

# Budgerigars of Today, United Kingdom, United States

by Eric Peake  
United Kingdom

The breeding and exhibiting of budgerigars has always been a challenge to the serious fancier, the not-so-serious being content with the colour production and the breeding of numbers. The challenge the budgie gives, enables the fancier to select the good qualities in his stock and to reject the faults. When one takes up the hobby of budgerigar breeding, the initial feeling is to breed as many as possible, the more serious aspect of selection comes at a later date.

When the times comes to programme your thoughts towards a breeding season, there are important facts to consider with your stock. The quality of the youngsters to be bred is the foremost thought in the breeder's mind; to plan the pairings is vital many weeks before actual putting up of the birds. Taking into consideration the quality of the stock's background, we must now make visual assessment of the bird's good points and its bad, omitting in our mind the most serious faults that will do our stud no good. The most significant area to work from is the size and style of the birds. Size is paramount in the show world, style brings that judge's eye a little nearer to your bird. The problem with exhibiting budgerigars is that not everyone sees the bird in the same kind of light. This may be a good thing to give variety, but we must stick to an "Ideal" model to base our lines upon.

The majority of budgerigars have inbred faults. This can be observed when judging because some birds show a combination of good and bad faults. To explain to the fancier how to get rid of the faults, can only be discussed along the lines of experience in both fanciers. To tell a newcomer to the fancy the same points, sometimes proves very difficult because of the lack of breeding experience. To this fancier it is vital that he has a picture of the Ideal bird before him at all times to work from and to study. The side view of the Ideal as printed by the Budgerigar Society, shows the grace and style, yet has a boldness in its facial expression. This view

shows that the back line of the bird must be straight with no curves or bumps, the wings must be clear with solid lacings and the body colour even and rich.

When I worked on this painting of the Ideal bird I had to bear in mind that this bird must be that little bit out of reach. Many fanciers say they have a bird approaching the Ideal, but on close examination the faults are in evidence in the bird. In the United Kingdom we have many superb show budgerigars which come from different parts of the country. There are definite lines of breeding coupling up these birds because this is where size comes in. The main winners in the U.K. are bold big budgies which stem back from years of concentrated breeding. When we see a one-off winner this usually can be traced back to a large line of birds.

In the exhibiting of budgerigars we will always have the problem of clear saddles on opalines and slight ticking on the head. These must be bred out of the birds by selective breeding over the years. In the saddle problem of the opaline, this has come about by the density of the melanine in the variety and the breeding of visual bad quality birds. Sometimes when we get a clear saddle on the bird, we get what is known as "thumb markings" on the wings. This is where the lacings of the body colour washes in to the black. The more serious problem of ticking has found its predominance in the opalines, but more normals are now showing ticking. To make it perfectly clear, the crown of the bird must be clear of any marks from the cere to the cap end just behind the eye, as seen in the Ideal.

A good front, along with the side, is a must in the exhibition bird. To show this I have shown a very good light green cock bred by Jim Moffatt of Scotland. You will see in this picture that the crown, when viewed from the front, shows a nice circle of yellow on the head. As the bird was photographed it turned its head slightly, this tends to show a split in the mask. Never judge a bird's qualities by a photo-

graph. See the bird in the flesh to make correct observations.

One of the guide lines for size in an exhibition bird is to look at the bird on eye level. That is, at the end of the perch in the show cage, see where the slope of the back line cuts through the bird. In the picture you will see the bird's head is a good way above the line, many birds have the line cut through the eye or even above.

