

Reeve's Pheasant

(*Syrmaticus reevesi*)

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These rather large pheasants not only have a beautiful color pattern, but have "***personality plus.***" The males can be rather aggressive toward their keepers. Our mature male was always watched very carefully. Our children would not go into the pen with him and when we had to feed and water it was a stand-off on who would intimidate whom. I like to think that we won as we never got **jumped on**, but I am sure that the male pheasant thought that he got the best of us. We had a trio in a very large pen and they kept their tail feathers in good condition. To do justice to a beautiful long-tailed bird like the Reeve's one should have them in a large pen. Never put in another bird of any species with them or the poor thing will surely be killed. The young chicks are also aggressive toward others and will even fight among themselves. They are hardy and a pleasure to have around.

It is interesting to note that years ago these birds were released into the wilds by some Western states. The introduction did not succeed which was a disappointment. The flight of these birds was slow and deliberate which proved not to be much sport to the hunters, although much powder was used until the right "*lead*" was learned. Also, the Reeve's are very territorial and they ran out all of the other pheasants from their territory. It was earned that the Ringneck could not live in the same area with the Reeve's. There is said to be a few left in the wilds.

The male has a white crown surrounded by a black band which also covers the forehead, cheeks, ear coverts and nape. A white patch extends from beneath the eye onto the throat and neck; the facial skin and a narrow band above the eye are red. The mantle, back and rump are mustard-colored, each feather having a deep black border; the wing coverts are white with brown black and chestnut borders, the tertiaries and secondaries barred white, chestnut and black with a broad mustard-yellow tip bordered with black and dark chestnut. The primaries are blackish, barred with brown; the tail, of twenty rectrices, is extremely long, the two central pairs of feathers being silver with curved black and dark brown bars along the shaft and broad yellow margins. The outer tail feathers graduate from silver, with black and dark brown barring, to yellowish-cinnamon, vermiculated with black on the outer feathers. Upper breast has black and chestnut collar separating the white neck from a narrow band of mustard-yellow, black-bordered feathers; the remainder of the breast and flanks are chestnut, barred with black and white, graduating to mustard-yellow and deep cinnamon lower down. The abdomen, vent, thighs and under tail coverts are black.

The female has a reddish-brown crown, the rest of the head being buff with blackish Nichol band and ear coverts; the mantle is mottled black and dark chestnut with large arrow-shaped white markings. The back and rump are greyish-brown finely marked with black, the wing coverts mottled greyish-brown, white and buff with large black spots and primaries and secondaries reddish-brown barred with black. The tail is long and pointed,

irregularly barred with buff and dark brown; the shorter feathers are plain chestnut and black with white tip. The lower breast, sides and flanks are boldly mottled pale chestnut, grey and white, while the abdomen and under tail coverts are pale-buff (Wayre, 1969)ⁱ. One way to tell the strength and purity of the stock is to note the coloration of the white crown on the male. If it has dark streaks in it is said not to be as good as a bird with a pure white crown. Judges in shows look for the white crown and give extra points for this feature.

If you have a large-covered pen and want to fill it with some very interesting birds, try some Reeve's pheasants. You will enjoy them immensely and will spend many hours of enjoyment working with them. Be sure and not mix the chicks or even mature breeding birds.

ⁱ A Guide to the Pheasants of the World, Wayre, Philip. Country Life, London, 1969.

