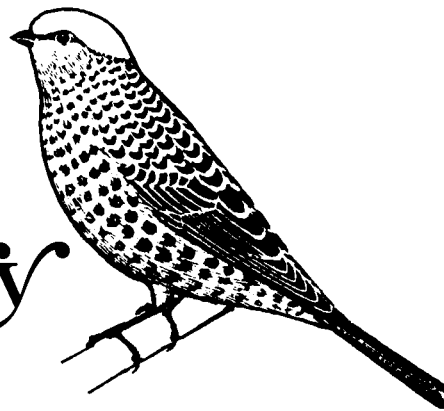


The Lizard Canary

by Kenneth Stubbart
Columbus, Ohio



One of the most fascinating and least shown canaries to appear on the show bench is the Lizard Canary. It can easily be recognized as the canary with the dark speckled feathers and the orange cap. It is the only member of the canary kingdom that changes the design of its feather marking when it moults. This makes it a unique kind of canary.

The lizard canary is grouped with the "type canaries" in most show catalogs even though it is not primarily judged for conformation, stance, or the other "type" characteristics. It might be more properly classed with the color bred since it is bred for controlled penciling or spangling (to be defined later) and for the orderly pattern of these markings. It is further bred and judged for its ground color. The lizard canary existed as a breed long before most types and certainly existed much before the wildest dream of color-bred canaries. It is the only present day canary to be judged for the designs and the placement of these designs in the feathers (the London Fancy is extinct). It deserves much more attention among the breeders as well as in the show whether it is benched with the type section or in the color sections.

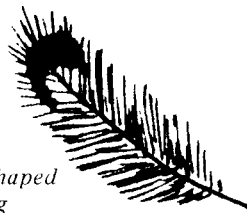
History of the Lizard Canary

The existence of the lizard canary can be traced back before the 1850's when special organizations were formed for it in Great Britain. The birds possibly originated and at least were most popular among the French Huguennots. These canaries were exported from France into England where they will have a stronghold even after the bombings of World War II. The **Lizard Canary Association**¹ of Great Britain and the **Confederation of All Type Canaries Club**² in the United States are consistently promoting the breeding, exhibiting and upgrading of these fascinating birds.

Description of the Lizard Canary

The lizard is a mutation of the self green canary. It too is a self bird and is recessive

to a normal self green canary. It has very dark plumage, legs, feet and beak. The lizards, like other canaries, are grouped into hard- and soft-feathered birds. The hard-feathered birds are called **gold lizards** and the buff or soft-feathered birds are called **silver lizards**. Their ground color is an even bronze which is produced from both color breeding and color feeding.



Crescent shaped marking

The most important show feature of the lizard canary is the spangling which is that chain of dark crescent markings that extends in parallel rows from the beak to the tip of the tail. These crescent shaped designs are known as **spangles**. They are not apparent in the fledgling, but they become apparent after the baby moult. This characteristic continues into the successive moult when the tip of each feather shows a slight light fringe between the crescent and the tip of the feather. If a bird loses a feather, a light tip will appear on the replacement. That single feather is very obvious among the other dark feathers on an otherwise evenly marked bird. This is not a serious fault, but it is certainly enough to diminish the show value of the bird when it is shown beside another nearly equally well qualified exhibit. When the lizard is moulted the first year, these white tips appear on all of its feathers, but **this does not disqualify it as a show bird** since most shows have classes for the old and the young lizards. It is a myth that flighted birds cannot be entered in shows and win!

The spanglings or crescent-shaped markings extend down the back of the bird from the cap (or from the upper mandible in the case of a non-capped bird) to the end of the tail. Each feather in the wing, the coverts, and the tail is edged in bronze. This is referred to as **lacing**. These spanglings or columns of crescents should

not be broken or staggered. They lose some of the defined crescent shape on the breast and flanks of the bird where they are known as **rowings**, but they still maintain distinct and even columnar markings.

