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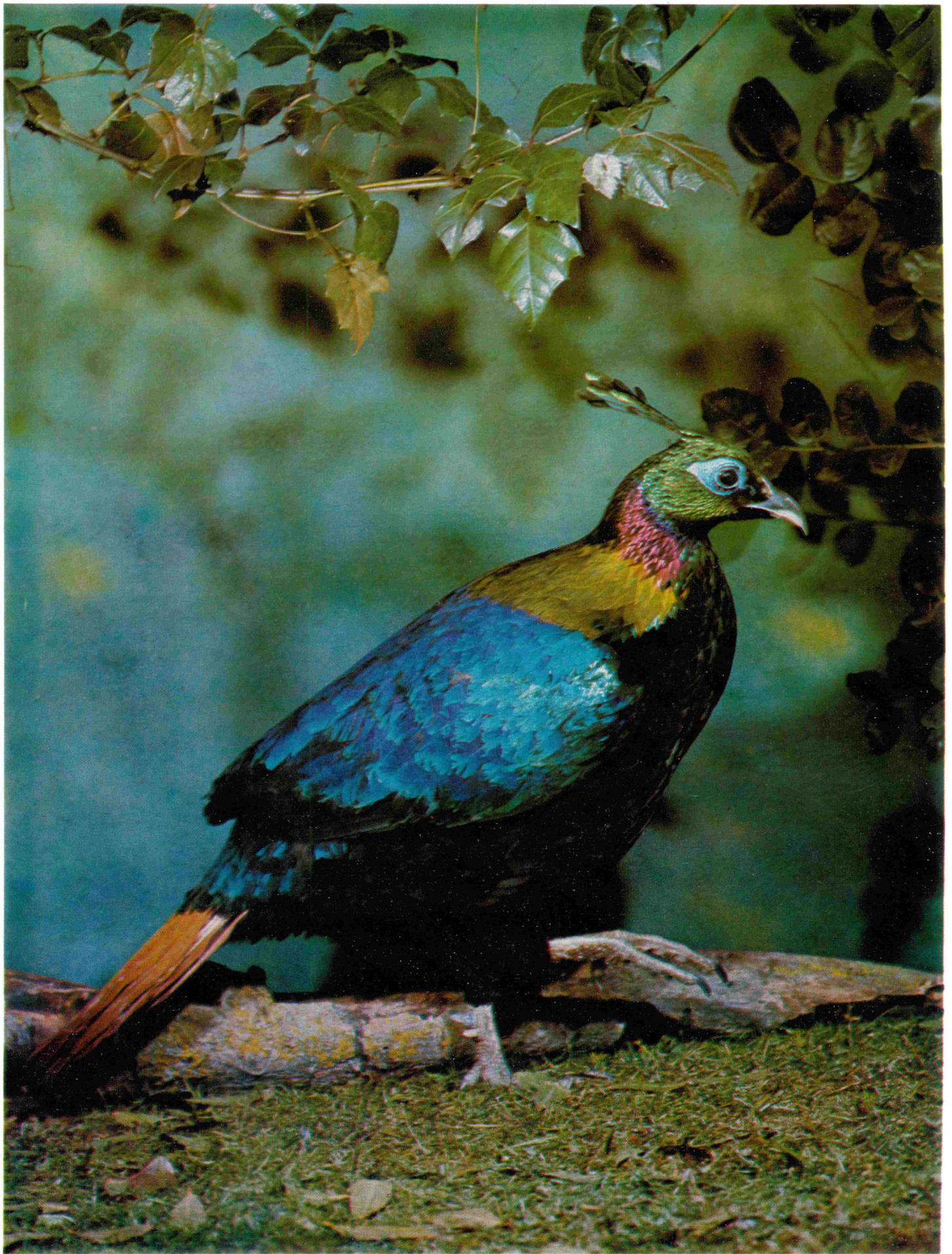
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As with most novice bird raisers, this writer's enthusiasm far outstripped his knowledge. If it had feathers, I had to have it. Fortunately, my limited bank-roll stopped me from turning what had become a complicated situation into a disaster. All of this is just a sneaky way of leading into the real subject of this article — the keeping of more than one species of birds in each flight of aviary.

