

## Finch species held in New Zealand

Not all finch species found in New Zealand are described in the following table. The species are grouped by the NZFBA's threat classification categories:

- Not currently threatened
- Threatened
- Most threatened
- Unknown or presumed extinct

### Not currently threatened

Zebra Finch	<i>Poephila guttata</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>These Australian finches are very popular little birds and deservedly so as they are easy to keep and breed, fairly inexpensive and are a good beginner's bird. They can also provide quite a challenge for skilled aviculturalists with the large range of mutations that can be produced. The normal colour is fawn but they can be white, black, grey, silver, brown and tan or a combination of these colours. Zebra finches are compatible with almost any finch but can be disruptive and interfere with other nests so it is not recommended to keep them with other exotic finches. They are very adaptable little finches and can be kept in a cage or aviary and their noisy chatter is a delight to listen to.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch seed mix, millet sprays and greens.</p>		

Bengalese Finch	<i>Lonchura domestica</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>Bengalese finches are good beginner's birds, easy care, readily available and fairly inexpensive. Like the zebra finch they can be housed in cages or aviaries but can be disruptive to other finches at nesting time. They are often used as foster parents for other harder to rear birds. Bengalese finches are available in white, chocolate, fawn, most often in combination with white. There is also a crested form. Bengalese finches are very sociable birds. Maybe this is why their common name is the "society finch" and it's not unusual to see 6 or more heads peering out of a nest as the family stays together. They also love to bathe and will enjoy communal bath time. They can be difficult to sex but only the male will sing as he displays and dances to his mate.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch seed mix.</p>		

Gouldian Finch	<i>Chloebia gouldiae</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>This Australian finch is one of the most striking members of the bird world. Three different colour head combinations can be found naturally, with the black head form the most common, then red and yellow (orange). There are many different mutations now available including white breasted and pastel dilutes. Mutations are still relatively uncommon in New Zealand and only the white breasted are available in any number. Gouldians are fairly easy to obtain and will breed well if kept in a draft free aviary or breeding cage. They can be kept with other finches, in a colony situation or as a single pair and will breed freely over the autumn and winter months.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with soft food and extra green seeding grasses in the breeding season.</p>		

Cuban Finch	<i>Tiaris canora</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>Not surprisingly, this finch comes from Cuba but it can also be found in Jamaica living on forest edges and grasslands and often on the edges of towns. Cubans are lively inquisitive attractive little finches with a melodious call, easy to breed and easy to sex. Unfortunately, their downside is that they can sometimes be quite aggressive to other birds similarly coloured or to their own breed. For this reason it is best to keep only one pair per aviary unless it is large and well planted. Youngsters should be removed from their parents soon after weaning. They are still fairly easy to obtain in New Zealand but are not the most popular of birds because of their reputation.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with live-food, seeding grasses and soft food.</p>		

Cordon Bleu Waxbill	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>This finch comes from the grassy woodlands of central Africa where it is often found on the outskirts of villages. There are different forms but only the red cheeked variety is found in New Zealand. The cordon is a very attractive, popular finch which suits a mixed finch aviary. Easy to sex and breed as long as the diet is right. Fairly easy to obtain in New Zealand.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with plenty of live food especially maggots, soft food and seeding grasses.</p>		

Plumhead Finch	<i>Aidemosyne modesta</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>The Plumhead, or cherry finch is a native of eastern Australia where it is usually found in flocks close to water, in reed-beds and in grasslands. This finch was nearly lost to New Zealand but has since made a comeback. Maybe because it appears drab compared to some of the more striking finches, it is not widely kept and the numbers seem to be declining again.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix and plenty of fresh green feed. Plumheads like to forage on an earthen floor.</p>		

Fire Finch	<i>Lagonostica senegala</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>This African finch is a very popular little bird, not surprising as it is a good breeder, fairly easy care, easy to sex and eye catching in the aviary. It is recommended as the first exotic finch for novice breeders to try and it's often available. Excellent for a mixed finch aviary, but is better kept as a single pair as two male fires may fight.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix and green seeding grasses but will breed better with live food and soft food.</p>		

