

# Wings 'n' Things

## Peales Parrot Finch

### *Erythrura Pealii*

**Peales Parrot finches** were first discovered in 1852 by Hartlaub on the Fijian islands of Kandavu, Viti Levu, Vanua Levu and also Taveuni. Peales are by some authorities grouped with the Royal Parrot Finches also named by some with the confusing name of Red headed Parrot Finches as a sub-species *Erythrura Cyaneovirens Pealii*. Peales are also called Fiji or Fijian Parrot Finches. They are found in Forested edges, grasslands and in cultivated areas, parks and gardens. They are fairly locally common and a gregarious species and are seen in parties and small flocks up to around 30 birds.

**Length:** 4 inches (100 mm).

**Male:** The forehead, crown and face bright red, throat blackish becoming bluish on the lower throat and then into turquoise onto the upper breast and light green on the rest of the under parts. The upper parts are deep green, upper tail coverts are bright red and the tail has red central feathers and reddish brown outer feathers. The bill is black, legs and feet are pinkish grey. The eyes are brown.

**Female:** The female is a paler form of the male. The blue on the throat and breast is less extensive.

**Juvenile:** Pale greenish-buff breast and belly, the head is also a pale green but sometimes the head has a blue tint to it. Bill yellow, eventually turning black. Hatchlings and very young chicks have four distinct dark blue iridescent spots, one on each corner of the lower and upper mandibles.

**General Info:** Peales are one of the Parrot Finches that is doing fairly well in its native habitat and has apparently adapted to human habitation. They are one of the species that fluctuates in price due to availability.

**Avicultural notes:** I have found these birds very prolific if fed correctly. They do really well in planted flights and large cages, but in smaller cages they will become overweight very rapidly. Of all the Parrot Finches I have ever kept these are the calmest and very inquisitive, always nosing at what is going on in the bird room. I never keep these or any tropical birds without access to heated quarters in the colder months. I have kept and bred these birds in both aviaries and cages, with the same degree of success. Although, when kept in cages the food intake has to be monitored and restricted, in particular livefood and eggfood to avoid obesity.

**Feeding.** A basic maintenance diet would consist of a good quality foreign finch mix. This is to be supplemented with grass and herb seeds which I feel is essential. Green food in the form of chicory, lettuce, dandelion leaves, Spinach or chickweed can be offered but make sure they are free from pesticides and chemicals, I often use a herb salad mix bought from the supermarket very cheaply. A good soft food such as EMP and live foods such as mini-mealworms and ants eggs can also be given once or twice a week but only a very small amount of egg food and 1 or 2 mini-mealworms each bird. During breeding periods protein levels need to be increased so I feed soaked, sprouted seed and egg food mixed together when breeding but as previously said one has to be careful not to overfeed. Grit and crushed oyster shell is essential as to, is a calcium supplement. Fruit is a major part of my birds diet, pear, apple and I also give dried figs that have had the seeds washed out from the

sticky fruit and given to the birds which they seem to adore. They are fairly simple and easy to keep. Fresh water should be given everyday with vitamin supplements added periodically.

**Compatibility.** Peales Parrot Finches mix well with other birds of similar size and are normally inoffensive birds. Some pairs can be slightly more aggressive during the breeding period but this is usually only confined around the immediate nesting area and is not normally serious. When housed with other Parrot finches care must be taken to avoid cross breeding, in particular Blue Faced cocks will chase Peales hens trying to mate with them.

**Breeding.** Peales are prolific and easy to breed given the right conditions, either in a large cage or aviary they will use a standard half open nest box or a basket, or make their own nest in an aviary. As with all Parrot finches they use copious amounts of nesting material and they will lay 3 – 5 pure white eggs which are incubated for 13 – 14 days. If foster parents are used such as Bengalese the young are reared without problems. But if parent reared it must be noted that most parrot finches stop brooding their chicks well before they are fully feathered so if bred in un-heated outside quarters then there is a real danger of losing the chicks to the cold. For reasons of the adult's health only 2-3 broods are recommended per breeding period. Fledging occurs at around 17-19 days and the young are weaned at around a further 2-3 weeks, adult plumage is achieved between 3 and 5 months.