Game birds and waterfowl were my first love and have remained my old faithful, so to speak. Those of you who have observed the quiet elegance of Mountain Quail, the brilliant colors of Golden and Tragopan Pheasants or, if you have been in the right place at the right time and seen the territorial or courting display of Mandarin Ducks or Palawan Peacock Pheasants, will understand my feeling for this group of birds.

We now have the proverbial fly entering the ointment ... having game birds, but at the same time coveting psittacines, softbills, and finches, and having pen space for only one or the other. For me this was not unlike having to make a decision between Farrah Fawcett or Racquel Welch. As must be obvious to you



Impian Pheasant (Lophophorus impeyanus)

Photo courtesy of San Diego Zoo.

by now a man, or a lady for that matter, does not make a decision as monumental as this one on the spur of the moment. He throws his hands up in the air and cries HELP. In my case the cry was answered in the form of one Francis Billie, a gentleman endowed with the patience of a Saint, who towed me through his aviaries and answered as many of my inane questions as humanly possible.

It soon was apparent to even a thick skull like me that Francis and his wife Erma were not just collectors of birds but able to identify different species and to tell a cock from a hen, but had a profound knowledge of the birds behavioral characteristics ... not just of a species as a whole, but of individual birds within that species. By the time I had tried the Billie's patience to the breaking point and Francis had shown me the door, it was clear that yes, you could mix birds — but no, there were no pat answers ... only generalities.

In the 10 years that have passed since my first cry for help, more aviaries have been built slowly and more birds acquired quickly — with the end result being 27 pens ranging in size from 3 x 8 x 8 ft to 25 x 35 x 12 ft housing fifty-six species and eighty one varieties of quail, pheasant, parrots, ducks, doves, finches and soft bills.

Now for specifics. My usual practice is to put a pair of gallinaceous or other ground birds in the pen first. After a

week or 10 days, I add a pair of arboreal birds such as doves, finches or small parrots. Birds should only be introduced when you have the time to observe them closely for a few days. I will then pay close attention to the newly integrated aviary early in the morning or late in the evening, periodically for about a month. If after this length of time, open warfare has not broken out, you can assume you have compatible birds. It is also good practice during the breeding season to watch for overly aggressive behavior. If at any time I observe serious aggressive action by a bird or pair of birds against other birds in the aviary, I immediately separate them.

