

Breeding the Celebes Golden Heart Dove

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According to the literature, the Celebes golden heart dove (*Gallicolomba tristigmata*) has seldom, if ever, been successfully imported into this country...that is until early 1985. The birds were obtained by one source overseas and imported through two parties into the United States; one in Florida and the other in California. Quite a few birds have now been imported so that a good captive nucleus is available to ensure the success of this handsome species in aviculture.

Related to the golden heart dove of New Guinea and the bleeding heart doves of the Philippines, (*G. luzonica*), the Celebes species is indeed a desirable addition. The forehead is a bright golden yellow and the rest of the top of the head is a powder blue-green fading to a rusty brown down the nape and mantle. The throat and belly are mostly a dirty white with another patch of yellow on the breast. At the base of the nape there is a maroon band (in the nominate form). Our birds have the band broken into a blotch on each side. This, plus the intensity of the yellow on the breast shield suggest our birds are the subspecies.

When we obtained our birds in February 1985, there were several birds available, however, we could see two birds, one slightly larger than the others with a bit more color, that tended to stay together. We thought that they might be a true pair. At the same time we also obtained a pair of black-nape fruit doves and a pair of superb fruit doves. These birds had been quarantined for more

than a month at a friend's and appeared healthy.

We released them into the aviaries when we got home. The superb were placed into a separate flight by themselves. The black-napes and the Celebes (as we have come to call them) were placed together into a well planted aviary measuring 18' long x 10' wide x 8' high with a pond approximately 3-4' across. This aviary is also home to a number of different finch species including chestnut-breasted, lavender-fire finches, pintail parrot finches, pearly-headed silver bills, and a pair of green avadavats. On the ground there are two Venezuelan semi-aquatic turtles (*Rhinoclemmys sp.*). To date there has been no interaction of any concern between the turtles and birds. In fact, in another aviary with a large pond we have a number of aquatic species of turtles with our Pekin robins and tanagers. We have had no problems with this combination. However, some turtles can be aggressive so you must be careful which turtles you combine with your birds.

The Celebes and the black-napes settled down fairly quickly, with the quail doves occupying the ground and the fruit doves staying in the vegetation where they sit motionless for long periods of time.

Our diet originated through a number of sources; a friend who already had some of the Celebes, and any reading material we could find. We then combined what we felt was the best of each and settled on the following: mix



Mature Celebes golden heart dove (*Gallicolomba tristigmata*).

Photos by Robert McMorris and Elaine Kraengel

together cooked, diced carrots, corn, beets, black-eyed peas, cooked rice, and soaked raisins. We also used some cooked, diced sweet or white potatoes. We found adding the potatoes made the mix softer and wetter than what we wanted so this was left out. We mix large batches at one time and store them in zip-lock bags and freeze them. Our other mix was originally made for our finches, but is now fed to all the birds. We mix equal amounts of ground dry dog food with high protein baby cereal and add ground-up hard boiled egg including shell. This is all mixed until a uniform color and a fluffy consistency is achieved. A note of caution: boil the eggs for at least 20 minutes and let dry for at least an hour on some kind of absorbent material. The eggs when hot retain too much moisture and, if added to the dry mixture at that point, will turn the mix into a doughy mess. This is also made up in large batches and put in zip-lock bags and stored in the freezer.

Our usual morning routine is to chop into small pieces a number of apples and/or pears and add dry wheat germ and dry quick oats to which we add the egg food mix. We also use endive for our greens which is chopped into small pieces. We chop fruits such as plums, grapes, peaches, strawberries, bananas, melon, oranges, etc. depending on availability. Once all this is chopped in small pieces we distribute the various mixes to individual dishes.

Our birds are fed once a day in the morning. With the Celebes and black-napes we use approximately 2 tablespoons of the vegetable mix and 2 tablespoons of the egg and apple mix. We add the greens and the fruit mix and we have also used crumbled Moist & Meaty

Just fledged golden heart dove.



dog food, which is a brand of semi-moist individually wrapped dog food made up of meat and cheese. Vitamins are sprinkled over the food before serving the birds. (We use Nekton products mixing Nekton S., E., and MSA together in a large shaker.)

Since the quail doves and finches require seed, we supply a large crock with a seed mixture. Our mix is 1/2 white millet, 1/3 small finch seed, 1/3 canary seed and 1/3 hook-bill treat (which contains safflower, hemp, milo, and millet. Their dishes are placed on a low platform about 1-1/2 feet above the ground. We also place a dish on a flat rock directly on the ground. This way the birds have two feeding stations and the turtles can also get at the soft food. The Celebes feed readily at both stations. They will use higher feed platforms as we have other Celebes in different aviaries that do so.