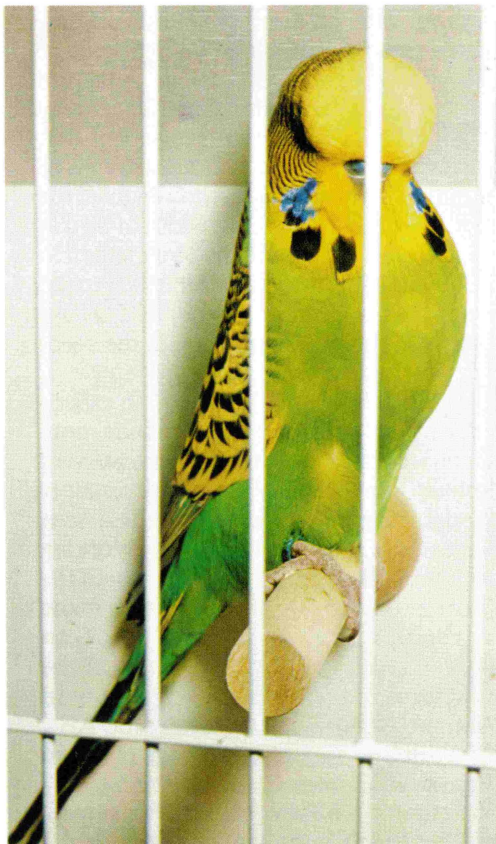
When we are breeding budgerigars we can sometimes assess the qualities of young birds in the nest. The picture of the young opaline grey green was taken at eight weeks old. This bird was bred by me in 1977. It won the first "Champion" bird in North Wales, taking best in show at the age of eleven weeks. As this bird was an outstanding baby it grew to be a big bird as an adult. The photograph shows the width of head this bird had, this is very important in the breeding of good budgies. The width of head comes from background qualities in the family, rarely does it appear from the birds showing narrow heads. We also want good depth of mask to carry the spots. Too big spots are an eyesore on a short masked bird, therefore it is important to have the depth of mask in the family as well as the width of head.

Having judged nearly all the top shows in the U.K. I was delighted to accept a judging engagement in America in May of 1981. Along with the judging, I gave talks to societies and showed slides of the the main winners in the U.K. My overall impression of the birds that I saw and judged in the states is that they were of high quality, many birds out of the cards were there for either condition faults or not coming up to the standard. The show at Delaware was a well run event with some very enthusiastic people in charge. Birds came from a wide area, from Florida to Ohio. The judging system, being totally different from ours, took a while to get used to but having mastered it, I soon got down to the selection of the birds before me.

The champion section provided some excellent exhibits, the most successful fancier being Don Langell of Massachusetts. His birds were powerful and showed very well. They also had good size in both cocks and hens. There was a stamp of uniformity in them which, of course, is the trade mark of a good stud. Bob Mello had some good birds in the intermediate section, he won the special for best. The birds in the intermediate were good but slightly below their U.K. cousins. Novice birds were level with our average beginners section in the U.K. We have some good birds in beginner sections in England which is due to the fact that we have more shows and more people keep budgies per square mile. The British fancier just starting out has the advantage



Champion opaline grey-green



Normal light green cock owned by J. Moffat, Scotland.



THE BUDGERIGAR SOCIETY'S IDEAL BUDGERIGAR

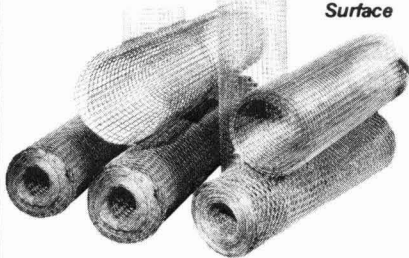
*In the ideal budgerigar we have a bird standing at the correct angle of thirty degrees from the vertical, with neatly fitting and well tucked-in beak, and good forward rise and upward lift of skull sweeping over to an excellent back-line. The eye is well placed, alert and fearless, and there is a good deep mask with well rounded and evenly spaced spots set not too high on the mask. The markings fall back from the eye to give that greatly desired free-from-ticking look which is so important. Excellent width of face is clearly indicated as is thickness of neck. The breast-line is right, conveying just enough depth to give a proper balance overall. Nicely cut away between the legs, this bird stands just sufficiently high above the perch. The wings are cushioned neatly on the body giving an uninterrupted line from head to tip of tail.*

painting by Eric Peake



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over the American fancier, having a wider range of fanciers to select from.