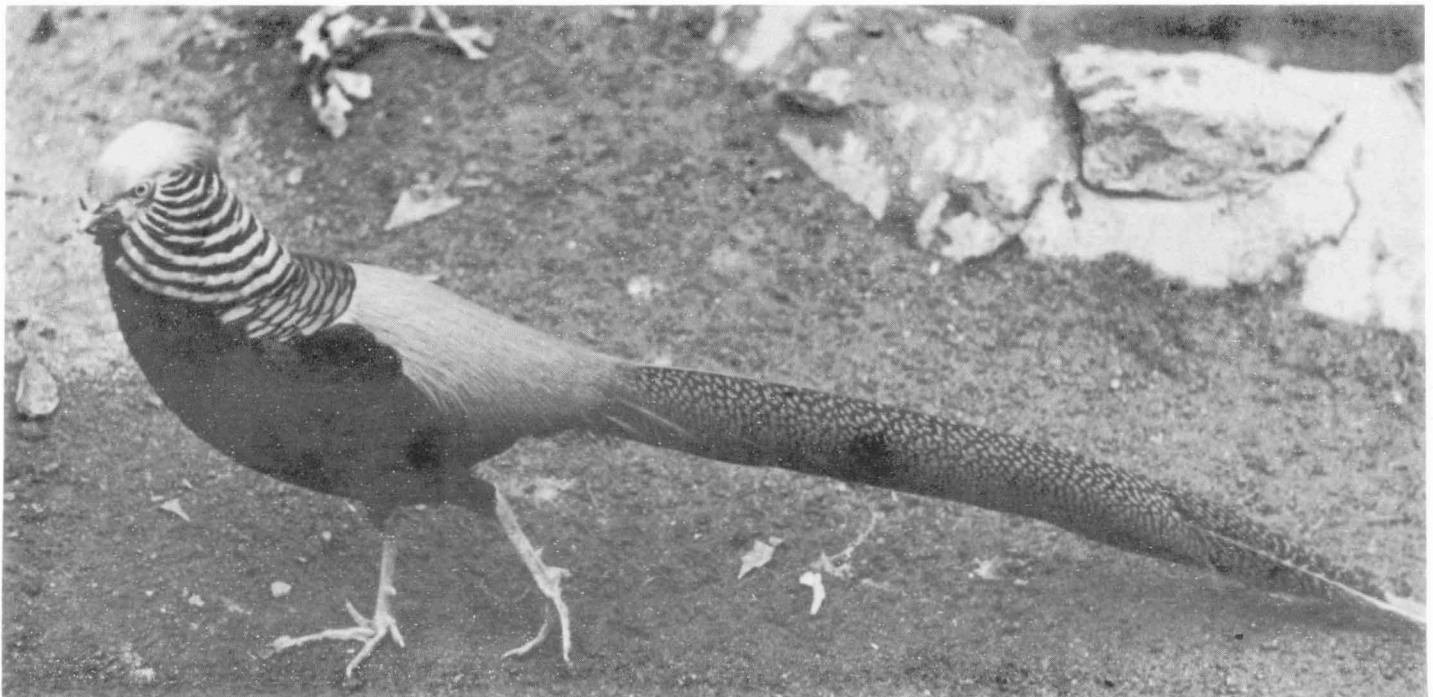
It has been this writer's experience that the larger the pen the better if you wish to mix birds, and that extreme caution should be used when trying to integrate any birds in a pen smaller than 6 x 12 ft; keeping in mind that we provide our captive birds their only environment and, unlike our government's social experiments, our birds can't move if they don't like their new neighbors. Common sense will tell us large or extremely aggressive hook bills should always be kept by themselves, or that if you put Cranes and finches together you're going to wind up with fat cranes and no finches. It is also my humble opinion that the only birds you could possibly put with a colony of Love Birds are Harpy Eagles or perhaps a Great Horned Owl!

In summary, I wish to state that a mixed collection is not everyone's cup of tea, but for those of you who wish to try, I think you will find the pro's far outweigh the con's. Like most aviculturists, I'm chronically short of pen space, but I have been able to at least double the number of birds kept by mixing birds that don't compete for space. Integrating birds has taught me much about diet that I've never found in any book. Who'd have thought that Rosellas and Mearns Quail would go eyeball to eyeball over crickets or mealworms — that, to my knowledge, I have not a single bird on the premises that doesn't love romaine or boiled egg. The fact that you have to pay close attention to your birds when trying to mix them can't help but teach you things you might otherwise have missed.

Last but not least, I can think of few sights more pleasing than to watch Peacock Pheasants, Bleeding Heart Doves, Purple Grenadier and a Turquoise male all sunning themselves at the same time on a clear spot in a well planted aviary. If you don't have a vast estate with acres and acres of aviaries you can still enjoy such a mixed collection if you integrate the birds carefully. What began as a game bird collection has enriched into a very enjoyable general collection. Those of you who have a collection limited to parrots or finches can greatly enhance it by judicious addition of a species or two of beautiful game birds. You'll be glad you did. ■

Golden Pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*).

Photo courtesy of San Diego Zoo.





BIRDS "SING" FOR:

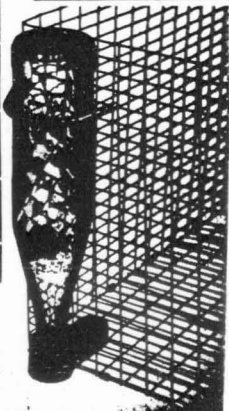
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	36"	96	51.95	99.90
	48"	125	68.35	132.70
1/2" x 1/2" 19 GAUGE	12"	25	—	32.65
	18"	37	—	39.50
	24"	58	22.35	40.70
	30"	73	26.85	49.70
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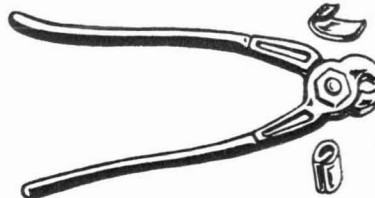
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