

THE BORDER CONVENTION of Great Britain

Governing body for Border Fancy Canary Specialist Clubs

CARE, MANAGEMENT AND BREEDING OF EXHIBITION BORDER CANARIES

The Border Convention ©2004
www.borderconvention.org.uk



This comprehensive, interesting guide-book has been co-ordinated by The Border Convention of Great Britain for all who wish to understand fully the care, management and breeding of the Border Canary. It was kindly written by Charles Norfield with the knowledge and experience of a lifetime with Border Canaries which will be of interest to all breeders, beginners and experienced alike.

Don Harrison, Secretary of The Border Convention of Great Britain, created the compilation of the material for this guide-book. Thanks are also given to Fred Driscoll who submitted the article on Wild Seeds and *Cage & Aviary Birds* who submitted the drawings.

This guide-book is copyright and may not be reproduced in whole or in part (except for review) without the express permission of The Border Convention of Great Britain in writing.

November 2004

CONTENTS

A lifetime with Border Canaries	3
The 2005 Convention model	8
Patience needed for true breeding condition	9
Weaning, moulting and training my Borders	12
A lot can be achieved with a little	16
Border show cages	19
Difficult decisions in the birdroom	20
Definitions	22
Minimum classification	24
Show cage specification	25
Breeding good Green Borders	26
No simple way of producing quality Whites	30
Picture	33
Cinnamon myths abound	34
Give your Borders every chance	36
Remember that bird?	38
Green food and its practical use	39
Green foods and wild seeds	42

A LIFETIME WITH BORDER CANARIES

MY first interest in birds came about when I was eight years old. My father took me to the Cambridge Cattle Market as a birthday treat, we went to a stall that was run by a man calling himself "The Bird Man of Norwich" who had mostly native birds on display. From this visit to the Market started my love of birds, and my first love was for British birds. My father was not able to help out with the purchase of any birds at that time due to the great depression, and like many millions of other men was out of work, plus the fact he was suffering from the first World War injuries. But later I did manage to buy a Goldfinch cock (10d) and a Linnet cock for 4d, this included the old wooden cage they were in. To enable me to buy these birds I acquired a paper round which meant I had to start at 6 a.m. every morning, and for my first weeks wages I received the magnificent amount of one shilling and sixpence.

When I was ten I managed to get a job as an errand boy at a nearby greengrocers. One day when I was tidying up the shelves where the greens were, the owner saw me putting the old cabbage and cauliflower leaves to one side. When asked by the owner what I was doing I told him about my birds, and that the greens were for them. Upon hearing that I was interested in birds he asked me would I like to see some real birds which were at the back, at the bottom of his garden in a wooden shed. When he opened the door I beheld the most wonderful sight I had ever seen, for inside were row upon row of cages filled with beautiful Border Canaries, and I was completely mesmerised by them. He could see I was taken with them so he offered me the job of cleaning them out once a week for 2/6d, which of course I jumped at. I would have done the job for nothing but getting paid for it was an added bonus, this boosted my wages to 7/6d a week. This was the time I fell in love with the Border Canary, this remains as one of the most vivid memories I have, it sticks in my mind even after seventy odd years.

I assisted Mr Hyde, my mentor, with his breeding season and listened to all he said, and very carefully I watched all he did. Because I had been a great help to him, the following year he presented me with a Border cock and two hens, these were the birds that started me off in a lifetime of Border Canaries.

Mydad had to sign the papers to enable me to have my first bird shed, a modest 6 x 5 which cost ten shillings as a deposit, and a small monthly repayment over three years. It beat the old wooden boxes on top of my dads chicken run.

My first birds were of a reasonable quality because my mentor did quite well on the show bench at that time. My feeding methods were very simple, just the normal good mixed seed in the hoppers with as much green food as I could gather, along with numerous amounts of wild seeds.

My records were kept in a penny exercise book at that time, and the way I used to keep the red mite down was with a tin of paraffin and an old paint brush. My feeding consisted of 14lbs. of plain tea biscuits which I crushed up with a rolling pin, and as many free eggs as I could cadge from my father. This was just about everything I needed throughout the year for my small stud of birds. Now-a-days I, like hundreds of other fanciers, use any one of the number of softfoods which are on the market, with I may add, numerous mixed seeds manufactured by many different companies all over the world.

I do not breed as many chicks as I did in the past but I have always line-bred because that was the way I was taught. In my opinion that is still the best method in maintaining a good strong and level strain of Borders, and to this day I still pair father to daughter, mother to son, uncle to niece, grandparents to grandsons or grand-daughters, and down the line using the same principle. I never ever bred for quantity, always for quality, and always to the highest degree possible, as I stated earlier on. But there again the proof is on the show bench, because over many years I have done my fair share of winning with this method (line breeding).

I have always kept a good complete records book, and can still refer a long way back to when I obtained birds from that great fancier from Scotland - Willy Walsh.

When I require any reintroduction of stock I usually go to people who have my strain in their stud, this way the blood line is kept intact. Very rarely will money change hands, it's usually a fair old swap job.

As regards the colour in my stud of birds. I do have a great liking for the Green, Cinnamon and White. At one time that was the only type of birds I had in my stud of Borders, which also included a few very nice 3-Parts Darks of all colours.

My method of pairing in the early days and just after the last World War, was to always pair one to one. But there again things have a habit of catching up with you and now-a-days I follow the popular trend and run only my best cocks with two or three hens.

I do use artificial light in my shed but only in the mornings, I like to ensure that my birds get at least 12 hours of light running up to and during the early part of the breeding season. This means my lights go on at approximately 5 a.m. in the mornings, to ensure the birds can go to roost in natural light at night as the light begins to fade, adjusting accordingly as the days lengthen.

My feeding methods and conditioning of my birds is a simple process in which I use one of the brands of soft-food into which I grate carrots and broccoli. I also use a good condition seed with pinhead oats, this is given once a week at the beginning of the conditioning period. This is slowly increased as the season progresses until they are receiving it every other day, then at this time I start giving them a little fresh green food. A little soaked seed is given on alternate days to the softfood, this I find will bring my birds into peak condition for breeding around the third week in March. As I only take two rounds I'm usually finished by the end of June.

My expectations regarding chicks is four per hen. In my opinion that constitutes a very good and reasonable breeding season by any one's standards. Remember always give your birds the best seed available, it pays dividends in the end.

After hatching I feed my chicks softfood with egg, and with a little finely grated carrot added. They receive this three times a day, 6 a.m., noon and 5 p.m., with a late night top up if required. The pinhead oats, and condition seed are put separately in

pots inside the breeding cages. They also get home-grown chicory leaves and my own mixture of soaked seed. This feeding program continues all the way through until they leave the nest. When they are being weaned, I give them bread and milk sop which is placed on an upturned pot (a tip from one of Barnett & Chandlers' videos). This allows the chicks to find the food that much easier. I will give them as much bread and milk as they will eat even if they have a tendency to waste more than they consume. In the hoppers I put small wild seeds. In my opinion this helps to give them a start to their staple diet later on in life.

I still derive great satisfaction from seeing my chicks emerge from the shell and grow into full maturity, after all it is still a great and wonderful spectacle to see a full pan of young healthy chicks. Nothing can be more satisfying to a genuine bird lover than seeing Mother Nature at her very best on the reproductive side of life.

When I first started with the birds I was told to use Epsom salts in the water as that was all that was needed to keep your birds fit and healthy. At the same time I used to save a load of old rusty nails and put them into the water as well, only because that was what I was told to do in the beginning, because of the iron derived from the old nails. Today there are many patented vitamins on the market containing soluble iron supplements to supply the required amounts of iron in your birds diet.

The use of vitamins. No, not really. As I stated earlier on, I do have my own vitamin supplement that I give to my birds. I must confess to using a Probiotic in the drinking water on alternate days, and in-between days I use a Calcium B12 in the water. On Sundays they have a treat in the way of Cider Vinegar as an added supplement, this makes them merry and bright and full of life for the following Monday morning.

I only use an Anti-biotic on any bird that goes sick after I have diagnosed it's illness myself. I never give an Anti-biotic to any of my birds if they are just under the weather, especially during the moulting period. There are many simple patented Pick-me-up's now on the market that will remove the stress and strife of the moulting stage, in both young and old. I find that if the birds are fit there should be very little difficulty for them in having a smooth and effortless transition through the moult. I like to continue all the way through their moult with the same diet as they were previously getting - the soft food mixture, with all the added ingredients - grated carrot, broccoli, the condition seed with pinhead oats and, of course, my home grown chicory leaves fresh every day. They also get plenty of wild seeds which are thrown onto the cage floor twice a week.

I train my young when they get to about five or six weeks old. This is the time I start to hang the training cages on the front of their stock cages. As soon as they start to moult, the training cages are removed until such time as I think they are sufficiently through the moult. I then re-introduce the training cage once again, this time only running them out for short periods. I do this as often as I possibly can.

I have in the past used my local C.B.S. clubs, which were ideal training grounds in preparation for the big two-day shows. This unfortunately is now out of the question because I can no longer drive, not even to nearby C.B.S. shows, of which there seems to be less and less these days. Showing my birds, I'm afraid, is now beyond me. Irrespective of that I still go through the ritual of training my birds. My biggest disappointment was when the railways stopped transporting livestock. In the days when you could send your birds by rail I would regularly send mine all over the country without any ill effects.

In the early days, before I moved to London, it was my practice to individually hand wash each bird before exhibiting them. Both my Borders and Yorkshires were treated in this way. Now that I'm living in a smoke-free area I find that a good heavy spraying will do the job just as efficiently about a week before the show. Three days before the show a nice light spray with half a teaspoon full of glycerine and a full teaspoon full of vinegar to each litre of water. With my darks, I also add a few drops of Eucalyptus oil, this gives them that little extra lustre to their feather when dry.

