



These are some of the 23 African Silverbills donated by Diana Mosier to the Fort Worth Zoological Park in early 1993. All hatched in her aviary and are now a conspicuous feature of the "World of Primates" exhibit.



# African Silverbills

by Diana Mosier  
Dallas, Texas

African Silverbill, *Lonchura (Eodice) cantans*, also known as the Warbling Silverbill; Order *Passeriformes*, Family *Estrildidae*. They average 11 centimeters in length. They are light sandy brown, darker brown on the wings and tail, and cream colored on their belly and tail coverts. There are four subspecies indigenous to West and Central Africa, they live in savannas, farmlands, and near villages. They are not dimorphic.

It is virtually impossible, in fact, to distinguish between the sexes until the chicks reach four months of age, at which time the male will begin to sing and display courtship behavior. This behavior may be only singing while bouncing up and down. It may even include what I call the "grass ceremony", which is singing and bouncing while holding a piece of grass in his bill.

Silverbills usually breed at eight to 10 months of age. Both the cock and the hen build the nest. He chooses and brings the nesting material to the hen, who arranges it to her liking. I have found Silverbills favor freshly cut strands of Bermuda grass three inches or longer, however they will also use Bermuda hay, leaves, pieces of cottonballs, or other grasses that grow in their aviary. They seem to prefer the larger woven baskets (you can purchase them in any pet or feed store) to any other type of natural or man made housing. They also seem to prefer nesting in the open, where they can observe what's going on in the aviary, unlike Red-cheeked Cordon Bleus, who prefer to hide their nests from prying eyes.

I have observed Silverbills mate for life, rather than only for the breeding season. Also, they are very attentive to their mates, doing everything together

from eating to sitting in the sun. It is very amusing to watch them preen each other, although the cock may pull feathers from the hen during mating.

I have noticed Silverbills, unlike some other finches, do not molt annually. The feathers are replaced as they wear out, the only heavy molt they experience is their adult molt which happens between six to eight months of age.

Although not as brightly colored as some finches imported from that area, they have a beautiful song (a testament to this is part of their name, *cantans*), and they are not aggressive, which makes them an excellent addition to anyone's aviary. Silverbills are also extremely hardy and can, therefore, be raised without much difficulty by even beginning aviculturists.

The hen lays four to six eggs per clutch, and has about five clutches per season. It would be wise, however, to limit them to three clutches if at all possible to have healthier young. Both parents take turns incubating the eggs, which hatch in 14 to 17 days. It has been said that with Silverbills, nest monitoring is not possible. I find that to be untrue, at least with my birds. I admit, however, I don't monitor my nests more than once daily, usually in the morning while both parents are away from the nest.

Silverbills are excellent parents and, although I have heard they can be used as foster parents, I cannot substantiate this as I am against using any bird to raise the offspring of another. I do know, however, that Silverbills stuff their chicks more like Societies or Zebras than an African waxbill.

The chicks fledge in about 21 days, and the parents continue to feed them



not just another can...

# THIS IS L/M.

*you deserve the best...*

**Variety** 36 newly formulated Vita-Vittle treats for birds and small animals.

**Freshness** Fresh-Pack™ technology guarantees an insect-free environment for 2 full years.

**Nutrition** Only L/M Vita-Vittle nutritional treats, provides a complete vitamin, mineral and guaranteed analysis on every canister label.

**Taste** Our special formulated flavors and aromas are a tasteful delight!

**Packaging** Look for our award-winning bright red packages now with a "touch of gold."



**L/M Animal Farms**  
Pleasant Plain, Ohio 45162  
1-800-332-5623

100% Satisfaction Guaranteed



**Sold Exclusively in Quality Pet Stores Nationwide!**



# AMERICAN FEDERATION OF AVICULTURE

Dedicated to conservation of bird wildlife through encouragement of captive breeding programs, scientific research, and education of the general public.



