

the Java Sparrow

Padda oryzivora

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I live in Lahore, Pakistan, and am writing up my own experiences keeping and breeding these beautiful birds of Asia.

I normally breed finches in small cages as I don't have space for long and big cages. Indeed, I once bred Java Sparrows in cages just two feet square. I have three pairs of which one (normal colored) pair has laid eight eggs. All hatched and all the babies were parent reared.

I don't use nest boxes made of wood but rather made of clay. The nest boxes are in reality clay pitchers designed to contain milk or water. Although many of the fanciers here are switching them over to nest boxes made of wood, I still use long pitchers (about eight inches deep and six inches square) as the Java Sparrows seem to love this type of nest box.

For nesting material I use grass and the most favorable is *khavi* which grows on the river banks (I don't know the English name) and is very good for nesting. With the *khavi* I got very good results as the birds prefer this nesting material as compared to other grasses. When completed, their nest is so complicated that it is difficult

to see the eggs or the chicks.

Javas love water. The drinking and bathing water should be available in abundance. As feed we give them millet, canary seed, rape seed and dehusked rice (they love it and it is very important in the feed). Also cuttle bone, grit in form of salt, black salt, river sand, and charcoal.

Our breeding seasons for all birds (except doves) starts in October and runs until the end of March. The months of April until September are

very hot months and the birds prefer not to nest.

Good breeding results can be achieved by providing Java Sparrows four things which I believe are the secret of good breeding results.


- 1 An abundance of drinking and bathing water.
- 2 *Khavi* (a type of grass) for nesting material.
- 3 Dehusked rice.
- 4 Long and narrow pitchers for nest boxes.

The birds should not be disturbed too much when breeding.

In Pakistan, normally kept colors are white and normal, although fawn and pied birds are also available but mostly fanciers like to keep the first two varieties.

My own experience suggests that for good breeding results one pair per cage is ideal. Javas should not be kept with other birds (even others of their own species) because of their aggressive nature. If kept in colony, the cage should be very long although height is not important.

A few years back a friend of mine bred Javas so extensively and sold so many birds that he purchased a new Suzuki car with his profits. This is not a joke, it is reality. His experiences are about the same as those which I have mentioned above.

It is my experience that normal colored birds are good breeders as compared to white, fawn, or pied (although the latter are all cage bred). 



A Java Sparrow surrounded by two juveniles. Note the difference in beak and plumage colors. Some states prohibit the keeping of this species.

Photo by Buckley and Buckley