

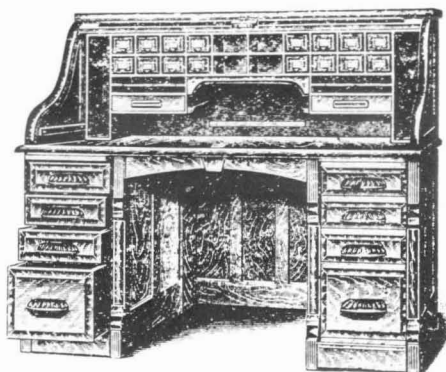
NOTICE

All correspondence intended for the editor of the Watchbird should be mailed directly to his address.

Sheldon Dingle
P.O. Box 340
Norco, CA 91760

From The Editor's Desk

by Sheldon Dingle



The bird world is peopled with snakes. I mean slimy, slithering, sneaking snakes that are poisonous to bird and man alike. These snakes will stand upright before you, fix you with a beady eye, and while swaying to and fro, try to hypnotize you into believing they are honest and sincere aviculturists and bird dealers.

One such snake was spotted in action here in Southern California during the latest Newcastle's disease outbreak. He is a bird dealer who has some aviaries and a store. Unfortunately, he acquired some birds from an infested source. Still more unfortunately, while the government task force was waiting for the test results on his birds, he went out and bought every cheap bird he could lay hands on. When the tests results said Newcastle, the government bought, at an inflated price, all of his birds and destroyed them—including the innocent birds recently purchased for that very purpose.

The profits were so good that the snake's neighbor and avicultural buddy called around trying to find a V.V.N.D. infected bird so he too could have his aviaries depopulated at a profit.

Gentle reader, I don't know about you, but my instincts tell me to grab the snake behind its head and to depopulate it vigorously against a rock.

Is nothing pure anymore? Is nothing sacred? Is mammon the only god left? Don't misunderstand me, I am all in favor of an honest profit in bird dealings, but the bird world seems to have too many people in it nowadays who are too willing to sacrifice a green bird for a greenback. Too many people look into a cage to see a parrot and see only a profit; they look to see finches and see finances.

Where are the sensitive, gentle souls who keep birds because birds are the living gems of the world, because birds bring delight to the eye, music to the ear, and peace to the soul? Where is the man who holds his birds so dear that he would not sell them at any price?

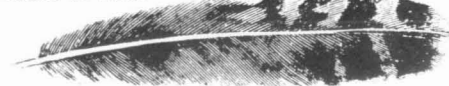
In our culture, birds no longer seem to be things of beauty that one can share with

others as one shares the beauty of a flower garden. Indeed, birds have become something akin to legal tender. This deplorable fact hit me rather hard when I learned of the aforementioned snake who was willing, nay, anxious, to have his birds killed for the proper price.

Well, so much for snakes. Now I should make it very clear that S.L. Dingle, your humble servant, is solely responsible for the things expressed in "From the Editor's Desk" column. My attitudes and commentaries do not necessarily reflect the philosophy and posture of the A.F.A.

You, too, are invited to share with our readers your own viewpoints and opinions. You can do so by addressing your letters directly to me. After all, everyone is entitled to their own erroneous opinions.

Now, perhaps I should get on with a letter or two.



Dear Friends,

I enjoyed the Watchbird article on the Red-eyed Copper Bar Zebra Finch. Now I have a question about the eye color. How red is red? As you know, the wild Zebras all have red eyes. The domesticated Zebras have "black" eyes (actually very dark red.) I have a red-eyed Zebra male. I prefer to call it pink-eyed.

But back to my question. If a black-eyed copper hen were sitting on a perch beside a red-eyed copper hen in the flight in the subdued light of a bird house, could you distinguish eye color between the two at, say, 15 feet distance?

If so, I would be inclined to call the one bird a pink-eyed Zebra, not that it makes a lot of difference.

The male I have is a '78 fawn pied. He has fathered about 25 youngsters to date, the first 5 with a normal grey hen, the rest with a "Florida Fancy" hen. The first clutch fledged in January 1979 and have not yet been bred.

Observations to date:

1. The "pink-eye" could be a sport rather than a mutation.

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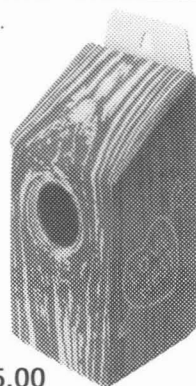
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2. If it is a mutation, it is not sex-linked—his daughters do not have pink eyes.
3. It is possible the male is split for blue.