## 1994 OFFICERS

LAURELLA DESBOROUGH, *President* (510) 372-6174 • Fax (510) 372-0306  
CHUCK SAFFELL, *1st Vice President* (813) 722-0997 GARY CLIFTON, *2nd Vice President* (602) 830-4920  
DAVID SMITH, *Chief Financial Officer* (702) 482-3986 DIANA SKALSKY, *Executive Secretary* (407) 892-0643

## LEGAL COUNSEL VICE PRESIDENT • LEGISLATIVE

AFA office, P.O. Box 56218, Phoenix, AZ 85079-6218 / (602) 484-0931 / FAX (602) 484-0109

## MEMBER NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Cockatiel Society, Inc. • Avicultural Society of America  
Gold Triangle Parrot Club, Canada • International Aviculturist Society  
Society of Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors • World Parrot Trust

## MEMBER CLUBS

### Northeastern Region

Linda Rubin, *regional vice pres.*  
(617) 469-0557

#### CONNECTICUT

State coordinator:  
Gustave Seehorst (203) 745-3697  
Connecticut Association for  
Aviculture, Inc.  
Rose City Hookbill Society

#### MAINE

State coordinator:  
\*

#### MASSACHUSETTS

State coordinator:  
Nancy Meyers (413) 256-3129  
Boston Cockatiel Society, Inc.  
Exotic Cage Bird Society of  
New England  
Massachusetts Cage Bird  
Association, Inc.  
Western New England Cage Bird

#### NEW HAMPSHIRE

State coordinator:  
Susan Fellows (603) 887-4930  
Birds of a Feather Avicultural Society

#### NEW YORK

State coordinator:  
Charles Galusha (518) 686-5263  
Broome County Caged Bird Club  
Buffalo Hookbill Association  
Capital District Cage Bird Club  
Central New York Caged Bird Club  
Finger Lakes Cage Bird Association  
Greater Rochester Hookbill  
Association  
Long Island Feather Enthusiasts  
Northern New York Pet Bird Club

#### RHODE ISLAND

State coordinator:  
\*

#### VERMONT

State coordinator:  
Peter Lowry (802) 754-6494

### Mid-Atlantic Region

Kayla Snyder, *regional vice. pres.*  
(215) 855-4463

#### DELAWARE

State coordinator:  
Nancy Selz (302) 798-8625

#### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

State coordinator:  
Thomas Marshall (703) 777-3252  
National Capitol Bird Club

#### MARYLAND

State coordinator:  
Brad Clark (301) 242-8471

#### NEW JERSEY

State coordinator:  
Peg Whitney (908) 542-7126  
Central Jersey Bird Club  
Feather Fancier's Society

#### PENNSYLVANIA

State coordinator:  
Debra Foote (814) 967-2866  
Anthracite Bird Club  
Central Pennsylvania Cage Bird Club  
Delaware Valley Bird Club  
Erie Cage Bird Club  
Greater Pittsburgh Cage Bird Society  
National Cockatiel Society  
Philadelphia Avicultural Society  
York Area Pet Bird Club

#### VIRGINIA

State coordinator:  
Dawn Kopf (703) 594-3841  
Blue Ridge Caged Bird Society  
Commonwealth Avicultural Society  
Parrot Breeders Association of  
Virginia  
The Aviary Bird Club of Central  
Virginia  
Tri-State Bird Club & Foundation

#### WEST VIRGINIA

State coordinator:  
Alexis Seifert (304) 866-3433

### Southeastern Region

Rick Jordan, *regional vice pres.*  
(305) 258-2373

#### ALABAMA

State coordinator:  
Charles Reaves (205) 892-0015  
Bird Club of Greater Birmingham  
Central Alabama Aviculture Society  
Rocket City Cage Bird Club

#### FLORIDA (NORTH)

State coordinator:  
Mary Giep (407) 892-1837  
American Cockatiel Society, Inc.  
Central Florida Bird Breeders  
Association

Emerald Coast Avian Society  
Exotic Bird Club of Florida  
Gainesville Bird Fanciers  
Gulf Coast Bird Club  
Heartland Avian Society  
Imperial Bird Club  
Jacksonville Avicultural Society  
Panhandle Aviculture Society  
South-west Florida Bird Club  
Suncoast Avian Society  
Sunshine State Cage Bird  
Society, Inc.  
West Florida Avian Society, Inc.  
West Pasco Exotic Bird Club

