

# **The Canary: Serinus canaria**

## **A Domesticated Serin From The Canary Islands.**

**Canaries include breeds such as:**

**Rollers, Timbradoes, American singers, Norwich, Belgian, Red factor, Lizard, Frilled, Gloster, etc.**

Ever since a little greenish brown finch with a captivating song was brought into Europe by a seafaring captain hundreds of years ago, this little bird has been a source of pleasure to many. Canaries are certainly one of the most domesticated species of bird. By domestication, I mean it has been captive bred by people for a long enough time for many strains to be developed. Very few, if any, could survive a release into their former natural habitat. Human controlled breeding has led to forms that are far different than the original wild ancestor. They have become dependent on us for survival.

Due to this long association between man and finch, canaries are popular as pets. They have been bred for qualities of song, size, shape, color, feather patterns and more. Each year, shows are held where birds are judged according to a “standard of perfection” for a given breed of bird. Many are beautiful while some are quite misshapen. For others, song is the most important consideration. Rollers and timbradoes, along with American singers, are judged by the number and quality of song tours they sing.

When looking for a canary as a pet or breeding it is important to realize what kind of choices are available. Some birds are a deep orange-red but require special “color food” fed throughout the molting season if the bird is to retain its color. Other individuals can have a fairly loud “chopper” song while some “rollers” sing so quietly they may be hard to hear.

A healthy canary is a hardy bird and should stay that way if it is fed a high quality seed mix and given ample green vegetables. I feed mine chickweed, dandelion leaves, spinach along with a treat of hard boiled egg. Contrary to popular belief, a canary will not die if it is let out of the cage. Free flight gives them much needed exercise and diversion. If let out regularly, the canary will soon learn where the food, water and security is and will enter the cage of its own free will. Give it a chance to learn.

Usually canaries are parent raised so they never feel a need to sit on your finger or fly on top of your head; besides, their nature is far to active for that. Give them the largest cage possible, keep it away from drafts and enjoy your bird. It will live a good long twelve to fifteen years or so.