

Ruffed Pheasants

PART 2
of a two-part article

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Golden Pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*)

There are two species in this genus. The Golden Pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*) and the Lady Amherst's Pheasant (*Chrysolophus amherstiae*). These two pheasant species are among the most beautiful and certainly are the most popular of all game birds.

The Golden Pheasant and the Amherst's Pheasant interbreed freely in captivity. The resulting crosses are completely fertile. This type of breeding should not be done, as it is doubtful many pure specimens of either species remain here in the United

States. This was true until a few years ago, when the San Diego Zoo was able to import some new, pure bloodlines from China.

Few Females

Wild-caught male Golden Pheasants from central China still reach the bird market in Hong Kong from time to time. Female Golden Pheasants are seldom ever seen, possibly because of their drab coloration.

Male Golden Pheasants: brilliantly colored. **Crest:** large. Consists of bright golden feathers. **Ruff:** large. Feathers of bright orange, bordered by two sky blue bars.

Display

The ruff can be spread like a fan across either side of the bird's head and neck. In a "full" display, the crest is raised and the ruff widely spread, so it hides the sides of the neck and head nearest the hen bird. The male's bright eye peers intently at the hen, over the upper edge of his ruff. He tilts his body toward the hen with the nearest wing slightly lowered and the other side raised. His tail tilts and spreads vertically. The scarlet tail feathers are very conspicuous in this position. If the hen stands still, the cock holds his position until she moves. When the hen moves, the cock jumps around to present the opposite side. This display is a remarkable performance.

Description Male

Crown and crest: gold. **Ruff:** orange edged with blue-black cross bands. **Upper back:** Dark green, back feathers have a black border, the rest are golden yellow. The fringe passing to scarlet on the sides. **Center tail feathers:** black spotted and tipped with cinnamon. **Scapulars:** dark red. **Wing coverts:** deep blue. **Breast and under parts:** scarlet, passing to chestnut. **Abdomen, thighs and undertail coverts:** scarlet. **Iris and orbital:** skin yellow. **Bill and legs:** yellow.

Female

Crown and neck: blackish brown, spotted with cinnamon, buff. **Rump, upper tail coverts:** black. **Tail coverts:** barred. **Legs and bill:** honey yellow.

Three Mutations

There are three known mutations and there is a possibility that a fourth exists.

The Dark-throated Golden Pheasant

These birds are similar to the Red Golden Pheasant but are deeper in color. **Face, throat and upper breast:** smokey black. No trace of metallic green, which indicates Amherst blood. **Central retrices:** barred, not spotted. **Soft parts:** darker yellow and sometimes blackish. **Female:** much the same as the Golden Pheasant, except the bird is much darker in color.

Continued on page 32

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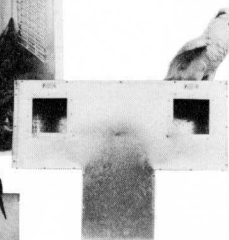
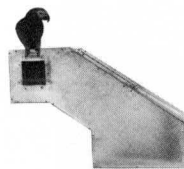
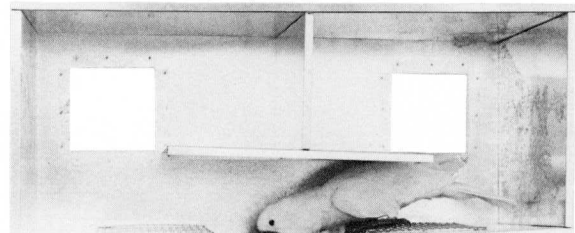
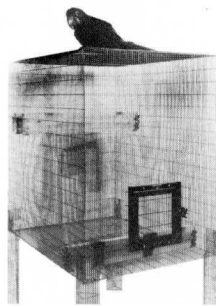
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Golden pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*)

The Yellow Golden Pheasant
Description

Head and crest: golden yellow.
Ear: orange. A similarity to the normal Golden is the two black and blue stripes.

The most remarkable difference between this mutant and the regular

form involves the total substitution on the wings of yellow for scarlet; red and dark brown, for the blue of the wing primaries. **Lower parts:** light straw color, with all lower parts being yellow. **Female:** similar pattern, with more or less stripes, or speckled with

black, straw colored, striped and spotted with a pale brown.

Salmon Golden Pheasant

Birds of this type were developed by breeding the Dark-throated Golden and Yellow Golden Pheasants.

Description

Salmon Golden Pheasants are similar to the Yellow Golden Pheasant with two distinct differences. **Central tail retrices:** a striped pattern like the dark throated Golden Pheasant. **String:** much lighter in color. **Breast and lower portions of the bird:** salmon or orange colored instead of lemon yellow. **Female:** dark tobacco color.

The other Golden Pheasant that I have heard about is a "cinnamon", or brown golden. There is no standard for such a bird.

All of the Golden Pheasants are hardy. They are relatively easy to keep under aviary conditions. They will do well with a mixed collection of non-competing birds.

Adult Males Will Fight

Two or three female pheasants can be run with each male. However, adult males will fight if kept together. It is possible to maintain a group of males in a large area with no females present. Plenty of cover must be provided. There may be some fighting in the spring, but it will not usually be serious. Such a group makes a wonderful show.

Plumage in Second Year

Some young Golden Pheasants will breed in the first year, although these birds will not assume adult plumage until the second year.

First year chicks, although small, are easy to rear on the usual pheasant starter crumbs.

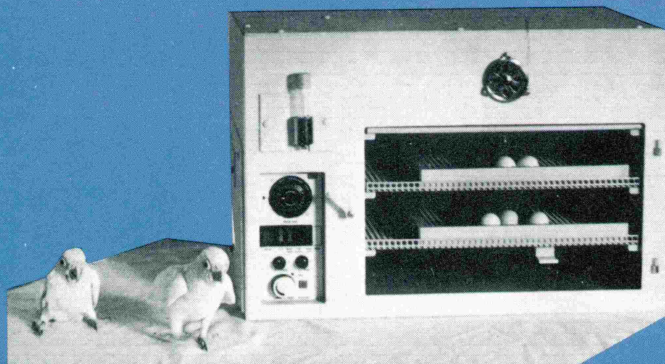
My First Birds

Golden Pheasants were my very first aviary birds. I've now had the species for 55 years and I have *always* enjoyed them.

I keep both Golden and Amherst's Pheasants with other types of birds. Normally they will do quite well. Included with the birds I keep are doves (not ground doves), rosellas, ringnecks, cockatiels and lovebirds. These birds should be kept in medium sized, planted cages. Pheasants do well in mixed collections and they add a lot of color to your aviary.

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