellow headed blue body Gouldian changes the color of the head to a tan or camel color. That is why you only see the blue in these two color heads, black or tan, also described as light grey.

I am still waiting for my first black or metallic body with red head Gouldian that does not molt back to normal plumage after their first molt or a pied Gouldian. I do believe these two mutations are possible. This year I will be breeding whites, blues, yellows, and splits. Through selective breeding they can be as large, and hardy as the normal Gouldian.

Tips from Ron: dying while they molt. Many Gouldian Finches die when they are molting. If you catch them when they first start to molt and put them in a breeding cage 24"W X 12"D X 12"H, or something similar, put a forty watt red light bulb and leave it on day and night (all the time), you are less likely to lose another bird. Also, you

can do the same for a baby that has fledged. Wait till they are seventy five percent colored before removing them.

Feed them a very high protein diet, do not put more than four or six birds to a cage. Many young birds complete their first molt within a four month period. Others take almost a year. Birds that take eight to twelve months to reach adult plumage could have complications. When breeding is over, the molt should start shortly there after. I am totally against using birds in immature plumage for breeding. Slow molting birds should not be used for breeding. Give them to someone who wants them solely for their enjoyment or in a mixed flight or aviary. Breeding season for Gouldian Finches usually starts in December or January. Followed by their annual molt in the following two months. It takes a lot out of the Gouldian to go through a molt, so give them a high protein diet, lots of fruits, and vegetables plus a supplement of vitamins, keep them warm and away from drafts and you should not have any problems, only sweet success stories.

## Show Standards: Do They Really Create the "Perfect" Bird?

by *Mary Rue  
Lansing, MI  
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At the February 1997 meeting of the Mid-Michigan Bird Club the speaker, Mike Underwood, of Avi-Sci., discussed bird show standards.

Mike first explained what a show standard meant to him. A standard should be based on and preserve the birds wild natural state. An ideal bird should be capable of release and survive in the wild after several years of captive breeding.

Mike discussed how show standards were used in judging cattle. The standards for cattle were based on producing a healthy, fully functional cow capable of reproducing. The standard set forth the perfect udders that would be capable of maximum milk production, not what someone arbitrarily decided looked good. Pelvic bones would be wide enough for cows to reproduce with little or no problems. The specimens that cannot do this are generally eradicated from the breeding stock.

I grew up in the world of dog shows. I saw where standards were set that really did not enhance the health and vigor of many breeds,

such as shortened muzzles on dogs that can cause breathing problems, or breeding extremely wide heads so that the females require Cesarian section to deliver puppies with wide heads. I have heard that this has also happened in other species that hold shows and set standards such as cats and fish. It is not always the show standards that create these problems. Many show standards describe an ideal that would be a healthy animal. While at the shows the specimens that win are quite different. You can see many examples of this at shows. For example; the standard describes a long slender bird. At the shows you see big squatty birds winning. This is due to the American theory that bigger and more is better.

A few years ago Mike participated in a university research on American and English Budgies. American Budgies are what pet owners usually refer to as parakeets. They are slender and on the small side, but are still pretty much the same as their species in the wild. English Budgies are bred by man to be bigger and heavier. During this research it was discovered that the dry weight of an American Budgie contained 20-30% body fat. While the English Budgie dry weight contained as much as 60% body fat. This predisposed them to fatty tumors. It also reduced their fertility rate and decreased the average life span. Occasionally English Budgie breeders will reintroduce an American Budgie to their breeding

program. This will increase the fertility rate and hardiness. The only problem is that it sets the breeder back on the show bench. The chicks will be smaller and not be as broad in the chest and head.

A question came from a member asking how can you tell if a bird has too much fat. Mike had participated in a research project on this topic. They tried four different methods of measuring birds to determine fat. A couple of the methods used were measuring girth, feeling and measuring the distance between the pelvic bones, and a hands method of feeling the keel, the chest, etc. Records of each method were kept on each bird for quite some time. At the end of the study, the birds were examined and it was determined that none of the above methods were reliable. The best way to tell is by dry weight. The problem with this is that the bird has to be dead to get an accurate reading.

Humans can be tested by floating in water. You would not be able to talk a live bird into floating quietly in a tub of water to be weighed. Also feathers on the bird can trap air and make the results inaccurate. We can only guess at body fat until a reliable method can be developed.

I have found that, at least on my birds, the large muscular ones tend to stand the same as the long slender ones. They have the same amount of leg showing as the slender ones. I have also noticed however that the

birds that appear to be fat tend to show less leg when they are standing. When these fatter birds stretch you will see that the legs are actually the same length as the slender ones. If you look at the difference in the way the American and English Budgies stand, you will notice the same.

Mutations were also discussed. Mike pointed out that mutations are sometimes less vigorous than the normal version. Mike told us of someone else's research on a problem with the white mutation of the Zebra Finches. It seems that the white mutation loses the colored facial patch on the males. When it was time to pair up the birds for breeding, they found that because of the loss of the colored cheek patch the birds were confused when picking mates. Males sometimes paired up with males, females with females. It was also noted that they were pairing up using the bands colors. The hand was the only color cue on the birds. Blue bands paired up with blue bands, red with a red etc...

What can we do about show standards that are causing long term health problems? The first thing to do is to contact the speciality clubs that create the standards. Tell them that you want the standard to be based on traits that enhance a bird's appearance without causing long term health problems and affecting the longevity of the species. It is also important that the judges are trained to judge the birds according to those standards. The judges should also be

reviewed periodically. Most standard setting societies have a judges panel. You can write to them about your concerns about the way shows are being judged.

It was brought up at the meeting that the cockateils are heading the same direction as the English Budgies. Long slender birds do not win over squatty ones. I have even heard of people who feed high fat foods prior to the show season to plump up the birds so they can win. This is not

healthy for the birds. When judges put those birds up at the shows, they are promoting and supporting this unhealthy practice.

We must start doing something about this now and not wait until we have problems, with life spans and fertility, to make changes.

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# IMPORT RESTRICTIONS, GENETIC DRIFT, MUTATIONS AND ARTIFICIAL SELECTION OF FINCHES IN AMERICAN AVICULTURE

by Robert Petrie  
Kenses City, MO

In the 1960s Australia banned importing or exporting of any wildlife across its borders and in 1992 the United States enacted the Wild Bird Conservation Act (WBCA) which has restricted the importation of some bird species into this country. Several species of finches are currently, or soon, will no longer be available from wild imports.

Through cooperative breeding programs there will hopefully continue to be some importation, but for the vast majority of species of finches we aviculturists will collectively need to maintain our own captive population of those species we want in our aviaries. With many of the Australian finches we have already proven it can be done. Although some Australian species of finch are no longer available to the American aviculturist, like the Red-eared Firetail (*Emblema oculata*), and a few others are rare, difficult and expensive to obtain, like the Painted Finch (*Emblema picta*), the majority of the species are quite common; for example, the Gouldian (*Chloebia gouldiae*), the Owl (*Poephila*

bichenovii), the Star (*Neochima ruficauda*), the Diamond Sparrow (*Emblema guttata*) and many others. The growing trend of governmental regulations is making it imperative that we take the same measures with the other species of finches from Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America.