You wouldn't believe the colors of the youngsters from the "Florida Fancy," about one third are white (understandably), one is a real, honest to God Fawn, the remainder, males, and females, are more "blue" than anything else.

Name withheld by request.

This letter came to me but its contents were addressed primarily to Mr. Joe Lannom. We invite a response from any of you Finch breeders who have pertinent information or ideas regarding the Zebra Finch mutation.



Dear Editor,

I viewed with interest your article on Zebra Variety (Oct.-Nov. 1978, page 34).

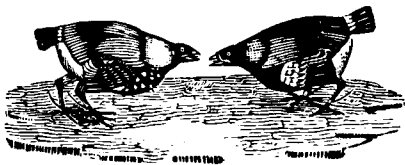
I have been raising, selling, and showing this variety of Zebra Finch (which I call creams) for over five years.

I showed a pair in Dallas at the National Show in 1977 and won best pair Zebras, also at the National in Atlanta in 1978 and won best pair.

I bought my first male in a pet shop in St. Louis in 1973. He had the dark burnt orange cheek patches, but was not as light in color as the ones I have now. I mated him to a silver hen. Each nest I eliminated the darker or more silver birds, keeping the lighter ones, and mating a light hen back to the father. I now have a strain that produces almost 100% light cream birds. They are exactly like the picture you show in your magazine and are beautiful. I have sold these birds in the St. Louis area for over two years.

My husband and I really enjoy The Watchbird, it is very informative and the color photographs are outstanding.

Sincerely yours,
Mrs. Dorothy Knapp
St. Louis, Mo.



Gentlemen:

Have just received the Dec./Jan. issue of WATCHBIRD which I am reading with the usual enthusiasm. I find, however, that this time there is one article which has caused some concern since in it some opinions are expressed as fact and in reality are quite misleading. The article to which I am

referring is the one entitled "Canary Thoughts for The Novice" on page twelve.

For openers, the author states that "all birds should have nice rounded heads short beaks, short tails and smooth even feather texture." Since Ms. Pritchard makes sweeping reference to "Type birds", she should have stated that the heads, beaks and tails of the Frilled varieties are a notable exception, as is the tail of the Yorkshire. A long tail on a Yorkshire Canary is a very important feature. The standard of perfection for the Yorkshire Canary, the same in the U.S.A. as in Great Britain, states that the size should be approximately 6¾ inches, not 6¼ as is stated in Ms. Pritchard's article. One half inch makes a lot of difference in a canary.

My partner Steve Shaw and myself have been raising and winning with type canaries for almost ten years now, always in hot competition. Glosters have been a mainstay in this room as most type canary breeders know. I am not bragging, I just want to give some background for what I am about to say.

For nine years, since we purchased our original breeding stock, we have been doing virtually all of our Gloster matings in the time honored traditional way. That is to say, by double buffing. We raise one hundred and twenty five young Gloster each season. We usually wind up with two or three which have feather lumps when they mature. These are destroyed if the lumps are bad and used as feeders if they are not. I invite Ms. Pritchard to come and see how many loose or sloppy feathered Glosters that she will find here. Loose feather, like so many other faults, comes from a lack of concientious pairings, and from not culling to the bone as one should. Breeding winners is as much a matter of what you sell as what you keep. If you believe that feather lumps come from double buffing, or is limited Norwich canaries exclusively, that is a serious error. Harold Sodamann is the one man in the whole U.S. bird fancy who has come up with a sound and well thought out theory on the matter of lumps. Novices should make use of the knowledge which he possesses. It is also unfair to cast aspersions upon imported birds. If you want good quality English birds, you must be willing to pay the same high prices which top birds command over there. We, in this country, are deluding ourselves if we think that all canaries bred in England are show quality. Many of them, of course, are; probably a much higher percentage than we have here due to the greater number of people interested and to more established strains. When I went to England a few years ago, I saw all those fanciers from the continent

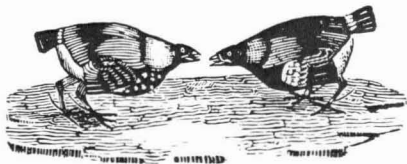
with lots of money in their hands vying for top birds. If a man has top quality birds and people beating down his door to get them, why would he sell them to an importer or wholesaler?

Getting back to Glosters, the standard, which is the same in all parts of the world to the best of my knowledge, says **not one word** about 4½ inches. Nowhere in the standard is size mentioned in inches. The standard does say and I quote; Size — tendency to the diminutive. The standard picture illustrates well the message of the written words. A chunky, rounded bird which is at the same time small, short and compact. Breeding Norwich to Glosters is a short cut to disaster. The Norwich is as different from the Gloster in demeanor and character as is day from night. The craze for head is what leads people to cross-breed.

