



Green Singing Finches by David Brown

The Green Singing Finch – *Serinus mozambicus* – is widespread across most of the African continent south of the Sahara desert. It has been a popular cage bird for many years as it is easy to determine the sexes, they are easy to look after, are long-lived, the male has a lovely song and formerly it was one of the more inexpensive species as it was imported in large numbers. Since the import ban was introduced it has become scarcer, but the demand is still there for this favourite. Although only small (5”) they can be aggressive to smaller or more passive birds, so if you are going to mix them, take care and watch for this aggression. The Green Singing Finch is of the same family as the original wild Canary and there are several other related species that have been available to aviculturists over the years. The Grey Singing Finch is not as colourful, but in many people’s opinion has a better song.

It is always best to have at least 3 or 4 pairs of one species to form a breeding programme of any birds. Some of the reasons for this are:- you should firstly start off with unrelated birds. If you happen to lose any birds you should still have enough to pair up and therefore not spend a long time looking for a mate (normally a hen) and potentially lose a whole breeding season. Also if you breed from two pairs, you can pair the resultant young together and make up unrelated pairs, as they will not be brother and sister – a really bad idea.

My Green Singers are all housed in outdoor aviaries the whole year round. These are enclosed and the roof is covered, so they are well protected, with the front of the aviary facing south. They get sun throughout the year. I have found these birds to be very hardy, indeed they will nearly always roost outside, even when they have access to a warm, lighted inside flight. This makes them ideal for beginners, especially as they are so long-lived. I’ve had some live for up to 17 years.

My birds are fed with a good foreign finch mixture and Versalaga Tropical Mix. This has more of the smaller millets than some mixtures. I also add Japanese Millet and a Budgie tonic mix, at least 50% of each once a week. I also add a small amount of Niger (about a tea-spoonful per bird per bird twice a week). They love this seed and will leave all other seeds in preference, but it is very fattening so it isn’t given ad-lib. Soft food is offered once a week unless they are breeding and then they get it every day. They also have access to mineralised grit, Oystershell grit at all times and grated Cuttlefish bone once a week. Many finches will not peck at a full Cuttlefish bone and this is why I grate it. This is to boost their Calcium intake. Finely ground Charcoal is taken when it is supplied. Like many other finches they love millet sprays.

My birds tend to use a cube nest box with a ¾” hole, however other fanciers find that their birds will use a Canary nest pan. The nest is made of Coconut fibre with very fine grasses as a lining. A clutch of around 4 eggs is laid (usually during September to April) which are incubated for 12-14 days. After a further 18 to 21 days the chicks leave the nest. This is when they are most vulnerable - due to my birds insisting on breeding during the Autumn/Winter. The longer they stay in the nest the better. So if you are lucky enough to get young do not keep checking the nest, as the young may bolt out of the nest before they are fully ready to fledge. A further clutch may be laid and the adults will be perfectly able to raise these chicks with no problem. I would rest the adult birds after they have raised two rounds of chicks.

When all the young are fledged and feeding themselves they will all look like hens. The cock differs from the hen in that they have a clear throat, whereas the hens have a necklace of spots around the throat. All young have these spots and cocks will moult these out when adult. Take care when choosing new stock as often birds purchased as hens will moult out to become identifiable as cocks. If you have a brightly coloured “hen”, then it is likely that this is a juvenile cock. The yellow on Green Singing Finches intensifies as they grow older.

The fact that my birds will start their courtship and breeding cycle late in the year in outside flights with no additional heat and only light on the inside shelters, may be the reason why they are rarely bred. Many keepers of Green Singing Finches will either bring them indoors or remove the nestboxes for the winter. A large indoor flight with access to nesting facilities all year round may produce greater and more consistent results.