A species, by an ecologists definition, is a population or series of populations of which the individuals are capable of interbreeding freely with each other but not with members of other species (Colinvaux 1983). A population is a group of organisms coexisting at the same time and place and capable for the most part of interbreeding (Colinvaux 1983). So currently all the Red-cheeked Cordon Bleus (*Uraeginthus bengalus*) here in North America make up a population. All the Red-cheek Cordon Bleus in the wild in Africa make up another population. Both those populations are currently part of the same species, but will they continue to be? The enactment of the WBCA means that any further imports of some species of wild caught birds are unlikely causing the two populations to become isolated from each other. Could it be possible through several mechanisms

genetic drift, mutations and artificial selection, that the North American population of some finch species could be changed enough to become a different species? To be separated as two different species typically means they cannot interbreed and produce viable offspring. For example a Horse (*Equus caballus*) and a Donkey (*Equus africanus*) are two different species and they can interbreed but the offspring is a sterile mule. I'm sure most of us are aware that many parrot species, most notably the Macaws, are capable of interbreeding and the offspring are fertile, yet they are still considered different species. They have retained different species status because interbreeding in the wild doesn't happen or if does it is at a low enough frequency as not to mix the two gene pools.

Domesticated animals change the classic definitions of a species. Man's best friend, the Dog (*Canis familiaris*), was probably the first domesticated animal and shows the greatest variety of form than any other animal in the world. Thought to have originally developed from the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*), the Dog is its self a species yet it can still interbreed with the Gray Wolf and even the Coyote (*Canis latrans*). In some areas of North American wild dog/Coyote hybrids, called Coydogs, are becoming quite a population. The common domestic Cat (*Felis catus*) is also capable of interbreeding with its wild ancestors, the Eurasian Wild Cat (*Felis silvestris*). When considering

captive animals and whether or not they are their own species, the common use of the inability to interbreed becomes invalid. The well-known Society Finch (*Lonchura domestica*) is thought to have originated from the crossing of several different Asian *Lonchura* species. It is possible though it derived from one species and through the mechanisms mentioned earlier it is no longer recognizable which species it came from. The Society Finch, is its own species and is capable of hybridizing with quite a few different *Lonchura* species.

The infamous Budgerigar, or Budgie (*Melopsittacus undulatus*), Cockateil (*Nymphicus hollandicus*), and Zebra Finch (*Poephila guttata*) are obviously domesticated and show a wide variety of forms, yet they are still considered to be part of the same wild species that they were derived from. It is arguable if the domestic forms should be called another species are not. There is one thing that separates the Budgie, Cockateil, and Zebra Finch from the Dog, Cat, and Society Finch. There is no variety of Dog or Cat or Society Finch that looks almost indistinguishable from its wild ancestor. There are still individuals of Budgies, Cockateils, Zebra Finches, and the other species of birds that show a variety of forms and mutations which still look similar to the true wild type.

Our North American population of Red-cheek Cordon bleus is definitely still in the same species as the wild type, but how could that change? The three mechanisms mentioned earlier, genetic drift, mutations, and artificial selection, can change the genetic make up of a population and fairly quickly. Since the American population is small it is subject to something called genetic drift (Minkoff 1983). Genetic drift would act upon this population in several different ways. The first possible effect is the founder principle. The founder principle is a product of random sampling error. For example lets say we are going to randomly pick 100 balls from a bag of 5000. In the bag there are 1000 white, 1000 black, 1000 red, 1000 blue, and 1000 yellow balls. When we pick out our balls we would expect to get about 20 balls of each color, but just as if we flip a coin 4 times we would expect twice heads up and twice tails up, it doesn't always come out that way. Same with the balls we pick. We may have a higher percentage of a couple of the colors and very few or maybe none of another color. Our new smaller population of balls would most likely not identically reflect the original large population of balls in the bag. This sampling error could effect our North American population of Red-cheek Cordon bleus the same way, they may not contain the same proportions of the genes that the wild population contains. When we breed our founder birds some genes that might have been rare in the wild may

now be in a high percentage of our captive population. Another possible effect of genetic drift would be if the population would happen to go through what is called a bottle neck. If we have a population of 150 pairs of Red-cheek Cordon bleus in captivity and just a few breeders maintain say half of the pairs and something happens and those pairs are lost, when the remaining 75 pairs reproduce to make the population 150 pairs again, the new genetic make up of our population will most likely differ from the our original founders and even more so from the wild population.

Alone, genetic drift would not make much of a difference, but when combined with mutations and artificial selection they can have a profound influence. Do to the very nature of animal reproduction and cellular division, mutations are inevitable. Each new life's chance of having a mutation is extremely small, one in several million. Just like the lottery though there is always the chance and the more you play the greater the chances are. Many of the finch species can be very prolific and the possibilities of mutations are high. We're all aware of the many color mutations of the Gouldian and Zebra Finches. Most mutations are deleterious to the animal and the vast majority of them never survive to reproduce and carry on the mutation. The most common mutations, where the animal survives, is changes in their physical

appearance. In the wild these abnormal individuals usually do not survive to further the characteristic. In captivity we can not only help them to survive but help them to reproduce more offspring than the average pair. Mutations can not only change the physical appearance of an animal but may cause changes in an animal's behavior or physiology. Aviculturists often keep alive and allow to breed those animals with mutations that may not directly be lethal to the animal but pressures in the wild would not have allowed the animal to live or reproduce. This can again change the genetic make up of the North American population from the wild population.

The driving force behind the domestication of any species is artificial selection. Every time a breeder chooses one individual to breed over another individual, they are practicing artificial selection. It was artificial selection that created the many breeds of the Dog, the huge size of the domestic pig, the continuous egg laying of the chicken, the different shapes of the domestic canary, the increased size of the captive Budgie and many others of that sort. Any population contains some genetic diversity. Although the wild individuals of a species all look very similar, they typically contain much diversity in their genes in order to cope with the ever changing natural environment. Even with all the genetic variety in the wild populations, natural selective pressures are constantly

working to keep the species toward that individual perfectly suited to the environment at that time. The "not-so perfect" genes are maintained in the population but in very small percentages. Through artificial selection we aviculturist often pick those genes present, but held to a minimum by nature, and select for them, causing them to become the norm of the population. An example of this is the increased body size of the Zebra Finch, or just about any other animal species. In the wild population there are those individuals that are only a tiny bit larger than the average size. The natural environment doesn't allow the slightly larger individuals to produce as many offspring as the average sized ones. This selection is done through an almost limitless number of ways; for example, maybe the large body is more easily caught by predators, requires more energy and therefore doesn't survive as well during difficult seasons, makes procuring food more difficult by slowing the animal down when chasing insects or by being too big to perch on the end of grass stalks to get the seeds, or many other such ways. In captivity many aviculturists think the bigger the healthier and they frequently select for that. Those slightly larger individuals are bred with other slightly larger individuals producing even larger birds. Mutations for larger birds happen and again these are selected for. Eventually the captive population is much larger and different from the original wild population.

In reality it would take thousands of generations to change a population enough to become a different species, but in a couple of generations the population could be directed that way. If to change the captive representatives of the various species is a desire of America aviculturists so be it. To select for different color varieties, changes in body shape, or different behaviors or physiological requirements really does no harm and is a right of any aviculturist. But, don't we have some obligation to try and maintain some individuals to the typical wild type. Nature has worked millions of years to create these specially designed birds and with no more wild individuals of some species coming into the country I think some of us aviculturists need to focus on keeping a proportion of our birds to represent those original wild types. If larger was always better or healthier then all birds would be big. There are small birds in the world though and being small is one characteristic that makes a finch a finch. A frequent argument in support of aviculture is having a viable captive population of a species is like having a savings account for that species. If something happens to the wild population we can withdraw from the captive one to help out its wild relatives. In order for this argument to be legitimate some of the captive population has to be representative of the wild type. To think that our selected types would be more fit in the wild is arrogant and naive.

