The cockatiel, *Nymphicus hollandicus*, is undoubtedly one of the most popular species among aviculturists. Next to the Budgerigar, it is the most popular psittacine as a pet. It can be reproduced quite easily in just about any type of aviary. It is easy to sex (except for the pied) and when tame makes a very enchanting pet. One of the main reasons for its popularity among aviculturists is that several mutations have occurred in this species. There is a great fascination in acquiring two or more mutation colors on one bird. The following is a short description on each mutation.

**PIED MUTATION:** The pied was the first cockatiel mutation to occur in captivity. They first occurred in the aviaries of Mrs. R. Kersh and D. Putnam in 1949. I visited Mrs. Kersh in 1979 and she was still working with this mutation, and I might add, they were outstanding in color. The pied is recessive, so unlike the sex-linked mutation the hen can be split to pied.

The pied mutation has a great variance in color markings. No two birds are alike. Good pieds are considered by aviculturists as birds that are mostly clear (feathers which do not contain any melanin) in the wings, tail, head and chest. Another term used in the trade is "heavy pieds."

When breeding pieds you may or may not get heavily pied young from heavily pied parents. Some of the best heavy pieds that we produce come from light pied parents. The only good way to obtain heavy pieds consistently is to work with a line of heavy pieds for several generations. Tony Barrett has done this to quite a degree and is now one of the top breeders of this mutation.

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Though most heavy pieds are still unevenly marked, some outstandingly marked birds do occur. One of the best is a bird completely clear except for two evenly marked grey patches on the back of each wing.

The pied birds cannot be sexed by visual markings as can the other mutations. Sexing must be done by behavior. Split pieds often show several white or yellow flecked feathers on the back of the neck.
CINNAMON MUTATION: The cinnamon is mentioned in the literature to have occurred around 1950 in New Zealand. The bird we have now originated in Belgium in the late 60's. When in Europe, the term Isabelle was used, and at first I thought this was a similar looking mutation, but this was the cinnamon using a different name. The cinnamon runs from a light phase to a dark phase. As adults the cock bird is a darker shade than the hen. The melanin in the cinnamon is brown, not black, and gives the bird a tannish color. The different shades of color come from the amount of melanin produced.

An unusually marked cinnamon occurred that has splashes of color on its back and wings. On some the markings are scalloped and show quite a degree of shading. The term marbled cinnamon has been given to this bird. Though it has been bred through to the offspring, I do not believe this is a mutation. I have had some birds that darkened in color and others which lost this marking after several years. One observation is that this may be due to a dietary deficiency or that they cannot absorb some vitamin. I have had one case where feather growth problems occurred in the offspring.

The eyes of the cinnamon mutation appear much lighter than the normal grey bird and this also varies in degree of intensity. The cinnamon is sex-linked in origin and they can be sexed after the first molt as with the normal cockatiel.

LUTINO MUTATION: The lutino mutation occurred from two normal looking cockatiels in 1958 in Florida and belonged to C. Barringer. Mrs. E.L. Moon purchased this new mutation and was the person responsible for developing this mutation strain.

The lutino has red eyes and this can be seen in the nestlings before they open their eyes. This mutation started out as a weak strain but with outcrossing, this can be corrected. The lutino cockatiel has a tendency to have a large bald spot on the back side of the crest area. Even at this late date, they still must be outcrossed to correct this fault.

The lutino is sex-linked and can be sexed as adults like the normal bird. It certainly is not as easy from a distance, but in the hand the hen and immatures show the dark yellow barring on tail and underwing feathers. Since the melanin has been removed in the lutino the background color behind the barring is whitish yellow. This mutation has been wrongly called albino or white but most of the birds are a pale yellow but some have a good deep yellow color. Only through controlled breeding can this
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FALLOW MUTATION: The origin of fallows is not completely confirmed. It may have been in Europe or in America. It occurred in the early 70's. The fallow is very similar to the cinnamon mutation with the main difference being that it has red eyes and is recessive.

There is a great difference in color variation in fallows. Like the cinnamon, the cock bird is generally a darker shade. Because of its similarity with cinnamons it has not been as popular. An outstanding fallow appears almost two-toned. They are generally hens and the body and face color is golden yellow while the wings are tan. Good quality fallows are outstanding in color. This is not a well developed mutation and is still somewhat new. It appears that there is a dark strain and a light strain, but I presume this is because the light strain has been line bred to keep the good golden yellow color.

SILVER MUTATION: The silver mutation occurred in Europe in the late 60's. This mutation, like fallow, is recessive and contains red eyes. It may be due to this similarity that there has been some confusion between these two.

The silver I observed in Europe was silvery grey in color, but others I have seen in the U.S. are very similar in color to the cinnamon.

The silver is noted for poor eyesight. Some are hatched blind. This mutation needs a lot of work before it becomes established.

CHARCOAL MUTATION: This mutation occurred in Europe in the late 70's. It is very different from all the previous mutations in that it does not have the orange cheek patch. The Charcoal does not carry any yellow pigment; without the yellowish background, the bird appears to be sooty charcoal in color. Both sexes appear the same before the first molt and are totally grey in color through the head. After the first molt the male obtains a white-face. The name white-face has also been given to this mutation, but this would be accurate only for the adult males.

The charcoal is recessive and when bred with the lutino it will eventually produce the pure Albino. Since the lutino is sex-linked, the albino cannot be obtained immediately. In fact the odds are very low even after you get the right pairing.

Since the charcoal lacks all yellow, one can definitely distinguish it from all other mutations at day one in the nest. Instead of the normal yellowish color, the charcoal has white down.

This mutation will certainly change the cockatiel world in a few years because it is so radically different than the previous mutations.

ALBINO MUTATION: This mutation was obtained from the Charcoal mutation. As soon as a mutation occurred that lacked all yellow it was only a matter of breeding it to a lutino to eventually acquire the pure albino.

The albino I observed in 1980 in the Netherlands was completely snow white. There was no cheek patch. The bird was a female. Usual mating to get the albino was 1:16 and is always a female. The generic pairing I observed would theoretically produce one female albino out of 16 babies. The next generation of this pairing would produce albinos of both sexes at the ratio of one to eight. I am certain that this is not the end of new mutations in cockatiels and this is what makes working with cockatiels so exciting.
Charcoal cockatiel, the charcoal mutation is new from Europe. It contains no yellow coloration and does not retain the orange cheek patch. The pure albino can be obtained through this mutation.