

## FERTILE FINGERS



### CUSTOM-BUILT AVIARIES

Specializing in Bolt-Together and Hanging

12515 Wagner Street Los Angeles 90066  
(213) 822-5010



### SMITTY'S Turquoise Aviaries

specializing in  
TURQUOISINES  
SCARLET CHESTED and  
YELLOW MUTATION  
BOURKE PARRAKEETS  
Catering to serious breeders only

**RALPH V. SMITH**  
616 So. Fifth Street  
Montebello, CA. 90640  
(213) 728-2263

## So You Want To Breed Your Canary

by Charlotte Nierenberg

### A guide for the novice.

Step-by-step care, before, during and after breeding. The aim of Mrs. Nierenberg is to take the guess work out of the novice's first attempt at canary breeding, providing a guide to success.

This helpful handbook is a must for the beginner's library, as well as the experienced fancier.

\$3.00 Post Paid

Order From  
A.F.A. Watchbird  
P.O. Box 1125  
Garden Grove, CA. 92642

See colored photo on front cover.

# Violeteared Waxbill

by David M. Skead

[Editors Note: The following data have been extracted from a paper published in *The Ostrich*, an organ of the South African Ornithological Society. The paper was written by David M. Skead in 1974.]

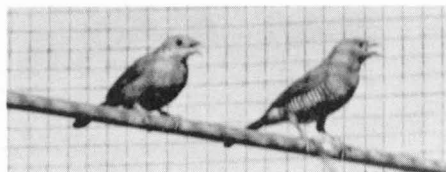
The Estrildinae are a group of small to very small seed-eating birds found in Africa, Asia, and Australia. Delacour (1943) recognized 108 species in 15 genera. . . Hall and Moreau (1970) place them in a separate family, the Estrildidae, and recognize 67 species for Africa.

This group is well known to aviculturists throughout the world, but apart from many studies under aviary conditions it has received scant attention from field ornithologists in Africa.

### HABITAT

The Violeteared Waxbill (*Uraeginthus granatinus*) was chosen for special study. The main study area was in the bushveld just north of Pretoria, South Africa. All four species [the study included the Blackcheeked Waxbill, the Melba Finch, and the Blue Waxbill] are chiefly birds of dry Acacia thornveld which is evident from a search through the literature for southern Africa and from personal experience.

Being birds chiefly of the Acacia thornveld found in drier areas is, to use a loose South African agricultural term, "sweet" veld as opposed to the "sour" veld of the higher rainfall areas. A further advantage is that the scrub areas support a good grass cover from which they achieve their main source of food in the form of grass seeds; and, if the bush is low and dense then cattle and antelope cannot get their heads in to graze the grass before it seeds. This is also an advantage when it comes to building nests with green inflorescences.



Melba Finch, hen-left, male-right

### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Violeteared Waxbills are occasionally found in small parties but generally they move about as singletons or in pairs. Pair formation takes place when birds are still sub-adults and the pair bond is strong

and maintained for life. Only one party of ten Violeteared Waxbills was seen during the study period.

### FOOD

All four species may be found feeding and drinking together although some interspecific fighting does occur — Interspecific fighting would appear to take place only where food supplies or water sources are limited.

Food has been the least studied aspect of the ecology of the species and apart from Immelmann and Immelmann (1967) nothing has been recorded about their diet in the wild except such loose statements as grass-seeds and insects.

All four are primarily seed-eating with insects, especially termites, being taken in varying degrees. The diet of the Melba Finches was almost impossible to obtain from direct observation because being a ground-feeding species they simply disappear from sight in the grass cover. Violeteared Waxbills which readily perch on grass inflorescences to feed on the seed are easily observed, but this behavior is of limited duration and for much of the year they must resort to ground feeding. . . It is probably true that most small grass seeds will be eaten, the limiting factor being the size of the seed.



Blackcheeked



Cordon Bleu, hen

### DRINKING

Drinking behavior of the birds has received attention in recent years from a number of workers in the arid parts of Southern Africa. No work had been done in a less arid climate until trapping began at a water point in this study.

