



COCK ZEBRA FINCH FEEDING AT
ABBERTON BIRD LODGE, LOCKYER
VALLEY, QUEENSLAND

Photo: Bill Jolly

THE ZEBRA FINCH

Zebra Finches, *Taeniopygia guttata*, (race *castanotis*) are the most common and familiar finch of inland Australia. They range over most of the continent, but avoid the cooler moist south and the tropical far north. They are also endemic to Indonesia and East Timor, and have been introduced to Puerto Rico, Portugal and the United States of America.

Zebra Finches inhabit open country with scattered bushes and trees, but have adapted well to human disturbance, taking advantage of man-made watering holes and patches of deforested land. Zebra Finches, including the many mutations, are widely kept by aviculturists, genetic researchers and pet lovers. It is almost certain that many readers of this article will have begun their avicultural pursuits with a pair of these ubiquitous little birds.

The life expectancy of a Zebra Finch is extremely variable, and depends on both genetic and environmental factors. In their natural environment they may live for up to 5 years, whereas in captivity, where there aren't (or shouldn't be) any natural predators 5 to 10 years is more common.

In the wild the Zebra Finch breeds after substantial rains, which may occur at any time of the year. Captive birds are ready to breed year-round. Wild birds are adaptable and varied in their nesting habits, with nests having been found in cavities, shrubs, low trees, bushes, under rocks on the ground, in termitaria, rabbit burrows, nests of other birds, and in the cracks, crevices, and ledges of human structures. In the aviary Zebras will accept almost any receptacle in which to build, lay and raise their young. When not breeding Zebras construct brood nests to sleep in. Seventy to eighty days after hatching Zebras become sexually active, this makes it one of the fastest maturing bird species on record.

One fancier in the far-north of South Australia noticed a pair of completely black Zebras regularly feeding in one of his parrot aviaries. The origin of this "new mutation" was found when he started a piece of heavy grading machinery after it had been idle for several weeks.

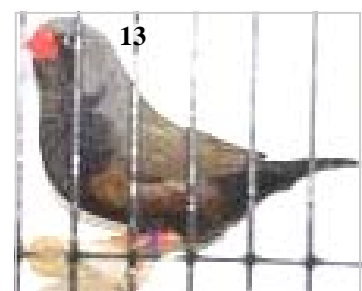
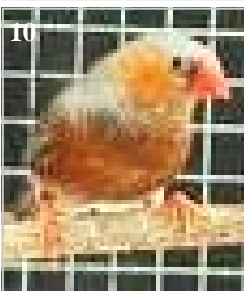
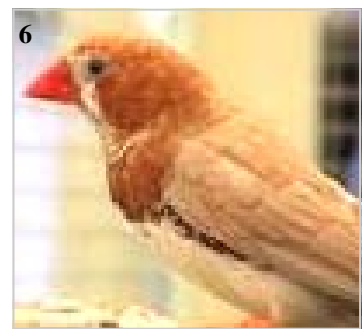


TIMOR ZEBRA FINCH
Taeniopygia guttata guttata
Note lack of barring on

After some spluttering and a couple of false starts the motor back-fired, and out of the exhaust shot a Zebra nest!

Many mutations of this popular little bird have occurred over the years, the following photos show but a few of those available, not all of which are available in Australia.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia



LEGEND

1. Fawn 2. Crested Black-cheeked White 3. Black-cheeked
 4. Marked White 5. Black-breasted 6. Fawn-red 7. White 8. Silver
 9. Pied & Fawn "Jumbo" 10. Grey-red 11. Crested 12. Pied
 13. European Eumo 14. Florida Fancy