Shortly after the doves were introduced into the aviary, several nests were positioned at various heights from approximately a foot off the ground up to approximately 6 feet. Since nothing was known about the breeding habits of the Celebes in the wild, we decided to position the nests to cover all possibilities.

During the first week in May we began to notice the male chasing the female and the birds began to call more frequently. The female could be seen up in the branches more often. This could be either an attempt by the female to escape the pursuit of the male or she was looking for a nesting site. One of the birds, probably the male, was seen carrying the nesting material, some of which was placed into the seed crock. On May 12th, the female was seen sitting on the nest against the back wall of the aviary, approximately 3-4 feet from the ground. The following morning when the female left the nest to feed, one egg could be seen. The literature we read stated that all *Gallinocolomba* lay either one or two white eggs. The Celebes quail doves, we know now, are the exception to the rule. Our birds lay one *brown* egg slightly smaller than a small chicken egg. It appears that the female does most, if not all of the incubation, as we never saw the male sitting. There is a possibility that the male may have sat for some periods during the day while we were at work. Several individuals who have since bred this species indicate the male does sit during the day. The female would leave the nest every morning for about 20 minutes to feed. During this time the nest appeared to be left unattended by

the male. Temperatures during May would reach 100°F during the day in that end of the aviary.

Our first egg hatched on May 27th after a 15 day incubation. The young squab was somewhat "hairy" in appearance and rusty red in color. The young also grow very quickly with the bird fledging on June 9th (14 days).

We were somewhat nervous at this time as the young Celebes, by comparison with psittacines and finches, was mostly unfeathered when it fledged. It had feathered out on its wings but the body feathers were mostly absent. The female could be seen feeding the baby so we left it alone. Within a few days the young bird was moving about the aviary and beginning to pick at food.

The second nesting began July 24th with hatching occurring approximately August 10th. We were attending the A.F.A. Convention in San Francisco at the time, so we are uncertain of the exact day. We returned home August 23rd to find this squab dead on the aviary floor. It was developed to the stage where it should have fledged. Its death may be due to serious discrepancies in the feeding of the birds while we were gone, also the pond had been allowed to become polluted. Once everything was corrected, the birds continued to produce, with the third nesting beginning October 3rd, and hatching on the 16th or 17th. It fledged November 4th without incident. The fourth nesting began on December 17th and hatched December 31st. It also fledged without any problems.

At this point, the aviary contained the breeding pair of Celebes plus their three surviving offspring. It was beginning to get crowded. The first baby appeared to be a female, judging by size, and now resembled the adults completely. The male began pursuit again during January, however, we are uncertain whether he was chasing mother or daughter. An egg was laid on February 10th but was not incubated by the birds. This egg was found a few days later broken on the ground. Another egg was laid on the 27th of February and again was not incubated. This egg was pulled a few days later and placed in the incubator; it failed to develop. At this time we removed the last two young from the aviary. Not being able to distinguish the first born from the breeding female, we decided to leave her with the adults. On March 21st another egg was laid and unlike the previous two, the young female began to sit on the egg the second day. Her sitting was erratic,

leaving the nest several times during the day. We have no definite reason why the last three eggs were not incubated by the birds, but can only guess, i.e.; overcrowding is one possible reason, the hibiscus where the nest is located was pruned back during the latter part of February, after the first two non-attended eggs were laid. It is also possible that the young female was laying the eggs. The last egg was finally removed after 20 days and proved to be fertile but never fully developed. Our last baby was hatched on the 20th of April.

At the time of this writing we have a second pair of wild-caught Celebes that are showing interest in nesting. Our goal will be to produce offspring from this second pair to breed with those that have already been produced. In this way we will be able to keep the gene pool as varied as possible.

In summary, we consider the Celebes golden heart dove to be an excellent addition to planted aviaries. They are peaceful with smaller birds, and other doves. It is worth noting that the black nape fruit doves are nesting in the same aviary, often using the Celebes' nest between their nestings. The two species co-exist together without problems. We have no experience with keeping two breeding males in the same aviary or with mixing other ground doves with them.

We feel our diet is easy to use and may be varied according to availability. We have friends who have tried this but are using the canned vegetables instead of fresh and are having good results. In fact other breeders use only seed, hard boiled egg and grated cheese. Temperatures in our breeding aviaries range up to about 110°F during the summer and down to about 35°F in the cold nights during the winter. The birds are protected from the cold drafts. They are, therefore, very tolerant of a wide range of temperatures.

We are very interested in working with fruit doves and ground doves and would be interested in hearing from other people who keep these types of doves or are interested in beginning with these birds. It is a sad note that these beautiful birds, particularly the fruit doves, have not gained more popularity among the aviculturists. They really are not difficult to keep and a joy to behold.

[Editor's Note: The breeding described above may be a first U.S. breeding of this species. Anyone with knowledge to the contrary please contact Dale Thompson at the AFA home office.] ●