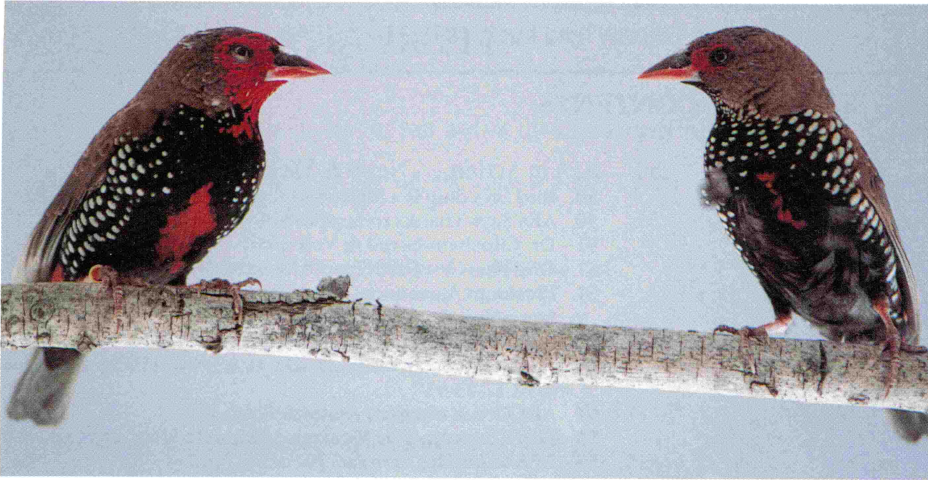


# Breeding the Painted Finch

(*Emblema picta*)

by Sid Milne  
Fallbrook, California

Photos by Sid Milne



The Painted Finch, from the most desolate parts of Australia, is aptly named. The adult male (left) always has a scarlet throat whereas the adult female (right) has a black throat.



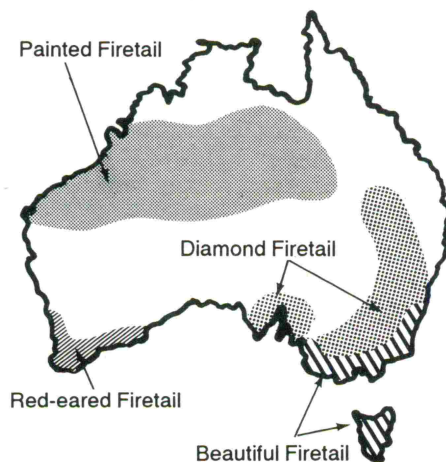
Young Painted Finches do not have the colorations as the adults until their first molt. In the wild, Painted Finches build their nests in spinifex grass.

The Painted comes from the arid inland areas of central Australia which extends through the Kimberley to the coast of northwestern Australia.

There are three other members in this family: Red-eared Firetail (*Emblema ocutata*) which comes from the bottom tip of southwestern Australia, the Beautiful Firetail (*Emblema bella*) which comes from the bottom part of southeastern Australia to Tasmania, and the Diamond Firetail (*Emblema guttata*) which ranges from southeast out from Queensland down to the coastal areas of southwest Australia.

Painted Finches in the wild nest in clumps of tussock grass, dense shrub and spinifex close to the ground.

They breed in small groups but have some distance between nests. Sometimes males chase each other around without doing any harm to each



other. Their long, tapered bills help them get small seeds from between the rocks and crannies. Globular-shaped nests are built on small, flat areas and are made of grasses, twigs, bark, small stones, and lined with soft grasses and feathers. Three to four eggs are usually laid in one clutch. They breed throughout most of the year. They normally produce more males than females but sometimes I have had up to four females in one clutch. Painted Finches can withstand cooler weather; outside aviaries are fine as long as they are sheltered from the cold wind and rain. The incubation period is around 14 days. One can start to see whether one has a male or female at about 35 days of age. They are also weaned around this time.

I have quite a few pairs set up in 6' x 6' x 4' flights. The sides and back are closed off to each other and the roof comes out four feet. The aviary floor is covered with sand, small stones plus lots of soft bark, grasses and feathers. Nest boxes should be placed at different levels. They have bred successfully in a base of a bushy plant and also in finch nest boxes.

The soft food consists of whole wheat bread, egg (blended), chopped up bok-choy, finely chopped broccoli (top part), Vionate vitamin powder, a little calcium (D-ca-Fos) and a natural bone ash with vitamin D<sub>3</sub> supplement. I then add to this mixture small mealworms, ant eggs, rice, bran, fish meal, molasses, dry skim milk, ground corn, soybean meal, wheat germ oil, white proso, German and Siberian millet, canary seed, plus a few oil seeds, niger, flax and rape. I make sure this mixture is quite dry. I can put 1/2 a cup of this soft food in my hand and squeeze it firmly; then after opening my hand it should all spring out and break up. Fresh, clean finch mix, cuttle bone and grit is always available, but changed every few weeks. My greatest concern is that cuttlebone sometimes has air pockets in which mold can build up very quickly. I grow millet spray and all the finches get a bunch each week. This is while it is in the milk stage. ●

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# Purple Grenadier

(*Ureaginus ianthinogaster*)

by Maureen Newman  
Hesperia, California

This beautiful, slender bird from the dry scrubland of central east Africa measures approximately five and one quarter inches in length including its long tail.

The adult male is a reddish brown with a rich, glossy blue on the chest, belly and base of tail. A similar blue forms a rather wide eye-ring. His beak is a deep coral red. The female is a lighter brown, without the reddish tones. Her chest and belly are a mass of off-white spots which, at times, forms irregular lines. Her eye-ring is most commonly a pale mauve or blue, but can vary from almost white to a blue almost as dark as in the male. (When I first noticed that one of my females had a much darker eye-ring than the others, I assumed it might have something to do with the length of time the bird had been in captivity, and that the darker coloring would fade in time, as has been seen in other species. I also assumed that this deeper color would probably not be passed on to successive generations. However, according to Derek Goodwin in *Estrildid Finches of the World*, the darker coloring could be an indication that the bird is of a different subspecies. Certainly her eye-ring has not faded and many of the offspring have darker than average eye-rings, but none so far exhibit color as deep as hers.) The female's beak is a pale red. As she reaches full maturity and breeding readiness, a dark, almost black band appears down the length of the upper mandible.

Fledglings are entirely brown, except for some purplish blue at the base of the tail. I have observed some

slight differences in the shade of brown among my babies, which, according to Derek Goodwin, indicates gender. I have not tried to confirm or deny this, however, since the sex of the youngster becomes obvious when, at around six weeks of age, a partial molt produces the colored eye-ring. At around four months of age a more complete molt results in the adult coloring, though the male, in particular, displays a richer, more beautiful plumage after the second full molt. This may be purely my imagination but it seems as if both male and female display richer colors with each successive molt.

The newly hatched chicks are almost black in color, naked except for a few tiny tufts of down and have deep blue and white gape tubercles. They start out in life surprisingly small considering the size of the adults, but they grow quickly and usually fledge at around two and a half weeks. I have, on occasion, been surprised to see them out of the nest as early as two weeks. I usually separate chicks from adults at around six weeks of age, making sure before moving them that they are, in fact, independent.

These birds, which were supposed to be so difficult to raise, have turned out to be some of the most prolific breeders with which I have worked. I don't know why I have had such great success — I don't have any special secrets or knowledge. I can't, therefore, furnish a recipe for successful breeding of Purple Grenadiers. The following is nothing more than a guide based on what I do,

\* Position open — contact regional vice president if interested  
\*\* Indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's state coordinator.

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