

# Mutations and Management of Button Quail

by Michael Omartian, Burbank, California

With the arrival of new color mutations, the avicultural future for Button Quail is exciting. Button Quail, also known as Chinese Painted Quail, have been popular with aviculturists for many years. Until recently, only normal and silver mutation Button Quail have been available to the aviculturist. In the last few years, several new mutations have been developed here in the United States and imported from Europe as well.

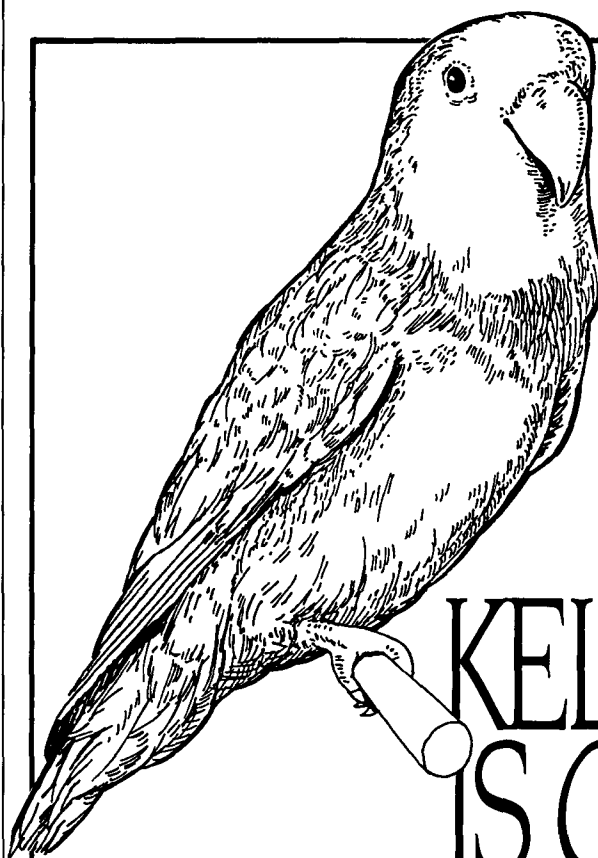
One mutation to arrive from Europe is the white Button Quail. These birds are pure white, but are not albinos as they have dark eyes and yellow beaks and legs. Another European import is the cinnamon or fawn Button Quail. This particular mutation varies in shades of brown, similar to the normal Button, but is much more diluted in appearance, hence the cinnamon coloration.

One of the most exciting new mutations, the Red-breasted Button Quail, was developed here in the U.S. Odd as it may seem, the hens of this mutation are more attractive than the males. The Red-breasted hens are extremely pale, cream to tan, with black barring on each feather, similar to a Plymouth Rock Chicken. Males look similar to normal Buttons except their white bib is replaced with a black bib and their whole underside is red, from throat to tail. The Red-breasted silver is, by far, the most striking mutation available. The hens are white with almost charcoal barring from head to tail. Again, no white is present on the male and the whole underside is a reddish-pink.

Our breeding stock is kept outdoors in flight-type situations. Flight cages measure 3' wide, 8' deep and 6' high which enables us to use the floor space for quail and the upper area for anything from finches to small parrots. In a 3' x 8' area, six to ten hens and three to four males can be kept comfortable. Button Quail can be

aggressive and new birds must be introduced with caution, especially males! To avoid problems, we simply take the whole breeding group and

switch flights when introducing new arrivals, thus alleviating any or at least most of the aggression towards the newcomers. *Continued on page 60*



## KELLOGG IS CARING

For over 50 years, Kellogg has manufactured superior quality bird foods and supplements for breeders. To us, it's more than just a business—Kellogg genuinely shares your interest in aviculture. We enjoy and care about birds as much as you do.

That's why we're so strict about the ingredients that go into every Kellogg product. Not only are Kellogg foods triple-cleaned for purity, they must meet every nutritional requirement necessary to give your bird a beautiful appearance and a long, healthy life.

From Petamine® to Budgimine®, from Pellets and Krums to Handfeeding Diet, and from Tweats® to Fortified Foods, you'll discover there's a lot of caring packed into every Kellogg product. Visit your nearest dealer, or write or call Kellogg for additional information.



Kellogg Inc.  
P.O. Box 684  
Milwaukee, WI 53201  
1-800-627-5495

**Got your reservation in for the  
17th Annual AFA Convention?**

Don't miss the "big one!"  
See center insert this issue for info.

**K** is for Kellogg...the choice of champions.





*The normal Button Quail and silver mutation, until recently, were the only color varieties available to American aviculturists.*



*Male and female white Button Quail look alike. Notice the nesting container in the background.*



*The male silver Button Quail has subtle, but striking, coloration.*



*The Red-breasted Button Quail mutation was developed here in the U.S. Note the darker bib and rusty undersides of the male and the mottling coloration of the hen.*

For the most part, when in a group situation, Button hens rarely incubate their own eggs. Rather, they lay them at random around the flight. Therefore, 95% of our production is the result of artificial incubation. We use the Lyon TX-7 incubator, with an automatic turner. The incubator is kept at 99.5°F. The turner is disconnected one day prior to the onset of hatching (usually the 15th day, since incubation runs 16 to 19 days in Button Quail). We hold eggs prior to incubation, at room temperature, until enough are gathered to fill the incubator to capacity, usually four to six days.

Our breeding stock is maintained on a combination of seed (finch mix or a good wild bird mix), nestling food, mealworms, greens, mixed vegetables, and wheat bread. The seed mix and nestling food are fed daily along with greens and wheat bread. Vegetables and mealworms are fed every other day.

For newly hatched chicks, our diet is somewhat diverse. Day one chicks are given hard-boiled eggs, ground fine, with poppy seeds sprinkled on top. (The poppy seeds attract the chicks' attention, so they start to pick.) Water is supplied in a very low container, usually a jar-top with marbles or aquarium gravel in the bottom to prevent the young from drowning. Nestling food and finely chopped greens are introduced on the third day, finch mix and mealworms (small) at about two weeks of age. With this system we have never had young starve, which artificially hatched have been noted to do. The young Buttons are kept in brooders until completely feathered at approximately four weeks of age.

Once feathered, the young Button Quail are introduced to an outdoor "baby" flight. In our baby flights we have a small open type wooden brooder box, 8" high by 16" square with a 25 watt bulb in it for cool nights. Once young no longer huddle to the light at night, they are ready for adult flights. At this time they are separated by colors (mutations) and transferred to breeding groups. Colors can remain mixed, we simply separate ours to keep mutation lines pure.

We enjoy working with our Button Quail mutations and are looking forward to new mutations which are becoming available such as Golden, Blue-faced and Cream Button Quail. ●