As far as judging is concerned I think my most memorable show would have to be my last, this was the British Border when I announced my retirement from judging after over forty years on the circuit. Not that I didn't enjoy all my judging engagements, because I did. From the lowliest C.B.S. club show, to the Border Specialist show, they all gave me great enjoyment and I always looked forward to the task ahead of me. The last one which I judged was the greatest number of Borders ever seen. We all waded through some 2,238 birds on that day. I was fortunate enough to have pulled out the supreme bird, a Green Variegated Yellow hen, and I thought to myself at the time, "what a wonderful way to retire, doing a job I enjoyed, with all my good friends around me".

I am asked about the administration of the Borders today. Without any doubt, in my humble opinion, we most definitely do need The Border Convention as our governing body. After all, it is only a hobby. Before anyone out there, irrespective of who you may be, starts to criticise and knock all the hard working officials and committee members (past or present) for trying to better our hobby for the benefit of all, not just the few, you should stop and reflect a while. Consider this - would you give up your time and travel long distances at your own expense, three, four or five times a year to try and better our hobby for the benefit of all? We must remember also that none of us are perfect, either as individuals or as a collective body, and on occasions we do get things wrong along the way. However, in my opinion, if you try your uppermost and level best for our hobby, no-one should ask for more.

When asked if I could recall my best birds this posed somewhat of a problem and quite a challenge. After over seventy years I honestly could not give a truthful answer to the question. The reason being so many of my beautiful Borders which I have loved over so many years have in their own way given me a lot of pleasure, all for different reasons. If I was to pick any birds in particular, one would have to be my Variegated White cock, which during his exhibition years won no less than 15 best whites at All Border shows. When he was six years old he still won his class at Galashiels, and up to eleven years old was still breeding good Borders. Others would be the many birds that won specials for me at both Nationals, and some of my birds that have won large classes at the British Border. It's like comparing all my children and grand-children and asking me to choose the one I love the most, that also would be impossible because I love them all equally. "Well maybe our grand-children just a little bit more".

How do I think the fancy compares to over sixty plus years ago? Well, one of the main differences is, in those far off days when going to Border shows you would find that the winners would come from all different fanciers from all over the country. Today however, just a handful of top fanciers are constantly winning at most shows.

My very best wishes to you all.

CHARLIE NORFIELD

STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE**POINTS**

Head & Neck:	Head, well rounded and neat when viewed from any angle, beak fine, eyes clear and positioned to rest on an imaginary line drawn as an extension to the line between the upper and lower mandible of the beak, very slightly forward of a central point of the head. Neck, in keeping with the head and flowing smoothly into the body lines and of sufficient length to give a free, jaunty look to the head carriage.	10
Body:	Well filled and nicely rounded running in a smooth downward curve from the gentle, smooth rise over the shoulders to the point of the tail. The chest also nicely rounded, but not heavy. The line of curve to the root of the tail always being downwards. Viewed from above and behind the body outline should be symmetrically pear shaped.	15
Wings:	Compact and carried close to the body, covering the back, with primary and secondary flight feathers meeting at the tips. Outer flight tips to meet at the root of the tail. Primaries and secondaries to be pointed.	10
Legs & Feet:	Of medium length and showing just a little thigh, the legs should be fine yet in harmony with the size of the bird and allowing it to adopt a gay, jaunty stance. Feet in keeping with legs, both to be clean and without blemish.	5
Plumage:	Close, firm and fine in quality, presenting a smooth, silken glossy appearance, free from browiness, frill or roughness.	10
Tail:	Close packed and narrow, being nicely rounded and well filled in at the root.	5
Position & Carriage:	Semi-erect, standing at an angle of 60°. Gay and jaunty with a full poise of the head.	15
Colour:	Rich, soft and pure, as level in tint as possible throughout, but extreme depth and hardness such as colour feeding gives are 'debarred'. Any exhibit showing the effects of colour feeding will be disqualified.	15
Size:	The length from top of the head to tip of the tail should not exceed five and three quarter inches ($5\frac{3}{4}$ "), length should be in proportion and balance with other features of the bird.	5
Health:	Condition and cleanliness shall have due weight.	10
		<hr/> 100

THE BORDER FANCY CANARY 2005 CONVENTION MODEL

The first two essentials of a Border Fancy Canary are type and quality. Without these it is of no use. The general appearance is that of a clean cut, lightly made, compact, proportional, close feathered canary, showing no tendency to heaviness, roughness or dullness, but giving the impression of fine quality and symmetry throughout.

Illustration of the New 2005 Border Model to be issued later.

PATIENCE NEEDED FOR TRUE BREEDING CONDITION

FOR the beginner or novice the breeding season is a time to exercise some patience, since pairing your Borders too early, before they are in true breeding condition, can bring a very poor start to the season.

The sight of cocks singing most of the day and hens bustling from perch to perch often convinces the newcomer that the birds are ready for pairing. The desire to “get cracking” in one’s early days in the Fancy is understandable, but some patience shown now will pay dividends later.

PRIME FACTOR

If your stock is basically sound then good management and the lengthening days will bring them into true breeding condition. At this time, if possible, keep the cocks out of sight of the hens as sometimes the birds will pair on sight. Often, when this happens, it is usually not the pair you wish to run together. Increasing vigour in the singing of the cocks is the prime factor in the conditioning of the hens.

When the cocks attain full breeding fitness they will literally dance on the perches as they burst into song and will feed their feet and often the cage front. At the same time they can pull themselves into unbelievably thin, pencil-like shapes. Indeed they can distort their true shape so much that the novice may wonder why he has retained them for breeding!

It is more difficult to assess when a hen has reached true breeding condition; however, certain signs tell us when they are ready. Provide each hen with a little nesting material; in many cases the hen will spread it about without much purpose, but when she is carrying the nesting material or a feather right at the back of her beak and is seeking a corner of the cage in which to place it, then one can be fairly sure she has her mind set on nest building. The nest-pan or nest-box should be introduced and more nesting material provided.

If you have a double-breeder available for each pair, now is the time to open the slide a little in order that the cock may serenade and feed the hen. As a result of the cock’s attention you will see the hen raise back her head and squat on the perch calling to him. This is the moment to allow him in with the hen, and in most cases, they will mate straight away.

Most beginners run one cock with one hen and provided there is no serious fighting between them they can safely be left together; the cock will usually give the hen much attention and will often assist in nest building. Some cocks will not worry the hen at all while she is sitting and can be a real help in rearing the young.

However, many cocks will wish to continue to mate or decide to remake the nest around the sitting hen. Any cock which is a nuisance should promptly be removed. Do not place him in the compartment on the other side of the sitting hen as his incessant singing and calling may persuade her to leave the nest and her eggs. Instead, place the cock in a cage as far away from the hen as space will allow. I always leave the top tier of my breeding cages free for the cocks so that I can cage them some distance from the hen. In my case this is essential as I run each cock with two or more hens. In these circumstances the cock must not be left for any length of time with one hen as it is possible for a cock to 'take' to a hen and refuse to mate with any other.

At least four weeks before I pair any birds I like to place all my hens in the cages in which I intend them to nest and rear their young. It is essential, in my opinion, that the hen has plenty of time to familiarise her position within the birdroom. At this time I also place the hens I intend to run with a particular cock as far apart as possible. This avoids the possibility of having two hens that will be running with the same cock in adjacent breeding compartments. If one hen should have infertile eggs I may wish to pair the cock to her while his other hen is busy rearing young 'next door', and she could easily neglect her duties on hearing her cock serenade and mate with another hen in the next cage.

SHARP KNIFE

As soon as young dandelion shoots appear they can be fed liberally, provided they are not frosted. I split the root with a sharp knife so that it is more easily eaten. Dandelion is a great help in assisting the birds to attain peak condition.

When a hen starts to lay, usually between the hours of 4 a.m. and 8 a.m., substitute each egg laid with a dummy egg until she has laid her fourth egg. I always sit a hen in the early evening as I have found that the chicks usually hatch at approximately the same time the egg was laid, that is, early morning. For me this is the ideal time for hatching as the hen soon has enough light to go about her duties. If you have several pairs that are laying around the same time, it is good management to hold back a clutch of eggs for a day or two in order that you set several hens at the same time. Then should you have a single chick hatch, or a hen go sick or refuse to feed her young, you have hens with chicks of the same age to which you can transfer the problem babies.

When you remove an egg, place it in a box on nesting material and mark it with the number of the hen's breeding cage. I have a cabinet, made some 50 years ago, which has numbered compartments in each drawer. However, the plastic containers which store nails in small drawers make excellent egg cabinets. Any such cabinet should be securely fastened to the birdroom wall.


You should record details in your birdroom diary as each egg is laid, such as the day you set the hen and the day the eggs are due to hatch. All such records can then be transferred to your permanent breeding records at your convenience.

I do not believe in pairing the Borders to any calendar date - breeding condition is the only criterion I use as to when I pair birds together. Send for your rings from the Border Convention in good time, whether using split rings or close-rings, order these at the same time so they are at hand when the baby birds are taken away for weaning. Close-rings will need to be put on the young birds by the time they are seven or eight days old.

It is some years since I wrote the foregoing and the only changes I find is that the Convention now issues numbered rings in the 'colour of the year'. I also use a probiotic which I have found is a real help in keeping birds in good condition. I now use no commercially grown greenfood during the breeding season as spraying of crops is now extensive.

My wife has given up enough of our small garden to grow sufficient chicory for my birds needs. I do, however, use broccoli florets and carrots which are finely grated and mixed with my softfood at other times of the year.

Novices may find themselves competing on the show bench with birds recently purchased, often for a lot of money, from a top champion exhibitor. I would urge the beginner not to lose heart, seek any advice needed, and the day you win with a bird you have bred yourself will bring you far more pleasure than can ever be got with winning with a bought bird. I hope all our novices will enjoy the beautiful Border canary as much as I have done over the past seventy years.



WEANING, MOULTING AND TRAINING MY BORDERS

ONE of the most rewarding periods is when a chick leaves parental care, and the responsibility for its future progress shifts to the fanciers. Border canaries are usually ready to be taken away from their parents between the 21st and 23rd day after hatching. It is now up to the fancier to provide the young chick with good quality food regularly every day to ensure that they develop to the maximum of their potential.