Red faced Parrot Finch	<i>Erythrura psittacea</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>This boldly coloured finch comes from the forest margins of New Caledonia. It is a very popular finch and is easy to obtain. There is also a sea-green mutation in New Zealand and a pied version but these are rarely seen. Red faced parrot finches are excellent for mixed finch collections as they are striking birds, easy care, good breeders and non aggressive so can be kept as a colony also. As they can be very difficult to sex this is sometimes a good option. They must not be kept with other parrot finch varieties as they will interbreed.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with green feed and some fruit. They enjoy some of the larger seeds like hulled oats and sunflower. At breeding time give them a good soft food mix and live-food will give bigger clutches.</p>		

Java Finch	<i>Padda oryzivora</i>	Not currently threatened
<p>This is a bird very much at home in the paddy fields of its native Java and Bali but it's a very adaptable finch. The Java finch is quite a large bird and shouldn't be kept with the smaller finches. It's fairly hardy and easy to keep and can be housed in a cage or aviary. Javas come in quite a number of different mutations including white, fawn and pied. Unfortunately their numbers are declining in New Zealand and they are not as popular as they once were.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: mixed finch with hulled oats and sun flower. They enjoy most green foods and fruit and will do better if given plenty of live food at breeding time.</p>		

Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs coelebs</i>	Not currently threatened (found in wild)
<p>The Chaffinch is a bird of the temperate regions of north Western Europe, usually found in hedgerows and cultivated fields. It was introduced to New Zealand in the 1860s, to make the early settlers feel at home. The Chaffinch has successfully settled in New Zealand and is often seen in fields and gardens but is not often seen in aviaries. They will breed successfully but need lots of live food. They were extensively trapped until recent years. The male can be quite aggressive to other birds, especially in the breeding season so they should only be kept as a single pair to a well planted, mixed aviary.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with lots of live food consisting of as wide a range of insects as possible.</p>		

Greenfinch	<i>Carduelis chloris</i>	Not currently threatened (found in wild)
<p>The Greenfinch comes from the hedgerows of Western Europe and was introduced to New Zealand in the 1860s. In most respects it is very similar to the chaffinch but it doesn't seem to be so aggressive and it is also not as often seen as the chaffinch in the wild. Not often kept in aviaries.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: a good canary mix with green seeding grasses.</p>		

Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Not currently threatened (found in wild)
<p>The Goldfinch can be found throughout most of Europe and like the other European finches was introduced to New Zealand by the settlers in the 1860s. It is now a very common bird in the countryside feasting on seeding flowers and grasses. Again it's not a common bird in aviaries although some canary breeders like to cross their birds with goldfinches for improved colour and song, producing mules. Occasionally a colour mutation will be produced. They are not as aggressive as the Chaffinch and seem quite sociable.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: canary seed with a mixture of millets. Goldfinches enjoy seeding grasses and sprouted seed. Some will take live-food but it is not essential.</p>		

Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea cabaret</i>	Not currently threatened (found in wild)
<p>Redpoll species can be found throughout most of North America and Europe often migrating in response to temperature and food availability. They were introduced into New Zealand by the early settlers but didn't colonise the country as successfully as some of the other introduced finches. They have often been kept in aviaries to catch mosquitoes and insects that would otherwise trouble the other aviary occupants. The male redpoll in the wild shows a striking red bib and cap but loses this on the average aviary diet.</p>		
<p>Feeding requirements: a good finch mix with as big a range of small seeds as possible and also a range of green seeding grasses and weeds. They enjoy soft-food at breeding time and must have a range of live-food.</p>		

Yellow hammer	<i>Emberiza citronella</i>	Not currently threatened (found in wild)
<p>Yellowhammers are found in the fields and hedgerows of much of central, northern and western Europe and were introduced to New Zealand by the settlers in the 1860s. They have now spread through most of the country and can be found in paddocks and pine trees or feasting on seeding grasses. They can be aggressive to other finches in the breeding season and prefer a larger well planted aviary.</p>		
<p>Feeding requirements: a good canary mix plus millets. They require lots of green foods and enjoy puha, dandelions and sprouted seed. In the breeding season they must have lots of live-food and soft food.</p>		

