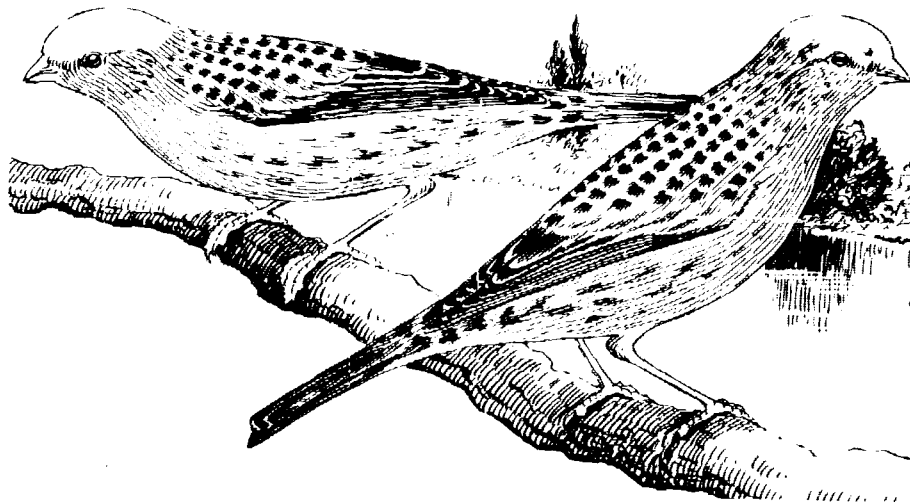




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Upgrading the Lizard Canary

by *Kenneth Stubbant*

Even if excellent lizard canaries are purchased to begin your breeding-exhibiting program, certain problems will arise and these problems will need to be warded against. The best pair of show birds will throw a few inferior offspring.

As with all other canaries, when the breeding and the moulting seasons are nearing an end, all of the birds should be given a careful surveillance to make sure that those with major faults are disposed of. As is the case in most hobbies, when a breeder beginning with a new group of canaries will be unsure of the ideal specimen and what problems a less-than-ideal exhibit might present. Study the printed standards and test the birds against each of these standards. Take time to be familiar both with the ideal specimen and with the problems or faults each bird might have.

FAULTING A LIZARD CANARY

There are several faults that will disqualify an otherwise excellent lizard ca-

nary. These faults include:

1. Over cap
2. Bald face
3. Variegation on any part of the body (including foul feathers in the tail or wing(s))
4. Poor and uneven spangling and rowing
5. Poor pigmentation or light toes, feet, legs and/or beak
6. Poor stance from improper or inadequate training
7. Poor feather quality
8. Disfiguration
9. Second year feathers mingled with the unflighted feather design (This is not a serious fault.)
10. Patchy ground color
11. Grizzled feathers any place on the body
12. Light feathers (These display the crescent-shaped marking, but instead of the blue-black penciling these feathers are bleached and they appear to have a smokey hue.)

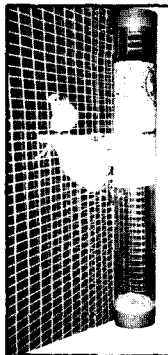
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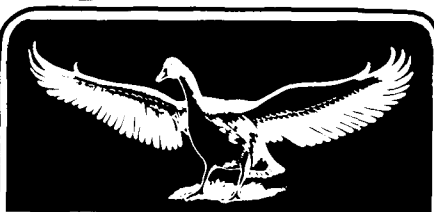
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VARIEGATED LIZARDS

Since the lizard canary is a self bird, variegation on any part of the body is an immediate disqualification for a either a show or a stock bird. This includes light or grizzled feathers anywhere, a pied or foul tail, foul wing(s), star wing (i.e., a light spot on the wing butt), and any larger area of variegation.

Variiegated birds should not be used in a stud, nor should they be sold to breeders. They should be discarded as singers or used as feeders. If the birds are kept for feeders, there is always the temptation to keep the eggs and young from the feeders. All efforts should be taken to rid an avairy of variegated birds, and accurate records must be kept so any birds that throw variegated young can be discarded.

Variiegation is very common in the first and particularly the second generation after an outcross to a self green or to a self bronze. For this reason, it has taken years to produce good studs of blue lizards and cinnamon lizards. It will take several more years to produce a good stud of pearl canaries. (For a good description of the pearl canary and procedures to produce it, see COLOURED CANARIES by G.B.R. Walker, p 107.)

BABY LIZARD CANARIES

It is amazing to see young lizards develop. A breeder may want to foster young lizards to a feeder hen. It is no problem to get a clear hen to accept one or two young lizard babies among her own, since the lizard baby has clear light skin and down. Later, when the feathers begin to form, the lizards are easily recognized since they are dark self birds with the distinctive cap among a nest of otherwise lipochrome or clear canary babies. It is not until the baby moult that the young birds begin to form the distinctive crescent shaped spangling. Variegation and other glaring faults will appear while the baby lizards are still in the nest.

HOUSING, FEEDING and TRAINING

A word should be said regarding the housing, feeding, and training of other canaries. Lizards can be housed under the same conditions as other type and color bred birds. There is, however, one problem. If a feather of an unflighted bird is pulled, it will grow back with a light tip. Therefore, every effort should be taken to prevent feather plucking among the show birds. You can prevent this by caging the birds separately. People with many years of canary breeding experience state that a

“pinch of salt” will cure the urge to pluck feathers. However, a proper balanced diet and conditioning on a regular basis will probably do the same as the “pinch of salt.” Therefore, it is recommended that show birds be housed in single cages until the after the show season.

It has also been rumored among non-lizard breeders that these birds need special diets of specially selected fatty seeds. Lizard canaries can be successfully maintained on the same diet as color bred and type canaries. This is not to deny that there are many and varied methods of feeding and conditioning the lizard canary and each may have its own merit, but for the novice, let it suffice to consider lizard's feeding habits the same as other canaries.

TRAINING and the SHOW STANDARD

The lizard canary is trained for a show in much the same way as are other canaries. You can accomplish this by running the birds in and out of a box-show cage. Visually examine the bird while it is in the show cage and compare it against the standard for excellence. Move the cage from one location to another. It helps to invite visitors into the bird room so that the birds can become accustomed to different surroundings and to having strangers handle their cages. The birds should develop an alert and steady position. They should stand at an approximate 45° angle in the show cage.

The following are the official show standards for the lizard canary:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Spangles | For regularity, distinctiveness and distribution | 25 |
| Feather Quality | For tightness and silkiness | 15 |
| Ground Color | For depth and evenness | 10 |
| Breast | For extent and regularity of rowings | 10 |
| Wing and Tail | Neatness, darkness, spangling and carriage | 10 |
| Cap | For neatness and shape | 10 |
| Covert Feathers | For lacing | 5 |
| Eyelash | For regularity and clarity | 5 |
| Beak, Legs, and Feet | For darkness | 5 |
| Steadiness and Staging | | 5 |
| | | Total points 100 |

All of these considerationa are not difficult nor do they provoke undue hardships on the breeder-exhibitor to produce prolific canaries that can win and fascinate the viewers of the canaries in the shows. Lizards are coming into their own in the North American and European cage bird shows and, with the increasing interest and upgrading, they will hold their own against most other entries. ■