

Lessons in Handfeeding Finches

by Myra Markley, Cedar Rapids, IA

For years I had been told that it was not possible to tame a finch. As wild birds, finches will always be flighty and afraid around humans. Finally, a few years ago I started hearing stories of people with tame, friendly finches, and I decided to try and tame one of my young Zebra Finches

I've never tried taming an adult bird. I figured it would be best to start with a young finch. I preferred one that had not weaned yet so I could take over the role as "mother" and acclimate the bird to humans. I contacted a few people on the internet who had hand raised finches and learned how they accomplished raising these tiny birds.

Magnolia Bird Farm

We Buy Birds
•
We Sell Birds



Complete Bird Supplies

8990 Cerritos Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92804
(714) 527-3387

(closed for vacation, first 2 weeks of July)

12200 Magnolia Ave.
Riverside, CA 92503
(909) 278-0878

(closed for vacation, first 2 weeks of August)

OPEN 9 TO 5 DAILY
Closed Sun., Mon. & holidays



Photo by Myra Markley

It took a while but this little finch learned to eat from the dinner plate without hopping into it.

I attempted to hand feed a couple of three-day-old Zebra chicks because they had been tossed from the nest. This failed miserably. Both babies died after a few days and I felt just terrible. I really am not sure why they died. It could have been a number of things; aspiration, bacterial infection, or the formula was not the right temperature.

My next attempt, which was nearly six months later, was with a 10-day-old Zebra chick. Her eyes had just opened when I started feeding her, and she ate very well for me right from the start.

Brooder

I built my own brooder from stuff around the house. It would be nice to have a real brooder but they are very expensive, and I am only an enthusiastic hobbyist.

Material list:

- A bowl, small aquarium, or plastic carrying case. I have used a shoebox in the past with no problems.
- A heating pad (set on low).
- A small plastic bowl or Canary nest.
- A washcloth.
- A small glass of water.
- Something to measure the temperature (keep the temp. around 98 degrees).
- Many Kleenex tissues and paper towels

Place the heating pad in the box, or around the shoe box so it covers the bottom and at least some of the sides. Add in the small bowl or Canary nest with a Kleenex tissues to help soak up the droppings. The small glass of water

is also kept inside in the makeshift incubator to add the much needed humidity. As the water evaporates add more. Place a thermometer in the incubator and place the lid gently on top but not closed tightly—it works best if there is a half inch opening on each side of the lid so air can circulate. Give it time to warm up and check the temperature. Keeping the temperature 96 to 99 degrees is best for young finches but should be slowly lowered as the chick grows feathers.

I used the wash cloth to adjust the height of the bowl/nest inside the brooder, this allowed me to more finely tune the temperature for the chick as it grew.

Hand Feeding Formula

Lafeber's Instant NutriStart hand feeding formula mixed with Gerber's Rice Cereal with Applesauce and water or Pedialyte worked the best for raising my finches. I used a small Oral Tipped Syringe for the feedings. Narrow or long tip made feeding the Zebra chick easier.

If you have a chick that is one to eight days of age, you may need to use the flat end of a flat tooth pick. The syringe will not work for a baby that small. It is best to just let the chick have one small drop at a time and swallow the food on its own.

Mix the ingredients into a thin yogurt like texture for younger chicks, thickening it slightly as the chick grows. Make fresh food for every feeding and clean the syringe thoroughly after every use. Also never force feed a chick, the risk of aspirating is too great.

Hand Feeding Schedule (Zebra Finch)

Days Old	Feeding Frequency
1-5	every 15-45 min.
5-9	Every hour
10-20	Every hour during the day, a few feedings at night. Provide millet although the baby may only play with it at first.
20-weaned	Every other hour or as needed


Each chick is different. Some just eat more than others. Watch your bird and work out a schedule that works well for you and your bird.

My finch took longer than a finch normally should to wean fully but when she was ready to stop taking the formula she just stopped begging and started eating fully on her own.

Hand raising finches is not something everyone should try. It is very hard, and the little ones do sometimes die. I have lost three chicks and successfully raised four Zebra Finches and two sparrows. All of the birds I have raised were tossed from the nest or abandoned. I did try to foster these chicks to more capable finch parents but the foster parents do not always take new chicks, which is why I learned to care for them myself.

The one tame Zebra Finch that I have kept tame and not introduced back into the flock is "DevNull." She is a Pied Grey Zebra Finch. DevNull eats just about everything I do. We eat most meals together and she eats right off my plate. It has taken months but she will no longer walk on our plates, she sits next to the plate and nibbles off the edges. She has also learned not to land on anyone's head anymore. Now if I could just potty train her...

She does like to be held and to have her neck gently rubbed. She also takes naps on my lap while I am working on the computer or watching TV. She has her favorite chair in the kitchen where she likes to sit and look out the window. She is very people friendly and will fly over to anyone who walks into the house.

DevNull is a true delight and even though she is a finch, she is very smart and affectionate. 

The Socorro Dove

Its Destiny

by Jan Parrot-Holden, Vancouver, WA

(Oct/Nov 1987)

This article reflects the AFA's early interest in field studies and the conservation of wild avian species. It also notes the very important fact that but for aviculture, the Grayson's Dove would surely be extinct.

Sxtinction. We read about it. We hear about it. But we seldom think about it—that sometimes gradual, sometimes rapid demise of a species. To bird people it is mystifying, intriguing, sad. It arouses anger, pity, even greed. Yet sometimes it leads to serious, intelligent efforts for reclamation. The Socorro Dove, *Zenaida macroura greysoni*, it appears, may just be one such story.

The story has its beginning on Socorro Island. Now if the name does-

n't sound familiar you aren't necessarily ill-informed. Few if any high school geography courses dwell on the Revillagigedos, a cluster of islands situated 210 miles south of the tip of Baja California. Socorro, the largest in the grouping, was once the homeland of a unique dove variety, whose discovery has been attributed to Edward Grayson, son of Andrew Jackson Grayson, naturalist and artist. In fact, the bird is also known as the Grayson dove but in this article I'll continue to use the island name.

This monumental find of an endemic species (one that is known to exist in no other habitat) occurred in the spring of 1867. According to the writings of Dr. Luis Baptista of the California Academy of Sciences, the Graysons, while shipwrecked on the island, made impressive collections and records of Socorro's flora and fauna. Among these collections were a great many discoveries as yet unheard of to science. And most significantly to



The female tends the nest while the male looks on.

Photo by Gene Hochman, Council Bluffs, Iowa