In order that I am able to keep accurate records, on removing the chick from the parents I place a coloured numbered ring on its leg. I use the Border Convention rings who use one colour for each year, then, if one puts the ring on the right leg of all first round chicks and on the left leg for second and subsequent rounds, one is able too see at a glance whether the bird was bred early or late in the year. All other relevant details can then be checked by means of the ring number in the record book.

When first removed from their parents I place the young birds in a 2ft cage, with five babies to each cage, in which thin perches are fitted about one inch above the floor.

At this time, a plentiful supply of bread and milk is given which I prepare by reducing slices of bread to crumbs in an electric coffee grinder. The bread crumbs are then made very sloppy with 75 per cent milk and 25 per cent slightly warmed water. To each cupful of crumbs I add one teaspoon of Glucodin and two of maw seed.

It is essential to get the birds eating sufficiently well so that eating and sleeping occupies most of their time. I like to see each cage of five babies consuming three good potfuls of bread and milk each day. I also provide a pot of the eggfood on which they have been reared, another of soaked seed and a third of mixed pinhead oats and condition seed.

I offer them a little salad cress between the bars, and I find many young will nibble at this tender green while still with their parents. Although at this stage the baby bird will only play with the seeds it is a good introduction to what will be their staple diet. I find the young chicks are quite capable of sorting over and eating the small wild seeds included in my soaked seed mixture.

I place a drinker and a seed-hopper in the cage, the top of the hopper having been sprinkled with wild seed and maw seed. I have found that the young bird starts to eat seed in its own good time and some are days earlier than others, but I continue with the bread and milk until they are least six weeks old.

Once I notice they are using the water pot I supply a mineral, vitamin, iron and calcium supplement in the water every day and I continue this practice until the birds are completely through the moult. I also supply soaked seed, pinhead oats and condition seed together with the eggfood, until the completion of the moult.

LINSEED TEA

I like to put baths on the young birds' cage two or three times a week which are removed at lunch-time when I substitute a training cage for the bath. The cages I use for training are double the width of the standard Border show cage and squared off at the top.

With these larger cages the young can run in and out without the squabbling that sometimes arises with the narrower cage door. In the training cages I provide narrow perches as in the stock cages. The drinkers on the training cages are filled with tonic grains, condition seed or wild seed so the young have to insert their head through the narrow drinker hole to eat the seeds they relish. I add two drops of aniseed oil to each pound of the seed, it seems to make the seed irresistible to the birds.

When the young birds are eight or nine weeks old they commence to moult which is a most stressful time for them. I try to cage as many of the young in pairs as possible, since I have found they moult much more quickly in pairs than when caged singly.

I like to keep the birds as quiet as possible, but as my birdroom is directly under one of the flight-paths into Heathrow Airport they are not exactly in tranquil surroundings. I do not, however, worry them with showcage training at this time as this would only bring further stress. I believe that Canaries are much more affected by stress than is often imagined.

In an effort to retain maximum colour and unmarked plumage, fanciers in the past covered the cages so that the young were moulted in semi-darkness, but losses during the moult were often very high. Today some fanciers still darken their birdroom windows during the moult but it is not a practice I subscribe to as I believe birds are creatures of the light and air. I have always tried to provide a birdroom that gives a maximum amount of both and my present room has a great deal of overhead lighting as well as large louver windows.

During the moult, I feed green food such as chicory, kale, raitail plantain, seeding grasses and cress every day. I also add grated carrot to the softfood after the young are 14 days old. The hens seem to like this addition and it also has the advantage of keeping the softfood moist in hot weather. During the moult I have fed marigold flowers and leaves to enhance the colour but these must be used continuously and in moderation until the moult is over as they can cause some patchiness in the clear-birds.

It is not possible to change a poorly coloured bird into one with good colour by natural feeding, but it can help to bring out the best of a bird's natural colour. I would not however feed anything other than green leaves to the self-green birds as marigold and nasturtium can adversely effect their colour.

During the moult I moisten all softfood with linseed tea which is prepared by boiling a cup of water and adding two teaspoonfuls of linseed. It is then removed from the heat and allowed to stand over-night. Next morning it will have turned into a cup of runny jelly. I then strain off the linseed and add enough to the softfood to moisten it. Linseed tea will help to give that extra sheen to the feather which is so desirable.

TRAINING CAGES

After the moult all young birds should be given their basic show cage training. This starts with running them from the stock cage into the show cage with the aid of a running-out stick. Under no circumstances do I actually touch the bird with the stick but instead aim gently to persuade the bird into the show cage. After a little while all that will be required for the bird to hop into a show cage will be to 'show' it the running-out stick. I always talk softly to my birds in encouragement during their training.

I like to leave the young bird in its show cages for a short while a few times. I also place them once or twice in a carrying case and leave them for a little while with the lid open. Those that show promise of being exhibition type birds are then given as much handling as possible. I have a two-tier training stand that lowers from the bird-room ceiling to an ideal judging bench height and this allows me to 'work' some ten birds at a time.

I act very much as a judge should do, bringing birds from the lower tier to the upper and vice-versa. I then like to pick up each bird moving it gently from perch to perch and assessing it side-on in terms of carriage, movement, position and length of leg, then I view the birds from above. This is also good training for the fancier as during a 'mock judging' exercise any faults in the bird will become apparent. For example, we may view a bird side-on and consider we have a good show bird but when it is viewed from above we may find the cheeks and width across the back may not be as good as required.

I had the need for training all birds correctly brought home to me very forcibly some years ago. The Border Convention staged a show in January and I had entered a few birds. The day before the show two of my show birds damaged feathers in their tails, so I substituted two replacements which had been in a large flight since early October.

On attending the show I was somewhat mortified to find that the drinkers had been placed inside the show cage of both exhibits as they were not finding the water. In an article a little later, the late Frank Savage expressed the opinion that it was a disgrace that a champion's exhibits had not been trained to find the drinker as late in the show season as January. Frank was right to say so, and the fault lay with me and not with the birds. I had presumed that as the birds had had a little training some three months earlier they were trained fit for a show and I had neglected to give them any kind of "refresher" training.

I hope that newcomers to the Border Fancy have not been discouraged in any way by recent articles and comments concerning the claim that our hobby is being dominated by 'professionals'. At the present time Phil Warne of Gloucester is the only fancier that in any way dominates the Border scene as a breeder and exhibitor, and his success should in no way discourage anyone who exhibits against him. Rather the reverse should be true, as it gives everyone the incentive to produce as good a Border Canary as he does. Mr Warne's success does not come from being 'lucky', 'dominating judges' or 'having money'; it comes from his ability as a stockman, the ability to stage a bird to perfection, and from a lot of hard work. Do not be discouraged by feeling you will never produce birds of the calibre of Phil Warne's, as I am sure there are fanciers with the determination to breed even better Borders and become one day 'champion of champions'.



Dr. J. Rosshirt, D.V.M. President of the North American Border Club meets Charlie Norfield, President of the West Wales B.F.C.C. at the Club's 1999 Open Show.

A LOT CAN BE ACHIEVED WITH A LITTLE

Small quality studs can compete with larger breeders

FOR THE Canary fancier the end of a breeding season usually brings one of two emotions: elation at the closing stages of a successful breeding season or frustration at a poor one despite all the breeder's efforts.

SHOW CAGE TRAINING

Show cage training should be continued until the birds start to moult, after which we should make every effort to keep them quiet and assist them so they have a quick clean moult. Baths should still be provided for all moulting birds, and greenfood should be continued as it is most beneficial at this time. I provide chicory, kale, cabbage and cress as available; if you live in an area where wild greenfood can be collected this also is excellent for the moulting bird.

Keep all perches scrupulously clean. The perch is the home of the bird and should be made of softwood of a comfortable size. They should have some 'give' in them, obtained by fixing them only to the front of the cage. Hardwood perches fixed securely to the front and back of the cage are an invitation for foot troubles. A corn in the ball of the foot can cause a great deal of discomfort to a bird and can be difficult to cure.

Should a corn occur, my own method of treating it is to immerse the affected foot for a few minutes in a solution of Milton or TCP; then pat dry and apply white iodine to the corn with a small paint brush. This will dry quite quickly after which time a smear of Germoline, Vaseline or Valpeda should be massaged into the foot.

Repeat daily until the corn hardens and can be removed, continuing to massage the foot with the ointment for a further week or so. Use one perch only in the cage during treatment which should be covered by a bandage or a similar soft material. If the corn has been allowed to develop into a large one then a 'split' cane perch can be used with the hollow side uppermost, thereby preventing the corn from touching the perch.

Check all birds for broken wing or flight feathers and remove any you find as it takes the bird some six to eight weeks to replace them. Do not dispose of any bird until after the moult has been completed as during this period a bird can alter a great deal. Often a bird not thought of very highly in nest feather can cause a pleasant surprise when completely moulted.

By the age of three months most male Canaries will be on song. However some will remain silent and pose a problem throughout the show season, often not coming into song until after Christmas or even the following spring.

AGGRESSIVE

Avoid overcrowding the young Canaries during the moult if at all possible. Young cock chicks can sometimes be very aggressive and squabbling can take place resulting in the loss or breaking of feathers. It is essential that lost feathers be avoided, particularly the flight and tail feathers.

Long service in the Fancy brings many things to mind and time teaches you always to moderate your expectations. In the early days we expect every egg to hatch and every chick to be a winner; but experience teaches us that if a few young are bred each year up to exhibition standard, then the continued development of our stud is assured.

Every fancier goes through a poor breeding season occasionally and there are even times when we never expect to breed another winner. Experience teaches us however that even the greatest Canary stud does not produce birds which are all winners or even of exhibition standard. Fanciers who can breed with 50 or more hens may, by the law of averages, be more likely to produce at least one good bird than the fancier breeding with only half a dozen hens.

OUTSTANDING

It is however as well to recall that many outstanding fanciers in the past proved they could more than hold their own on the show bench breeding from a very small stud of birds. I remember a leading Yorkshire fancier of many years ago who kept only eight hens and six cocks for breeding.