#### FLORIDA (SOUTH)

State coordinator:  
Kathleen Harring (305) 258-2377  
Cage Bird Club of Charlotte County  
Gold Coast All Bird Club  
Greater Brandon Avian Society  
Parrot Society of South Florida  
Treasure Coast Exotic Bird Club

#### GEORGIA

State coordinator:  
Mimi Shepherd, DVM  
(404) 248-8977  
Aiken Bird Club  
Genesee County Avian Society

#### KENTUCKY

State coordinator:  
Thomas B. Angel, Jr., DVM \*\*  
(606) 371-4929  
Central Kentucky Cage Bird Club

#### MISSISSIPPI

State coordinator:  
Maurice O. Hinton (601) 857-5168  
South Mississippi Cage Bird  
Society

#### NORTH CAROLINA

State coordinator:  
Bob Beech (919) 855-8292  
Charlotte Metrolina Cage Bird  
Society  
Raleigh-Durham Caged Bird Society

#### PUERTO RICO

Coordinator:  
David Negron (809) 251-1153

#### SOUTH CAROLINA

State coordinator:  
Ted Stephens (803) 279-3374

#### TENNESSEE

State coordinator:  
Wanda Elder (901) 853-9988  
Cage Bird Club of Northeast  
Tennessee  
Greater Memphis Bird Club  
Middle Tennessee Caged Bird Club  
Tennessee Valley Exotic Bird Club

#### VIRGIN ISLANDS

State coordinator:  
\*

### Mid-Eastern Region

Bob Smith, *regional vice pres.*  
(517) 764-5170

#### ILLINOIS

State coordinator:  
Bonnie Doane (708) 223-2117  
West Suburban Caged Bird Club

#### INDIANA

State coordinator:  
Nicole Vander Heyden, DVM  
(317) 786-1826  
Central Indiana Cage Bird  
Kentuckiana Cage Bird Club  
Michiana Bird Society

#### MICHIGAN

State coordinator:  
Dave Bowman (616) 381-5779  
Ann Arbor Cage Bird Club  
B.E.A.K.S.  
Capital Feathered Wings Bird Club  
Genesee County Avian Society, Inc.  
Mid-Michigan Bird Club  
Motor City Bird Breeders, Inc.  
Saginaw Valley Bird Club  
Town & Country Feathered Friends

#### OHIO

State coordinator:  
Dianne Holloway (419) 636-3882  
Classic Feathers  
Golden Crescent Cage Bird Club  
Miami Valley Bird Club  
Northwest Ohio Exotic Bird Club

#### WISCONSIN

State coordinator:  
\*  
Avian Insights Bird Club  
Kenosha Exotic Bird Club  
Madison Area Caged Bird Association  
Wisconsin Cage Bird Club, Inc.

### North Central Region

James McCabe, *regional vice pres.*  
(612) 753-5241

#### IOWA

State coordinator:  
\*

#### MINNESOTA

State coordinator:  
Steve Estebo (612) 432-4758  
Minnesota Companion Bird  
Association

#### NEBRASKA

State coordinator:  
\*  
Greater Omaha Cage Bird Society

#### NORTH DAKOTA

State coordinator:  
\*  
Dakota Feather and Fur Club

#### SOUTH DAKOTA

State coordinator:  
Royce King (605) 393-1720  
Black Hills Cage Bird Club

### South Central Region

Richard Hazell, *regional vice pres.*  
(316) 681-2079

#### ARKANSAS

State coordinator:  
Carol Hoerres (501) 839-2948

#### KANSAS

State coordinator:  
Pall Hazell (316) 681-2079  
Kansas Avicultural Society, Inc.

#### LOUISIANA

State coordinator (acting):  
Jeanne C. Murphy (504) 833-4241  
Fax (504) 833-4241  
Gulf South Bird Club, Inc.

