

# Warbling Finches

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The Warbling Finches (genus *Poospiza*) is a small group of 13 species of Middle- and South American buntings which are almost unknown in aviculture. In Europe several species are now and then available and so far I've seen five species offered by bird-dealers and/or kept by aviculturists. I myself have kept only a single male of one species—the Ringed Warbling Finch (*Poospiza torquata*)—over a short time and, so far, it has been the most commonly offered and kept species.

Strangely enough, I couldn't discover any breeding results with this species. Because I'm best informed with aviculture in the Netherlands, I will discuss here the breeding-results of four species which have so far been reproduced in this country.

## Cinnamon Warbling Finch

The first species is the Cinnamon Warbling Finch (*Poospiza ornata*) also known as the Pretty Warbling Finch. This species appeared recently in the news because the San Antonio Zoo (Texas, U.S.A.) had the US first breeding (anon. 1996). The world first breeding was published in 1960 (Cummings, 1960) and this author has already published some notes about some Swedish breeding results (de Ruiter, 1997).

As far as I was able to find out, the species has been bred in the Netherlands only once (Schepers, 1988). Mr. Schepers obtained a pair in 1986 and in a small breeding cage 80 x 70cm and 110cm high (31.2 x 27.3 x 42.9 in.) they soon started to build a nest and in early 1987 four eggs were laid. Two of them hatched after about 12 days of incubation but the chicks lived only for three and seven days. After this failure the birds were placed in an outside flight 5 x 3.2m and 2m high (16.4 x 10.5 x 6.5 ft.) which was well planted. They share this aviary with several species of small softbills, estrildids and finches.

Putting a pair of Chestnut-breasted

Warbling finches in the same enclosure proved to be impossible and after some fights these were removed.

In June a second breeding attempt was made. This time three eggs were laid and all hatched. With lots of living food the chicks developed very fast and after nine days the first young left the nest followed the next day by the other two fledglings. All three were raised to independence and after this the breeding pair made a third breeding attempt which was unsuccessful.

## Chestnut-breasted Warbling Finches

The Chestnut-breasted Warbling Finches (*Poospiza ceasar*) which were removed from the aviary of the Cinnamon Warbling Finches were placed in another aviary which they shared with several estrildids, a pair of Back-crested Finches and a pair of Namaqua Doves. In June 1985 they started to build a nest which was mainly constructed from coconut fiber and on 1, 2 and 3 July, eggs were laid. Only the female was seen incubating and after 12 days two young were found in the nest. A day later the third baby

appeared. This last young died however after four days. At the age of 12 days the remaining two young left the nest. The breeding pair bred two more times the same year, both times using—after some renovating—the old nest.

## Black and Rufous Warbling Finches

Another successful breeding-result with Warbling Finches was achieved by Mr. Penders (Wessels and Penders, 1980). He obtained a pair of unknown birds in 1977 which later proved to be Black and Rufous Warbling Finches (*Poospiza nigrorufa*). Because they were in perfect condition, they were placed directly into one of his well-planted outside aviaries measuring 6 x 1m and 1.5m high (19.6 x 3.3 ft. and 4.9 ft. high). Only a month after obtaining these birds, they started to build a nest in a low bush. The nest was built from grasses and hay and three eggs were laid. Ten days after the female had started incubating, one chick hatched. After it had hatched all the other birds living in the same aviary were removed to reduce all possible disturbance and risk, something which in my opinion is rarely done.

The baby was raised mainly with



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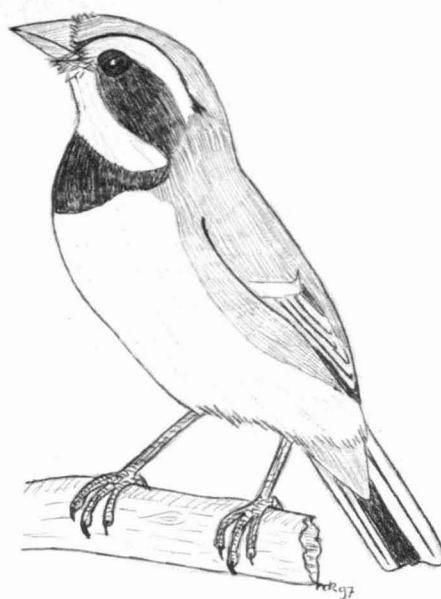
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*Poospiza melanoleuca*



*Poospiza torquata*

the greater part of it. Although observations were quite difficult because the nest was very hidden, the incubation was thought to have taken 13 days. The favorite food during the raising were spiders but these were not very numerous because of the bad weather conditions during this time. After two days one baby died then five days later a second baby died. The remaining young was raised successfully and left the nest after a total of 18 days.

Although this chick was feeding itself after one month, the parents continued to feed it to an age of two and a half months.

Hopefully I have raised some interest in these delightful birds and if some aviculturists in the U.S.A. animated by this article will start with Warbling Finches, the propose of this article has been successful.

#### Literature

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locktus (up to 100 a day) and after 10 days the chick left the nest. After a further 11 days the young was independent. The breeding-pair made a second breeding attempt but due to weather conditions all three of these eggs were infertile. The raised young started to molt after three months and its breeder was honored with a first breeding certificate for the Netherlands.

#### Black-headed Warbling Finch

The Black-headed Warbling Finch (*Poospiza melanoleuca*) is the last species bred successfully thus far and again by Mr. Schepers (Schepers, 1987). It is seen by many scientists as a subspecies of the Grey and White Warbling Finch (*Poospiza cinerea*). These birds also were placed in a well-planted outside aviary which they shared this with estrildids and other small birds. In August three eggs were laid and both male and female shared incubation, although the female did



*Poospiza nigrorufa*



*Poospiza caesar*

Drawings by  
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