Every bird was an outstanding specimen and fanciers with much larger studs had to take second place to his birds over a number of years. He always maintained that it was the quality of the birds kept which mattered and not the quantity. I hope every novice with limited space and a limited pocket will realise that a lot can be achieved with a little, provided the little he keeps has thoroughbred quality.

In the Border section in particular we have newcomers who pay large sums for birds from a top champion exhibitor and win novice specials galore with these birds. This can be discouraging for the novice who is trying to produce his own winners. However, this "buying to win" attitude cannot guarantee continued success, as when reaching the champion section such fanciers will find that the top winning birds each show season just cannot be purchased. All newcomers should allow themselves time for success to arrive and should support their local society and shows, for that way they will derive the greatest amount of pleasure and satisfaction from their birds and our hobby.

I would also like to stress to all beginners that they should overcome any reluctance to ask questions of other fanciers or speakers at club meetings. Do not be afraid to seek an opinion on your stock from experienced fanciers; I can assure you that most of them are willing to be helpful and to encourage newcomers in the Fancy.

Many exhibitors today arrive at a show only an hour before closing and their only interest seems to be seeing how their birds have fared. Such people miss the opportunity of viewing and discuss the merits of their own and other people's birds with other fanciers, and they fail to make friendships with fellow fanciers.

A lifetime in our hobby has brought me many friends, both here and overseas, who have enriched my life considerably. There are many attractions for the newcomer to our hobby today; I appreciate that a time consuming hobby such as ours can be off-putting, but it is a worthwhile and rewarding one, and in my own case a lifelong one.

LINSEED TEA BENEFICIAL DURING THE MOULT

When most of the Canaries are still heavily in the moult, this is a rather stressful time for them and we should go about our birdroom chores in as steady a manner as possible.

While birds are in the moult it is not the time to be running them out in show cages for a long period; it is sufficient to leave the show cage on the stock cage thus allowing the young birds to run into it if they wish. The show cage should not however be left on overnight. The majority of Canaries will have completed their moult by the end of this month and then the serious business of show cage training can begin in earnest.

One should remember that birds are 10 or more weeks in the moult before it is completely over and all the new feathers are in place.

During the latter part of the moult a good iron tonic should be added to the drinking water as this helps the supply of blood to the new feathers.

During the moult it is also beneficial to add a little linseed tea to the softfood and it is very easy to prepare. If a cupful of water is normally used to moisten your softfood then two teaspoonfuls of linseed will be sufficient. If more water is used then employ more linseed.

Make sure that the linseed you use is perfectly clean and gives the appearance of being highly polished; dull linseed with a grey look about it should never be fed to birds. Put two teaspoonfuls of linseed into a cup and pour on boiling water to fill the cup; allow the tea to stand overnight. Next morning strain off the weak runny jelly and moisten your softfood with it. The linseed itself should be discarded.

If you add the linseed tea to the softfood twice a week it does help to put that grand bloom on the plumage that is so desirable in exhibition Canaries.

Every year newcomers to our hobby will be showing their birds for the first time and some may find the show schedules somewhat difficult to comprehend. In general we have three types of shows. Local club shows are run mainly for the club members and are usually one day events in which the birds are taken on the morning of the show day. The show open to the public in the afternoon and the birds are collected about tea-time.

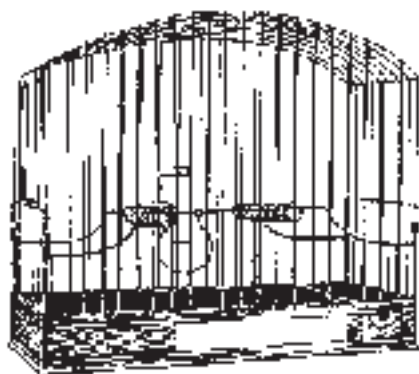
Open shows are, as the name suggests, open to all fanciers who wish to exhibit their stock and many are held from September until January. A great many of these shows are held on the Saturday and Sunday; the majority of exhibitors taking their birds on Friday evening and collecting them between four and five o'clock on Sunday.

Specialist clubs support these events by granting patronage consisting of rosettes, diplomas, medals, spoons and cash specials. If you belong to a specialist club you must remember to state this on your entry form so that the show secretary knows your birds are eligible for the specials granted by the specialist society of which you are a member. Subscriptions to specialist clubs should always be paid before the start of the show season.

Border Show Cages

CONVENTION APPROVED MAKERS

Your Guarantee is the Registration Label



D. BOND	128 Longview Road, Clase Estate, Morriston, Swansea, West Glam. SA6 7JF.
D. COLES	Top Cottages, Thistleton, Nr. Oakham, Leicestershire LE15 7RQ.
G. DENNENT	6 Tewksbury Road, Bloxwich, West Midlands.
P. GIBBS	'Ahenure", Callan, Co. Kilkenny, S. Ireland.
C. GLAISTER	73 Adderlane Road, Prudhoe, Northumberland NE42 5HS
C. JAMES	19 Blaen Cefn, Winch Wen, Swansea, West Glam. SA1 4AW.
W. T. JONES	62 Pool Rise, Springfield, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 6EJ.
M. JURIK	4 West View Road, Kimberworth, Rotherham, Yorks. S61 2HF.
O. G. MARRIOTT	25 Alferton Road, Pinxton, Notts. NG16 6JZ.
B. TANNER	4 Hartcliffe Road, Knowle West, Bristol.
J. E. TARLING	21 Montford Avenue, Corringham, Essex SS17 7PP.

DIFFICULT DECISIONS IN THE BIRDROOM

NOVEMBER is a month of difficult decisions for all Border fanciers. What birds should be kept for the 2002 breeding season? What birds need be put aside for disposal? Will fresh blood be needed?

Many champions like to make these decisions as early as possible, thus allowing more time to be given to show and stock birds which are being retained. Newcomers to the Fancy may find the process of culling their stock difficult, so much so, that I have known some novices keep all the young birds that they have bred and all the parent birds.

What the newcomer must do is consider which pairs have produced birds approaching the standard he or she is seeking and which fall far below it, or carry the major faults, such as a poor head and bad wing carriage. Nobody can make progress in breeding exhibition stock if such birds are used.

This is the time when the beginner must harden his heart and select only those birds that he feels will enable him to progress with his chosen variety. One point I would like to stress is that no fancier should keep more birds than can be managed with some degree of comfort. If you are forever in the birdroom trying to cope with more birds than your limited time may permit, it is a sure way to dampen your enthusiasm for the hobby.

AMPLE SPACE

As a rough guide you should plan to breed in no more than a quarter of the cages available to you in the birdroom, thus allowing yourself ample space to accommodate the young birds. I am always surprised at the number of canaries that fanciers keep these days. I remember a novice being in my birdroom who informed me he was breeding with 35 hens and it was only his third breeding season!

Some of the most successful fanciers in the past kept no more than a dozen hens. Every bird, however, was of a high standard. In my own case I try to use 20 hens and about a dozen cocks. I find this quite enough to keep me busy even though I have been retired for many years?

Study the standard of excellence and select your stock accordingly, paying particular attention to your breeding records. I have found that those birds that are successfully reared from full nests are a better bet for the next breeding season than one that had a struggle to reach the weaning stage. With careful selection we can breed fertility into a stud alongside all the other attributes we seek.

The proceeds from the sale of surplus birds should be used in the early years in the Fancy for the purchase of a bird, or birds, that can bring improvements to one's present stock. It is better to commence a career in our hobby with three pairs of good quality birds than a dozen pairs of indifferent quality.

Remember it costs as much to feed a bad bird as it does a good one, and it requires just as much to look after them.

The rewards, however, can be vastly different. There are several options available to you in disposing of your surplus stock. The columns of *Cage & Aviary Birds* is an obvious one and in this same section you may find a champion breeder of note advertising his surplus which will give you an opportunity to enquire if he has a bird of the type you are seeking.

The sales classes at the National Exhibition are another outlet for surplus stock and these can often give you the opportunity of acquiring a bird you need. At the National Exhibition the newcomer will find plenty of good quality stock on offer and most of it is reasonably priced. Do remember when looking at fresh stock that it is usually easier to obtain a good cock bird. Good hens are very often hard to come by.

When you are visiting a show you may note that a particular fancier has exhibited the best bird in section and feel he is the right person to approach for stock. However, first look at all the other birds he has exhibited to ascertain if they are the same high standard as his winner. If you find they are well down in the cards, each differing in type and quality, it can be assessed that this fancier's birds are not consistent.

He has maybe one good bird and the rest not up to standard. Another fancier may have entered a team, and although he may not have won the best in section award all of his birds are highly placed in their respective classes. It can then be seen that this exhibitor is breeding birds of a type and quality that is consistent. Of the two fanciers, I would prefer to purchase birds from the latter.

At this time of the year all birds that are not being used for exhibition purposes should be given maximum cage space, the cocks and exhibition birds being caged in single compartments. All birds should be given a good canary mixture in the seed hoppers. I also give a little softfood, grated carrot and condition seed, mixed together twice a week. I give a little greenfood once a week throughout the winter.

When my birds return from a show I give them a bath as many enjoy a splash after being away for two or three days. I also give them a little tonic on their first day back from a show. This consists of three teaspoons of glucose and three teaspoons of sherry to each pint of water. I leave this mixture in the drinkers until tea-time when I replace it with clean water. It is also a wise precaution to spray them with an anti-mite preparation.

Regular spraying is sufficient in most areas to keep show birds in good feather and clean condition. It is also important that stock cages are as spotless as possible. Remembering to wipe round the drinker holes as this will help to stop the light-coloured birds from getting a dirty ring round the neck.

In days gone by we used to hand-wash show birds regularly but the smoke-free conditions in most areas have lifted this need. Should you feel one of your birds would benefit from a hand-wash do not attempt it until shown how by an experienced fancier. At this time of the year many local clubs have a meeting when a canary washing demonstration is being given and every beginner should try and attend.

