

Breeding the Spectabiled Mannikin

by Carol Anne Calvin and Stash Buckley
New Jersey

Also known as the New Britain Mannikin, the Spectabiled Mannikin from the islands of New Britain and New Guinea is a very attractive, extremely animated, and rarely imported species of finch.

These finches were obtained from quarantine on May 2, 1990, and kept in a large community flight, approximately six feet square by seven feet high, with two other *Spectabilis* pairs and three pairs of Teerinki Mannikins (also from New Guinea). This particular wild-caught pair engaged in no breeding activity until set up as a single pair in a flight three feet long by two feet wide by two feet high in our basement birdroom.

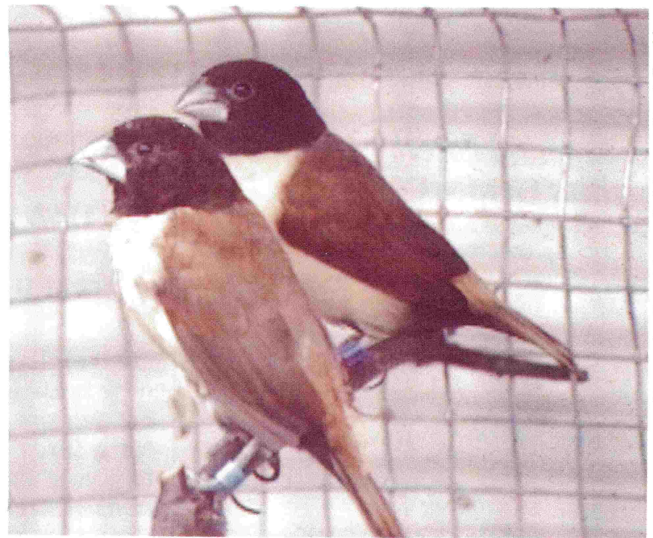
The temperature in this 12 by 24 foot room is a constant 78°F, with a relative humidity of between 70 and 80 percent. The flight contained a selection of closed wicker nests, a hay-covered floor, and bundles of dried grasses tied along the walls of the flight and in corners to provide privacy (especially around the nesting areas). The sexes are dimorphic, the hen being slightly smaller than the cock, with a proportionately smaller beak.

Selecting a large wicker nest in which we had placed a small amount of soft hay, the pair proceeded to nest-build. They used four inch long burlap strands supplied in a loose clump on the flight floor. Egg laying commenced shortly thereafter, with the incubation period following. Both the cock and hen shared in the nesting duties.

As this pair's parenting ability was untested, we decided to foster the first three eggs to a proven pair of Society Finches who successfully completed the 13 day incubation period. Two chicks hatched on July 15, 1990. The third egg was fertile, but never hatched. One of the two chicks died about a week after hatching. The surviving chick fledged at about two weeks of age (the first week of September 1990) taking slightly longer than Society chicks to wean.

Since then, other pairs of Spectabiled Mannikins have bred for us, and some have proven to be excellent

The Spectabiled Mannikin is also known as the New Britain Mannikin. The cock is in front of the hen.



Photos by Carol Anne Calvin and Stash Buckley



Immature Spectabiled Mannikins do not have the coloration of the adults.



This is the puffed-up display of the cock bird when he sings a pleasant, cricket-like song.

parents. Clutch sizes have remained relatively small, being from two to three eggs. In our opinion, this is the most beautiful of the mannikin species, with the exception of the Pictorellas. We would encourage anyone fortunate enough to have this little bird to make serious efforts towards breeding, or this will yet be another species lost to American aviculture. ●



The parents can be very attentive to other young.

Editor's Note: Any persons knowing of a successful breeding of the Spectabiled Mannikin prior to the dates stated in this article, please notify Dale R. Thompson, Avy Awards Committee, through the AFA Home Office.