

AGAPORNIS...THE LOVEBIRD FAMILY

Continued from the July edition

FISCHER'S LOVEBIRD

Fischer's Lovebird was originally discovered in the late 1800s. They are named after the German explorer Gustav Fischer. Fischers are native to a small area of east-central Africa, south and southeast of Lake Victoria in northern Tanzania. In dry years, some birds move west into Rwanda and Burundi seeking moister conditions.



FISCHER'S LOVEBIRD
Agapornis fischeri

PHOTO: Peter Bekési

Fischer's Lovebirds live at elevations of 1,100-2,200m in small flocks. They have a fast, straight flight, and the sound of their wings can be heard as they fly. They live in fairly isolated clumps of trees with grass plains between. They have a high-pitched chatter, and are very noisy. These birds eat a wide variety of foods, including seeds and fruit. They are sometimes pests on farms, as they eat crops such as maize and millet.



DISTRIBUTION OF FISCHER'S LOVEBIRD

The breeding season, in the wild, is January to April and June to July. The nest is in a hole in a tree, often in old woodpecker holes 2-15m above the ground. The wild population is estimated to be between 290,000-1,000,000.

Fischer's Lovebirds show no sexual dimorphism, and it is impossible to tell whether an individual is male or female through plumage alone. Sexing can best be done by holding a bird facing away from you, tilting it back towards you by about 45° and looking at the beak. A hen has a very rounded beak, while a male will be seen to have a distinct crease down the centre of the bill. This is particularly noticeable where the beak meets the thin white line between the red of the beak and the first feathers. The male's line will appear to have an indentation (towards the head) in the line at the point where the crease meets the line, while a hen's will appear perfectly rounded.

Fischer's prefer a dark nesting box of an oblong orientation. Such boxes are often referred to as "E-type" nest boxes, and have a partial division across the box, behind which the domed nest will be constructed. They are normally good parents and fertility is usually high.

There are several mutations available, including lutino, lime and yellow-lime. The red-eyed lutino mutation is not sex-linked like most of the other red-eyed yellow mutations in birds. Therefore, it is possible to have "split" for lutino hens in this species. Lutino to lutino is not a good mating as baby lutinos are rather weak and do not beg for food as strongly as the other Fischer colours, and because red-eyed birds have poor eyesight, a hen lutino tends to ignore the young that beg the least. The best mating to produce lutinos is, lutino cock to a yellow-lime split lutino hen. This combination gives the strength of the dark-eyed bird plus the better eyesight of the split yellow-lime hen. Consequently, any young lutinos produced will be stronger and the hen will feed them well, even though they may not beg as strongly as their non-lutino siblings. Although not as many lutinos will be hatched from this combination, more will be reared in the long run.



SO-CALLED BLUE FISCHER'S
ACTUALLY BLUE MASK
FISCHER'S CROSS, BRED
BACK TO FISCHER'S

Reference: *Wikipedia*

To be continued.