

CAGE BIRDS IN BRAZIL-1997

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After 2 years in Brazil for the third visit I feel I should say something about their cage birds. My wife and I were in the city of Belo Horizonte state of Minas Gerais about 400 miles north of Rio de Janeiro from August 1995 to August 1997. We joined COA (Clube de Observadores do Aves) which is their equivalent of our Audubon Society. So we frequently got away from our rental of the ground floor house in the neighborhood (barrio) called Ouro Preto (black gold) into the wild. Belo Horizonte (beautiful horizon) is the third largest city in Brazil with about 5 million inhabitants if you count the suburbs.

Brazil (spelled Brasil by the Brasileiros) has approximately the same range of species in cages that we have in the USA. Budgerigars and parrots are common. Their "canarios Belgas" we just call them canaries. Zebra finches are called Mandarim, Society finches are Manon, Last Gouldian finches are Diamante-de-gould. These have approximately the same color variations as we have here. And they have several diamond dove and nun finches plus others that we have.

But several native species that are mostly unknown to us are excellent cage birds! Only one, the Tico-tico, *Zonotrichia capensis*, the rufous-collared sparrow is available in the USA to my knowledge. This finch nests in an open cup shaped nest as I saw in a hanging flower pot on the porch of a ranch (fazenda) house.

I have seen the beautiful blue Azulão, *Cyanocopsa brisonii* or ultramarine grosbeak, in the wild as well as caged. The female is brown. Once I saw a flock right in the city feeding on a native tall grass.

The tiny black, Tizui male, *Volatina jacarina*, the blue-black grassquit, has a white spot on the shoulder. The female is streaked brown. They also frequent vacant lots in the city.

The Cardeal, *Pavoaria*, comes in 5 species, *P. coronata* is crested. I had a pair of *dominca* cardeals or red-cowled cardinal. The female laid but they did not set upon the eggs and I did not have enough time to follow through with them. Evidently they also have our Virginia cardinal, *Cardinalis cardinalis*, in captivity, but I did not encounter any.

The male Canario-da-terra or saffron finch, *Sicalis flaveola*, is a nice yellow in season, although not as yellow as the domestic canary.

A solid black bird (eye, bill and legs and feet also) is the Passaro-preto (chopi black bird), *Gnorimopsar chopi*. It is popular for its tameness. It will offer its head near the cage bars in order to be scratched or preened by human fingers. However, it is difficult to breed in captivity.

The Trinca-ferra or green-winged saltator, *Saltator similis*, is a larger bird at about 8 inches long. Other caged birds are seedeaters: Bigodinho, *Sporophila lineola*; the Brejal, *Sporophila albogularis*; several species called the Caboclinho, *Sporophila* sp; the Coleirinha, *Sporophila caerulescens*; the Coleira-do-brejo, *Sporophila collaris*; the Patativa, *Sporophila plumbea*; the Tico-tico rei or red pileated finch, *Coryphospingus cucullatus*; the pintassilgo, *Carduelis magellanica*; and more!

I especially want to discuss a bit about two more native species, both endangered! The male Bicudo or larger-billed seed finch, *Oryzoborus crassirostris*, is black with a white

wing spot. It is about 6 inches long. The female is brown. This species is very rare in the wild since they have been trapped nearly out of existence. A mature male costs about \$5,00 or more and you must have a permit to own one.

The Curió, *Oryzoborus angolensis*, is an inch or so smaller than the Bicudo. The male is black with a white wing spot like the bicudo, but the ventral feathering back of the crop to the tail is a chestnut (reddish brown) color. Again the female and young are brown. Again a permit is required.

The Bicudo and Curió males are the most desired cage birds! They sing much like a canary. The Curió are judged on the length of continuous song separately from the sweetest song. Ordinary males cost \$500. Contest winners cost much more. Females are about half the cost of the males.

The native birds are often in annual contest. The Bicudo, Curió and Trinca-ferra are the ones most judged. But other species may be seen in contest.

I wanted to bring back some of these cage birds--especially the Curió, Tiziu, Azulão, and Trinca-ferro. But the red-tape was too much for me to overcome without help. For example, when my wife (in the US briefly for tax purposes) asked for import permits, the authorities laughed at her and refused to give the permit, saying you can't get native birds out of Brazil! Well I had the "ear" of an official of IBAMA (the Brazilian agency covering such requests) and of COA and of people who helped write the law regarding the export of birds. These people said it was possible! GRRRRR!!!

Other cage birds:

Tico-tico rei
pintassilgo
passaro-preto

Coryphospingus cucullatus
Carduelis magellanica icterica
Gnorimopsar chopi

Frugivoros-
saira-sete-cores
corrupiao

Tangara selson
Icterus icterus jamaicai

Omnivores-
sabria

Turdus (rufiventris) 4 other species

Parrot-
tumi

Forpus xanthopterygius

Given as a speech: Botanical Center- Des Monies, IA. 26 Oct '97 Sunday 2PM Talk
2:30-3:30PM