A very effective and possible way to maintain a portion of the captive population representative of the wild type is through national finch standards, such as those of The National Finch and Softbill Society. Showing birds is one of the many facets of aviculture, especially for finch enthusiasts. Standards for the various species of birds are set by the various societies to assist the judges in picking for that selected ideal type bird. Historically, and especially for Budgies and Canaries, the judges had some lee way and would often judge for the slightly larger individual. Soon the standards began to reflect this and helped to further change the birds until some of the standards no longer reflected the wild type bird. In the finch and softbill categories wild birds and descriptions of wild birds in books are often used to help set the standards. This is what would be needed in order to keep that certain percentage of the birds to the natural type. That is the standard needs to be based solely on the true natural species and not biased by preferences of the judges. Our Red-cheek Cordon bleu's standard would be designed from measurements and observations of the founder birds. For example judges would be recommended to judge for individuals that perch at the normal 45° and not more upright like a Goulds. Judges would select for birds with red cheek patches as close in size to original birds and not larger and larger ones. As various body forms and color

mutations arise more standards could be created to allow those aviculturists, who want to, to work towards a different type of bird, but the original wild type standard would need to be maintained. By doing this, unlike with Canaries which the wild type is no longer available in American aviculture, we would still be able to say we have true Red-cheek Cordon bleus in our aviaries.

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*Editor's note: The following three articles have been taken from the Queensland Finch Society's publication, the Finch News. On behalf of the National Finch and Softbill Society, I would to thank them for allowing us to reprint them here. Although the subject of these three articles pertains almost exclusively to Australian aviculture, I thought their subject matter would help us explore the challenges of small captive populations. Some of the ideas of the following authors might be controversial but that should only make us to consider them in more depth. These three articles added well to the previous two to give us a some well rounded and indepth views of the challenges facing us American aviculturist in working with small captive populations.*

## **The Dangers of Mutations, Inbreeding and Genetic Drift**

*by Michael Johnson  
Secretary,*

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Avicultural Fedaration of Australia*

*This article first appeared in the March 1997, vol. 26 no.3, of the Finch News, the official publication of the Queensland Finch Soceity of Australia.*

The recent article by Benj Whitworth, "Maintaining Rare Finches in Captivity", presents a well-argued case for concern when a species reaches small numbers in captivity. The article gives a good overview of the problems of small populations and I would like to expand on these in one of two areas.

When talking about mutations as aviculturists we use the term mostly to refer to the colour

mutations that many like to breed. Put simply, we are in fact talking about the mutations of genes that control things like a birds feather colouring. In fact, mutations of many types can occur, for instance a mutation of the genes controlling the sexual organs may result in low sperm count, while others may cause problems such as chicks dead in the shell. Most mutations are harmful, although a small number may be useful. These "good" mutations however are very rare.

The genes that cause these mutations are carried in the population, but rarely become evident. That is because two birds carrying the gene would have to mate to produce offspring exhibiting the mutation. (That is, in the language of the colour mutation breeder, they would have to be split to the mutation) in

large wild populations, this is a fairly rare event. Even when this occurs, birds born with mutations in the wild usually die fairly quickly.

When a color mutation becomes evident in a small captive population, of course, the bird does not become a meal for the first passing goshawk. Rather, it becomes an object of curiosity and desire amongst fanciers. In an effort to breed more of the same, the owner will cross breed back with the birds most likely to have similar mutated genes, that is the birds parents, siblings and near relatives. This practice is known as line breeding, which in reality is just a polite term for deliberate inbreeding.

Of course the problem is that at the same time the breeder may be establishing some other unknown and unseen mutations, like the new ones that cause fertility problems. Anyone who has had anything to do with purebred dogs can tell you of the wide variety of genetic problems some breeds carry.

Similar problems arise when a population of "normal" birds reaches low numbers. The result may be breeding of close relatives who may be split for unknown mutations. These mutations then become predominant in the population. If the mutations affect the fertility or breeding of the birds, then the numbers of birds produced may never replace the numbers lost. Eventually the species dies out in captivity.

It would be my guess that most of the species lost to aviculture died out not because everyone stopped keeping them, but rather because such mutations became predominant. The trouble is that every time a population drops to very low numbers the changes of this happening increase.

The second issue to be expanded on is that of population size. Where did the figure of 500 birds come from? I was not a guess, and comes from population biologists working within zoos. To understand its importance it is necessary to understand the concept of "genetic drift". When two birds mate, they each contribute 50% of their genes to the offspring. If they only produce one offspring, then obviously half the genes they carry will be lost. If they produce two offspring, then on average 75% of their genes are passed on, and so on. Multiply across the entire population of a species, and with each generation a percentage of the genes are lost. In fast expanding or very large populations, this loss is so small as to be negligible. However in small populations, such as in zoos or aviary populations, the loss in genetic diversity can be quite rapid, and, as Benj says, rare genes can be lost.

Why is this important? The rare genes may be ones that are useful in adapting to changes in the environment. For instance, some birds may carry genes that leave less down



on the chicks. In normal conditions, these birds may be less successful at breeding because they have a higher rate of chick mortality. This keeps the genes rare. However, with the advent of global warming these birds may become more successful, and their rare genes predominate allowing the species to adapt and survive the changing conditions.

Zoos want to be able to keep as much genetic diversity in their populations as the can. This is so that if called to reintroduce animals to the wild there would be sufficient genetic diversity in the zoo populations to give the animals a chance to adapt. Therefore zoos decided to aim to save 90% of the genetic variation of the founder population for 100 years. There is a complex mathematical equation that allows you to work out how many individuals are needed in a population to achieve this. A practical figure for most species of birds like finches happens to be 500 individuals. If we as aviculturists are interested in making a contribution to conservation, and I believe we should, then surely it is our responsibility to maintain genetically healthy populations of our birds.

Some people may point to this or that island species, which has very little genetic variation or is very inbred. The point is we do not know how many species have become extinct through their inability to adapt

or through problems associated with inbreeding. Scientists require populations of inbred mice with very little genetic diversity for medical research. We do know that fewer than one in ten attempts to establish such strains are successful. The example of an inbred species is like the smoker who lives to 90- great to hear about, but we all know they are simply lucky to have beaten the odds.

The best way to reduce inbreeding and genetic drift in small populations is to manage it, using studbooks and other techniques. People interested in pursuing this can do so by reading the Conservation Committee's new manual - "Species Management and the Use of Studbooks as a Conservation Tool". Anyone interested in reaming more about the importance of captive breeding should read the excellent book by Colin Tudge. "Last Animals at the Zoo" published by Oxford University Press. This book is in paperback and sells for about \$18.00. I have tried to strip concepts back to their most basic in this article - my apologies to anyone who considers my explanations to be simplification or distortion of the science of genetics.

# Maintaining Rare Finches in Captivity

by *Benj Whitworth*

*This article first appeared in the January 1997, vol. 26 no.1, of the Finch News, the official publication of the Queensland Finch Society Inc.*

When breeding rare finches there are two extra factors that need to be taken into account to maintain them in captivity. These are the effect of small population size and the effect of inbreeding on the finch population.

The importation of finches into Australia ceased around 40 years ago. This has meant that the only foreign finch species available are those which were present within Australia at the time of the import bans. Since then a number of species have died out, due to lack of young birds replacing the old. This continues to be a problem, even though we have maintained species for so long. The problem is that some species become less popular, and therefore are kept less. Once the population of a species falls too low it may not be possible to return it to former levels.

## Extinction as a result of small population size

Small populations are more likely to go extinct than large populations. Once a population becomes too small it is not ruled by the law of

averages, it is affected by the fate of individual animals.

