

## Bloedel Bird of the Month – The Cut-throat Finch (*Amadina fasciata*)



The Cut-throat finch<sup>1</sup> is a small African bird. Males have a blood-red band on their neck. Their name makes them very easy to identify. Many other birds have far less useful names.<sup>2</sup>

Cut-throat finches live in lightly forested grasslands. There, their sandy bodies, marked with black and white spots and stripes, hide them well. They are common and seem to have stable numbers across their vast range. They are native across the Sahel from Senegal to the Red Sea, and south through Kenya and Tanzania. A separate population ranges from southern Angola and Namibia,

south to north-eastern South Africa, through Zimbabwe and Mozambique to the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup>

Females lack the distinctive red 'cut' to the throat but otherwise have similar colours.

Adult birds are around 4.75 to 5.25 inches long (11.88-13.13 cm), including the tail.

Juveniles are faded versions of their parents, with males having a duller red throat band.<sup>4</sup> Both sexes lack breast colour details and have dark beaks.<sup>5</sup>



**Female and male Cut-throat finches at Bloedel Conservatory**

<sup>1</sup>Also called 'Cut-throat Weaver' or 'Ribbon Finch': <https://thefinchweekly.com/2016/01/07/the-cut-throat-finch/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/28/bird-names-origins-blackbird-yellowhammer>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.biodiversityexplorer.org/birds/estrildidae/amadina\\_fasciata.htm](http://www.biodiversityexplorer.org/birds/estrildidae/amadina_fasciata.htm)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.beautyofbirds.com/cuthroatfinches.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.efinch.com/species/cutthroat.htm>

## Breeding

Nest	Built by both sexes. It is made of a ball of grass. It has a short entrance tunnel. Birds will line the nest with feathers. Old weaver bird nests are often used.
Clutch size	2-7, but usually 4-6 eggs
Incubation	Starts when the fifth egg is laid Eggs are incubated by both sexes
Hatching	After 2-14 days of incubation
Leave nest	At 21-23 days old
Weaned	At around 6-7 weeks old
Juvenile molt	Occurs at 60-75 days old <sup>6</sup>



**Weaver bird nests in Botswana**



**Adult male white chest colouration**

## Behaviour

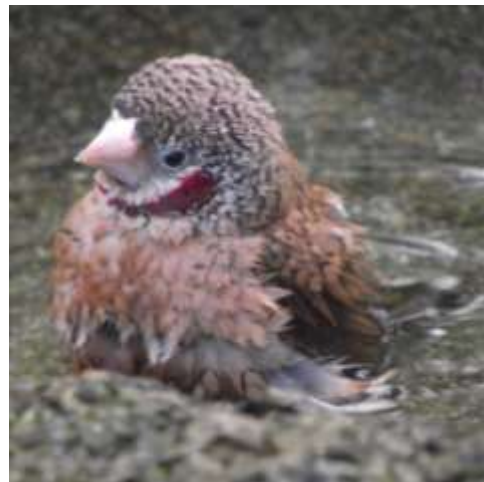
Cut-throat finches have a reputation for being aggressive towards other birds when raised in mixed colonies. They will take hatchlings out of the nests of other species. They can defend themselves against larger birds. When they are not breeding, they can be calm and gentle around other birds.

## Diet

In the wild they do most of their foraging on the ground, mainly feeding on seeds and termites.

In captivity, they eat a standard finch mix or parakeet mix and readily eat mealworms.

They need a source of calcium such as crushed egg shells, crushed oyster shells or cuttlebone.

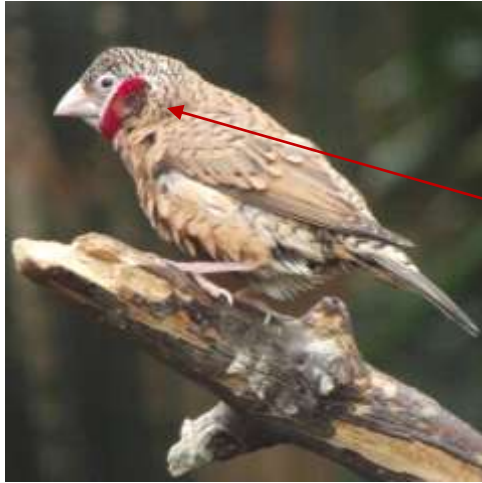


**Birdbath at Bloedel Conservatory**

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.finchinfo.com/birds/finches/species/cut\\_throat\\_finch.php](http://www.finchinfo.com/birds/finches/species/cut_throat_finch.php)

## Hearing

Finches have an opening to the ear canal located behind and slightly below the eye. It is not usually visible.<sup>7</sup>



**Detail showing the ear canal entrance**

## Song

The call of the adult male is low pitched and repetitive.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [http://www.finchinfo.com/physiology/bird\\_anatomy\\_terms.php](http://www.finchinfo.com/physiology/bird_anatomy_terms.php)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.finchinfo.com/audio/rCut-throat.mp3>