

BEAUTIFUL FIRETAIL

Emblema bellum

OTHER NAMES: Firetail Finch

Beautiful Firetails are shy, solitary and elusive birds which live in permanent pairs. They frequent dense cover and sleep in roosting nests at night.

Description:

A large robust finch, males have an olive-brown crown and back finely barred in black. Under parts are grey with fine black barring. Facial features include a black stripe on the forehead extending to surround the eyes. The rump and upper tail coverts bright crimson, while the centre of belly and under tail coverts are black. The eyes are hazel with a light blue peri-ocular ring.



The bill is red and legs and feet pink-brown. Females resemble males but lack the black patch in the centre of the belly. Immature birds are dull versions of the adults with indistinct barring and black bills.

Length:

120-130mm.

Subspecies:

None.

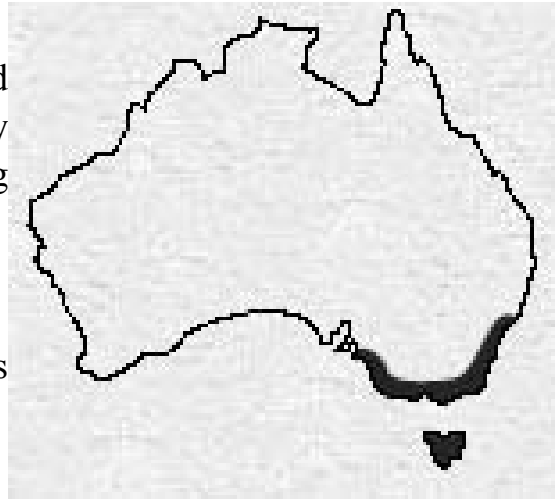
Status:

In the wild - uncommon to rare

In aviculture - uncommon

Distribution:

Tasmania. It also has a fragmented mainland distribution from Sydney (NSW) to Adelaide (SA) and including Kangaroo Island.

**Habitat:**

Cool temperate heath, melaleuca thickets and swamps (seldom far from water).

Threats:

Destruction of habitat, feral cats and wildfires.

Diet:

Half-ripe grass seeds and seeds from trees and shrubs. This is supplemented with insects gleaned from foliage.

Breeding:

October-January. The nest is flask shaped with an entrance tunnel. It is constructed from green grass and small twigs. Both parents incubate and rear the young.

Courtship Display:

Not well known.

Sexual Maturity:

Beautiful Firetails reach sexual maturity and are capable of breeding at around 9-12 months of age.

Clutch:

5-8 white eggs (12mm x 18mm). Incubation period: Not well known but probably about 12-14 days. The young probably fledge at around 15-17 days. Fledged birds should not be removed from the parents until at least 4 weeks after fledging.

Mutations and Hybrids:

No records.

Suitable Aviaries and Compatible Birds:

While Beautiful Firetails may be kept in suspended cages or breeding cabinets of the following dimensions: 700mm(long) x 400mm x 400mm, these birds are at their best in larger planted aviaries.

Beautiful Firetails will readily share an aviary with most other small seed eaters (eg. Zebra, Painted, Parrot-finch and etc) as well as small parrots, doves and quail.

Adapted from:

<http://www.birdworld.com.au/records/finches/bfire.html>