One point in the American shows I thought was very good was the small plastic finger draw put in the cage front after judging. This is an excellent idea for the correct amount of water. I was also very impressed with the higher slope on the show cage of the American standard. In England our slope is about an inch lower. My reason for favouring the American cage was that it gave the bird much more headroom in the upright position. When the eye balanced the two cages side by side, the American cage gave the impression of more room inside, but it dwarfed the bird against the English version. At the particular show that I judged, the time seemed to go very quickly and there was limited allowance to view the birds. In the U.K. we have longer to view the birds, thus enabling the individual classes to be scrutinised. I found the competition very keen, the overall interest to be high and the sense of humour at its best. I cannot account for other parts of the U.S.A. but the East Coast certainly has it on the right lines.

One of the pleasant aspects of my visit was my stay with various American budgie fanciers. While I spent time viewing the Art scene, naturally I kept an eye on the birds (both varieties) to see the competition. My first and longest stay was with Harold Trethaway, of Wilkes Barre, PA. He went out of his way to make my stay a pleasant one. We talked and talked about practically everything. His home is a miniature smallholding, with dogs, modena pigeons, tropical fish, canaries and of course some fine budgies. He showed me some good examples of Light Greens, a variety that seems to breed a lot of birds that just do not make it, though Harold had some quantity that had proved the exception. I particularly liked a pied cock that had done some winning. He also had some good pairs just going down. I would liked to have seen their offspring. The birds I saw were a balanced set with style and type. He must have a problem when sorting out as there were many in my eyes that would have done a lot of good on the English circuit.

My next stay was with Don Langell of Boxford, MA. With only two days at this fancier's home, I wanted to see as much as possible. I had heard a lot about Don's super birds and here was a chance to see them for myself. His delightful home set in the beautiful wooded area, reminded me of parts of England though his house was truly American. I had been asked many times how do the birds in America compare with those of England. Here at Langell's birdroom were many that would take top honours in the U.K. I was in my

element looking at such large powerful birds, many good light greens and grey greens were the product of careful selection. I saw the fine cock bird that won the "All American" in 1980. What a superb example of a grey green. His clean birdroom smelt of success, his fertility and nest quota were the envy of many a fancier and I sure wish I lived near to see the years ahead that this fancier will score big with his birds. I would like to take this opportunity to say to you all, go and see this fanciers birds. You won't be disappointed.

Travelling through beautiful countryside I spent a day with Ken and Libby Tefft, their Rhode Island home housing their neat and tidy bird room. I saw some first rate examples of birds in the blue series, one good young violet certainly had the depth of colour so lacking in today's exhibition violets. The amount of work Ken and Libby do for the budgie fancy in America is colossal to say the least. As retiring ABS secretaries, they deserve a good rest to concentrate on their birds, I wish them every success in the future.

My last visit on the fancier circuit was to Gordon Trethaway, in New Jersey. Again I saw some first rate birds, in a neat and very well organised birdroom below their house. Gordon had some excellent albinos and some first rate pids, mainly in the blue series. His skyblues were some of the deepest coloured birds of this variety I have seen for some time. Showing in partnership with his brother, Harold, I saw again some excellent normal light greens. They had style and good colour. A feature of Gordon's birdroom was the lengthy flight with its perching arrangement that ran lengthways. This gave a superb view of the birds in rows. This method enabled the fancier to measure off the width of bird at a glance, also it showed the bird's length to its advantage. I was very impressed to see again such a clean birdroom, as I always believe cleanliness is essential in the keeping of any cage bird.

Visiting America was indeed an experience I will never forget. I was made more than welcome by the fanciers, a very homely atmosphere all round. I certainly thought the quality of birds I had seen were above what was expected. Working with the birds at present should benefit the fancy in time to come. Having been made a member of the ABS and the AFA, I can now keep track of the show results, all the functions, etc. that are going on in America. I hope to be visiting the AFA Convention in Washington, D.C. in August 1982, when I shall be on holiday for a month with my family. I wish everyone in America all the very best in the forthcoming breeding season and the 1982 shows.

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