

# The Border Fancy Canary

(1978 National Cage Bird Show)

by Sig Larson  
Utica, Ohio

The 1978 National Cage Bird show was held in Atlanta, Georgia, and a good time was had by all. Over 1100 birds were benched, including 150 Border Fancy Canaries. The Atlanta area is not known to have a large supply of Borders, so most of these exhibits were brought in from the east and midwest sections of the country.

One of the problems confronting Border Fancy Breeders at the present time is an argument concerning the judging standard to be used. There are two groups, IBFCC (International Border Fancy Canary Club, which is located in the Midwest) and the ABFCC (American Border Fancy Canary Club, with headquarters in the Northeast), who have prepared standards for judging the Border Fancy Canary. Both groups use the same picture standard, (two-dimensional) and the same basic word description and point scores for various features of the bird. Both standards restrict the size of the bird to "not more than 5½ inches in length." The ABFCC also sponsored a three-dimensional figure for the bird.

Some breeders of the Border Canary are presently trying to change the standard to delete the requirement "not more than 5½ inches in length" so that Borders can be shown in any size up to that of a Norwich. The primary reason for this change is reflected in the fact that larger birds are winning shows in England, Scotland, Ireland, etc. I understand that the standard is the same in the English-speaking European countries as it is here in the U.S.A. If this is the case, then judges who make show winners of large Borders (over 5½ inches long) are cheating on the standard now in effect.

Why is there such an interest in a large bird? The reason is said to be a more pleasing Border with more "substance" of body. It is true, of course, that the larger the bird the more body that can be bred into

the species. A 6-inch bird will give more opportunity to breed a more pleasing, prize-winning bird than one of 5½ inches. A 6½ or 7-inch bird will give more opportunity to raise a good bird than one restricted to 6 inches. Where do we stop if we eliminate any restriction as to size?

History in England indicates that when the Border Fancy was of unrestricted length the larger bird won at the shows. Crosses were made with a Norwich and the resulting "working birds" were shown as Borders. Feather structure became loose and long, the Norwich brow was common, and heavy bodies were in vogue. The jaunty, middle-sized Border that we know now disappeared from the show bench. The English Standard was then reduced to "not more than 5½ inches in length."

It is tough enough to breed good Borders to the restricted standard we have now. Think ahead to the problems that would abound if we went to 7-inch Borders. What was a good Border for one judge would not be large enough for another and, strangely enough, they would both be right. The breeder would have a hopeless task and would put a large cock to a small hen hoping for a variety of size in the offspring. This would not seem to be a very scientific approach to breeding.

So our present judging standard for the Border Fancy Canary is listed for the Fancier and is the same for both IBFCC and ABFCC. Many American judges pick a bird larger than 5½ inches long. I judge by the standard we have now and will do so until it is changed. Change should only come if a majority of Border breeders in the U.S.A. are in favor. It is fine to cooperate with the approach taken by our European neighbors, but I feel that the American breeders should decide changes on their merits and not blindly follow programs set up overseas.

## Border Fancy Judging Standard

Borders  
Scale of Points

HEAD, Small, round and neat looking	10 pts.
BODY, Back and chest well filled and nicely rounded	10 pts.
WINGS, compact and carried close to the body, just meeting at the tips	10 pts.
LEGS, of medium length, showing little or no thigh	5 pts.
PLUMAGE, close, firm and fine in quality	15 pts.
COLOR, Rich, soft and pure	10 pts.
TAIL, Close packed and narrow	10 pts.
POSITION, Semi-erect, standing at 60° angle	10 pts.
CARRIAGE	10 pts.
HEALTH, Condition and cleanliness	10 pts.
TOTAL 100 pts.	

As the 1978 Judge for the Border Fancy at the Atlanta National Show, I attempted to restrict the winners to the required length. Some very good, over-sized birds were not considered. The result was that some breeders were happy and some were sad. The winners were happy with me, the Judge, and the losers were mad at me. What else is new? We cannot all be winners all the time and I guess our only condolence is that there will be a new and better judge next year.

After 15 years of judging bird shows I have to come to three conclusions: (1) The breeder can never be objective about his own bird. (2) Many bird breeders have never before been in competition and therefore do not know how to lose. (3) As a judge, my only responsibility is to satisfy myself that I have done my best under the circumstances.

A medium-sized self green Border won the 1978 Kellogg Trophy and it was later the winner of the Scannell Award as the Best Bird in the National Show. It was the property of Robert Morrison of Detroit, Michigan. It was his first Border Canary Kellogg winner. He should be congratulated on raising a fine bird.

Maybe by the time the 1979 National Show comes around the IBFCC and ABFCC will have arrived at a mutually agreeable compromise which will change the present standard, hopefully for the better, and will present the written version of that compromise to all Border Breeders. If no written changes are made, then I hope all judges will unite behind the standard we have now and will choose the best bird that conforms to that standard.

Atlanta, the home of National Show President Ray Johnson, put on a very successful National Show and we hope to see all of you in Los Angeles, California, in 1979.



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