

# Specialization in Finches

by Peggy Dalrymple, Galesburg, IL



*Lavender Finch (Estrilda Caerulescens) Central Africa*

**S**pecies specialization is possibly the key to a future for American finch aviculture.

Sometime around 1980, I inadvertently let the quest for rare and unusual finches take precedence over the desire to actually breed the birds. The fascination of ownership eventually led to many overcrowded aviaries and the constant influx of new species into my bird rooms. This kept dreaded viral and bacterial problems a recurring reality.

My foray into the world of importing and exporting finches and softbills was not the contribution to aviculture I had envisioned. In the long run, it wasn't even good business.

Nine years ago I began a program of specialized breeding. To this day, only one species of estrildid finch has my undivided attention.

While one species may not please every finch breeder, a concentrated

effort with several species bred year after year may give finch aviculture a chance to proceed into the next century with or without imports and wild caught birds. Trying to breed multiple and everchanging species will not be nearly so productive.

Being the first to breed a new species of finch is undoubtedly an admirable accomplishment. But it by no means ensures the continued availability of that particular species in the U.S.

Quantity and Quality are equally important in the world of finches where a couple of years or a minor accident can spell the end of breeding for a particular pair of birds.

In the 1970s it was nearly impossible to purchase a pair of U.S. bred Australian finches. That we can now purchase and breed many of these species almost effortlessly and at our leisure (as some have suggested) is a

testimonial that specialized breeding works. The needs of individual species were recognized and the legendary health problems were bred out of our domestic strains — to the point that these once impossible problems are now all but forgotten.

This is success at its finest.

Many estrildids in our aviaries today are in need of some type of specialized effort. Markets for domestic strains of African and Asian finches exist and can be expanded.

Without dedication and specialization, we can expect very few finches in our future. 

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## Notice

### Joseph M. Forshaw Still Researching Australian Parrots

Australian ornithologist Joseph M. Forshaw is currently examining the validity of various subspecies of Australian parrots for the third (revised) edition of his book *Australian Parrots*.

He would appreciate the opportunity to visit any aviaries in the southern California, Phoenix, and Vancouver areas when he is in these locations during the month of November 1998.

As part of the research, he is looking critically at the Bare-eyed Cockatoo or Little Corella subspecies *Cacatua pastinator sanguinea* from southern New Guinea. Forshaw would greatly appreciate visiting anyone who has or suspects they have this subspecies of the Little Corella be they private aviculturists, bird dealers, or zoological collections.

In short, if you know the location of one of these subspecies and are able to arrange for Forshaw to visit during November, please write or call:

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