Figure 2 shows the percentage monthly trapping of the . . . species studied in relation to monthly percentage of rainfall. The dry-season peak. . . June to September, is immediately clear. This is to be expected in birds subsisting largely on a diet of dry seeds. During the rainy season they can obtain enough water from green grass-seeds, invertebrates, or other green plant food. Furthermore, although no records exist, they can surely obtain

enough water from early morning dew. They frequently visit roadside pools and dams that fill with summer rains.

**TERRITORY**

The Violet-eared Waxbill is a solitary nester. The closest two nests found were 90 m. apart. No intruders were seen near any nests because they nest far apart and as the population is small defense of territory was never observed.

**COURTSHIP AND DISPLAY**

A pair of Violet-eared Waxbills were followed from 08:30 to 09:30. During the hour two other adult males were driven off, the female actually doing all the chasing while her mate followed behind. Twice during the hour the male broke off grass inflorescences and flew to the female. Both times vision was obstructed by the dense bush so no further observations were possible. A nest was found nearby two weeks later.

On another occasion a male was flitting around a female making a buzzing sound with his wings. He plucked off a dry grass culm and held it in the tip of his beak for a few seconds before dropping it.

**NEST STRUCTURE**

The Melba Finch, Violet-eared and

Blue Waxbill all build dome-shaped nests with the entrance at the side. A small platform is made first; then an outer shell of strong dry grass culms. Green grass inflorescences are used for the main body of the nest and to make it waterproof. Other plant material may be used too. Feathers are used to line the nests, but amounts vary from nest to nest, from a few feathers to the whole inside being lined.

**EGG LAYING AND INCUBATION**

No data are available for the Violet-eared or Black-cheeked Waxbills.

**SUMMARY**

The winter diet of the Violet-eared and Blue Waxbills consisted mainly of dry seeds, each species relying on a few seed species for the bulk eaten . . . Peak drinking was in the winter months.

Breeding biology is described and it is tentatively shown from the limited data that breeding success is low . . . The Melba Finch and Violet-eared Waxbills were the best ringed species with high recapture rates. Both populations were considered resident as ringed birds were not seen far from the trapping site. . . . Data for these two species showed that mortality was high in both species, especially in the juveniles.



**STOLEN  
JULY 30th, 1977**

3 Military Macaws  
(including a mated pair)  
1 Blue and Gold Macaw  
tame, under treatment for  
fungus on the feet.

**FROM  
PALOS VERDES BIRD FARM  
Bob Busenbark  
4146 W. Pacific Coast Hwy.  
Torrance, CA 90505**

Please advise above party if  
you can provide any information  
concerning these birds

# Always IN the Winner's Circle

**PETAMINE and BUDGIMINE**

*(by Kellogg of course)*



**BREEDERS!** Do you want year round health and performance for your prize winners? Do you insist on a specially formulated COMPLETE bird diet, university tested? Do you ask for all of this and CONSISTENT Quality? Why not use the two top winners, Petamine and Budgimine. Now available at your dealers' in ECONOMY sizes 5, 10 and 25 lb. pkgs. Or write Kelloggs for the supplier nearest you.

**LOFT-KELLOGG CO., INC.**

322 E. Florida St. Milwaukee, Wis. 53201 (414) 276-0373

# Basically Birds

CALL OR WRITE FOR UP-TO-DATE PRICE LIST TODAY  WE BUY  SELL  SHIP  ALL KINDS OF BIRDS

PARROTS  
MACAWS  
COCKATOOS  
AMAZONS  
CONURES  
LORIES  
COCKATIELS  
LOVEBIRDS  
PARRAKEETS  
FINCHES  
CANARIES  
DUCKS  
GEESE  
SWANS  
PHEASANTS  
QUAIL  
DOVES  
RATTITS



**Marion Martinez**  
1549 SOUTH MARSHALL ROAD  ALPINE, CALIFORNIA 92001  
**714/445-9468**