Say we have a small population of finches, maybe 10 pairs of Laven-der Waxbills. It is possible that most of the offspring in one year could be male, just by chance. If you don't believe me then try flicking a coin 10 times. Although there are only two sides to the coin it is likely that you will toss more of one side, perhaps heads. However if you toss a coin 100 times it is likely that the heads and tails will even out to about 50:50.

Species where there are more of one sex are the Dybowski's Twin-spot which has more males and the Blue-breasted Waxhill which had more females.

Small populations are also more likely to be wiped out if all the birds are in a few finch keeper's hands. If a snake gets into the aviary or a fire goes through one of their aviaries then the species which they had may be wiped out forever. For this reason it is important to spread rare species around to different breeders rather than a few people having most of the stock.

An example of this occurred with the Red-chested Zebra, where one breeder retained almost all the stock. When he got sick the Red Zebra was almost lost to the fancy, and only now, about eight years later has this mutation made a comeback.

Although this example was a mutation the same thing can be applied to species. Examples of species which occur in only a few breeders aviaries may be the Purple Finch, and the Napoleon Weaver.

### Inbreeding and its problems:

#### Selecting Stock:

When I am selecting stock from a breeder or at a sale I pick the big, healthy, brightly coloured birds. I mean who doesn't? I hope that the birds that I breed also possess these characteristics. This is fine for common species such as Ruddies or Cubans. However when we are breeding rare finches these thoughts have to be slightly modified. It is still okay to pick the healthy, bright birds however we must be selecting from birds within a line, rather than between lines. For example, when selecting stock of a rare species for example Red Crested Cardinals, it is best to select the best birds from Fred's sale birds as well as the best birds from Joe's sale birds, rather than deciding that Fred's birds are better than Joe's and therefore only buying from Fred. The reason for this is that if we select from only one breeder we are far more likely to be selecting birds that are related, even if only slightly and this reduces pairing opportunities for the future.

#### Line Breeding:

Line breeding is the practice of mating together distant relatives such as grandparents to grandchildren, parents to children, cousins to each other or to aunts and uncles to

improve some particular character. Line breeding and inbreeding is an important method used especially by finch showmen to improve some particular characteristic in your stock. Line breeding does have the disadvantage in that it can often reduce fertility of your stock and/or increase dead in shell. For common species this is okay because low fertility strains can be outcrossed to another line of unrelated birds. However rare species don't have other strains which can be outcrossed with and therefore a gradual reduction of fertility occurs. This is especially the case in Australia where importations have been banned for a great many years and it is likely that most of the birds are already, at least distantly, related.

So I suggest that very careful selection of stock is made when starting to breed rare species (e.g. Lavenders), and this does not just include the parents of the birds, you must search further back into the birds histories to make sure your sources are not closely related.

### 500 individuals. Is it a rule?

Some authors in *Finch News* suggest that we need 500 birds for a stable population. The 500 rule was a guesstimate made in the 1970s when no one was sure how many individuals you needed to stop a species going extinct. It was expected that 500 individuals was enough to maintain genetic diversity within a population and enable it to adapt to future changes in the environment.

This number was just a guess and there are some species still surviving with far less than 500 individuals. It is known that in populations with less than 100 individuals that you will lose rare alleles of genes. For example a rare allele is the Yellow Headed Gouldian, and it is unlikely this mutation would have survived in the wild if the population had decreased to 100 in the wild. Even smaller populations than 100 suffer from inbreeding and deleterious recessive alleles being expressed.

Weaver, Whydahs and effective population size. An example of where we are going wrong!

I have no idea how many weavers or whydahs there are in Australia. So I will make a guess for this example: lets say there are 200 Red Bishop Weavers left in captivity. You may say this is a large enough population if we follow the suggestion above of atleast 100 individuals. However the above is for randomly breeding populations, for example birds which breed in pairs. Weavers are not randomly breeding, one male can mate with many females. Lets say each male mates with 5 females (I know that is a little extreme, but it is possible) then although there are 200 individuals in the Australian population, the breeding (effective) population size is actually only 120, i.e. 100 females and 20 males. Those 20 males will sire all the young and therefore the next generation will have far less genetic diversity than the past generation. If this continues for many generations the population

will be inbred and will die out, due to decreasing fertility and an increase in deleterious genes being expressed.

So what can we do? For rare species of weavers and whydahs it is important to use as many genetically diverse males as possible (i.e. select males from different sources) and to use many males as possible. Preferably breeding these birds as monogamous pairs. You may say they are harder to breed this way. It may take more of your time, e.g. taking the male out when the female is on the nest, so he won't drive her back to nest. But surely a \$2000-\$4000 bird is worth a little extra time. Also you may actually increase breeding success because when many females are kept with one male, only the most dominant females will breed.

Summary

Rare finches are most likely to become extinct in captivity for two main reasons. Small populations are more easily wiped out by a disaster such as a fire, or by an unfortunate breeding event, such as producing only one sex.

Small populations are also more likely to suffer from inbreeding (e.g. where fertility is reduced or deleterious genes are expressed) or the loss of rare alleles. We should be able to maintain rare species by spreading birds amongst breeders and by breeding birds in pairs thereby improving genetic diversity.

# Breeding Finches

by Bevan Ruhland

*This article first appeared in the October 1994, vol. 23, no. 10, of the Finch News, the official publication of the "The Queensland Finch Society Inc. of Australia.*

Over forty years ago I trapped birds as a kid and sold them for pocket money, some I retained to begin my hobby in aviculture. Today there are no birds to trap or atleast very few. Nothing compared to the flocks we used to see when I was on the land.

I don't think I have ever been without birds of some type except when I was overseas. Although at times, I can remember when I only had a colony of Budgies or Zebbies to my name. The first parrot I ever owned was a Pale-headed Rosella and the first finch was a Bullie (Chestnut-breasted Mannikin).

Today, the part of aviculture I enjoy the most is getting all of my best birds together, boxing them all up and then going off to a bird show somewhere. Over the years, I've showed a lot of different animals, mainly horses, cattle and later on birds. It had always been a tradition in my family to breed the best you possibly can and then show them

with pride. Coming from a very competitive showing family my parents are over 70 and still showing cattle to this day. I soon learned that showing is an integral part to being a success at breeding anything. Very early I learned that you don't always win.

Sometimes you may go for ages without winning anything major and then your luck appears to change. Bingo, you start winning your share of the big prizes. My greatest claim to fame so far would be from our finch show last year when I took out the Grand Champion, Reserve Champion and Champion Hen of Show. I'll probably never see that again. The prize I like to win best is the Champion Pairs. I find it easy to get a good cock bird for the single classes but a lot harder to get a good cock and good hen of the same type at the same time. Winning the Champion Hen is also very important to me, as I maintained before, you can get a good cock bird but it's harder to get a good hen bird. Only recently the Queensland Finch Society has introduced Hen classes into its show schedule. It is really good to see as it will help us to lift the quality of our hens as well as the cocks.

## Breeding with a Purpose:

Conservation and preservation is most beneficial to our hobby and gives us a direction and purpose. Breeding birds without a purpose can be detrimental and pointless.

Keeping birds just to enjoy, is no longer good enough. Never before has aviculture been under such a threat from so many sources. Government, Federal, State and Local and a number of fringe groups. Pressure from such groups is enormous but is not in my opinion the greatest threat to aviculture. The major threat comes from within our own circles. I don't know where aviculture is heading and how long it will take before it possibly self destructs. No longer can we top our collections with wild caught birds. Our genetic base is being eroded away in many cases, by our own ignorance.

\*Clubs are full of members who are permeated by apathy, misplaced self assuredness and blinkered short sightedness. The attitudes of most is that as long as they have birds in their backyard, all is okay. Forget the future. A club that condones breeding birds with no purpose or direction has little appeal and doesn't attract new or younger members. Consequently that is why you see most societies struggling to stay viable, meeting attendances falling and today you mostly find that those societies are only a fraction of what they were in their hay day.