## Threatened Finches

Little Green Singer	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>	Threatened
<p>Found throughout much of central and southern Africa, usually in scrub around villages and never far from water. The Little Green Singer lives up to its name with a beautiful song although its colouring is more yellow than green. The male is a delight to have in an aviary although care should be taken with the selection of other species as the Singer can be aggressive to similarly coloured birds eg Cubans, siskins and Jacarini. It is best to keep one pair per aviary although it is sometimes possible to have an extra female. The female is easily identified by her necklace of yellow spots which the young also have. Singers will often breed over the winter months and like to use hessian, mosses and white cotton wool in their beautifully crafted little nests.</p>		
<p>Feeding requirements: good quality finch mix with extra canary seed. At breeding time provide bird cake or Madeira cake and access to live-food.</p>		

Jacarini	<i>Volatina jacarina</i>	Threatened
<p>The Jacarini or blue black grassquit comes from the grasslands of South America, where they can often be found near water. This is an interesting finch as the male transforms from a drab sparrow like bird into a shiny black acrobat at breeding time. Jacarinis are not often seen in New Zealand aviaries, partly because they tend to be quite secretive, hiding in any shrubbery. They also have a reputation for escaping via any small hole. They like a well planted aviary and must not be housed with Cubans. Best kept as one pair per aviary.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good quality finch mix with the addition of plenty of live food.</p>		

Jacarini must have a good supply of small mealworms or maggots to breed successfully.

Cut throat Finch	<i>Amadina fasciata</i>	Threatened
<p>No prizes for guessing how this African finch got its name. They are often found in large flocks in semi arid areas of central Africa where they can cause problems eating farmers' crops. These birds require plenty of live food and have been accused of taking other nestlings so are not recommended for mixed finch aviaries. Cut throats are easy to sex and will breed well if given the right conditions. It is rare for them to breed successfully without copious amounts of maggots or mealworms. Available in reasonable numbers, but not often kept.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with plenty of live food.</p>		

Orange Breasted Waxbill	<i>Amandava subflava</i>	Threatened
<p>This tiny finch comes from the grasslands of central Africa where it is often found in flocks on the outskirts of villages and in reed beds. The Orange breast is a delightful finch, non aggressive, easy to sex, easy to keep and excellent in a mixed finch aviary. They used to be one of the most common finches but lately have become hard to obtain, probably because of their very short breeding life. Orange breasts are very happy to be kept as a colony or as a single pair and prefer a well planted aviary.</p>		
<p>Feeding requirements: good quality finch mix with green food and a soft food supplement at breeding time along with a good supply of small maggots and mealworms. They may breed without live-food but nest sizes will be smaller.</p>		

Black hooded Red Siskin	<i>Carduelis cucullata</i>	Threatened
<p>This strikingly beautiful bird originates from the wooded areas of northernmost South America but is now seldom seen there as a result of trapping and destruction of habitat. It was one of the first birds to be named on the Cites list as critically endangered and subject to movement controls. The Siskin is holding its own in New Zealand thanks to some dedicated breeders but is still in limited supply. This is not a bird for newcomers as it can be a poor parent and needs extra attention for chicks to be successfully raised.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with added canary, niger and sunflower seed, green feed especially flowering puha. At breeding time they require soft food or cake and a good supply of live food is appreciated.</p>		

## Most Threatened Finches

Parson Finch or Black-throated Grassfinch	<i>Poephila cincta</i>	Most Threatened
<p>This Australian finch is found in open savannah country from Cape Yorke down to Queensland. Parsons nearly disappeared from New Zealand aviaries a few years ago but numbers were built up again by a keen breeder. They are still in short supply. Parsons mate for life and it is difficult to introduce a new partner. They seem to do better if allowed to select their own mate. Parsons are best kept as a single pair or as a larger colony. The hen seems to be prone to egg binding, especially younger birds.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with plenty of green seeding grasses and sprouted seed. They appreciate lots of green food and at breeding time will enjoy bird cake and live food.</p>		