I am in full agreement with the last paragraph in Ms. Pritchard's article, urging people to attend shows and join clubs. The standard is the final word in defining matters of type, and the standard must be studied and learned by heart. It must be learned accurately to be of any value to the individual, or to the fancy as a whole. Misquoted or misinterpreted, it can do much harm to those who are newcomers. It is early in the fancy that we seem to be the most curious. It is most unfortunate that many of us do not keep that curiosity sharp and keen after we have learned the basics and are ready to move into the more difficult aspects of bird breeding.

A final note. I am not a contentious person, nor do I look for controversy where none exists. I must honestly say though, that the bird publications in this country are always looked forward to eagerly by novice and "old-timer" alike. The messages and lessons which go out to the readers are almost always absorbed and discussed, especially by the novices. Accuracy should always be our byword.

Thanks in the name of
the fancy
Frederick A. D'Amato



Dear Sir:

As you no doubt know by now, I made the fatal mistake of writing an article for the Dec/Jan issue of the Watchbird. I have never seen anything cause so much comotion! I feel that I must stick up for myself, since so many think I am a rank novice and

know nothing. I had hoped to help a little, not hinder.

I started raising canaries in 1958, and have been showing them since 1959. I have been a consistent winner at shows both in San Diego and Los Angeles. I have also been raising type birds for quite some time. My Glosters have won many awards, as well as IGBA Rosettes. Without wanting to brag, I have some of the nicest Frills in the United States, as many judges can attest to. I have raised Red Factors, Dilutes, Pastels, Gloster, York, Norwich and Frills. I have been a canary classifier for over 10 years, and have been judging both Type and Red Factor, in Fresno, Los Angeles and San Diego for four years.

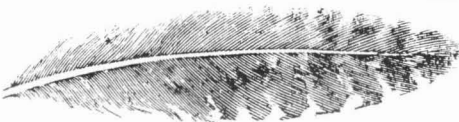
Sorry to have upset the bird world in the USA. I promise never to do it again!!! If people would have read what I *said* in my article, instead of what they *thought* I said, it would have helped!

Yours in the fancy,
Janice Pritchard

Welcome to the world of controversy in print. By now you should know that if one writer says it's daytime, another will say it is night. Do not be discouraged. If you spoke from a burning bush, you would not be accepted by everyone. The important thing is to base your opinion on as solid a foundation as possible and stick to your guns.

Controversy promotes learning and should not be shunned. By the way, I have received affirmative response to your article, as well as negative.

Ed.



Dear Sir:

Would you please send me information on raising birds in aviaries? I started with four pairs of Zebra Finches but found that I need an outlet for my overflow of babies or must erect more aviaries. Anything you have in the way of buyers of Finches would be very welcome — or any information on controlled breeding of birds.

I'm mainly interested in small birds that can be housed together and eat about the same type of food. I have trouble finding different kinds of finches. Any help you can offer will be appreciated.

Thank you in advance,
R.J. Aagard
Biggs, Ca.

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tion on raising birds in aviaries — you should divulge information.

Fortunately, I have a few answers that may be of some help to you. First off, to acquire a wide selection of finches, some quite rare and expensive, contact the various bird dealers who advertise in our magazine. Many of these dealers have lots of finches of all kinds and they would be only too happy to sell some to you. Of course, when the government puts the squeeze on the importers and arbitrarily restricts or eliminates the quarantine stations the supply of finches becomes rather spotty. On the other hand, if the government policy continues, you can contact your local smuggler and get what you want for slightly higher prices and much higher risks.

The same advice applies to selling your birds. Contact the various dealers advertised herein and make arrangements to sell them your surplus. Naturally, supply and demand will set the prices.

Now regarding controlled breeding. I have several ideas. First, you might introduce a Toucan or a Hornbill into your Zebra flight. These two birds will snap up the slow and unwary finches instantly and you will have achieved two things at once — you will have reduced your overpopulation and you will be upgrading your stock as only the quick and vigorous will survive. Note, too, sir, that this same technique applies in the wild. It is perfectly natural. Be prepared, however, to deal with a very fat Toucan.

Second, you might alter the sexual balance of your breeders. Do not keep pairs. I recommend a large surplus of males — say fifty to each hen. This will guarantee a very modest nesting and will result in fewer babies. Do not reverse the sexual ratio as one exceedingly virile male may fertilize all of the hens before he falls off his perch — and then, of course, you are again confronted with the unhappy problem of too many babies.

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Truly, sir, your problems are multitudinous. God forbid the malady should spread. I don't think the economy could stand it.

Ed.

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