Until societies begin to promote "breeding with purpose" they may all eventually perish and so will aviculture in general. Our primary purpose is simple: to breed quality birds in quantity.

My greatest bug bears are inbreeding, ignorance and people who don't cull heavily enough. All of these are detrimental to the future of aviculture. Culling your birds is every bit as important as worming our birds or changing the water. Once we get everybody breeding quality, not just quantity, then perhaps we can look at the preservation of our species through species management.

Our Species Management Committee fulfills a great role here but it should be working hand in hand with another group, possibly called "Species Preservation Committee", to ensure that the common species we currently enjoy, remain in their present true to type form.

This is where showing birds plays a very important role and anyone who is not into showing is missing out on so much and more than likely is probably breeding blindly because they wouldn't necessarily know if what they are breeding is okay or if it is polluted or inferior or absolute rubbish.

When I attended my first show, I was very surprised at what I saw. Up until then I thought that I had pretty good birds. After studying the birds on display and then going home and appraising mine. My birds were breeding all right but what I was breeding was absolute rubbish. Everything was wrong. Mostly they were small and obviously not displaying thriftiness and strong

to allow our present stocks of pure-blood finches to become endangered. Not enough emphasis is being placed on protecting the bloodlines of the common species we keep at the moment.

Only the show fraternity have gone to any effort to maintain the vitality required to breed champions. If more aviculturists could be encouraged to get involved with showing and be proud of the birds they breed, and not just be proud of the numbers or dollars they produce, then in no time we would have a well established stud book and all our current species would be once again safe.

Anyone who is involved with showing will soon verify that this is probably the best and surest way to achieve our goal. I would invite responses from show people, judges and other interested parties on this issue.

Showing of birds by and large has mostly been grossly misunderstood by aviculturists and general public. Most clubs who are experiencing the falling membership could add incentive to belonging by encouraging breeders to establish a quality line of breeders capable of being shown and then featuring maybe one or two exhibitions a year. Today the onus is on every aviculturist to become aware of the problems our hobby faces, and care enough to do something positive about it.

All responsible aviculturists should endeavor to familiarize themselves with all the various species standards so as to ensure our genetic stockpile of future generations. Everybody is familiar with the plight of the Queensland Star, Indian Silverbills, Blue Breasted Cordon etc. to name a few. Once everybody is taught how to identify a hybrid and how to recognize a pure strain, the future of the species will be in much better hands and the genetic purity of each species will be safe guarded.

Generally speaking Australian aviculturists have been very successful in keeping their species fairly pure and true to type. Some crossings have occurred by accident and some by design but most crosses are sterile. The current habit of using closely related pairs such as brother and sister is both unethical and also genetically damaging helping to decimate our gene pool and in my books is akin to hybridizing.

People who set out to breed quantity at the expense of quality have paved the way for quality to decline and therefore inferior birds being sold to many future breeders.

Even if you never bring home a champion trophy by accepting the challenge to breed champions or at least trying for the other more general strengths of a showbird you will be contributing to aviculture and that is a worthy reward in and of itself. Likewise those who have diligence and take what they are doing

to allow our present stocks of pure-blood finches to become endangered. Not enough emphasis is being placed on protecting the bloodlines of the common species we keep at the moment.

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All responsible aviculturists should endeavor to familiarize themselves with all the various species standards so as to ensure our genetic stockpile of future generations. Everybody is familiar with the plight of the Queensland Star, Indian Silverbills, Blue Breasted Cordon etc. to name a few. Once everybody is taught how to identify a hybrid and how to recognize a pure strain, the future of the species will be in much better hands and the genetic purity of each species will be safe guarded.

Generally speaking Australian aviculturists have been very successful in keeping their species fairly pure and true to type. Some crossings have occurred by accident and some by design but most crosses are sterile. The current habit of using closely related pairs such as brother and sister is both unethical and also genetically damaging helping to decimate our gene pool and in my books is akin to hybridizing.

People who set out to breed quantity at the expense of quality have paved the way for quality to decline and therefore inferior birds being sold to many future breeders.

Even if you never bring home a champion trophy by accepting the challenge to breed champions or at least trying for the other more general strengths of a showbird you will be contributing to aviculture and that is a worthy reward in and of itself. Likewise those who have diligence and take what they are doing



to allow our present stocks of pure-blood finches to become endangered. Not enough emphasis is being placed on protecting the bloodlines of the common species we keep at the moment.

Only the show fraternity have gone to any effort to maintain the vitality required to breed champions. If more aviculturists could be encouraged to get involved with showing and be proud of the birds they breed, and not just be proud of the numbers or dollars they produce, then in no time we would have a well established stud book and all our current species would be once again safe.

Anyone who is involved with showing will soon verify that this is probably the best and surest way to achieve our goal. I would invite responses from show people, judges and other interested parties on this issue.

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# THE NATIONAL FINCH AND SOFTBILL SOCIETY

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

The National Finch and Softbill Society is dedicated to the preservation of all finch and softbill species.

- NFSS Bulletin*** Our bi-monthly *Bulletin* connects you with other finch and softbill keepers around the country. It includes articles on diet, breeding, management and the experiences of other aviculturists. NFSS keeps you abreast of the news on legislation.
- FINCHSAVE*** The goal of *FINCHSAVE* is to establish and maintain all finch and softbill species in American aviculture. All members are encouraged to enhance the propagation of finches and softbills.
- Census*** The annual NFSS Census can connect you with other breeders for the purpose of exchanging information or breeding stock.
- Leg Bands*** NFSS offers, to members, closed traceable leg bands, in 9 sizes.
- Affiliations*** Your club can affiliate and receive plaques and rosettes as show awards. Non-show clubs, too, can affiliate and receive service awards for members. Speakers are available, with slide programs that feature finches and softbills.
- National Show*** All members are encouraged to attend and participate in NFSS' National show. An International Patronage Exchange brings awards from foreign countries.
- Judges Panel*** Composed of individuals who have completed the apprenticeship program, all NFSS Panel Judges judge by the NFSS Standard of Judging, are approved by the Board of Directors, and are available to local clubs.
- Standards*** At mid-year 1995 NFSS had exhibition standards for twelve species, including the first standard for softbill species, and several more in the works.
- Champions*** NFSS sponsors a "Champion Exhibitor" and "Champion Bird" awards program. Both reward high achievements on the show bench.
- FINCHSHOP*** The sales division of NFSS offers various items for sale to members. The profits are used to support the Society's other programs.