Blue faced Parrot Finch	<i>Erythrura trichroa</i>	Most threatened
<p>This finch comes from Cape York, Australia and can also be found in the islands to the north of here, usually at the forest margins. The Blue faced parrot finches are very similar to the red faced parrot in their requirements and will easily interbreed so must not be kept together. They are often available but not as common as the red faced parrot finches. They are very suitable for a mixed finch aviary. Keep just 1 pair or more than 3 as they can get quite competitive at breeding time when the male can chase the hen around the aviary.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with some hulled oats and crushed sunflower. They need green seeding grasses and will enjoy live-food and some fruit as well as soft food when raising young.</p>		

Tri-coloured Munia or Tri-nun	<i>Lonchura malacca malacca</i>	Most Threatened
<p>This munia comes from the paddy fields and reed beds of India and Sri Lanka, and is usually found close to water. Tri-nuns are very tolerant birds, easy to keep and happy in a mixed aviary situation or as a colony. Surprisingly they are now quite difficult to obtain, perhaps because they aren't as showy as some other finches so are not often kept. They will interbreed with other munias so should be kept separate.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix and green feed and sprouting seed.</p>		

St Helena Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrid</i>	Most Threatened
<p>The St Helena comes from the grasslands of central and southern Africa, never far from water. It's often found in colonies around villages where it probably forages on the fallen seed from crops. The St Helena builds a complicated nest with a cocks nest on top, probably to confuse predators. This used to be a popular finch in New Zealand but now is very difficult to obtain. There are still some fawn mutation birds around but it's very rare to see the original brown form. The male and female are quite similar and they have quite a strong pair bond.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good seed mix with lots of seeding grasses and a plentiful supply of live food in the breeding season.</p>		

Star Finch	<i>Neochmia ruficauda</i>	Most threatened
<p>Stars are found naturally along the north and north-western coast of Australia, usually living as a colony in clumps of grasses, and never far from a water hole or river. Like several Australian finches they tend to be winter breeders, when food is more plentiful. Star finches are very difficult to obtain in New Zealand, with the yellow mutation now being more often seen than the original red headed form. The sexes are very similar with the head colour slightly more extensive in the male. Stars can be kept as single pairs or in a colony situation and they are fine in a mixed finch situation. As their numbers are now so low in New Zealand it is recommended that they are kept as a single pair in their own aviary to give them their best chance of breeding success. Please contact the NZFBA if you know the whereabouts of any of these finches so that the genetics of these birds are managed through breeding programmes.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with the addition of sprouted seed and green food. Most require live-food in the breeding season.</p>		

Spice Finch	<i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	Most threatened
<p>Found throughout the Asian region from India and China down to Indonesia. Unfortunately there are very few pure breeds left in New Zealand now yet at one time they were quite common. Spice finches have been bred with similarly coloured Bengalese and there are quite a few mixed parentage birds around as a result. Spice finches can be good breeders and easy to breed but probably fell out of popularity as they can appear quite drab compared to other more colourful finches. Please contact the NZFBA if you know the whereabouts of any of these finches as there is a successful breeding scheme in place to manage the genetics of these birds.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix but will do better with access to seeding grasses, sprouted seed and green feed.</p>		

European (or Eurasian) Siskin	<i>Carduelis spinus</i>	Most threatened
<p>Distributed from Iceland through Russia to Japan. Yellow-green and brown streaked plumage with black crown. Wings are black with yellow bar. Similar looking to the goldfinch.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good quality finch mix and greens.</p>		

