

Fostering

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We are often faced with the difficult decision of losing young or fostering them. I have no doubts about the virtues of fostering because I often save the life of a baby and occasionally produce a few extra young each year by fostering. The idea that fostering produces inferior birds because they become imprinted on the foster parent in unsubstantiated.

I do not view the young birds in terms of money or profit, rather I see them in terms of achievement and personal satisfaction. I keep and breed Fringillidae species. As a rule, the first clutches of the season are fostered, particularly in rarer species such as the Black-hooded Red Siskin. Within a couple of weeks the siskin eggs are replaced under the original parents and they finish the incubation.

I seldom experience difficulty with Red Siskins raising their own young. Quite the contrary, my birds are excellent parents and I even occasionally foster Greenfinches, Goldfinches and other siskin species under them.

The first two clutches from a virgin pair are incubated for a week to 10 days and then fostered out to a proven pair.

There is nothing wrong with trying to obtain an extra one or two clutches from each pair. The only concern is



Yellow-hooded Siskin feeding his young.



Red-shouldered Whydahs are occasionally offered for sale and are well worth considering if they are to be kept in large flights with Estrildidae finches.



The pair out of the nest were fostered to Yellow-hooded Siskins, the two in the nest were raised by their parents. The upper middle Goldfinch egg is fostered out to Black-hooded Red Siskins.

that one will almost certainly lose the hen if one becomes too greedy.

In my earlier days in the fancy, I remember obtaining 48 eggs from a young pair of Red-faced Parrot Finches. Frightening, isn't it? I most certainly would not do it again. The breeders of rarer species such as the Blue-breasted Parrot Finch, however, should certainly try to obtain an extra clutch of young. Red Siskins normally produce three clutches (often three eggs per clutch) per year which is nine eggs. I try to obtain 15 eggs whether they are fertile or not, but no more than that.

Vitamins and minerals are of paramount importance during the breeding season, as is hygiene. A chunk of cowlick and one cuttlefish bone are always available to my birds. During the 12 days of incubation, one calcium tablet is placed in a bowl of fresh water daily. Seeding grasses are lightly sprinkled with a multivitamin powder and a couple of drops of codliver and wheat-germ oil are mixed with the daily supply of dry seed mix.

As I keep only Fringillidae species, sunflower and niger seeds are always available. If you keep your birds indoors, do not forget that a dose of vitamin A, E and D is essential.

One should always consider raising some of the rarer or endangered species that are compatible with your other birds. For example, if you keep Fringillidae species, include a pair or two of Red Siskins or other rare Fringillidae in your collection. If you keep Estrildidae species, you could help establish some of the parasitic Ploceidae species such as Pin-tailed Whydahs, Paradise Whydahs, etc.

I always recommend that aviculturists specialize in one group of birds. For instance, Fringillidae, Ploceidae or Emberizidae. In doing so, one gains the respect of other aviculturists for one's dedication to a specific group of birds.

The main factors determining how successful one is in producing young are food, aviaries, nesting set ups, etc. and the compatibility of the birds one keeps together. Zebra Finches, for example, dominate in most collections but they should never be kept in the same flights as rarer species—but that is another story for another time. ➔

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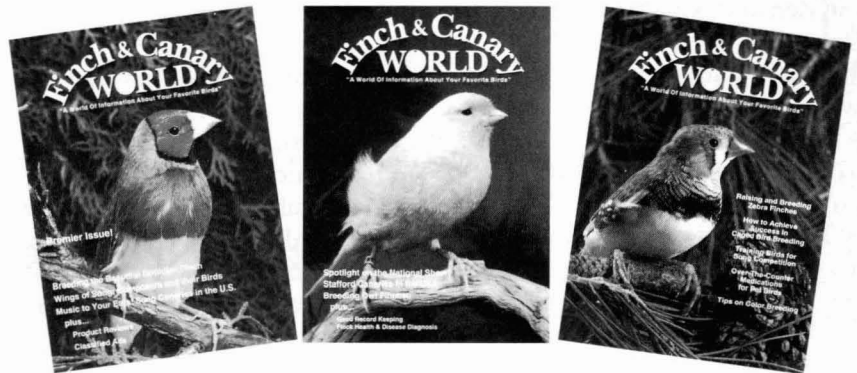


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