Niltavas belong to the large family of Old World flycatchers Muscicapidae and are certainly one of the most beautiful species in this group. The species most frequently observed in aviculture is the Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara*. There are three subspecies, *N. donatata*, *sundara* and *whistleri* which originate from a large part of the Himalayas, south and south-western China and the Malay peninsula. Within its native habitats it lives in the forest undergrowth.

Even though it is regularly available to European aviculturists, the name flycatcher keeps many breeders from obtaining these wonderful birds. Many aviculturists feel that these birds can be kept alive only if large amounts of live insect food is made available. This is not true. I have personally cared for several of these birds and they were fed a diet of mainly commercial insectile food (non-living) and live food was given only on a limited basis.

I have observed breeders who kept single males in meter square (39 in.) cages, but it is certainly advisable to keep these lively birds in an aviary. A well planted aviary, whether indoors or out, is best. A combined indoor/outdoor enclosure is ideal. In cold climate areas the aviaries, preferably indoors, should be kept above the freezing point.

Only a few successful breeding attempts have been accomplished with the Rufous-bellied Niltava and this is really a shame. The reasons for so little breeding are that most Niltavas are kept as single birds or they are housed in mixed collection aviaries with a number of different species. To improve the chances for breeding Niltavas they should be housed in medium sized planted aviaries as single pairs.

To bring the pair into breeding condition it is, indeed, necessary to supply them with large amounts of live food. This food can be in the form of mealworms and crickets. There is, however, a much cheaper solution. Several pieces of rotting fruit and one piece of liver can be placed in a basket or bowl that is covered with a wire mesh to keep the birds out. The fruit and liver attracts an enormous number of fruit flies, house flies and other insects. These live insects are an excellent food source and a cheap way to feed Niltavas. There is a good possibility of breeding these delicate birds if the aviary is well planted and has many sheltered places that give the birds a place to hide.