

Hand feed a baby Gouldian?

by Char Leigh

(article from ladygouldian.com)

The following is a story about my experience of hand feeding two baby Gouldians. This was quite a feat since I only had my birds for just about a year and didn't have a clue as to this feeding thing.

Proven Pair?

My Gouldian pair were proven breeders when I purchased them and they showed their stuff that season by having three clutches and feeding and caring for their young. The following season, they only laid three eggs with just two hatching. For some reason, they fed up to the time when the babies were just about to fledge. I quit hearing the chicks begging for food and did not see the parents entering the nest. I waited a few days being a novice and not knowing what to do and because I wanted to give the parents every opportunity to do their parenting as they had done in the past.

Hand feeding experience?

The little chicks came out and were too weak to get off the bottom of the cage and the parents had nothing to do with them. I would put them back into their nests and they would come out again. I was quite concerned to say the least so I contacted an experienced breeder friend and she said to definitely get them out of there and hand feed them. I was concerned before, but now I was petrified since the only hand feeding I had done was for my children and myself. I had an eye dropper which I sterilized and planned on using and the breeder brought over some Exact and showed me how to mix, etc. Now these little chicks were not interested in me sticking a dropper into their beaks, therefore, they wouldn't open them. My son was staying with me at the time, thank God, and was able to help me or I could never have done it myself. I didn't know what I was going to do until I remembered a lady in our Bird Club telling us how she hand fed her Zebra baby and had to use a toothpick to get his beak open. When I heard that, I thought what a terrible situation to be in, but then I knew that was where I was and knew what I must do and that it wasn't going to be a piece of cake.

Blind leading the blind

As I opened that very tiny beak, my son would put the food into it. I would say we were the blind leading the blind, both of us a nervous wreck. After a few feedings, the fledglings opened their beaks for us. We fed every few hours, scared to death that we would drown them or not know when they had enough. They did fine for about 4 days, even able to feed them through the bars of their little cage. The next morning, however, one little chick had died. I was so upset with disbelief, I cried for the loss of that little baby. What had I done wrong? Of course, I blamed myself. I conferred with my expert breeder friend and we came up with a possible explanation being that I wasn't able to keep the temperature up high enough in the late evening. We really weren't sure. Then she thought she could hear a rattle in the surviving chick when she held it to her ear. She said that this baby would most likely die too. I mixed an antibiotic type medication with each feeding and kept the cage much warmer, a heating pad underneath the tiny cage and a Reptile Black light on the top, then wrapped it with many towels. I prayed for this little creature of God's to live. I named him "Spartacus" to give him a strong name to help him pull through, and he did.

Spartacus or Spartygirl?

His name became "Spartygirl" because when colored in, he was a girl. She would step up onto my hand and sit on my arm or shoulder and was quite happy there. Even today, when she sees me, she flies to the nearest perch where she stays while I talk to her. I bring all the birds their little plate of food each day and when I come to her cage, I say, "Here's your food." She comes flying over to me and I hold the plate inside the cage while she eats off of it, all the while talking softly to her as I did from the beginning while hand feeding her. She is a little over a year old today and is very precious to me and still remains my pet.

Friends forever

I must tell you that I am tearing up now as I write this to all of you. It is one of life's most beautiful experiences, a tiny little bird with so much love and intelligence wanting to be my friend forever. I am thankful that I was able to save her life and share this with you. Perhaps my story will help someone else should the same situation arise, and they will know that they too can make it as I did.