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The Ideal

by Alf Ormerod

Whilst on my visit to the States and at the "All American" at Conn. I was naturally brought into a number of discussions regarding the proposed change of a new drawing of an "Ideal" budgerigar. As a member of ABS I was fully aware of the situation through the monthly Bulletins and letters I receive from ABS members, most of whom are closely linked with this matter as judges, directors, etc.

The object of an "Ideal" drawing is to give newcomers to the fancy an idea of what a top class budgerigar should look like and for judges to use as a guide line. I say a guide line as you cannot depict on a flat sheet of paper the living object as it is in a show cage and judges can only judge what comes before them good or bad.

We must also bear in mind that the drawing should be something that could be achieved but if that came to pass the bird would still be able to fly and reproduce, as otherwise it would be a waste of time and effort.

It is generally agreed that fertility has declined over the years as we get farther and farther away from nature and the wild budgerigars that are the ancestors of our birds today.

To make a drawing is no easy task. You can ask a painter or an artist to put on paper a village scene or a landscape and he or she can produce what they see before them and the same person if they had a budgerigar before them would produce a good likeness but when you tell them, "Now I want this but more frontal rise and more backskull and a thicker neck," they are lost because they are not budgerigar fanciers with years of experience behind them. They may not know that when you alter one thing you have to alter many other things so that you retain balance and poise in the depicted bird. I have had a lot of ex-

perience in this field (not that I can draw or paint) but when I was on the staff of a large Polytechnic College I had access to the Arts Dept. and the head of the department was a particular friend.

When the English B.S. decided to have a new ideal picture made, I was one of the committee chosen to bring it about. I sought help from my friend and other members of his staff but soon realized that without the general knowledge of breeding and exhibiting budgerigars they were not able to achieve what was wanted. At this time I came in contact with Eric Peake who was an art teacher, a good photographer and a fancier, so combining all his knowledge with what I had in mind we finally, after months of work, came up with what was a good drawing. He did a front view, side view and back view all to the same scale of 8½" in length. The front and side views looked good but you wouldn't have thought the back view was the same bird yet all measurements were correct. Have you ever looked closely at a budgie from the back and noticed how poor the best bird can look?

In the early days when budgerigars were shown as "Foreign Birds" there was no ideal drawing for judges to work to but even then it was recognized by a judge that head quality was one of the main features to be considered; a small headed bird always looked snaky in appearance even though the overall shape was more like a pencil compared to our present day exhibition birds.

I believe it was just before the last war that we had our first pictorial ideal. Then as today there was the same problem of how to depict on a flat sheet of paper the living thing, but it was something to work on.

The shape and size of our birds improv-



The "Ideal" was Best in Show twice in succession at the B.S. World Show at Leicester in 1975 and 1976. It is the only bird to date to win the title twice. Eric H. Peake, one of Britain's foremost bird artists, painted this picture from a number of photographs and slides.



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ed so rapidly that in 1951 another ideal was adopted as by that time the head, neck and throat had really surpassed those of the pictorial ideal but were still in keeping with the written standard and I feel one must always remember the written word when looking at the pictorial. This reads as follows "Head, large round wide and symmetrical when viewed from any angle, curvature of skull commencing at cere to lift outward and upward continuing over the top and to base of head in one graceful sweep". As birds continued to improve and more and more birds were appearing on the show bench to match the ideal especially in head, the picture was again altered (in 1968) in these respects but still maintained the overall balance, and this is still in operation today.

It was felt that no useful purpose could be service by having a picture of an ideal cock and hen as we once did, and I fully agreed with this decision, as a pictorial illustration plus the written word can only be taken as a guide line and it is nature that determines which egg will contain the best-headed bird and whether it be a cock or a hen.

When judging a class of hens as a mixed section of cocks and hens for the section awards, the adjudicator can only select from what is before him. You might ask how a judge, after deciding his best of the Green series and the other sections of the well known colours, can go on to select his best rare, best clear-wing, etc. The answer is the same, the judge has to select the best from what is before him even though the birds don't generally compare with what he has judged previously but he still works on the same outline and the description of the bird.

Let us face it, when a person reaches the stage when he becomes a judge he should know what he is looking for and have a mental picture of the ideal imprinted on his mind.

Very few birds compare with our present ideal so when judging I am looking for an example cock or hen that is balanced throughout and showing no very bad points such as a dropped tail or badly crossed wings. Even if such a bird has an excellent head, mask and spots, it should never win a good class as the bad faults cancel out its good points.

One sometimes remarks that a particular bird is a cock headed hen which means that the head has more frontal rise than is usually found, but even in the days when we had the two ideals no judge would put this down as a fault if the neck, shoulders, body and the rest of the bird conformed to the recognised standard. The show points of a good hen are as writ-

ten in the standard of the ideal bird so therefore it must possess a good head, face and deep mask. The beak must be well set into the face and the eye positioned well away from the front. The eye too near the cere gives a pinched-face appearance. In order to show off the head at its best, width is needed between the eyes. The neck should be short and thick and this gives desirable shoulders.

Wings must be about two fifths of the total length of the bird set well to the body and not crossed and when steady on the perch the bird should stand at approximately 30 degrees from vertical. Spots should be evenly spaced. I prefer a bird with smaller evenly spaced spots than one with big spots which touch each other with a big gap in the centre. Colour must be an even shade and not patchy, the tail straight and tight with two long feathers.

An 8½" bird is a big bird, to test it yourself put a tape measure cut at 8½" inside a show cage on the back at the angle of 30 degrees and you will soon realize what I mean.

The English top birds are recognized all over the world as the bird, and all the good birds in every country including Scotland have been bred from them.

