

Bloedel Bird of the Month – The Pin-tailed Whydah



January 4th 2017



April 3rd 2017

In April, Bloedel's new 'female' Pin-tailed Whydah revealed that 'she' is a 'he', by growing a long tail. He is now busy practicing his mating dance.

At the end of December 2016, Bloedel Conservatory gained some new birds. When looking at photographs of Whydahs on reputable Internet sites, it seemed clear that one of the new birds was a female Pin-tailed Whydah.¹



Photographs taken on January 4th, 2017

¹ <http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-pin-tailed-whydah.html>

By April 2017, it was apparent that the new bird was really a juvenile male and not a female, when 'he' started to grow a long tail!

Photographs taken on April 3rd, 2017





These photographs show that the Whydah has begun to develop his breeding plumage, which may reach nearly 20 cm in length.

There are many ‘YouTube’ videos showing the spectacular courtship displays of the male Pin-tailed Whydah. Some examples are given in the links below.^{2,3}

After the breeding season, he will lose his long tail and revert to resembling a female. This phase is called ‘eclipse’ plumage.

The Pin-tailed Whydah (*Vidua macroura*) is found throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. It is a brood parasite, meaning females lay eggs in the nests of other birds, particularly finches, and rely on those host birds to raise their young. Some species of brood parasites will destroy the host's eggs, but the Pin-tailed Whydah just adds its eggs to the nest and does not harm those of the unknowing ‘foster parents’.

Pin-tailed Whydahs mainly forage on the ground for seeds and grain. They will also feed on insects, such as butterflies, bees, wasps, locusts and ants. They forage in small groups made up of one long-tailed male, several females, and non-breeding young.⁴

Although the male Pin-tailed Whydah may be a spectacular bird, its plumage makes it unsuited to small enclosures. Two male Pin-tailed Whydahs **should never be housed together during the breeding period, as they are likely to become territorial and aggressive to one another.**⁵

²Pin-tailed Whydah Mid-Air Dance (Slow motion) Singapore <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMnUwNNjrc>

³Weird Dance Of The Whydah: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS1ekNXI2mE>

⁴<https://www.beautyofbirds.com/pintailedwhydahs.html>

⁵http://www.finchinfo.com/birds/finches/species/pintailed_whydah.php