



# A Breeding Season for Australian Finches

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In nature, Australian springtime prepares the finches of its various regions for the breeding season with increasing daylight hours, new growth of food sources and warmth to facilitate increased activity. The food is varied and abundant and the water is continuously fresh and clean. Exercise and bathing are frequent activities. The birds come into a biological state of breeding condition, exhibited by nesting activity, mating rituals and, in some cases, an intolerance of other birds near their chosen territory.

Aviary birds will respond in much the same way, if the same stimuli are

artificially introduced. A well managed aviary or bird room can easily accomplish the required natural guidelines. Lighting can gradually lengthen the daylight hours to a desirable 16 hours of light daily, and supplemental feed can provide the necessary additional dietary protein, additional green food, such as vegetables or sprouts, can simulate the seeding grasses induced by the spring rains.

For years it was thought that Australian birds would breed according to the seasons in Australia, which are reversed from those in the US. With increased domestic strains of

these birds, most species will breed on the aviculturalists time table if all other breeding requirements for the species are met.

While increased daylight hours and a high protein diet are common to a captive breeding program, proper humidity remains a subject of some dispute. In the wild state, many Australian finches breed during periods of excessively high humidity. In a captive environment extreme humidity can lead to bacterial problems in the flock, due to a normal accumulation of excrement, and it can accelerate spoilage of supplemental feed. Most Australian finches breed and hatch out young well at 50% humidity.

No bird can be expected to maintain a state of breeding condition year around. A predetermined breeding season that is the cumulation of planning and preparation will produce better results and ensure the health of the birds for years and breeding seasons to come.

### Sources

- Evans and Fidler, *The Gouldian Finch*, 1986, Silvio Mattacchione & Co.
- Immelmann, Klaus, *Australian Finches in Bush and Aviary*, 1974, Angus and Robertson.



Photo by Margaret Perry



Red-headed male Gouldian Finch.

Male Painted Finch



Photo by Herschel Frey