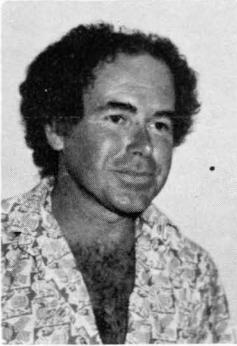




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by Lee Horton

FISCHER'S LOVEBIRD



Lee Horton

Once again I would like to make an announcement before beginning my article on the Fischer's Lovebird. The response to the formation of an African Lovebird Society has been overwhelming. Since I have not been fortunate enough to answer all questions and requests as yet, please be patient. Through the many requests it has become evident that the need of such a society is great. All basic organizational plans should be completed by early summer. At that time, all inquiries will be answered and details of meetings, monthly newsletters and annual show requirements will be discussed. Anyone still interested but who has not had the time to send in their name, please do so now; send your name, address, phone number and the type of lovebird you keep, to Lee Horton, 2376 Bella Vista, Vista, California 92083. Now back to the article.

Those who have kept the Fischer's Lovebird will all agree that this is truly a beautiful bird. The general plumage is green, yellowish on the underparts, forehead, and cheeks. The throat is orange-red, remainder of head (back) olive green, upper breast and collar around neck yellow. The bill is red and a small part of the rump is violet blue (variable). This bird is nearly exact in every detail to the Masked Lovebird except the color on the face is orange red instead of black.

Fischer's are easy to keep. Requirements are basically the same as for the Masked. They will breed freely in colonies, as well as in single pairs. Usually they are good parents. It should be a very simple statement that aviculturists either have great results breeding these birds or very poor results. I have talked with several friends who have bred these birds for over fifteen years. There seems to be a consensus of opinion that they will breed

very well for two or three years and then will do poorly for a year, perhaps even two years. Then they will cycle back into good breeding. During the good years, six or seven babies are produced per nest. In the bad years, the same parents may raise only one baby per nest. When asked for details from the experienced breeders, all assured me their birds had not been overbred during the good years. They had all followed the normal procedure of taking two nest per season. The diets were basically the same, greens, apple, corn, vitamins, soft food, as well as normal seed, grit and cuttlebone. What then could be the cause for this consistent behavior? I really have no answer. My experience has basically been the same. I have had Fischer's for many years now and for the first seven years I was famous (among the bird circle) for raising a very large amount from a few breeding pairs. I could never understand why so many marvelled at so little effort. I went as far as selling the best of the first round babies to the most experienced breeders. I gave them exact instructions of my procedure and the birds would not perform for them. In fact, in most cases, they all eventually sold the birds after a couple of years, thoroughly frustrated. I now realize that I was very fortunate. I was the exception to the rule. This year out of a colony of twelve pair, I think I have raised fifteen babies. In the past the same colony produced average rounds of fifty babies in their first clutch. The conditions to my knowledge have not changed. The birds are fed basically the same diet (probably better since I have now more time for the birds). Please do not misinterpret this as saying Fischer's are less than ideal subjects to keep in your aviaries. They are excellent aviary birds and I will always keep them. But understand that they are not always the easiest to breed on a consistent basis. If you have a bad year don't give up the next year. You may raise fifty or more. At this point in time, the Fischer's themselves seem to know what the breeding season will bring, certainly not you and I.

There have been a few mutations of this lovely bird, but to my knowledge none have been established. A blue form of the Fischer's was bred here in California many years ago. It was not established, probably because the Blue Masked was much more dramatic in color. The Blue Fischer's would look exactly like a Blue Masked except the face (mask) would be silver (near white) instead of Black. The origin of the bird was probably from hybrids between Blue Masked and Fischer's.

Pied forms still appear, but again as with the Masked and others, they seem to be not genetic in nature, so none are reproduced. I have a friend who has the most beautiful example I have ever seen. The shoulders and all the flights are pure yellow. It is a truly dramatic bird. However, as with all the others that have appeared over the past few years, the young raised have all been normal.

A true mutation of Lutino Fischer's appeared in Europe many years ago. Very few still exist. The mutation is recessive in nature and has never been established, due mostly to infertility, I believe, combined with the inconsistency of their breeding. But someday, there is always that possibility that the dream will come true and a new fabulous mutation will appear in your aviaries. It can happen. I have friends who have been so blessed ■