***Join with us...Send in your application...Today!***

# NFSS Affiliates, Delegates & Shows

(Listing as of May 1, 1997)

## ALABAMA

Central Alabama Avicultural Society  
Ginny Allen (334) 749-7168

Rocket City Cage Bird Club  
June C. Hendrix

## CALIFORNIA

Aviary Association of Kern  
(805) 767-6110

Capitol City Bird Society  
Mariana Mejia (916) 452-2037  
*Show* October 25, 1997  
Placer County Fairgrounds  
Roseville, CA  
Panel Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau

Finch Society of San Diego County  
Sally Huntington (619) 452-9423  
*Show #1* November 1, 1997  
Panel Judge: Joseph Krader  
*Show #2* November 2, 1997  
Panel Judge: Hal Koontz  
San Diego, CA

Golden Gate Avian Society  
Cathy Knight (510) 634-5068  
*Show* November 8, 1997  
Tracy, CA

## COLORADO

Rocky Mountain Society of Aviculture  
Julie Kern (303) 753-6145  
*Show* November 20, 21 & 22  
Denver, CO

## CONNECTICUT

Connecticut Association for Aviculture  
Chris Voronovitch (860) 649-8220  
*Show* October 25, 1997  
Panel Judge: Christine Voronovitch  
Manchester, CT

Connecticut Canary and Finch Club  
Alfredo Robles (860) 951-9438  
*Show* December 1997

## FLORIDA

Aviary & Cage Bird Society of South  
Florida  
Phil Barth (305) 426-5340  
*Show* August 23, 1997  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Panel Judge:

Colorbred Canary Club of Miami  
Armando J. Lee  
*Show* December 6, 1997  
Panel Judge: Tom Rood  
Miami, FL

Florida West Coast Avian Society  
Todd Etzel (941) 322-2023  
*Show* November 30, 1997  
Sarasota, FL  
Panel Judge: Stephen Hoppin

Florida State Fair Exotic Bird Show  
Dale Laird (407) 657-7989  
*Double Show*  
February 15, 1997 *Saturday*  
Panel Judge: Martha Wigmore  
February 16, 1997 *Sunday*  
Panel Judge: William Parlee  
Tampa, FL

## Heartland

Maxine June  
*Show* January 1997

Sunshine State Cage Bird Society  
Dale Laird (407) 657-7989  
*Show* October 11, 1997  
Panel Judge: Tom Rood  
Orlando, FL

## GEORGIA

Georgia Cage Bird Society  
Derrel Ward  
*Show* November 1, 1997  
Marietta, GA

## HAWAII

Honolulu Canary and Finch Club  
Kathy Perreira (808) 844-3629

## ILLINOIS

Greater Chicago Cage Bird Club  
Jane Muscato (630) 305-9043  
*Show* November 1, 1997  
Panel Judge: Tom Rood  
Rolling Meadow, IL

**Illini Bird Fanciers**

Jan Marcott (217) 347-9690

*Show June 7, 1997*Panel Judge: Earl Courts  
Shelbyville, IL**National Institute of Red-Orange  
Canaries (NIROC)**

Stephan V. Hopman (815) 469-8455

*Show November 29, 1997*Panel Judge: Martha Wigmore  
Elk Grove Village, IL**INDIANA****Indiana Bird Fanciers**

Conrad Meinert (219) 269-2873

*Show October 11, 1997*Panel Judge: Miki Spartzak  
Fort Wayne, IN**IOWA****Mid-America Cage Bird Society**

Rhoda Shirley (515) 243-1511

*Show October 4, 1997*Panel Judge: Tom Rood  
Des Moines, IA**KANSAS****Kansas Avicultural Society**

Sharon Mills (316) 687-2497

*Show October 10, 1997*Panel Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau  
Wichita, KS**KENTUCKY****Central Kentucky Cage Bird Society**

Ms. Boo Shea (606) 744-2551

**LOUISIANA****Gulf South Bird Club, Inc.**

E. J. Nagel Jr. (504) 271-1840

*Show October 18, 1997*Panel Judge: Miki Spartzak  
Metairie, LA**MARYLAND****Baltimore Bird Fanciers***Show October 11, 1997***MASSACHUSETTS****Massachusetts Cage Bird Assoc.**

Dianna Smith (508) 540-3214

*Show October 18, 1997*Panel Judge: Charles Anchor  
Hanover, MA**MICHIGAN****Great Lakes Avicultural Society**

Diana Hugo (616) 842-0163

*Show October 18, 1997*

Grand Rapids, MI

**Mid-West Cage-Bird Club, Inc.**

Patrick Vance (810) 443-0643

*Show September 6, 1997*

Panel Judge: Clarence Culwell

**Motor City Bird Breeders, Inc.**

Ron Girling (810) 751-8265

*Show October 25, 1997*Panel Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau  
Warren, MI**MISSOURI****Greater Kansas City Avic. Society**

Nita Haas (816) 331-5285

*Show October 18, 1997*Panel Judge: Paul Williams  
Grandview, MO**Heart of America Hookbill & Finch  
Society**

Moses Linn (816) 523-4661

*Show June 13, 1997*

Grandview, MO

**Missouri Cage Bird Association**

Richard &amp; Rose Dickman

(314) 928-3444

*Show October 8, 1997*Panel Judge: Patrick Vance  
Eureka, MO**NEW HAMPSHIRE****Birds of a Feather Avicultural Society**  
hosting the:**Kaytee Great American Bird Show***Show October 4, 1997*Holiday Inn Center of New Hampshire  
Manchester, NH

Panel Judge: Daren Decoteau

**NFSS  
INTERNATIONAL  
AFFILIATES**

**CANADA**

**Budgerigar & Foreign Bird Society  
of Ontario**

Jim Marks (416) 292-3852

**Cage Bird Society of Hamilton**

**Durham Avicultural Society of  
Ontario**

Vincent Moase (905) 723-1978  
Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

**Essex-Kent Cage Bird Society**

Alfred Mion (519) 948-6398

*Show* October 17, 18, & 19, 1997  
Windsor, Ontario, Canada

**NEW MEXICO**

**New Mexico Bird Club, Inc.**

Gail Ranshaw (505) 822-1483

*Show #1* September 27, 1997

Panel Judge: Ray Johnson

*Show #2* September 28, 1997

Panel Judge: Conrad Meinert

Albuquerque, NM

**NEW YORK**

**Finger Lakes Cage Bird Association**

Rena Rouse (315) 252-7673

**New York Finch & Type Canary Club**

Barbara Kulak (718) 967-6899

*Show* October 18, 1997

Brooklyn, NY

**NFSS  
INTERNATIONAL  
CORRESPONDENTS**

**AUSTRALIA**

**Queensland Finch Society**

Gavin Dietz, P.O. Box 1600,

Coorparoo DC 4151

Queensland, Australia

**GREAT BRITAIN**

**The Estrildian**

Ian Hinze, Coetref, Tyn Lon,  
Holyhead, Gwynedd LL65 3LJ,  
Wales, United Kingdom

**The Waxbill Finch Society**

Mr. Buzz Hope-Inglls,  
10 Litchfield Close, Plympton,  
Plymouth PL7 3UU, England

**Zebra Finch Society, England**

Margaret Binns, 97 Bent Lanes,  
Davyhulme, Nr. Urmston, Manchester,  
M31 8WZ England

**NORTH CAROLINA**

**Raleigh-Durham Caged Bird Society**

April Blazich (919) 851-8079

**OHIO**

**Fort Defiance Bird Club**

Bea Endsley (419) 263-2795

*Show* September 27, 1997

Defiance, OH

**Toledo Bird Assn. & Zebra Finch  
Club of America**

Rick Yunker (419) 691-9432

*Show* September 27, 1997

Panel Judge: Patrick Vance

Toledo, OH

**OKLAHOMA**

**Bird Fanciers of Oklahoma**  
Gene and June Miller (405) 382-7066  
*Show* September 27, 1997  
Panel Judge: Paul Williams  
Oklahoma City, OK

**OREGON**

**The Finch Connection**  
Paula Hansen (503) 581-8208

**PENNSYLVANIA**

**Central Pennsylvania Cage Bird Society**  
Donald Strause (610) 926-5210

**Delaware Valley Bird Club**  
Kris Kroner (215) 628-4143

**Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society**  
Junc & Ralph Turkovich (412) 379-5819  
*Show* November 1, 1997  
Monroeville, PA  
Panel Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau

