

## **Blue Faced Parrot Finch**

*(Erythrura trichroa)*

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### **Description:**

- Size: approximately 120mm in length and weight 15 – 18gm
- Adult male: Rich grass green body. Head cobalt blue.
- Adult hen: Duller green on back with more olive shade on belly. Head slightly duller pastel shade of blue. Both sexes have red on the rump. The cock has more red/orange under the wing.
- Juvenile: Dull green until after the first moult.



### **Distribution:**

The blue faced parrot finch is a bird of the tropics. Its range is the border regions between tropical forest and cleared areas.

The main populations are in Papua New Guinea, Solomon, New Hebrides and the adjacent islands.

A small colony exists in the rainforests of Cape York Peninsular in northern Queensland. Sightings are rare in the wild.

It is very common in Australian and European aviaries.

### **Characteristics :**

They are a very active and lively bird. They are easily bred in the right environment.

The cock bird is very sexually aggressive so the hen must be protected by providing shelter for her to hide.

If this bird is bred in the colony situation the number of cocks should not exceed the number of mature hens available.

The maximum life span is about 7-8 years but best breeding results occur from birds 1 – 4 years of age.

### **Housing :**

This bird requires a densely planted aviary with plenty of vegetation cover. They breed best in large aviaries. I have not heard of them successfully breeding in cabinets.

If natural vegetation is not available then dried brush, or bamboo, attached to the walls will provide acceptable cover.

They are quite compatible with other finches so they can be bred in a mixed colony.

### **Feeding :**

Like all parrot finches they have a tendency for gluttony which can impact upon their breeding results.

During the off-season I restrict the amount of live food and sprouted seed. Additions of half ripe green seed, sprouted seed, oil seeds and live food can act as a breeding stimulus.

General finch mix with extra canary and niger seed when breeding.

Greens include endive, Lebanese cucumber and other garden greens.

Live food is not essential but is appreciated, especially when feeding young, but remember they are guts.

They will eat all forms of live food normally fed to finches including white ants, meal worms and fly pupae. The only live food I feed is fly pupae.

Green seed and sprouted seed is a must for all parrot finches. It is far more important than live food. I have found the lack of sprouted seeds is the major cause of birds not commencing breeding.

### **Nesting:**

Most blue faced parrot finches prefer to nest in a wooden nest box. They also prefer the nest box to be on the smaller size. The box is crammed, lined, with soft grasses and feather.

I have heard of some pairs showing a preference for nesting in brush but my experience is that when they have bred in brush, bamboo thicket, they built their nest in a small cane basket.

They will reuse the same nest, and material, for a number of clutches.

### **Breeding :**

Birds reach sexual maturity at 6 months of age but it is always best to let them mature before pairing up. It is not advisable to attempt to breed from hens under 9 - 12 months of age.

Better pairing are obtained if birds have a choice of mates.

Once birds commence breeding they can rear 3 -4 clutches per year. During breeding the risks of obesity is eliminated so plenty of live food and other highly nutritional foods can be feed.

Young birds will lay between 4 -6 eggs per clutch with 3 -4 young leaving the nest after 21 days. They are self sufficient about 3 weeks after leaving the nest but will not cause any problems if left with the parents until they finish the juvenile moult.

Like other parrot finches and Gouldian finches the young have iridescent turquoise beads on either side of the base of the bill.

### **Health:**

Parrot finches spend a lot of time on the aviary floor so they are prone to worm infestation. Worming should be carried at least annually and preferably before the breeding season.

As they come from a rainforest region, they will tolerate wet and humid conditions more so than some of the other Australian grass finches.

The blue faced parrot find is hardy and requires no special health requirements.

### **Mutations :**

The only mutation I'm aware of is the lutino.

The lutino is a sex-linked mutation. All the green is replaced with yellow, the blue with white. The red rump is retained.

I have found this mutation very difficult to breed consistently.

The major problem seems to be the normal coloured (split cock) cock bird does not find the yellow, lutino, hen attractive. If any normal coloured hens are available, the cock bird will pair to them and leave the yellow hen. Even when only a single pair, yellow hen and normal cock, is housed together the cock does not drive, chase, the yellow hens as normal. The yellow hens then become obese and the number of eggs laid is reduced.