#### MISSOURI

State coordinator:  
Carter Atwood (816) 987-3907  
Gateway Parrot Club  
Greater Kansas City Avicultural  
Society  
Missouri Cage Bird Association

#### OKLAHOMA

State coordinator:  
Richard Bewley, (918) 366-7427  
Bird Fanciers of Oklahoma, Inc.  
Oklahoma Cage Bird Society

#### TEXAS (NORTH)

State coordinator:  
Virginia Baker (214) 374-4141  
Dallas Cage Bird Society  
Fort Worth Bird Club  
Plano Exotic Birds Association

#### TEXAS (SOUTH)

State coordinator:  
Ray Wangler (210) 732-8025  
Alamo Exhibition Bird Club  
Triangle Bird Breeders Club

### Northwestern Region

Natalie Frumin-Weiss,  
*regional vice pres.*  
(206) 927-6983

#### ALASKA

State coordinator:  
Michelle Keener (907) 345-2220  
Alaska Bird Club

#### IDAHO

State coordinator:  
Wayne Tracy (208) 467-2082

#### MONTANA

State coordinator:  
\*

#### OREGON

State coordinator:  
\*  
Birds Exotic All Bird Club  
Emerald Exotic Bird Club  
Mid Oregon Bird Club  
Northwest Bird Club

#### WASHINGTON

State coordinator:  
Jeri Wright, *legislative liaison*  
(206) 838-9802  
Avis Northwest Bird Club  
Cascade Canary Breeders Assoc.  
Greater Spokane Avicultural Society  
Northwest Exotic Bird Society  
South Sound Exotic Bird Society  
Washington Budgerigar Society, Inc.

## Western Region

Robert Gibson, regional v. p.  
(702) 645-7608

### ARIZONA

State coordinator:  
Michelle Rietz (602) 973-9282  
Arizona Avian Breeders Assoc.  
Arizona Aviculture Society  
Arizona Seed Crackers Society  
Avicultural Society of Tucson

### COLORADO

State coordinator (acting):  
Ray Vanderleest (303) 795-2088  
Rocky Mountain Society of  
Aviculture, Inc.

### NEVADA

State coordinator (acting):  
Joanne Edwards (702) 436-0110  
Las Vegas Avicultural Society  
Reno Area Avian Enthusiasts

### NEW MEXICO

State coordinator:  
Kelly Tucker (505) 298-3876  
Las Cruces Parrot Club  
New Mexico Bird Club

### UTAH

State coordinator (acting):  
Steve Long (801) 647-3653  
Avicultural Society of Utah  
Utah Pheasant Society

### WYOMING

State coordinator:

## Northern California Region

Donna Tondreault, regional v.p.  
(916) 642-9050

### CALIFORNIA (NORTH)

State coordinator:  
Jim Pritchard (707) 887-9462  
Aviary Association of Kern  
Aviculture Association of  
San Francisco  
Butte County Bird Club  
Capitol City Bird Society  
Central California Avian Society

Central Coast Avicultural Society  
Coastal Avian Society  
Contra Costa Avian Society  
Foothill Bird Fanciers  
Gold Country Aviculture Society  
Gold Country Bird Society  
Golden Gate Avian Society  
Model Aviculture Program  
Monterey Bay Cage Bird Club  
Redwood Empire Cage Bird Club  
Redwood Exotic Bird Society  
Santa Clara Valley Bird Club

### HAWAII

State coordinator:  
Joe Baker (808) 966-6966  
Avian Research Association  
Hawaiian Parrot Fanciers, Inc.

## Southern California Region

Aletta M. Long, regional v.p.  
(213) 596-7429

### CALIFORNIA (SOUTHERN) SAN DIEGO AREA:

State coordinator:  
Marty Muschinske (619) 468-3201  
Finch Society of San Diego County  
Hemet Valley Bird Society  
North County Aviculturists  
San Diego County Bird Breeders  
Association  
San Diego County Canary Club

### CALIFORNIA (SOUTHERN) LOS ANGELES AREA:

State coordinator:  
Jami Kennedy (805) 296-4451  
Antelope Valley Bird Society  
Long Beach Bird Breeders  
Norco Valley Bird Breeders  
Orange County Bird Breeders  
Simi Valley Bird Society  
Santa Barbara Bird Club  
South Bay Bird Club  
Valley of Paradise Bird Club  
Ventura County Bird Club  
West Valley Bird Society

### Philippines

Avian Society of the Philippines

\* 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.

For information about contacting any of these member clubs, please call that club's state coordinator.

