

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Passeriformes
Scientific Name: Sicalis flaveola

Family: Thraupidae
Common Name: Saffron Finch

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male):



Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other Savannah, Second Growth, Agricultural Areas

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other [Click here to enter text.](#)

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore
 Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Granivore & Insectivore:

Seed mix usually consists of a finch seed, which is a preferred diet item.

These birds are often housed with more frugivorous birds, so they often have access to some form of a frugivore diet consisting of softbill pellets, chopped fruits, vegetables & greens.

Live insects such as mealworms, waxworms, & maggots are readily consumed.

Noted to forage on leaf lettuce as well.

Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: No data Females: No data

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: 12 years Females: 12 years

Species Fact Sheets

BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: No published data, but presumably 1 year Females: No published data, but presumably 1 year

Courtship Displays: Males sing from a conspicuous perch.

Nest Site Description: Typically a cavity nest consisting of a bulky hemisphere of dry grasses & lined with softer material built in a palm frond or cavity such as pipes, roof eave, or nestbox. In captivity, has nested primarily in small covered wicker finch nests and, to a lesser degree, woven cup nests. In the wild, will build in an abandoned nest of yellow oriole or rufous hornero.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: 2-4 eggs. Up to 5 eggs. Eggs a creamy color with purplish-brown markings.

Incubation Period: 14 days

Fledgling Period: 14-17 days

Parental Care: Both parents feed the chicks with sires often doing the majority of feeding once chicks fledge.

Chick Development: Altricial

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Found in pairs & small flocks.

Social Structure in Captivity: Can be kept in large flocks, with attention paid to size of enclosure and plant density. When carrying capacity of enclosure is achieved, aggression & displacement will increase. Flocks tend to be well-balanced having a sex ratio skewed in favor of more females, as males can become territorial & easily breed with multiple females. Same sex flocks are usually more easily managed when observations indicate all birds have either paired up as duos or trios with no lone individuals in the group.

Minimum Group Size: 1.1

Maximum Group Size: Dependent on enclosure

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes

Comments:

Often are not aggressive to other species, but on rare occasions may not mix well with similarly colored small birds.
One recorded instance of killing a Red-legged Honeycreeper.

Optimal Habitat Size: Small holding spaces (such as 6'x4'x7') are suitable for a few individuals. Large aviaries are needed to ease intraspecific aggression in large flocks.

Management Challenges: Care should be taken when introducing new birds as it will be a change to group dynamics. Introductions to groups are not recommended during the breeding

Species Fact Sheets

season, but instead opt for the nonbreeding season. When introducing to a group, birds should be at least 1 year old.

Some aggression can arise if chicks are fledged within a group of saffron finches if there is not adequate space to minimize interactions with other adult saffron finches.

One institution twice had problems with parents becoming aggressive to chicks and/or mates after chicks hatched that resulted in deaths.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

As of 2019, a large breeding flock currently resides at Como Park Zoo (St. Paul, MN) in a 10,000 sq foot aviary that consists of roughly 60 birds that breed consistently, but parentage is unknown and birds are rarely trapped. Over the years the population has either increased or remained consistent through breeding. Birds are thought to nest at least 60' high in rafters and the tops of trees. They appear to nest year-round.

A mixed gender flock (typically numbering 3.6) at Brookfield Zoo (Brookfield, IL) has pairs that tend to prefer nesting 6' or higher, often in high-traffic areas such as keeper pathways & feed stations in artificial nest structures like covered finch nests. The flock typically produces 2 clutches per year. They appear to have a short non-breeding season Dec-Feb.

Some institutions manage their saffron finches in mixed-sex flocks, and some are successful with single pairs.

REFERENCES:

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