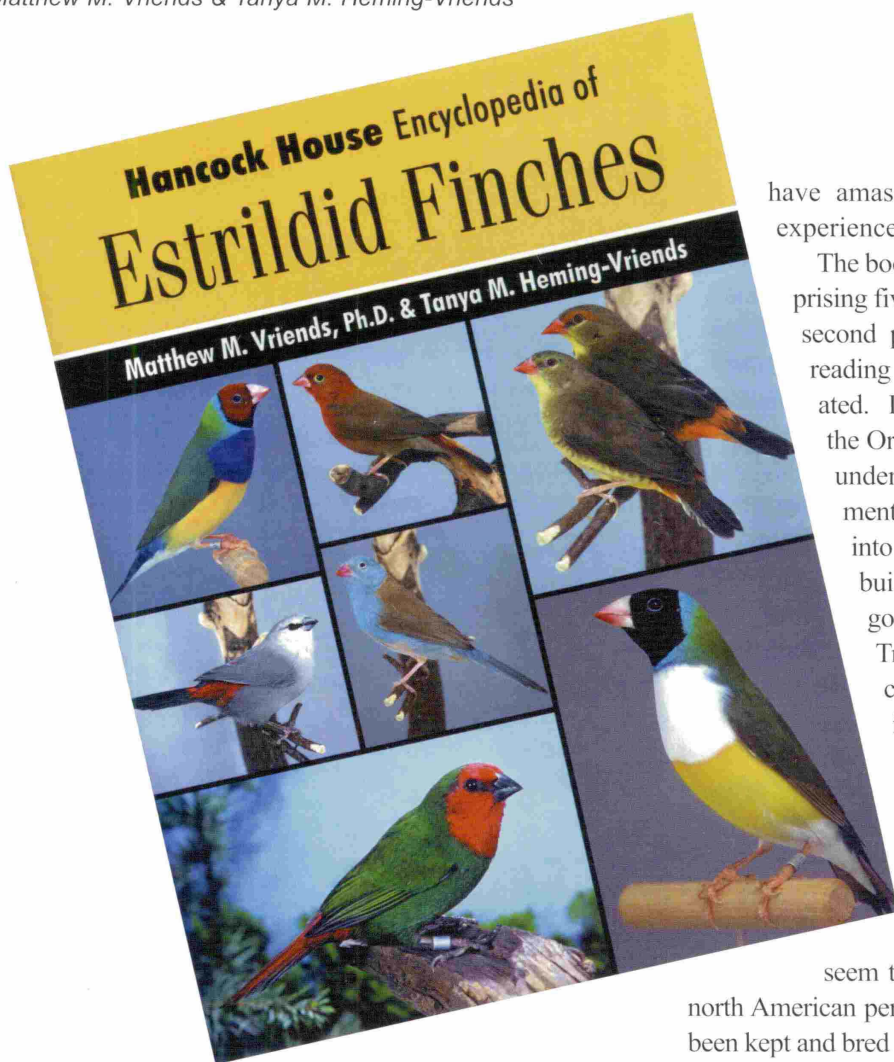


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A Book Review
by Daniel Shearing
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HANCOCK HOUSE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ESTRILDID FINCHES

by Matthew M. Vriends & Tanya M. Heming-Vriends



My first impressions of this book were somewhat mixed although on reading it fully I became very impressed with the content. It certainly deserves the title encyclopedia as all species, common, rare or non-existent in aviculture have entries. However, on flicking through the book, as one would a reference, it is possible to stumble on inconsistencies. The most noticeable of these being within the colour photographs showing suitable accommodation which showed a number of larger display aviaries more suited to much larger birds rather than for Estrildids. However, on reading the book through, it is apparent that the authors

have amassed a wealth of information based on experience.

The book is separated into two parts, the first comprising five chapters detailing management while the second part gives detailed species' accounts. On reading through the book its value can be appreciated. It starts with a chapter entitled Understand the Origin of Your Pet Finch, which gives a good understanding of the environmental requirements of estrildids in a general way. This leads into Housing, Management and Care which builds on the previous chapter and is full of good advice. Common Illnesses and Their Treatment, Food and Water, and Breeding complete the management aspects of keeping estrildids and all in all is discussed in a very comprehensive fashion.

The species' accounts are very detailed and in most cases, bearing in mind this book has been produced in north America, the accepted avicultural nomenclature is used. However, it does seem that the accounts have been written from a north American perspective and hence some birds which have been kept and bred successfully in Europe have been dismissed with just a few lines, even though the authors acknowledge a number of British and European sources.

The book is very well illustrated with 56 pages of colour photographs comprising nearly 200 photographs of the birds and about 50 photographs showing accommodation etc. The photographs of the species are well exposed and clear making identification an easy process.

Despite initial reservations, this is an excellent book when taken as a whole and I would recommend it to anyone interested in the range of estrildids. ❖

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