

The Gloster Canary

by Mark Whiteaker
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History tells us that the Gloster Canary originated in 1925 in England, and was first shown by Mrs. Rogerson. It was the result of crossing a small crested roller with a small border. The result of this cross was subsequently shown at the 1925 Crystal Palace National Show where fanciers recognized the bird's potential. Through the years a standard of excellence has evolved.

The attractiveness of this little bird was slow to be recognized in the United States. In 1960, Margie McGee of California imported some glosters and began to boost the popularity of the gloster with articles in the American Cage Bird Magazine. These articles were supported with photographs by Ed Grim. Margie also exhibited the gloster canaries in many shows.

Margaret Gordon of Ashville, North Carolina, another pioneer of the breed, won many awards with her birds in the 1960's. Among these awards was the "best of breed" in a National Show.

In the late 1960's and the early 1970's, articles about the gloster appeared in the ACBM, further encouraging fanciers to seriously consider breeding this attractive little bird. These articles were written by such respected people as Harold Sodaman and the late Clifford Newby. In 1970, Jerry Welfingdale of England, overseas chairman for the International Gloster Breeders Association, encouraged Harold and me to establish a chapter of that organization in this country. This was done and the organization was known simply as the U.S. Chapter of International Gloster Breeder's Association. This organization has maintained a membership of well over 150 members. The U.S. Chapter sponsors the gloster sections of the National Cage Bird Show where there are generally nearly 200 entries.

The gloster is now firmly established as one of the leading exhibition canary breeds in the world. It heads the number of entries in many local shows and has in various years lead in the number of entries at the National Show. At the 1976 National Cage Bird show in Elizabeth, New Jersey, a

gloster for the first time was named best bird in the show, and it was also awarded the Pat Scanell Memorial Trophy in recognition of the achievement.¹ Now that it has finally broken the barrier, the little gloster will win many more "best in show" awards.

In the gloster canary, there really are two different type birds — almost two different breeds of birds. One of these is the crested bird called the Gloster Corona (meaning crown), and the other is the plain head or the Gloster Consort. In any discussion of the gloster canary, one should keep in mind the first of all the standard of excellence as recognized by the IGBA² as well as other gloster organizations. The standard for both the consort and the corona calls for the body to be short and cobby, and with a chest nicely rounded and without prominence. It should have a short full neck and the back should be well filled, with the wings lying close to the body. The standard calls for the tail to be closely folded and well carried. It calls for the plumage to be close and firm, giving a clear appearance of good quality and natural color. It also calls for the carriage of the bird to be alert and quick, with lively movement. It calls for the legs and the feet to be of medium length with no blemishes. The condition of the bird is to be healthy.

Perhaps the two most important characteristics of the breed are the head and the size. The standard calls for the corona (crest) to be neat, regular, unbroken, and round in shape, with a definite center. The eye is to be discernible, or in other words, the crest of the corona is not to cover or hide the eye. The gloster should have a short, petite beak.

The standard calls for the head of the consort to be broad, and round, and to have a good rise over the center of the skull. It should show eyebrows or "brow," as it is commonly referred to.

The standard refers to the size of the bird as tending to the diminutive. This requirement may well be one of the more controversial points of our gloster and perhaps one of its misunderstood or misinterpreted

characteristics. When all of these characteristics are found in a stud, we can say that the smaller the bird is, the better it is. For without these characteristics prescribed in the standard of excellence that set a gloster apart from other breeds, a small bird or a small crested bird is simply a pretty little canary and not a gloster. There are nice large birds with gloster characteristics. There are also small birds that do not possess the characteristics required to meet the gloster standard of excellence. Nowhere in the standard is a definite size specified. However, we hear and read that glosters should not be more than 4½ or 5 inches in length. There is nothing in the standard that indicates that it is to be judged this way. The standard simply specifies "to the diminutive," which means that "all things being equal, the smaller the better."

During the slightly more than fifty years that this little canary has been in existence, it has made giant strides toward becoming one of the most desired and recognized exhibition birds. While there are problems in breeding glosters to the standard, the recognition and success of producing superior quality birds is one of the rewards in breeding and exhibiting them. ■

¹In his article, Mark did not indicate that this Corona Gloster was bred and banded by him.

²Standards of Excellence are available through most clubs and through membership in the International Gloster Breeders Association, Mark E. Whiteaker, 516 E. 7th Street, Trenton, MO 64683.

Editors's note: Mark Whiteaker has the coveted record of breeding the best Consort Gloster in 1970, 72, 73, 74, and 78. He was awarded the Kellogg Trophy for 1973, 1975, 1976, and 1977. With a record like this, it is easy to see why he was asked to contribute to the Canary Issue of Watchbird. It might also be of interest to note that all of the winning glosters mentioned above have been hens.