



Photo by Dan Martin

## zebra variety by Terry Dunham

Hazel Kipp breeds Zebra Finches and other birds in two outside aviaries in Central Florida. This winter the temperature dropped to 26°F, numerous times and light snow covered the ground, but the Zebras continued to breed. Among the young birds fledging were about ten specimens of what may be a new, brilliantly marked mutation.

The birds in question are like chestnut-flanked whites, with two obvious differences: first, all black and gray coloration is lacking — the males have no chest bands and neither sex has the familiar tear-drop mark at the eye; second, the flank markings and cheek patches on the males are brilliant, as the color plate illustrates.

One hypothesis for the appearance of the birds is that they are penguin-chestnut flanked whites. In Cyril Rogers'

book, *Zebra Finches*, however, the color classifications for penguin males specifies "PALE orange to PALE cream" cheek patched (italics mine) and "cream" cheek patches for the chestnut-flanked whites. It would therefore appear that this explanation is inadequate.

"I had a chestnut-flanked hen and a white male that threw two light silver young, a male and a female," Mrs. Kipp explains. "I put those two light silver birds into an aviary with five pairs of fawn zebras. Each bird took a fawn mate, and then these new types started appearing."

The new variety when first fledged 'looks like they have been dipped in weak tea,' she says. "It's not a rich color, like creams, though. After the moult the males get their bright colors, while the hens turn pure white and are easy to confuse with normal white zebras, but they

have a faint cream barring on the tail."

After the odd birds first appeared Mrs. Kipp pulled the light silver pair and put them by themselves, and more of the odd young appeared from the nests of that pair. Other specimens continued to appear in the fawn flight, where some splits from the initial breedings had remained. The odd young are now reaching maturity and have been paired in separate cages for breeding records and control. Before being separated the male shown in the illustration mated with a fawn hen. The nest produced one fawn young and two of the new variety. Overall, the unique birds have appeared in about equal numbers of males and females.

"Zebras are so mixed up you never know what's inside," Mrs. Kipp observes. She has also been breeding white-headed fawn zebras, which she calls "Eagles" ■