

THE THREATENED JAVA SPARROW

The Java Sparrow, *Padda oryzivora*, also known as Java Finch or Java Rice Bird is a small passerine bird. This estrildid finch is a resident breeding bird in Java, Bali and Bawean in Indonesia. It is an extremely popular aviary and cagebird.

The Java Sparrow is a very gregarious bird which feeds mainly on grain and other seeds. It frequents open grassland and cultivation, and was formerly a pest in rice fields, hence its scientific name. The nest is constructed in a tree or building, and up to eight eggs are laid.

The Java Sparrow is 17cm in length. The adult is unmistakable, with its grey upperparts and breast, fawnish-pink belly, white-cheeked black head, red eye-ringing, pink feet and thick red bill.

Both sexes are similar, but immature birds have light brown upperparts and paler fawn underparts and cheeks. The rest of their head is dark grey rather than black, and the bill is grey with a pink base.

The call is a "chip", and the song is a rapid series of call notes "chipchipchipchipchip", which has been likened to a bee buzzing in a bottle.

The Java sparrow is considered to be a serious agricultural pest of rice. Due to ongoing habitat loss and extermination programmes in some areas, the Java Sparrow is now uncommon in its native range. It is evaluated as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and is listed on Appendix II of CITES.

Reference: Wikipedia

Because the Java breeds so well in captivity it is often overlooked as an aviary bird. It is important that we, the aviculturists of today, make every effort to ensure that this neat, intelligent bird is preserved as an aviary species, even if, as seems likely, it becomes extinct in the wild. It is the preservation of species such as this that the Sustainable Aviculture Network (SAN) will play an important role. Please support the SAN Network, the long-term future of many of the foreign species in our aviaries will be dependent on such a programme. Ed.