I would ask all novices not to be downhearted if the bird they have bred and exhibited is beaten by a "bought" bird (usually from a top champion exhibit). There is no credit in winning with a bought bird as such credit belongs only to the breeder of the bird. The day you take that red ticket or special with a bird you have bred will bring you true credit and much pleasure. That is what our hobby is really about. Friendship and breeding your winning birds has always been the grass roots of our hobby. My wish is that it may long continue to do so. Good luck.

DEFINITIONS

CLEAR BIRDS - A 'Clear' bird shall be clear, but the presence of dark flue which cannot be seen without unduly disturbing the bird, or the natural discolouration of legs and beak shall be entirely ignored.

TICKED BIRDS - a 'Ticked' bird shall be one with ONE mark, coverable by a new one penny, on the body, or three dark feathers on wing or tail, side by side to form a solid mark. Any grizzle mark covered by one new penny to be classed as Ticked.

FOUL BIRDS - A 'Foul' bird is the opposite to a 'Ticked' bird. Light marks on dark feathers.

EVEN MARKED - An 'Even Marked' bird is one with four technical marks, viz., marks to be even on both wings and both eyes, broken marks to be disallowed. (In judging marked birds, TYPE and QUALITY should form the first consideration in these as in all other classes, and no prize should be awarded for good marking alone where TYPE does not conform to the National Council's Standard of Excellence).

VARIEGATED BIRDS - Shall be those which have other markings in addition to, or without the technical marks, thus:

(VARIEGATED) - more light than dark.

(HEAVY VARIEGATED) - more dark than light.

(THREE-PARTS DARK) - To be 75% dark.

SELF BIRD - A 'Self' bird shall be one having no light feathers visible. Light flue under region of vent shall not merit disqualification. Light tips to otherwise dark feathers, wherever seen, shall be counted as light marks, so that a dark bird with such features is either Foul, 3-Parts Dark or Variegated according to the extent of such markings. The 'Self or Foul Border', just as the clears, variegated and 3-Parts Darks must conform to the Standard of Excellence with regard to 'Type and Quality'. 'Poor or bad colour' should be penalised just as it is in the clear and variegated sections.

GREENS - The correct colour shall be rich, pure green and should be likened to the top side of a young holly leaf (buff green). Colour should be pure and level throughout, free from bronze, brown or olive tints. Pencilling on the back to be dark, clear and distinct, but not broad or heavy. Flank pencilling to be finer but in harmony with that on the back. Beak, legs and feet to be dark, but failure in this respect does not lead to disqualification, but simply counts against the bird, according to the extent.

CINNAMONS - The correct colour to be a rich deep cinnamon throughout. The buff cinnamon to be softer shade. Back and flank markings as with greens but of a brown shade and fainter. Greenish or light tints to be avoided.

BLUE - The correct colour to be as clear a shade of blue as possible in the yellow feathered bird. Of softer shade in the buff form. Other points as for the greens.

FAWNS - Colour a soft pinkish form. Otherwise as for cinnamons.

N.B. In judging Self or Foul birds where type and quality are on a par or thereabouts every credit possible should be given to birds of the correct colour and markings.

MINIMUM RECOMMENDED CLASSIFICATION FOR SPECIALIST SHOWS

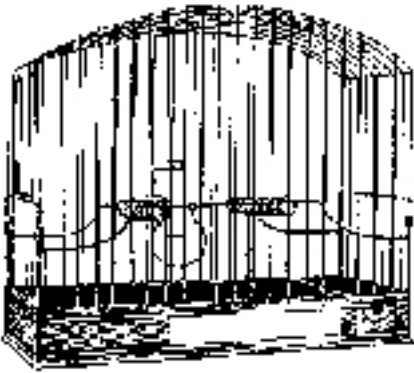
CHAMPION

NOVICE

1.	Clear or Ticked Yellow Cock, Flighted	38.
2.	Clear or Ticked Yellow Hen, Flighted	39.
3.	Clear or Ticked Buff Cock, Flighted	40.
4.	Clear or Ticked Buff Hen, Flighted	41.
5.	Green Variegated Yellow Cock, Flighted	42.
6.	Green Variegated Yellow Hen, Flighted	43.
7.	Green Variegated Buff Cock, Flighted	44.
8.	Green Variegated Buff Hen, Flighted	45.
9.	Three Parts Dark Yellow Cock, Any Age	46.
10.	Three Parts Dark Yellow Hen, Any Age	47.
11.	Three Parts Dark Buff Cock, Any Age	48.
12.	Three Parts Dark Buff Hen, Any Age	49.
13.	Cinnamon Variegated Yellow Cock, Any Age	50.
14.	Cinnamon Variegated Yellow Hen, Any Age	51.
15.	Cinnamon Variegated Buff Cock, Any Age	52.
16.	Cinnamon Variegated Buff Hen, Any Age	53.
17.	Cinnamon Yellow Cock Self or Foul, Any Age	54.
18.	Cinnamon Yellow Hen Self or Foul, Any Age	55.
19.	Cinnamon Buff Cock Self or Foul, Any Age	56.
20.	Cinnamon Buff Hen Self or Foul, Any Age	57.
21.	Green Yellow Cock Self or Foul, Any Age	58.
22.	Green Yellow Hen Self or Foul, Any Age	59.
23.	Green Buff Cock Self or Foul, Any Age	60.
24.	Green Buff Hen Self or Foul, Any Age	61.
25.	Unflighted Clear or Ticked Yellow Cock	62.
26.	Unflighted Clear or Ticked Yellow Hen	63.
27.	Unflighted Clear or Ticked Buff Cock	64.
28.	Unflighted Clear or Ticked Buff Hen	65.
29.	Unflighted Green Variegated Yellow Cock	66.
30.	Unflighted Green Variegated Yellow Hen	67.
31.	Unflighted Green Variegated Buff Cock	68.
32.	Unflighted Green Variegated Buff Hen	69.
33.	Clear or Ticked White Cock, Any Age	70.
34.	Clear or Ticked White Hen, Any Age	71.
35.	Blue, Fawn or Variegated White Cock, Any Age	72.
36.	Blue, Fawn or Variegated White Hen, Any Age	73.
37.	Even Marked Cock or Hen, Any Age	74.

All exhibits entered in Any Age classes that are Unflighted, should be nominated U/F on Entry Form.

SHOW CAGE SPECIFICATION



Overall length	12 ⁵ / ₈ "
Overall width	4 ³ / ₄ "
Overall height	11" and ends 9"
Base	3 ³ / ₃₂ " thick
Bottom rail	1 ³ / ₈ " wide x 3 ³ / ₁₆ " thick
Corner posts	3 ¹ / ₄ " long x 3 ³ / ₁₆ " sq.
Drawer posts	1 ¹ / ₂ " long x 3 ³ / ₄ " wide
Drawer handle	1 ¹ / ₂ x No.6 round head screw
Drinking hole	7 ⁷ / ₈ " long x 3 ³ / ₄ " wide
Crossbar	4 ¹ / ₂ " from base inside
Frame	16 gauge wire
Filling	18 gauge wire

The standard show cage is the Dewar type of cage as per the H. Parminter drawing number HJP.001. Copies of the drawings are available at £4 each from: Mr. M. Scott, 14 Holburn Lane, Ryton, Tyne & Wear NE40 3DF.

SHOW CAGE PERCHES to be 5⁵/₈" spiral perches, 16 spirals to the inch, spiral to run either way clockwise or anti-clockwise. Fixed in show cage with 6 clear wires in between fixed at 8 wires.

FLOOR COVERING to be Oat Husks.

SEED IN SHOW CAGES to be either mixed or plain.

CAGE LABELS when fixing cage labels on show cages the centre of the label should be directly under the perch nearest the seed tray.

SHOWING BIRDS. Birds can be shown with or without a ring.

Any cocks exhibited in hen classes to be disqualified.

All birds entered in wrong classes to be disqualified and marked W.C.

All birds exhibited in dirty cages to be removed from the staging at the show manager or judges' discretion and not judged as the cage and bird could be infested and is not fair on the other exhibitors.

BREEDING GOOD GREEN BORDERS

Six formidable points needed in achieving a good Green Border

THE SELF Green Canary might well be considered as the fundamental Canary as it is the form in which the three colour pigments are present in their original unmutated state. The Green Canary is the starting point of all the other colour forms that have appeared at a later stage in the history of the Canary. The oldest mutant form is the Cinnamon, listed in records as long ago as 1709.

The Cinnamon Canary is, quite simply the original Green Canary with the black pigment missing; thus only brown is left giving us the yellow-brown shade called Cinnamon. It is to my intention to deal with the mechanics of sex-linkage here; it is sufficient to say that the cocks from the cross-mating of Green and Cinnamon will be either pure breeding Greens, pure breeding Cinnamons or Greens 'carrying' the recessive Cinnamon gene.

Here are either pure Greens or pure Cinnamons.

SEX-LINKAGE

Many charts of sex-linkage of Green and Cinnamon have been published and I have always kept one of these displayed in my birdroom. However well one may understand the result of Green x Cinnamon pairings, such a quick reference guide can be very valuable.

White-ground Canaries exist in two forms, dominant and recessive, and can be found in both forms in many varieties of Canaries. As far as I am aware only the dominant form exists in the main type breeds within the United Kingdom. In order to breed Whites in the dominant form one parent must be a White-ground bird. From the pairing of a White x Normal Canary the offspring should, theoretically, be 50% White and 50% Normal.

Should two White-ground birds be paired together the expectation will be 25% Normals, 50% Whites and 25% which will receive two White genes and will die. It is not true that all the Whites from a White x White pairing will die as is often believed.

The foregoing is a very brief resume of the theory behind Green, Cinnamon and White-ground Borders. In this and in a subsequent article, I shall attempt to explain my own experiences with each of these colour variations. The well-known Border enthusiast Phil Warne expounded the theory that the Green Border Canary can revert more quickly than any other towards the type of its wild ancestors.

I agree with his thinking on this matter, as certainly in my own experience, the continuous pairing of Green to Green can lose size and quite a bit of the Border type required. I have found that the production of first rate Green Borders is no easy task; it is even more difficult to maintain a stud of them over a number of years without loss of colour, type or feather quality becoming a problem.