### Unknown or presumed extinct

White-headed Munia	<i>Lonchura maja</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
<p>The White-headed Nun comes from the Indonesia/ Malaysia area where it can be found in most cultivated areas. This nun is a very sociable finch, happy in a colony situation or as part of a mixed collection but it can be difficult to sex. The White-headed Nun is now extremely rare in New Zealand. Please contact the NZFBA if you know the whereabouts of any of these finches as there is a successful breeding scheme in place to manage the genetics of these birds.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix but prefers a varied diet of green feed and seeding grasses and sprouted seed.</p>		

Hooded (Black-headed Yellow) Siskin	<i>Carduelis magellanica</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
<p>This siskin is found through much of South America. The male is largely green above and yellow below, with a black head. The female does not have a black hood and is duller in appearance. Lives in woodland, savannas and gardens from sea level to 5000 m. It used to be seen often in NZ aviaries but is now impossible to obtain. Best kept as a pair. Found in flocks in the wild.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: Finch mix with extra niger and sunflower seed. They need lots of soft food or cake and live food in the breeding season and will enjoy seeding grasses at any time.</p>		

Melba Finch	<i>Pytilia melba</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
Found throughout most of central and southern Africa, in dry grassland areas.		
Melbas are very attractive, easy to sex birds, but now impossible to obtain in New Zealand. They have a reputation for aggression, especially at breeding time. They like a well planted aviary, with secluded sites for nesting.		
Feed requirements: these birds must have live food if they are to breed successfully. They enjoy fossicking for seeds and insects on an earthen floor. The Melba will take the usual finch seed mix with canary seed.		

Pin-tailed Parrot Finch	<i>Erythrura prasina</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
Found in sub-tropical and tropical montane and lowland moist forests of South-east Asia (eg, Borneo). Feeds in rice paddies, but prefers feeding off the ground. The male's coloration is striking, with cobalt blue throat, forehead, and sides of head, with a green coloured nape and back, through to a red rump and central tail feathers. The female's tail is slightly shorter than the male, and body coloration is duller than male.		
Feed requirements: good quality finch mix and soft food. Little apparent interest in live food.		

Tri-coloured Parrot Finch	<i>Erythrura tricolour</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
Found on forest edges and cultivated areas in Timor, Tanimbar and some other islands in this area. Also known as the Tanimbar parrot finch. Care must be taken to keep this finch in warm draft free conditions. Impossible to obtain in New Zealand.		
Feed requirements: good quality finch mix.		

Diamond Firetail Finch	<i>Emblema guttata</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
This beautiful bird is found in scrubby areas in South Eastern Australia. Firetails spend quite a bit of time on the ground searching for insects and seeds. They can be kept in a mixed collection or as a colony. Impossible to obtain in New Zealand.		
Feed requirements: Good quality finch mix, greens, and seeding grasses, and live food at breeding time.		

Masked grassfinch	<i>Poephila personata</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
The original territory of this finch was the northern coast of Australia, including Cape York Peninsula. They are never found far from water. They are a non-aggressive species, best suited to being kept as a colony but pairs can be kept also. Never available.		
Feed requirements: good quality finch mix and lots of green feed including seeding grasses. Live food isn't essential but can be offered.		

Longtail / Heck grassfinch	<i>Poephila acuticauda</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
<p>The Longtail comes from much the same area as the Masked Grassfinch and it also inhabits grassy areas around water holes. They are best kept as a colony or as a single pair as they can be quite disruptive in a mixed aviary. Longtails used to be very common in New Zealand but are now impossible to obtain.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good quality finch mix with lots of seeding grasses and sprouted seed. Lots of live food is needed in the breeding season.</p>		

Aurora Finch	<i>Pytilia phoenicoptera</i>	Unknown or presumed extinct
<p>Comes from central Africa where it can be found in fields, the edges of patches of bush and occasionally on the outskirts of villages. The Aurora is closely related to the Melba but is not as striking. Auroras used to be quite common but now, like the Melba, are impossible to obtain.</p>		
<p>Feed requirements: good finch mix with canary seed and plenty of live food and soft food or cake. Like the Melba, they appreciate being able to scratch around on an earthen floor.</p>		