



Adult cock Peale's, showing a nice amount of blue.



Baby Peale's, showing close-up of tubercles. Note the lack of red between the eyes.



Juvenile self-feeding Peale's.

Breeding the Peale's Parrot Finch

(*Erythrura pealii*)

by Carol Anne Calvin and Stash Buckley
Magnolia, New Jersey

Recently we decided to import some Peale's Parrot Finches (*Erythrura pealii*), a bird of undeniable beauty and allure. We felt that with the uncertainty of the quarantine laws and the tightening of restrictions on the airlines, it was now or never.

We made an arrangement with a good friend, Sigie Meyer, of SE Bird and Supply, to bring in some of these birds, domestically bred in Europe. You can imagine our joy and exhilaration when the day came when the birds finally arrived in the United States and quarantine had begun.

The days passed without incident and we got a call from Sigie saying the birds were ready to be shipped. We fully expected that there would be a minimum of hens, and some of the birds would be quite old. You can imagine our surprise when it turned out that we had an equal number of cocks and hens, all appearing to be under two years of age.

These birds were set up in two hold-



Adult hen Peale's.

ing cages for several weeks to allow the birds to acclimate. They settled down quickly, and we decided to pair them up and place them in breeding cages approximately 3 feet long by 2 feet high by 2 feet wide in our basement "tropical" birdroom, with a minimum temperature of 78°F and 70 to 80 percent humidity. They started nesting almost immediately, using hay and burlap strands as nesting materials, stuffing them into large, closed wicker baskets.

We have noted an interesting habit with the Peale's Parrot Finch. This is the only parrot finch species in which the birds feed each other. This seems to work both ways — the cock feeding the hen and the hen feeding the cock. Also, the cock Peale's Parrot Finch mating dance is almost identical to that of the cock Red-headed Parrot Finch — little more than a bobbing up



A typical Peale's breeding flight, showing heat light which Peale's enjoy after bathing, and is also useful for some egg-laying hens.



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* Position open — contact regional vice president if interested
** Indicates 2 year term has been fulfilled. If no new interested party comes forward and indicates a desire to serve, incumbent remains in position.

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and down motion. Also worthy of note is the variability of the extent of the beautiful turquoise blue on the throat and chest of the cock.

Although the Peale's Parrot Finches loved eggfood and mealworms (as well as everything else they were offered), they seemed reluctant to incubate correctly, so many eggs were fostered to Society Finches. Average clutch size was four, with a 50 percent fertility rate.

The first egg to hatch was one successfully incubated by the parents, hatching on November 15, 1991, after approximately 14 days of incubation. Only the one egg hatched in this clutch of four. After approximately two weeks, during which time the pair was supplied with eggfood and mealworms, the cock appeared bored with his chick and feeding chores, and was obviously ready to recycle.

Fearing abandonment, we pulled the chick and put him under a pair of Societies who were raising a Spectabiled Mannikin of about the same age. Unfortunately, they did not accept him. So, reluctantly, we pulled the baby Peale's Parrot Finch, clipped a young Society's wings for company, and placed both in our Animal Intensive Care Unit for hand-feeding.

The baby Peale's was fed approximately every hour and a half from 6:30 a.m. until 11:30 p.m. with Roudybush Handfeeding Formula No. 3.

The Peale's was self-feeding by mid-December, being weaned by the use of spray millet and canary/finch mix scattered on the incubator floor. The young Society was instrumental in teaching the Peale's to eat seed.

Subsequent clutches were fostered to Societies with few problems, but, surprisingly enough, although baby Peale's have blue faces, this first chick was the only one we've encountered so far with red feathers above the beak. Apparently there is great variation in plumage coloration in juvenile Peale's.

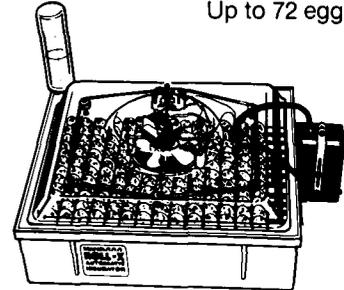
Although these birds have come in before (we had four birds brought in previously by Sigie Meyer — only one of which we believed to have been a hen), successful breeding seems to have eluded this country. We would hope to hear of other serious breeders bringing in these birds to ensure a large enough gene pool to establish a viable population of this beautiful and personable finch. ●

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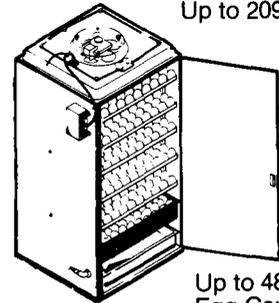
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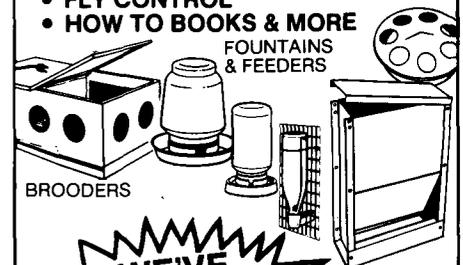
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