The "Ideal" we work to is still good enough for us and it is only the odd bird that comes along as an outstanding specimen that matches up to it, one such bird was the Dark Green Cock that gained Best in Show twice in succession at the B.S. World Show at Leicester in 1975 and 1976, beating on both occasions over 4000 other exhibits, and was the only bird to date to win this coveted honour twice. Perfect drawings of this bird have been done by Eric Peake from a number of photographs and slides. What better ideal could one wish for and aim to produce?

The top breeders of the USA are still importing birds from England every year for upgrading their original stock from English lines, so the pattern must be right and I consider that the 8½" bird is really as far as we can go with all the other points in proportion, if we are not going to ruin all we have worked for.

To the committee who are working on the ABS ideal, I say think hard and long. What is the use of trying to breed a 9" bird that if achieved would not be able to fly properly or holdup its head, and what about breeding? Poor fertility is at present the major headache all over the world regarding the top size show specimens and one of the main reasons why so many newcomers are giving up this great hobby, which has for many years been the greatest ever small livestock hobby for the working man.

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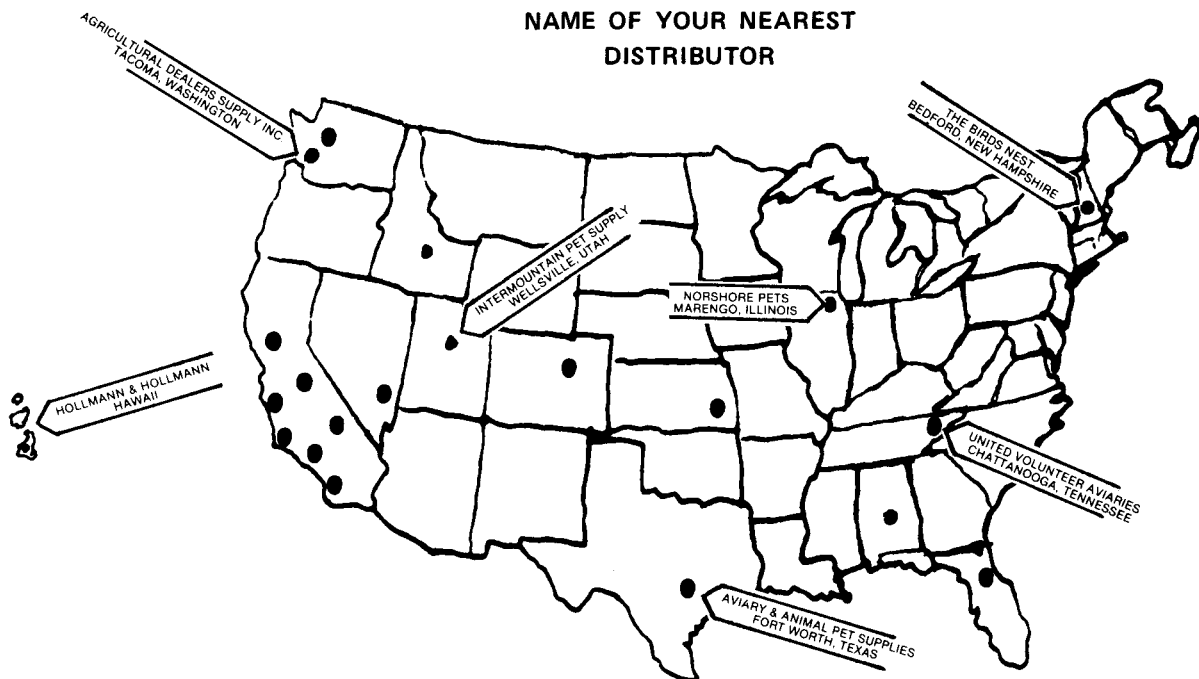
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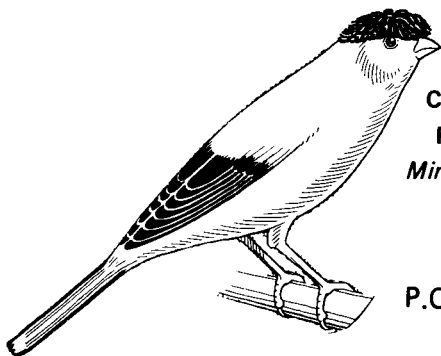
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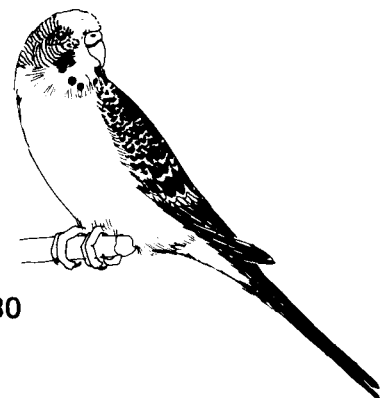
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Color-bred Canaries Carl Walsch
American Singers Madeline Mysliwiec
English Budgies Don Langell
Foreign Birds & Amer. Budgies

. Conrad Meinert
for information contact:

Show Managers
Hank and Gail Gievicky
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**November 16-18, 1980
16th Annual Great Western
Budgerigar Society's
Great Western Roundup**

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Rosemead Community Recreation Center
3936 Muscatel Ave., Rosemead, CA

for information contact:

Mrs. Valerie Sarate
1879 Redding Way
Upland, CA 91786

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32nd National Cage
Bird Show**

Hertz Skycenter Inn
Jacksonville International Airport
Jacksonville, FL

for information contact:
Harold Sodemann
Rt. 5, Paola, KS 66071

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for information contact:
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For info. contact show sec.

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