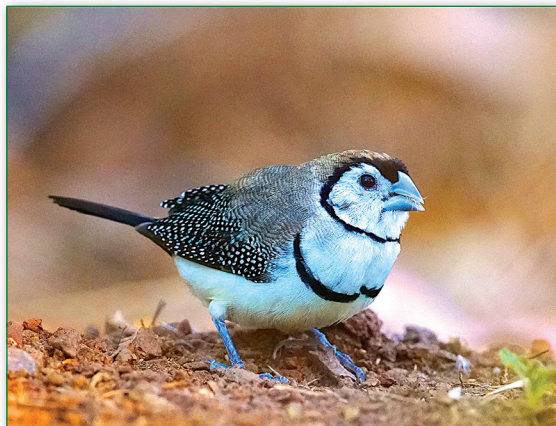


# Feather Fascination!

with local Birdwatcher,  
Jim Butler



## **DOUBLE-BARRED FINCHES: Search now!**



IT was a wonderful and unique sight for me last week! A flock of forty adult Double-barred Finches (10 cm, 10 g) beside the dirt track at Wacol, on the ground and on the seed-bearing grasses; and on the other side of the track, another flock of thirty juvenile Double-barred Finches mainly perched in

the seeded tall grasses. The whole seventy birds shared a blueish bill and a plumage colour palette, but both flocks still very distinct. These superb birds, granivorous and gregarious, with a bouncing, undulating flight, are prevalent at this time. They monogamously breed from January to May, so today they are congregating for comfort.

Double-barred Finches inhabit dry grassy woodlands, scrublands and farmlands. Dry seeds offer a diet rich in carbohydrates and fat, but poor in protein and water. Therefore, these finches have to drink at regular intervals; and because they are not strong fliers, they always live close to water. They also must consume some insects for protein. Dry grass seeds are abundant on the ground for much of the year, but become scarce when rain falls and they germinate.

Australian has about twenty grassfinches which is indicative of its ancient and present ecology. Double-barred Finches are the smallest by weight and bill-size; and bill size is directly related to the size of seed consumed. Many grassfinches are richly coloured (Gouldian Finch) or have spectacular markings (Double-barred Finch) and because of the ease with which most can be kept and bred in captivity, are universally popular cage birds. In particular, the Zebra Finch, closely related to the Double-barred Finch, is called "The Mouse of the Avian World" because they are the avian model in the same way that the white laboratory mouse has provided the mammalian model. The Zebra Finch is used across the world to study avian communication, the effects of heat on avian physiology and mate choice and sexual attraction amongst birds.

Search the grassy edges of dirt tracks near water

~ Jim

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