



IN SEARCH OF CANARIES...

by Glenn A. Mitchell
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The Belgian Fancy

Once again we come into a breed of canary that is verging on the brink of extinction. This is one of the Old World Varieties and is a most enjoyable bird. This is one of the loud singers and it is one that keeps the volume of song going in the house from morning until night. This bird is attempting a comeback. It remains to be seen if it can make it. It will, if enough people care about canaries and the breeding of valuable species to bring it back into general acceptance. Currently it is rather expensive but it is such an enjoyable bird that an avid breeder would be foolish to pass up obtaining a breeding pair of these birds.

It seems that over the years the Belgian and the Frill have been crossed and I am sure it was to the

mutual benefit of both. Today one can find a few frilly feathers on the front of a Belgian and some of the judges seem to think that this is the way it should be. It seems that the Scotch Fancy is one of this trio that makes them all tick and behave in their own peculiar fashion. If you have never seen these birds in action then you better look them up — they are a delight.

There are societies that deal only with Old World Varieties. It is a shame, though, that they are not more vocal or not more into bringing these birds into the fore as they should be. It seems that I am the only one making noise about them, although I know many people raise them. The parrot people are shouting from the roof tops about the endangered species — so the canary people should be shouting just as loudly, as some of our birds are just as endangered. Also, they don't bite!

The stance of the Belgian Fancy is strange — as is the Scotch Fancy. The head would be considered "snaky" and is small in proportion to the body. The crown should be flat and the extension of the neck is such that it gives it an overbalanced appearance. The legs are long, the body slim and the bird looks undernourished. However, this bird has the vitality of a dozen normals and can hold his own in the singing, eating and displaying categories.

This bird is judged for body type. This is the only reason for the close and careful breeding — to maintain this particular body characteristic. Color is of no importance in the judging of this bird, therefore, color feeding is not at all essential. People have a

penchant for light colors in birds and ask for the yellow, whites and variegates. I am a green advocate. I love the green bird and I find that I get so much satisfaction out of this color and the birds always perform perfectly for me. After my stable of birds turns all to green, I am the happiest breeder in the whole area.

Judging this bird is quite simple. The head should be rather oval, small and compact. The neck should be slender and long. The shoulders are massive and square giving a remarkable hump-backed appearance. The back is well filled, long and straight. The body is long and tapers toward the waist. The breast is deep through the body and the wings are long and compact and should be carried close to its body. The tail is long, narrow and straight and gives the appearance of being very stiff. The long, straight legs tend to show quite a length of thigh joint and they are held straight and stiff which enables the bird to assume its typical attitude when in position in the show cage.

The Belgians are a hard feather bird. They show themselves as clean, neat, smooth with an easy erect posture that belies the obvious balance. The head is actually depressed with the neck reaching out to its limit and the beak pointing directly downward towards the bottom of the cage. You can also find this same look in the Scotch Fancy. Once you have seen the bird you will always recognize it. Once you have seen it, you are more than likely to fall in love with it as it is a delight of the bird world.

Actually there is no scientific investigation recorded on the Belgian Fancy. Its characteristic high shoulder, "nervy" action and ability to hold a position are probably the results of some sort of mutation, developed by selective breeding and training. This bird originated in Europe, hence the title of Old World Varieties, and, even as here, there are few of these birds left. Try to find them if you are interested in conservation and in breeding to restore a breed that is disappearing. But, at all costs, don't mix these with common birds as you will lose the value of the bird and all of your work will be for naught! ➤

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