**Northeastern Penn. Cage Bird Club**  
Gary Fino (717) 829-3891

**Seven Mountain's Exotic Bird Club**  
Kathy Temple (814) 832-2150

**PUERTO RICO**

**Organización Puertorriqueña de Aves Exoticas, Inc.**  
Jacky Civitares (787)752-4433  
*Show #1* February 23, 1997  
Ponce, PR  
*Show #2* April 20, 1997  
Quebradillas, PR  
*Show #3* June 22, 1997  
Guanynabo, PR  
*Show #4* August 24, 1997  
Carolina, PR  
*Show #5* December 6, 1997  
Panel Judge: Dr. AL Decoteau  
Carolina, PR

**TENNESSEE**

**Middle Tennessee Cage Bird Club**  
Eva Duffey (615) 361-5939  
*Show* October 11, 1997  
Antioch, TN

**TEXAS**

**Alamo Exhibition Bird Club**  
J. T. Payne (210) 695-8181

**Canary & Finch Society**  
Noma Johnson (281) 930-9393  
*Show* November 8, 1997  
Panel Judge: Paul Williams  
Pasadena, TX

**Fort Worth Bird Club**  
Clarence Culwell (817) 220-5568  
*Show* October 4, 1997  
Panel Judge: Stephen Hoppin  
Fort Worth, TX

**Texas Bird Breeders and Fanciers Association**  
Clarence Culwell (817) 220-5568  
*Show* October 25, 1997  
Panel Judge: Cecil Gumby  
Temple, TX

**Texas Canary Club**  
Chris Davis (713) 361-3364  
*Show* November 1, 1997

**VIRGINIA**

**Peninsula Cage Bird Society**  
Marian "Bea" Rogers  
(757) 484-6001

**WASHINGTON**

**Cascade Canary Breeders Association**  
*Show* November 30, 1997

**Pacific Northwest Spring Bird Exhibition**  
*Show #1* April 18, 1997  
Panel Judge: Miki Spartzak  
*Show #2* April 19, 1997  
Panel Judge: Conrad Meinert  
*Show #3* April 20, 1997  
Panel Judge: Dr. Al Decoteau  
Puyallup, WA

# 1997 Chronological Show List

## September

*There's a show for everyone*

### January

- 1/25 FL (34 entries)  
Heartland Avian Soc  
(Stephen Hoppin)

### February

- 2/15 FL (133 entries)  
Florida State Fair  
Exotic Bird Show  
Day 1  
(Martha Wigmore)

- 2/16 FL (114 entries)  
Florida State Fair  
Exotic Bird Show  
Day 2  
(William Parlee)

- 2/23 PR (46 entries)  
Organizacion Puer-  
torriquena de Aves  
Show #1  
(Dr. Al Decoteau)  
■ PR (96 entries)  
Organizacion Puer-  
torriquena de Aves  
Show #2  
(Dr. Al Decoteau)

### April

- 4/18 WA  
Pacific Northwest  
Bird Show  
Show #1  
(Miki Spazak)

- 4/19 WA  
Pacific Northwest  
Bird Show  
Show #2  
(Conrad Meinert)

- 4/20 PR  
Organizacion  
Puertorriquena  
de Aves  
Show #2

- WA  
Pacific Northwest  
Bird Show  
Day #3  
(Dr. Al Decoteau)

### June

- 6/7 IL  
Illini Bird Fanciers  
(Earl Courts)

- B/13 MO  
Heart of America  
Hookbill and Finch  
Soc.

- 6/22 PR  
Organizacion Puer-  
torriquena de Aves  
Show #3

### August

- B/16 NY  
Rochester Cage  
Birds Club

- 8/23 FL  
Aviary and Cage  
Bird Society of  
South Florida

- B/24 PR  
Organizacion Puer-  
torriquena de Aves  
Show #4

- 9/6 MI  
Midwest Cage Bird  
Club  
(Clarence Culwell)

- 9/13 CA  
Greater Brandon  
Avian Society Inc.  
■ PA  
Chester County Bird  
Breeders

- 9/27 OH  
Fort Defiance Bird  
Club

- OH  
The Toledo Bird  
Association  
(Patrick Vance)

- OK  
Bird Fanciers of  
Oklahoma  
(Paul Williams)

- NM  
New Mexico Bird  
Club  
Day 1  
(Ray Johnson)

- 9/28 NM  
New Mexico Bird  
Club  
Day 2  
(Conrad Meinert)  
■ NY  
Finger Lakes Cage  
Bird Associatin

### October

- 10/4 IA  
Mid America Cage  
Bird Society  
(Tom Rood)

## October

### ■ MI

Society of Canary &  
Finch Breeders

*(Christine Voronovitch)*

### ■ NH

Great American Bird  
Show

*(Daren Decoteau)*

### ■ TX

Fort Worth Bird Club  
*(Stephen Hoppin)*

### 10/11 FL

Sunshine State Cage  
Bird Society

*(Tom Rood)*

### ■ OH

Cleveland Cage Bird  
Society

### ■ IN

Indiana Bird  
Fanciers

*(Miki Sparzak)*

### ■ KS

Kansas Avicultural  
Society

*(Dr. Al Decoteau)*

### 10/18 LA

Gulf South Bird Club  
*(Miki Sparzak)*

### ■ MA

Massachusetts Cage  
Bird Association

*(Charles Anchor)*

### ■ MI

Great Lakes  
Avicultural Society

### ■ MO

Greater Kansas City  
Avicultural Society

*(Paul Williams)*

### ■ MY

Baltimore Bird  
Fanciers

### ■ NY

New York Finch &  
Type Canary Club

### 10/25 CA

Fresno Canary and  
Finch Society

*(Clayton Jones)*

### ■ CT

Connecticut  
Association for  
Aviculture

*(Christine Voronovitch)*

### ■ OK

Oklahoma Cage Bird  
Society

### ■ MI

Motor City Bird  
Breeders

*(Dr. Al Decoteau)*

### ■ TX

Texas Bird Breeders  
Fanciers Association  
*(Cecil Gumby)*

*(Clayton Jones)*

### ■ MO

Missouri Cage Bird  
Association

*(Patrick Vance)*

### 11/20, 21, & 22 CO

Rocky Mountain  
Society of  
Aviculture

**The National Cage  
Bird Show**

### 11/29 IL

National Institute of  
Red-orange Canaries

### 11/30 FL

Florida West Coast  
Avian Society

*(Stephen Hoppin)*

### ■ WA

Cascade Canary  
Breeders Assoc.

## November

### 11/1 CA

Finch Society of  
San Diego

Day 1

*(Joseph Krader)*

### ■ GA

Georgia Cage Bird  
Society

### ■ IL

Greater Chicago  
Cage Bird Club

*(Tom Rood)*

### ■ PA

Greater Pittsburgh  
Cage Bird Society

*(Dr. Al Decoteau)*

### ■ TX

Texas Canary Club

### 11/2 CA

Finch Society of  
San Diego

Day 2

*(Hal Koantz)*

### 11/B CA

Canary and Finch  
Society

*(Paul Williams)*

### ■ CA

Golden Gate Avian  
Society

## December

### 12/6 CA

Aviary Assoc. of  
California

### ■ CT

Connecticut Canary  
& Finch Club

### ■ FL

Colorbred Canary  
Club of Miami

*(Tom Rood)*

### ■ PR

Organizacion  
Puertorriquena de  
Aves Exoticas

*(Dr. Al Decoteau)*

## February '98

### 2/14 & 2/15 FL

Florida State Fair  
Bird Show

Two Day Show



# FINCHSHOP

the National Finch and Softbill Society store

ITEM	QTY	SIZE/ STYLE	PRICE EACH	TOTAL AMT
NEW T-Shirt Design! 10 Colorful Finches in Stalks of Grass w/NFSS		M•L•XL•XXL (circle size) All 50/50 White	\$18.00	
Video "The Wonderful World of Finches and Soft- bills: An Introduction"		Members & Affiliates: Non-Members:	\$17.00 \$22.00	
Show Cage Plans (see sizes below)			\$4.00	
All 3 Show Cage Plans (set of all three)			\$10.00	
NFSS Plastic Water Bottle			\$6.00	
NFSS Zebra Pin			\$6.00	
NFSS Gouldian Pin			\$6.00	
Eric Peake Lithograph The Diamond Firetails Signed by the artist			\$35.00	
Name Badge (Members only) *Print name clearly *Includes one line of engraving		2 lines - add \$1.00 Magnetic back add - \$1.00	\$7.50	
Past Bulletin Issues-1994 and later issues			\$4.00	
-1993 and earlier issues			\$3.00	
1995 NFSS Handbook (Membership Yearbook)		Includes Census, Index & much more (Jul/Aug '95 issue)	\$4.00	
NFSS Judges Handbook and Official Standards		In handsome small 3-ring binder. Updated in 1995!	\$15.00	