## SCHEDULE FOR AFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

Mark these dates and plan to attend!

### BOARD MEETING

February 4 - 6, 1994

Landmark Hotel, Metairie, LA (near New Orleans)  
airport shuttle available  
for hotel reservations call  
(800) 277-7575, Linda Mashburn  
Room rates \$59.00 double or single

### AFA CONVENTION 1994

August 4 - 6

Knoxville, Tennessee

for the next 21 days. After the chicks are on their own, it is still possible to distinguish them from their parents because their bills remain black. Between four to six months of age their bills turn silver, right about the time they start their adult molt.

Silverbills prefer greens and spray millet. To this I add fresh fruits and vegetables daily. I have tried feeding frozen vegetables, but they were not eaten as readily (nor as quickly) as the fresh food. I provide seeded grasses for them in their aviary, along with dandelion greens which I grow in flower pots and change weekly. I also sprout greens from their seed, and wheat grass, which they eat with gusto. To this I add a seed mixture of my own.

To provide calcium to their diet, I give them the standard cuttlebone, but I also provide eggshell. I bake the shells in the oven at 350° for 30 minutes. You can also buy sterilized eggshell which is just as good. To my seed mixture I add vitamins and proteins in the form of dried meat or fish that I grind to the consistency of coffee. I also feed a cornbread concoction which consists of three eggs, two tablespoons of peanut butter, and I substitute water instead of milk. Before I feed the cornbread, I add lactobacillus acidophilus to aid in digestion. Along with all of this I give my birds wheat bread, charcoal, oyster/gravel for grit, a salt/mineral block and, of course, live food.

I have found successful breeding and rearing of young requires abundant and varied types of live food, therefore I offer ants, fruit flies, earthworms, and mealworms.

I also try to simulate their environment by stocking my aviary with trees, shrubs, and high seeded grasses. I also put sandstone rocks on the floor to keep their nails trim.

African Silverbills have been known to breed with *L. malabarica*, *L. punctulata*, and *L. striata* Var. *Domestica* so it would be best to add only bonded pairs if you have any of those birds in your aviary.

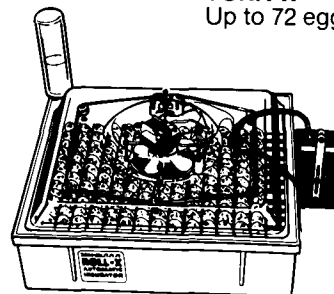
In conclusion, nothing is absolute in birdkeeping. Climate, housing, anything could make your birds perform differently from mine. Still, I hope this article has been of some help. So good luck with your Silverbills! I hope you enjoy your birds as much as I enjoy mine. ●

## Marsh Farms INCUBATORS

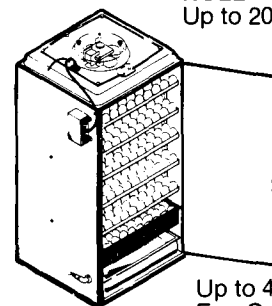
- FEATURING fully automatic turners. Adjustable temperature and humidity control.



**TURN-X**  
Up to 72 eggs.



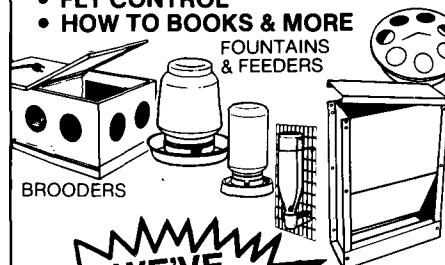
**ROLL-X**  
Up to 209 eggs.



Up to 480  
Egg Capacity.

## & BIRD EQUIPMENT

- BROODERS
- FEEDERS & FOUNTAINS
- FLY CONTROL
- HOW TO BOOKS & MORE



BROODERS

**WE'VE  
MOVED!**  
Write for our  
CATALOG today.

MANUFACTURED BY

**LYON**  
ELECTRIC COMPANY, INC.

2765 MAIN STREET Dept. W  
CHULA VISTA, CA 92011 U.S.A.  
TELEPHONE: (619) 585-9900

WE ACCEPT