When I commenced with my project of breeding some good Green-ground Borders I listed just what was needed in a top exhibition Green Border. It was a formidable list as follows:

(a) My ideal Green Borders must in every way be the equal of the best of the Normals in type, position and quality of feather.

(b) It must possess a depth of green colour which is not too light and not too dark, without any darkness on the head, a trait from which many a Green Border suffers. The colour should run throughout the bird without becoming lighter at the throat or towards the vent.

(c) It must show all its rowing, or pencilling, on the flanks and back in as clean a manner as possible. Such markings should show up boldly in black against the green body colour.

(d) The wings and tail should be as rich and deep a black as possible. (Slight bronzing is acceptable in a young bird).

(e) The legs should be dark.

(f) The beak should be neat in size and dark in colour.

Once I had read the foregoing and realised the many points to be bred for, I was not too surprised that fanciers who produce good exhibition teams of Green Borders year in and year out were not plentiful. I had kept a few Green Border and Yorkshire Canaries just after the end of the last war, but had not applied myself to the task of producing them to top exhibition quality.

Although, some 15 years ago I had a reasonable stud of Borders, they were mainly Normal and White-ground birds. As I had resolved to produce my stud of Greens without purchasing an actual Green bird from anyone, I knew I had a breeding project that would keep me busy for several years.

I had in my stud one bird that I considered could become the cornerstone on which to build; this was a really lovely quality and type Three-quarters Dark Yellow Cock which had been sent down to me from Scotland a year or two before by that great Border fancier Willie Welsh. I suspect that he carried a little Cinnamon blood as Mr Welsh was a great believer in a 'dash of Cinnamon' in his birds. I paired this bird to the best three hens with the maximum of variegation that I possessed and, as expected, I produced a

reasonable number of Heavily Variegated birds among which were two three-quarter Dark Buff hens. This was a stroke of good fortune as I was then able to pair both these hens back to their father the following year. I also produced a three-quarter Dark Cock very much like his sire which I put across two Heavily Variegated hens bred from a slightly different blood line. The following season I still did not produce any Self Green birds but I did have several Foul and Three-quarters Dark young. I felt certain the third year of my breeding programme would bring my first Self Green Borders and it did: one Self Green Yellow hen of good colour and reasonable type, but with clear legs and a beak with no trace of darkness.

I had produced my first Self Green Border from within my own blood-lines without having to introduce any Green out-cross into my stud. However, it took me a further four breeding seasons, sometimes breeding very closely indeed, before I had a small team of Self Green and Dark Borders which I felt would not disgrace me on the show-bench.

‘TRIAL RUN’

I had not shown at all for three years and I decided I could not face a ‘trial’ run. So I entered my birds where I knew the competition would be fiercest: the British Border FCC show at Winsford. I was delighted to find that my efforts were rewarded with two winners in the Green classes, with most of the team being in the ‘cards’. As a bonus a young Three-quarters Dark Cock, a by-product of my efforts with the Selfs, had taken third best champion at this great show.

There was, however, much room for improvement in colour and the desired dark legs and beak. On the bonus side breeding from Three-quarter Dark foundation stock had given me Green birds of reasonable size with good backs and shoulders. I felt that I still needed to improve two features: extra length of leg, and a better cleanness through the legs giving the birds a better ‘sweep’ from breast through to the tail.

I could maybe have improved colour at this point with an outcross and was tempted when I judged a bird of outstanding colour and reasonably good type.

I have always felt that if you are not familiar with a stud never purchase an outcross without a visit to inspect the stock of the fancier. In this case I visited the owner of the wonderful Green coloured Border I had so much admired, only to find that the rest of his Greens were of good colour but very poor type and about Fife Canary size. The one outstanding young bird was what I term a ‘type sport’ and had I purchased this bird without seeing from whence it came, I would have been seriously misled as to its potential.

Another danger when making a purchase is to buy from a fancier who sells largely on the merits of a show team of purchased birds; in many cases the rest of his stud can be second-rate.

I feel there are three avenues open to the fancier who wishes to add a Green corner to his stud. The first, and most obvious, is to purchase a pair or trio from a well known and successful breeder of Green Borders but the number of top Greens available from such sources is not large.

The second option is to purchase first class Three-quarter Dark Borders. Here you may find more good birds available as some of our best Borders of type, quality and size can be found amongst these birds, as evidence by the success of Mr Warne's Winsford winning Three-quarters Dark Buff cock which took many specials over the Normal Borders. With a little patience in pairing the Three-quarter birds together, the first Foul and Self birds should not be long in appearing.

The last option is the one I have undertaken: whereby you can produce the Green bird from within your own stud. Provided you have some good quality stock, one only needs to take the best birds with as much variegation as possible and pair these together, retaining the best of the young with the maximum of dark feather. These I advise pairing back to the father and mother (in my own case I did pair brother to sister also), keeping a careful eye on the green characteristics mentioned earlier. It does require patience to follow through such a breeding project, but given time you will produce Self Greens from your own blood.

I am sure you will derive great pleasure in breeding your own Dark Borders without the need of assistance from outside blood. To anyone reading this article who may be considering some future breeding project. I can but suggest to 'GO GREEN'. This is not an easy task but little that is truly worthwhile in our hobby ever is.



NO SIMPLE WAY OF PRODUCING QUALITY WHITES

WHITE-GROUND Border Canaries. For several years I maintained a small stud which gave me a lot of pleasure and a measure of success on the show bench. I have been asked many times what is the best way to breed exhibition White Borders. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer, as with all exhibition Canaries it takes patience and time. First and foremost we must endeavour to breed Borders, whatever ground colour they may be, to the same level of excellence as our best Normal birds.

There are two types of White Canary, the Dominant and Recessive forms, but as far as Type Canaries are concerned usually only the Dominant form is found. A Dominant White Canary can be distinguished from other forms by the yellow present in the wing and tail feathers.

In some birds this yellow is more noticeable and in most Type breeds, such as the Border, the frosting from the Buff feathering, combined with line breeding, can greatly reduce or completely hide this colouration.

Among the White-ground Borders we have, apart from Clear Whites, the White bird with Green variegation or Cinnamon variegation and the Self Green or Self Cinnamon, called Blue or Fawn variegates, or Blue or Fawn Selves.

I believe in having a breeding project - that is a plan to produce certain birds in a stud - without the necessity of bringing in out-crosses. However, in the case of the White-ground bird we have to go outside our stud and bring in a bird carrying the White-ground genes.

This outcross should preferably be a cock and as good a White as we can obtain. This may well mean waiting for the right bird. We need a White Border of as good quality as any Normal. What is needed is first class quality and type combined with clean White-ground colour. It does not matter if the bird is a Clear or Variegated so long as it is good enough when judged as an exhibition Border.

Never introduce a bird, however good its White-ground colour, if it has a major fault such as a poor head, crossed wings, poor feather quality, bad position or short legs. No one can purchase a perfect Border in any colour but when purchasing a bird on which we hope to base the future of our white stud we cannot afford blemishes which may take seasons to breed out. This time should be spent on producing our first tip-top White Border.

When adding a White to a stud purchase as good a bird as your pocket will allow. It is, after all, your investment in a breeding project that will bring you pleasure and satisfaction for years. Avoid coarse-feathered birds of a greyish hue.

Having obtained a White cock the next task is laying foundations for the future. I was often asked for 'a good White cock'. On enquiring what it is going to be paired to, I have been informed "a couple of 'odd' hens".

Two good White Border breeders, alas no longer with us, were Albert and Vic Keen of Middlesex who produced many winning White birds. They insisted if you wanted to breed good White Borders only the best Normals should be paired to them. This is sound advice, as far too often the White bird is paired to an 'odd' hen.

BEST HENS

On introducing a White cock into a stud, we should give him the best hens we can provide, perhaps a good quality Clear Buff hen and a Marked or Self Green Yellow Hen would make an ideal start. We should obtain one or two good Clear or Lightly Marked Whites from the Buff hen and one or two Variegated Whites or Self Blues from the second pairing. These will provide a good 'base' on which to continue.

We should also obtain some Normal birds from such pairings. I have often heard it said that Normals from White pairs lack colour and will cause deterioration in the ground colour in Normals if used with them. I have not found this to be true, but it may affect the offspring of Clear White x Clear Normal pairing over several years. However, it is true one of the best coloured birds I have bred came from a Blue Variegated White cock paired to a Lightly Marked Yellow hen. This cock was a Variegated Yellow cock of exceptional rich colour.

I have found White Borders are quite hardy. A Lightly Variegated White cock produced excellent youngsters for me at 12 years of age and still won his class when exhibited at seven years old. They are usually good parents, although the better they are the harder they are to breed! I find a fair percentage of White-ground offspring are produced by each pair, but the expectation of 50 per cent White and 50 per cent Normal can only be obtained over a great many pairs. I have only once had five White chicks hatch from five eggs, I imagine this is very rare.

COLOUR

In the case of the Blue Border we are told the ideal colour is powder blue, but I have only ever seen one Blue Border this description would fit. This was bred years ago by Noel Weaver of Nottingham, who was never able to produce another.

In producing Self Blue Borders we must retain type, concentrating on obtaining as light a body colour as possible. The vast majority of Blue Borders can be termed slate-coloured rather than Blue and are often of poor feather quality. Some good examples of Self Blues and Fawns have graced the show bench recently, notably from Messrs W. Martin, F. Hickson, H. Wilkinson & Son, Cyril Whitford and others. There is plenty of scope on the show bench for those who can produce good Blue and Fawn Borders. Several All-Border shows provide classes for these birds, although often they have to compete in Variegated White classes, which is not very encouraging.

In the Fawn Border we find the most beautiful feathered of all Border Canaries. The expression “feathered like a Java Sparrow” can truly be applied to the best Fawns. If this quality is carried into the Fawn-marked White Birds they can be superb.

