

EDITORIAL**FOREIGN FINCHES—A POTENTIAL THREAT**

A recent report (Adelaide *Advertiser*, November 29, 1960, page 11), under the heading "Finches Next His Skin," describes how a man in Sydney tried to smuggle 85 finches into Australia by strapping them in bags to his body. The offender was fined £25.

It has recently been pointed out by Drs. K. Immelmann and D. L. Serventy that there are enough local species of finches to satisfy the needs of amateur bird fanciers, and the possible spread of foreign species as a result of aviary escapees was a serious threat to native birds. For instance, in North Queensland, the Spice Finch (*Lonchura punctulata*) was now very common in Cairns and Townsville and was displacing native species. This drab-colored import from South-east Asia, which also occurred about Sydney, had little to commend it. Another species, with even

greater potentialities for doing harm, was the Java Sparrow (*Padda oryzivora*). This bird is popular with fanciers. It is a large bird, with a huge rose-pink bill, black head, rump and tail, and large white cheek patches; the general coloration is blue-grey. The Java Sparrow is regarded as a pest in its homeland (Java), and every effort should be made to prevent its acclimatisation in Australia. Great vigilance is needed by the authorities to prevent the importation, legally or illegally, of aggressive and dangerous birds for avicultural purposes. Importations of foreign birds should only be permitted for bona fide scientific research by recognised institutions where the birds can be strictly controlled. It is the duty of anybody observing any foreign species unknown to them or new to an area to report the matter to the proper authorities.