



Red-eyed Copper Bar Zebra Finch

Joseph R. Lannom, Jr.

A newly developed Zebra Finch is the Red Eyed Copper-bar. I have tried to locate other breeders with this beautiful new mutation, but have been unable to.

This bird has a recessive sex-linked gene that suppresses the production of melanins. However the production of erythromelanin is not affected. The result is a female bird that is white with red eyes and a light rust colored eye bar. The male is a white bird with red eyes, cheek patches and side bar, with a variable intensity chest bar. Both sexes have faint cinnamon barring on the tail.

The first red eye was noted in Sept. 1975 in a small pen (4' x 10') of Pied Zebras (7 pr.). The baby bird was white and was not able to fly properly. The baby appeared to fly erratically and seemed unable to perch easily. In catching up the bird, it was noted that the bird had red eyes. So the nest mates were caught up and banded. This first red eye subsequently died. The following month another red eye fledged in a similar pen and this time survived along with two nest mates. Both pens of piers were from the same group of Adults and from this point all young were kept for future breeding. The four visual normals (Pieds) developed as two males and two females and the red eye was a female. The two males and one normal and one red eye females were set up to breed. This pen produced red eyes females and a few red eye males as well as splits.

At the present time we have over fifty red eyes set up for breeding as well as a large number of possible splits.

When the red eyed babies fledge, the most noticeable thing is the very poor ability of these birds to fly. The reason appears to be very sensitive eyes. The babies fly into the walls and the wire for the first week. A dark aviary appears to help the babies get through the first few weeks. The time between fledging and self sufficiency seems to be extended for at least a week or two.

When red eyed babies are fledged in pens with normal eyed babies, a high mortality rate is experienced, as much as 50 to 75%. This rate can be lowered by covering the pen. However the rate can still be high. In pens where the adults are all red eyed the mortality rate is about average for other Zebras. Where only one of the parents is red eyed it is the same as if both were.

At the present time we are breeding to eliminate the pied type, enhance the red markings, and out breeding to white to produce a visual albino. We have now progressed to the point of having a large number of red-eyed birds and will probably have a surplus next year. All from a strange flying white baby bird.

I suspect that this red eyed gene is spread out through stock in a great many aviaries and other breeders have produced red-eyed birds, but with the high mortality in crowded pens, they haven't been noticed.

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