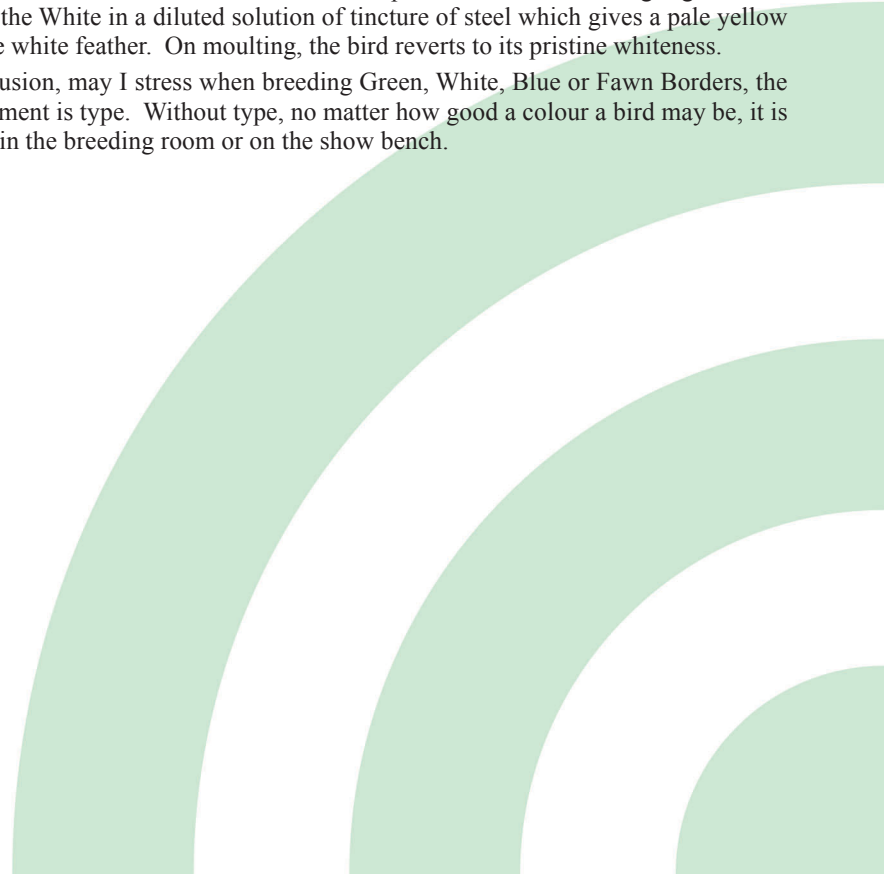
One advantage of a lifetime spent in the Fancy is sitting on a winter’s evening by the fire, closing your eyes and remembering those birds. Birds of all varieties come jostling into one’s mind to be enjoyed once again - even the first bird I ever owned, a Goldie cock, purchased for four pennies 72 years ago is still fresh in the memory.

When you have a few good White Borders in the stud, it is time to consider breeding Fawns. Always pair the best possible Cinnamon colour, tight feathered bird, making sure it is a good cinnamon colour, tight feathered and not too heavily pencilled or dark over the back. The best Fawn birds I have bred always seem to come from a Fawn-marked White paired to a Self Cinnamon Yellow hen. The Fawn-ground colour was richer from this pairing than any other.

Always remember most Normals are frightened when first introduced to a White bird. Many fanciers have found this to their cost when their best Normal is “up for the specials” and placed next to a White bird. So introduce the White bird gently, giving the other birds a chance to accept the colour.

Sometimes I find a Normal bird refuses to accept a White in the breeding cage. In this case I “dip” the White in a diluted solution of tincture of steel which gives a pale yellow effect on the white feather. On moulting, the bird reverts to its pristine whiteness.

In conclusion, may I stress when breeding Green, White, Blue or Fawn Borders, the first requirement is type. Without type, no matter how good a colour a bird may be, it is of little use in the breeding room or on the show bench.





Dr. Jim Rosshirt, D.V.M., President of the North American Border Club kindly sponsored this feature.

Jim is an honorary member of the West Wales BFCC and inaugurated the CHAGRA trophy for best dark as a tribute to Charlie and Gracie Norfield.

CINNAMON MYTHS AROUND

IN MY recent article I gave a brief outline of the methods I have used to create a small stud of exhibition Green Borders. As I mentioned, the oldest recorded mutant from the Green Canary was the Cinnamon. I have always considered the Cinnamon and Cinnamon-marked Canary to be among the most handsome of their kind. In the Cinnamon and its derivative, the Fawn, is to be found that perfect feather quality which is a joy to behold.

Many myths still surround the Cinnamon, it being claimed that the blood once introduced into a stud cannot be controlled, and that it brings loss of size, narrow heads and eye troubles in its wake.

Two great fanciers of recent times, the late Willy Welsh of Border fame and the late Percy James with his Yorkshires, both used Cinnamon blood within their studs for many years and both bred top exhibition birds which carried Cinnamon blood. If two such fanciers found much success on the bench with the help of the Cinnamon bird then surely the dangers of the use of such blood have been somewhat exaggerated.

To explain a Cinnamon carrier cock simply means that visually the bird may be clear, variegated or green, but carries within it the Cinnamon gene. A hen cannot be a Cinnamon carrier in the same way as a cock.

In the case of Cinnamon blood one must control its use and it is essential that good records are kept. If used indiscriminately it can spread through a stud in a few seasons. A hen can only pass the Cinnamon gene to her sons.

It is the carrier cock which appears Normal or Green in appearance that causes the problems in Cinnamon breeding. I have known a fancier take a cock bird to a window to 'check its eye colour' and then state with some conviction that it has black eyes so cannot be carrying Cinnamon. In fact, from a nest where cocks are 'split' for Cinnamon, all cocks may be dark eyed and only by 'proving' them can you ascertain the Cinnamon carrier. A nest mate brother may only be able to pass on Normal characteristics.

It can be seen then how essential it is to keep very complete records when dealing with Cinnamon blood, as it is through the casual use of Cinnamon-carrier cock birds that the Cinnamon blood can spread quickly through a stud.

Much of what I have written in my previous article on the Green Border applies equally to the Cinnamon, as again we must strive for good ground colour and clear markings and yet still be the equal of the best exhibition Normals. It is also true of the Cinnamon, as of the Green, that continually pairing Self to Self will produce birds with narrow and poor heads and a loss in overall size.

If we breed with undersized birds, Normal, Green or Cinnamon we can expect to breed small birds, but if we select Cinnamons of normal size, and preferably line-bred, they will breed the same sized birds as their parents.



**Gracie Norfield -
cleaning Charlie's
water pots!**

I have found, as with the Greens, that it is the Three-quarter dark cock that can keep the head properties and body size in the Self Cinnamons. By size I do not mean the so called 'stock bird' which more often than not is a bird heavy in chest and back with an abundance of feather, but a bird excelling in exhibition qualities combined with reasonable all-round size.

I have never found it difficult to breed big Borders, but in most cases they do not possess the true Border movement or the position of the ideal exhibition bird, and frequently there is a shortness of leg and thickness behind the legs that is not desirable.

The real bonus of running a few Cinnamons in the stud is the Cinnamon-marked birds that come along. In my experience a good Cinnamon-marked Buff cock or hen is seldom overlooked and nearly always catches the judge's eye for the richness of body colour and quality of feather.

Its general attractiveness is a real joy to behold, and one or two such birds that I have seen exhibited through the years are high on my own list of the best Borders.

With careful records and common-sense, the breeding of Cinnamons can be very rewarding, and I believe that they can do much more good than harm in a stud.

GIVE YOUR BORDERS EVERY CHANCE TO CATCH THE JUDGE'S EYE

BY now we should have given all our potential show birds their early training for the show bench. Part of this training will mean we have left the birds in their show cage for an hour at a time and ensured that they can find their seed and water. We will have done our best to see that the birds are 'steady' in their show cage thereby giving them every chance of catching the judge's eye.

EXTRA CARE

The drinkers on the show cage are placed in an unnatural position compared to the drinkers in their stock cages, so the newcomer must take extra care to see that his birds can find the water. It is a good idea to put something attractive in the drinker to draw the bird's attention to it, perhaps a tonic seed or a small piece of greenfood; then when the bird is seen to be putting its head through the small drinker hole you can substitute water for the treat.

Remember to place the birds for a short period in the travelling box with the lid open then gently close the lid when they are used to their new surroundings and carry the box around the garden or birdroom. A few such trips soon accustoms the birds to the travelling case. Before you close the lid, however, always ensure that the birds are on a perch and not on the floor of the show cage; otherwise it may flap around in an attempt to perch and in the process damage a wing or tail feather.

Make sure that all your show cages are clean and that the perches are spotless. Exhibitors have the added problem of having to cover the bottom of the show cages with oat-husks, thus ensuring the contents of the ridiculously small seed drawers are not quickly covered with the non-edible husks. At shows, the small drinkers of birds on the lower benches also get filled with the stuff by courtesy of the birds above them. This is a cross the newcomer to the Border Fancy will have to bear, since generations of Border fanciers have come and gone without any progress being made as regards having the drinker in a normal position, or another type of floor covering being used. The beginner who shows other types of Canary will find the show cage for their variety a much more sensible proposition.

Make sure you send your completed entry form off in good time and not the day before entries close. When you have your show cage labels, make sure they are placed in the correct position on the show cage.

Many beginners find some difficulty knowing in which class their exhibit should be shown. A beginner might study the classification and find that the only class that mentions Cinnamon is that for Self or Foul birds. As the bird they intend to show has Cinnamon feathers they enter it in this class. But if there are no classes for Cinnamon Variegated birds shown in the schedule - just those for Marked and Variegated - then both Green and Cinnamon Variegated birds must be entered in these classes.

When you bring your birds home from the show either leave them in the travelling cases overnight, just propping open the lid a little - I keep a few small squares of foam rubber for this purpose - or unpack the birds and give them fresh drinking water. The birds should be returned to their stock cages in the morning and given a little softfood and condition or tonic seed; they may also appreciate a bath.

Should you find that some of your best birds do well for you on the show bench do not be tempted to show them every week throughout the show season. Remember that as a novice your best birds are the ones on which your future success will depend, so use common sense and do not place too much stress on the birds or tire them unnecessarily. This is very important in the case of hens for these birds are the foundation upon which every canary breeder depends.

