

Video Reviews

Handrearing Parrots

A Video by
Rosemary Low and Rob Harvey

Reviewed by Dale R. Thompson
Lemon Cove, CA

During the 1960s I was very impressed by Fern Hubbel and Eleanor Cooley, two aviculturists who were expert in the art of handfeeding baby birds.

In the 1970s, Robert J. Berry, then Curator of Birds at the Houston Zoo, produced one of the first and best videos on handfeeding birds. This was just at the time when handfeeding was becoming more prevalent.

Shortly thereafter, we at Aviculture Institute created our own handfeeding video and during the process learned just how difficult it really is to create an accurate documentary on this complex subject. Handfeeding is not a simple matter, no matter what anyone tells you. There are brooders, temperatures, syringes and spoons, bedding, records, and, of course, the baby bird.

With these experiences in my background, I was very delighted to observe a video on handfeeding parrots done by Rosemary Low and Rob Harvey. Believe me, even in 1997 the ability to handfeed is extremely important to the success of any avicultural operation.

This video by Low and Harvey is very detailed—which is why it is so good. Both Rosemary Low and Rob Harvey discuss the many aspects of hand rearing psittacines and they do not leave out any details. From discussion, Low and Harvey move into the actual demonstration of handfeeding techniques. Much of the video shows Rosemary Low actually handfeeding babies, from the very young to the almost weaned, while she explains each and every step as she goes through the process.

Many things some of us learned

from trial and error in the past (often to the detriment of the birds we experimented on) are clarified in this video. The video is a definite must for any newcomer wishing to learn handfeeding from the beginning. It will save the novice countless errors and will also help the old master polish his technique.

Rosemary Low brings a new understanding to the delicate art of handfeeding. She takes us through the complete process from hatching to the difficult weaning period. With so many baby parrots currently being stunted due to incorrect handfeeding techniques, this video is a definite guide that can counteract and correct the problem.

Besides the basics of handrearing, Low is constantly giving additional tidbits and helpful hints throughout the video. She mentions, for example, that far too many people wean their babies too early. She suggests that stunting is caused by feeding too little, using a formula that is too thin, or failing to feed often enough in a day. There are many other comments that will greatly increase the understanding of those who handfeed parrots.

Though this video was produced in England, the terms and products are familiar to viewers in the United States. Aside from Rosemary Low's delightful English accent, the video could easily have been done in the nursery of an American aviculturist.

Having myself taught handfeeding techniques to many American aviculturists, I know the difficulties and can enthusiastically recommend *Hand Rearing Parrots* by Rosemary Low and Rob Harvey. It is a good piece of work at a time when it is very much needed.

Hand Rearing Parrots by Rosemary Low and Rob Harvey can be obtained for \$24.99, plus \$5 s/h (Florida residents add 6% sales tax) from:

Brinsea Products, Inc.,
3670 Hopkins Avenue
Titusville, FL 32780
USA

Telephone 407-267-7009

Fax 407-267-6090



Grassfinches of Australia

A Video by
GEO Wildlife Documentaries

Reviewed by Dale R. Thompson
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For those aviculturists interested in finches, it is by far the Australian finches that have usually drawn the most attention. The Australian finches range from the common, but strikingly marked Zebra Finch, to probably the most colorful finch in the world, the Gouldian Finch. Yes, there are those, including myself, that early in the business, did not know that the Zebra Finch originated from Australia.

Having in the past reproduced a great number of Australian finches (nine species), I have always loved their song and behavior. With great enthusiasm, a male will sing in an upright position saying to the world that he has found a mate. Then with a great deal of effort, the pair will then build a nest, incubate and raise a family. Not an easy feat when one realizes this may happen over a two to three week period of time.

Traveling around the world observing parrots, finches and softbills has always been a joy to me personally and with over 40 trips under my belt, I realize that I have only just begun. On both trips to Australia, it has always been great to observe cockatoos and parrots in the wild, but those who have traveled with me know the world stops when it comes to finches and softbills. There has been many a stop (often to the distress of the driver) to observe a group of finches along the road.

It simply amazes me to see finches in the wild; I guess I have been so used to seeing finches in cages and flights. In Australia, the grasslands are their world and these finches seem to be so full of life in the wild. Whether in groups or pairs (as usually seen) these wild finches seem larger than life.

To observe over 40 Chestnut-breasted Manakins work over a wild field of



Pair of Fawn mutations of the Shaft-tailed Finch.

tailed Finches in their kitchen window) who cannot make a trip to Australia should obtain the video, GRASS-FINCHES OF AUSTRALIA. This documentary shows finches in their natural habitats of Australia. Whether it is the deserts, the woodlands or the Mellaluca forests, this video examines the lives of these popular finches in the wild.

There are 18 finches represented and each is documented. It shows the often unique behavior of these finches, their courtship and nesting habits, and each species has been filmed in its own natural environment. You may observe behaviors and actions that you may not have seen in your captive finches.

All of the most familiar finches can be found in this video, with some outstanding close-ups of nests and feeding. These include the popular Zebra Finch, Long-tailed Grassfinch, Owl or Becheno (called the Double-barred in the film), Chestnut-breasted, Masked, Crimson, Plum-headed, Black-throated and the Star Finch.

Two outstanding pieces of footage are shown of the Gouldian and Blue-faced Parrot Finches. It is breathtaking

to see the Gouldian Finch in its native habitat. And this documentary also tall grasses or to observe a pair of Masked Grassfinches close up (six



A pair of Masked Grassfinches with their distinctive yellow bills.

feet) right under my camera will always be a memory.

Aviculturists or pet owners (who have even a pair of Zebra or Shaf-shows rare footage on the Blue-faced Parrot Finch.

Those Australian Finches not common to American aviculture can also be seen in this documentary. Some are so beautifully colored and marked, it would be wonderful if we could have them in our aviaries. Some of these include the Red-browed, Beautiful, Diamond, Red-eared (the Australian version), and Painted Finches.

This is a documentary of these finches in the wild only and does not show them in aviary life. I personally recommend this video to all finch enthusiasts as it shows in a very professional manner a delightful group of finches that would be difficult to observe even if one does go to Australia.

Those wishing to obtain this video, please send check or money order for \$49 payable to "GWI Associates," to:

Kristine Spencer
3100 SE 168t Ave., #LLL-331,
Vancouver, WA 98683 