Spangling and rowing are of the uppermost importance to the lizard canary when it appears on the judge's bench. It is given 45 points for these distinctive feather markings. The breakdown is as follows:

1. 25 points are issued for the spangling down the back to the tip of the tail.
2. 10 points are allowed for the rowings down the bird's throat and breast. These tend to thin toward the center of the breast and may be nonexistent between the legs and on past the vent. The vent should never be white or showing patches of variegation around or near it.
3. 10 points are allowed for the black tail and wings.

In addition to these 45 points the judging standard allows 15 points for other feather patterns. They are as follows:

1. 10 points are also given for the distinct spangling over the head of the non-capped lizard,

or

2. 10 points are allowed for the cap (which will be described later).
2. 5 points are given for the eyelash. This is a distinctive line of dark feathers that extend from the upper mandible over the eye and slightly behind the eye. It gives a clear definition and a neat appearance to the cap.

The Cap

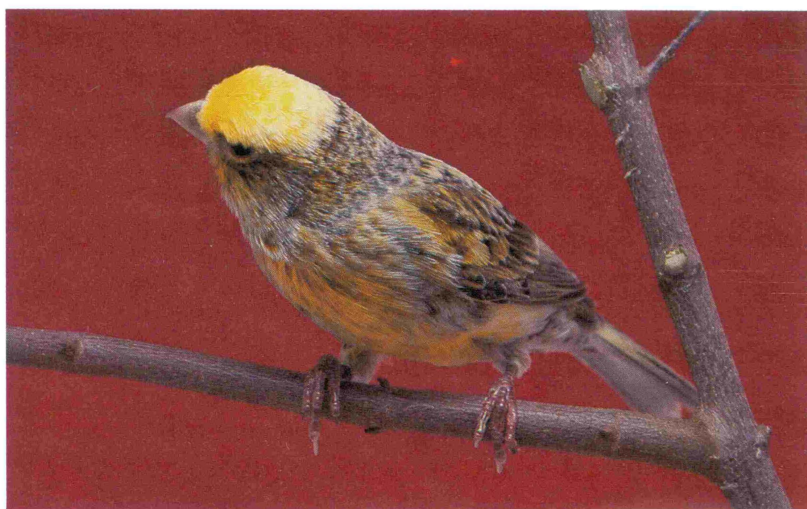
The lizard canary's cap is probably its most easily recognized characteristic, particularly to the novice. In color, it is a distinct orange and it extends from the upper mandible to the base of the skull. It is oval or thumbnail in shape.

Early in the production of this bird, it was believed that if a gold clear cap was

