

# **NEW FOODS**

**By Carol Heesen**

We all know that good nutrition is crucial to our bird's health. Getting the birds to eat it can sometimes be a challenge! Gouldians, in particular, can be very resistant to trying new foods. There are a couple of tricks you can use to encourage your birds to try the foods they need to maintain optimal health.

The fastest and easiest method is to introduce a "teacher" bird into the flight. Societies and Zebra finches are used most commonly as they are very curious birds who normally accept and eat any new foods offered. As the Gouldians watch the teacher birds eating, they are often encouraged to try new foods.

Try serving small amounts of the new food over the old, familiar feed.

If this method is unsuccessful, try changing the presentation of the food - chop smaller, serve whole, mix with other foods. Presentation is crucial in getting birds to try new foods. For instance, I have found many Gouldians to be resistant to eating hard boiled egg that is mashed with a fork. Run the same hard boiled egg through a grater so it looks like small white worms and the birds devour it! Use your imagination and creativity in finding the presentation that is best accepted by your birds. And take heart, chicks raised in your facility will readily accept the foods you offer - they grew up on them and are familiar with them.

If the above method is unsuccessful, more drastic means are called for. The goal in this second method is to use hunger to motivate the birds to try the new foods without causing unhealthy weight loss. I have found the following method to be quite successful:

- Remove all food one half hour before lights out.
- Leave the water receptacles in the cage.
- At first light in the morning, present the new food stuff. This motivates the birds to try the new foods while they are most hungry.
- One hour after lights on, return the familiar, accepted food items to the flight.
- Repeat daily until the new food stuffs are being consumed.

Most birds will accept the new foods within 2-5 days.

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