## NFSS SHOW CAGE PLANS

- # 1 Cage Finches up to and including Zebras
- # 2 Cage Finches larger than Zebras
- # 3 Cage Softbills

## SHIPPING & HANDLING \$

under \$10 add \$2.00  
over \$10 add \$3.00  
TOTAL \$

Name \_\_\_\_\_ # \_\_\_\_\_ Member  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form and payment  
(check or money order  
payable to **NFSS**) to  
**FINCHSHOP**  
c/o Julie Duimstra  
4400 NW Walnut Blvd. #68  
Corvallis, OR 97330

# THE NATIONAL FINCH AND SOFTBILL SOCIETY

## GUIDE TO ORDERING NFSS CLOSED LEG BANDS

NFSS welcomes comments and suggestions for this Guide. Contact the home office.

### size "A"

Small Waxbills  
Gold-breasted Waxbill  
Orange-cheeked  
Waxbill  
Bicheno (Owl) Finch  
Quail Finch  
Red-eared Waxbill  
Strawberry Finch

### size "B"

Black-cheeked Waxbill  
Cordon Bleu Waxbill  
Cuban Melodious Finch  
Fire & Olive Finches  
Lavender Finch  
Rufous-backed  
Mannikin

### size "C"

Black and White  
Mannikin  
Blue-capped Waxbill  
Bronze-winged  
Mannikin  
Star & Cherry Finches  
Green Singing Finch  
Grey Singing Finch  
Heck's Shafftail  
Painted, Pileated  
Finches  
Pytilias, Silverbills  
Red-headed Parrot  
Finch  
Shafftail Finch

### size "D"

Blue-faced Parrot Finch  
most other Parrot  
finches  
Chestnut-breasted Finch  
Gouldian Finch  
Pictorella Finch  
Pin-tailed Nonpareil  
Yellow-rumped Finch  
Zebra Finch  
most smaller Mannikins  
most Twinspots

### size "E"

Black-crested Finch  
Diamond Sparrow  
Golden Song Sparrow  
Nuns, Siskins  
Peter's Twinspot  
Society & Spice Finch

### size "G"

European Goldfinch  
Magpie Mannikin  
other large Mannikins  
small Tanagers

### size "J"

Pekin Robin,  
Silver-eared Mesia  
other small softbills

### size "K"

Java Rice Bird  
Red-crested Cardinal  
Saffron, Shama Thrush

### size "L"

Diamond Dove  
other small doves  
Quail, other softbills

### size "M"

Pagoda Mynah, large  
Sunbirds  
Leaf Birds

### size "R"

Green/purple & Superb  
Starlings

### size "S"

White-tailed Jay, Ring  
Neck Dove  
Java & Indian Hill  
Mynahs  
Toucanettes, Aracaris

### size "T"

small Touracos,  
Plush-capped Jay  
Small Toucans, small  
Hornbills

### size "U"

Large Touracos, Large  
Toucans  
Large Hornbills

# THE NATIONAL FINCH AND SOFTBILL SOCIETY

## BAND ORDER FORM

Orders processed weekly as received.  
 Cashier's Check or Money Order will expedite your order.  
 Please, no mail requiring signatures.

NFSS offers to members only closed traceable aluminum bands. Available only in the NFSS color of the year, the bands are engraved with the initials *NFSS*, size code, year and number. No choice of numbers.

All orders are recorded for permanent reference. Bands are ordered in strings of ten, all the same size. New members may order before receiving membership number. Write "New" for membership # on order form.

1997 or 1998 (CIRCLE CORRECT YEAR PLEASE)

BAND SIZE	# OF STRINGS	PRICE STRING	TOTAL AMT
A		\$2.75	
B		\$2.75	
C		\$2.75	
D		\$2.75	
E		\$2.75	
G		\$2.75	
J		\$2.75	
K		\$2.75	
L		\$2.75	
M		\$2.75	
R		\$2.75	
S		\$2.75	
T		\$2.75	
U		\$2.75	

**POSTAL INSURANCE:**

Under \$50 - \$.75

From \$50 to \$100 - \$1.60

Over \$100 - \$2.50

If you choose not to include this sum NFSS will not be responsible for replacement of bands lost in shipment.

SUBTOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

INSURANCE \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Membership # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

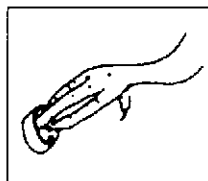
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mail form and payment payable to **NFSS** to:

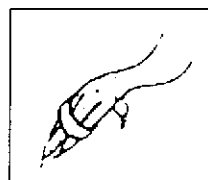
Ms. Eileen Laird  
 NFSS Band Secretary  
 1166 Village Forest Pl.  
 Winter Park, FL 32792  
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# LEG BANDING PROCEDURE

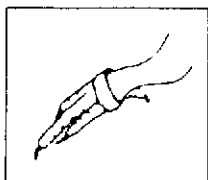
courtesy of  
**The National Finch and Softbill Society**



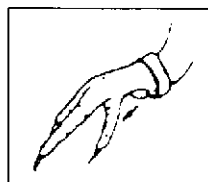
The most important thing to remember when banding chicks is to do it over a counter or table so if the chick is dropped it doesn't fall to the floor. The age to band varies between species but is generally between 5 and 10 days. You can tell by looking at the ankle joint (the joint where the toes come together) and the size of the band.



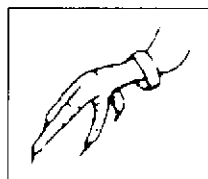
Have the bands, a toothpick (or other small blunt instrument) and some lubricant ready. Be sure you have the bands "right side up" for easier reading.



The band is generally placed on the bird's right leg. Banding just before the parents go to roost in the evening will prevent them from picking at the band. By the next morning they will have forgotten about it.



Hold the chick firmly but in such a way as to not cut off its breathing and so that you don't harm it. Remember, their bodies cannot tolerate compression. Put a little bit of lubricant on the chick's foot and slide the band over the three front toes and finally over the ankle joint. The back toe will probably have to be gently pried out from under the band with a toothpick. The band now should be in the proper location between the ankle and the elbow joints.



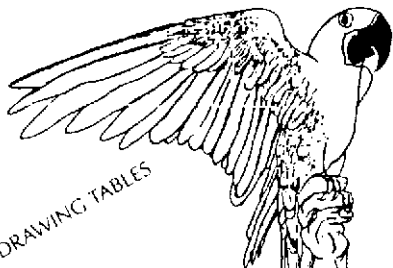
Check on the chick the next few days to be sure that the band has not slipped off and that there are no scrapes or irritations on the foot or leg.

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