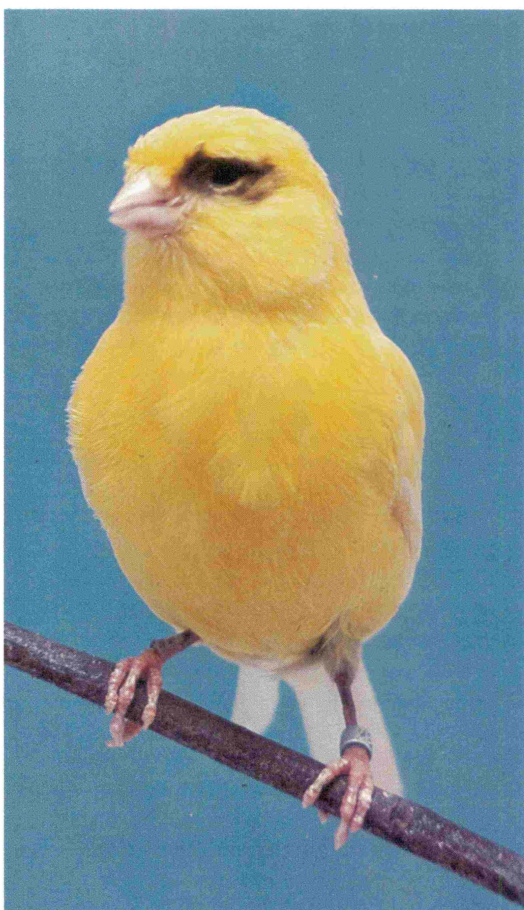
photo by Ken Stubbart



Gold Lizard, owner/breeder Ken Stubbart



Silver Lizard, owner/breeder Pearl Bush



*Yellow Border,
owner/breeder David Gillilan/Lee Mize*



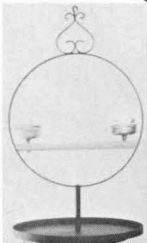
*Cinnamon dilute, owner/breeder David Gillilan/Lee Mize
Varigated Blue and White, owner/breeder David Gillilan/Lee Mize*

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bred to a silver clear cap, only clear capped or nearly clear capped birds would be produced. Only clear capped lizards were accepted on the show bench. This pairing soon began to increase the size of the cap. These breedings produced two faults. The least serious of the two is the "over capped" lizard (see illustrations) in which the cap begins to run down the back of the bird's neck. The over capped area may extend farther down the neck on one side than it does on the other. It is much the same with the second and more serious fault known as "bald face." This characteristic is obvious when the cap extends over the side of the head below the bird's eye(s) and lower mandible, thus doing away with the eyelash.

The correct breeding is clear cap to broken cap. This pairing will most generally produce the following:

Broken Cap — including nearly clear cap to nearly non cap. It is a description of a cap with feathers breaking the defined edge of the cap. It is officially described as "one where the head and the neck feathers disqualify it from being classed as either clear or nearly clear cap or as a non or nearly non cap lizard."

Clear Cap — Previously described.

Patch Cap — This is a cap that has a patch or spot of dark feathers within the cap. (It should not be confused with "patchy coloring," which refers to uneven ground coloring. This is not common with modern methods of color feeding.)

Ticked Cap — Refers to a very small patch of dark feathers within the cap that equals less than one tenth of the area of the cap.

A general rule for pairing as far as the cap is concerned is that two birds showing clear or nearly clear caps will produce like young while non capped or birds showing little characteristics of caps will throw like young.

Color Feeding

The lizard canary requires color feeding if it is to be entered in shows. The color feed for the lizard may be the same strength as that fed to the other red birds, or it may be used anywhere between full strength and half strength as long as the birds develop the smooth even bronze ground color. Varying the strength or amount of color food during the moult may produce a patchy coloring, which is considered a serious fault. Since the head and neck are the last areas to get new feathers in a moult, if color feeding is not consistent the orange cap will be the first and most noticeable patch area. The ideal bird has an even bronze ground color with a satiny texture to the feathers.

Show Characteristics

The ideal lizard should therefore have the following characteristics:

1. Deep even bronze ground color.
2. Satiny feather texture.
3. Compact wing and tail carriage with the wing tips touching above the tail forming continuous spangling from the cap to the tip of the tail.
4. Spangling on the back (These are clearly defined with no light tips among the unflighted feathers.)
5. Rowings on the breast and flanks.
6. Defined eyelash.
7. Dark pigmentation in the feet, legs, and beak.
8. Well rounded breast.
9. Large head that is well rounded on the top.
10. Good stance. for even though lizards are active birds, they should be steady from training.

The lizard canary truly is one of the most fascinating canaries bred and exhibited today. It is not only an excellent show bird, but it is a ready breeder and a fine singer. Any breeder and exhibitor of canaries who is seeking success on the show bench will find it by purchasing and/or breeding lizard canaries that meet the above specifications ■



Broken Cap



Non Cap



Clear Cap



Short Cap



Patch Cap



Bald Face



Ticket Cap

¹Lizard Canary Association, Mr. R.J. Rainbird, 104 Fletcher Rd., Ipswich, Suffolk, England.

²The Confederation of All Type Canaries, Mr. Paul Dec, President, 12456 S. McVickers, Palos Hts., IL 60463.