Each newcomer to our hobby should remember that every fancier, no matter how well-known and successful, was once in the position that he or she is now. So enjoy your birds, have plenty of patience and do not get too despondent if your favourite does not take the best novice or a red ticket. Try to enjoy and learn from every show you visit, making as many contacts with fellow fanciers as you can. With steady progress and perseverance the rewards will come.

The novice should make up his or her mind right from the start to participate fully in every aspect of the hobby, and offer his or her services at the local club and the nearest open or specialist show. Every club and every show is only as good as those who give their time to make it so.

‘GREAT FANCIER’

The term ‘great fancier’ has, to my mind, more than one definition and it does not necessarily mean the fancier whose birds win everything in sight. I had a friend who loved and enjoyed his birds but through a lifetime in the hobby never aspired to greatness on the show bench. However, he was secretary of his local club for forty years and was tea-maker, staging erector, sweeper-upper, drink-filler and seed topper-upper at his own show and at least another seven or eight shows throughout the show season. Part of his annual holiday was taken at National Exhibition time and for years he was found working at this great show in any section where he was needed. He gave of himself unstintingly for the hobby he loved. To my way of thinking he was just as much a great fancier as the one with an armful of cups.

REMEMBER THAT BIRD?

As my dotage descends upon me my memory is, alas, not what it was! An exception is when I close my eyes and still see the Goldfinch cock that won my first red ticket in 1928 and the ticked yellow hen that brought me my first Border special in 1930.

I can vividly remember many of the great Borders shown in the past as clearly as I can recall Phil Warne's variegated yellow cock of last season. As part of my regular hospital treatment I am often immobilised for longish periods and I can close my eyes and have a parade of super birds pass before me. Not only lovely Borders from great fanciers but many British, Lizards and Yorkshires all of which I have been interested in during my years in the hobby. I recall the excitement of one National when Raymond Sawyer exhibited a never seen in this country before Cock of the Rock.

Although I have shown and won with a blue Border through the years I have only ever seen one truly blue Border which was shown by the late Noel Weaver years ago. Neither Noel or anyone else has shown a blue with such wonderful blue ground colour since. If the best of the cinnamons and greens I recall are of yesteryear it is because they had such wonderful ground colour, the richness in some of the cinnamons almost made them 'glow'.

It would take pages of the Journal to recall individual birds and fanciers, from the superb cinnamon marked birds of Willie Welsh, the yellow cocks of Mr Reid and Alec Atkins through to that terrific clear buff cock of Phil Warne's in 1990 - years of wonderful Borders and grand fanciers which bring much pleasure to recall.

The world of Borders may be much changed from my early years in the fancy but thankfully much that is good remains. We now have partnerships and fanciers that breed from fifty to a hundred or more hens and whose view of the hobby of breeding Border canaries is much more commercially based than in the past. However, the majority of Border fanciers are in the hobby for the great pleasure the breeding of this wonderful canary brings to them.

Through the years I have always enjoyed any success my friends have had on the show-bench. As for me it has always been part of the pleasure of our hobby and I feel sure they in turn have been pleased with any success I may have enjoyed. One thing I do not enjoy today is when admiring a winning bird people ignore the bird and make derogatory remarks about the exhibitor.

The hobby has been a wonderful one for me for a lifetime and has brought me many friends, many of them in countries around the world. During my years as a Border fancier I may not have bred many "Rolls Royces" but I've bred a lot of pretty reliable "Ladas" and more to the point have enjoyed every minute of it.

I am now looking forward to adding to my memory a few more terrific Borders that hopefully will arrive on the show bench next season. This is a great hobby of ours and we should all support those that work hard, often with more kicks than thanks, to make it so.

GREEN FOOD AND ITS PRACTICAL USE

by FRED DRISCOLL

GREEN FOOD such as chickweed, which unfortunately is seasonal, dandelion and many other summer vegetables are extremely valuable and a good additional food source during the whole of the year - not just for a short period at breeding time or the two months prior to that. Recently, in the last few years, it has been possible to purchase the biggest majority of greens in most of the supermarket chain stores, even when they have been out of season. With our old friend the broccoli at the top of the list - this is a good nutritious vegetable besides being rich in iron - so we have no excuses for not giving our birds that little green food tit bit in the depths of winter.

It is very important, whenever you give your birds green vegetables, they are absolutely clean and fresh and if possible pick the greenest and youngest looking you can find available. This, I can assure you, will be the most beneficial and satisfying for your birds. I know the best and the cheapest is definitely the wild species which are probably growing in abundance right now - nice young shoots of dandelion hidden under all the fallen leaves. Don't give them the old big dark leaf roots from last year as it will be very bitter and give them the runs. What they want is the nice light green shoots which are the fresh growth this year. Next in line is the old favourite chickweed or *bird grass* as it was known in the 18th century. It was given this name because at that time it was widely grown as a rockery plant, for its lovely little white flower, and because our native birds always seemed to be enjoying its flowers and seeds.

One vegetable which, for some unknown reason, seems to have been badly neglected is the humble carrot. This to me is by far one of the most beneficial and nourishing foods you can give your cage birds whether it be sliced, grated, raw, or slightly boiled to soften. My preference is for the grated and then slightly boiled. This was an option which I used in conjunction with my soft food, soak seed and condition seed. I never dispose of the carrot water - that is used for a different purpose. In the super markets you can easily obtain small plastic punnets of fresh cress for a few pence. Simply remove the entire content of the punnet on the cage floor with the cress uppermost, they will soon go to town on every thing visual. Unfortunately this is soon consumed and the remains have to be removed.

Another good, enjoyable item of food which my birds derive satisfaction from is the stump of a cauliflower or cabbage plant. Simply remove the outer skin, which is too hard for them to penetrate, slice the stalk in two and put in the cage with the white fleshy part uppermost - this will soon be devoured. The humble swede or turnip when tenderised is quite good but only a few of mine seem to have taken to it. The loose-leaf type of lettuce seems to be most appreciated by most cage birds, especially at breeding times, because it is easily consumed and regurgitated. But, in my opinion, is of little use because of its 90% water content.

Other useful greens, which are all perennials and can be used for several years before replanting, are spinach, chicory and kale. All these are easy vegetables to keep growing by simply removing the outer leaves as required without disturbing the whole plant. They will keep on merrily growing providing you keep feeding them. In the same category are Brussels sprouts which are very nourishing and beneficial, filled with plenty of vitamins, but unfortunately stink to high heaven after two or three days of birds droppings.

WILD SEEDS

Availabilities, capabilities, palatability, and a sense of humour. First and foremost is, without doubt, the seeding heads of the sow thistle and the ordinary meadow thistle along with coltsfoot. This throws its yellow head up above ground well before its greenery - gather these just before they ripen, but only gather what you require to feed your birds. It is possible to continue plucking these plants for several weeks as the head continue to ripen. This, of course, only applies to the thistle and dandelion heads. In a few months time there will be quite a number of seeding grasses to be had which are very palatable for your canaries to be feeding on. Simply gather a reasonable hand full, tie together with some light twine and hang upside-down inside the stock cage. If you give your canaries plenty of wild seeds, you won't experience any of the dreaded diarrhoea, enteritis, or going light amongst young or old birds. The continued and regular use of wild seeds will, in the long run, keep your birds active all year round and at the same time, because the brownish seed is extremely rich in oil, put a beautiful lustre on the birds' feather as well as other side benefits to the birds.

If, like myself, you are active enough and able to wander out into the fields I suggest that in and around July to September you start collecting all the wild seeds required to supplement your normal seed requirements during the winter months. It is quite possible to collect in excess of 20 or 30lbs. I say lbs because my scales are rather old like me. First I will give you some of the areas and places you will be able to find your wild seeds, then the method of obtaining and gathering same and lastly how to preserve your harvest of seeds.

HARVESTING YOUR WILD SEEDS

First and foremost to be gathered is *Chicken Weed* or *bird grass*. This can be gathered at any time after April by simply pulling it up when you can see that the seed heads have been formed. Place them all on a sheet of newspaper, continually turning them over and over with a little occasional shake will soon dislodge the tiny seeds. You will be surprised how much seed there will be on the paper after a couple of days. Next, resembling *Gold-of-Pleasure*, is the *Common Poppy* which comes and goes so quickly. After it has flowered and the seeding head has turned brown is the time to cut the bag round the stems and hang up in a light airy place. Now and then, when you go past, give it a tap with your hand - these pods contain thousands of small black seeds.

I recommend the *Willow Herb* with its lovely little pinkish flower. When the capsules are ripe they again have thousands of greyish seeds. *Shepherds Purse* is very highly sort after by canaries, so called because of the shape of the seed pods, but if I had my way it would be called *Hearts Delight*. When the pods open it expels dozens of pale brown seeds.

Wild Rape with its nice, sweet, oily black seed will keep your birds fit and warm all through the winter months along with a little *Blue Maw* seed.

Cornflower, sometimes confused with the *Corn-Cockle*, is exceptionally nice for conditioning as well as for a winter feed. They have a lovely purplish flowering head with spreading lobes. They belong to the thistle family but these are not spiny like the common *Spear Thistle*, the black seeds are very good indeed. *Charlock* is a very nourishing seed with its little four yellow flower petals. This, when ripe, expels dozens of dark reddish brown seeds from long narrow pods. *Wild Radish* is very similar regarding the seedpods but differs in respect of the flowers - the latter has pale pink or pale yellow flowers with red-pencilling on the petals - but again has nice dark brown seeds.

Corn-Spurrey is a very nice soft seed which grows right at the very end of each stem in bunches of five or six. The flowers are white and have five petals, the seeds are dark brown to black and are oval in shape. This plant is cultivated much on the continent and used widely as cattle fodder (this plant likes sandy soil).

A very useful seed is the *Campion family* namely the white, red, bladder and ragged types. All have brownish seed pods and the colour of the flowers range from white, pale pink to red. The seeds contained in the pods are spherical and about as big as a pinhead. The colour of the seeds can be from greyish to black.

The ones I collect in abundance are *Fat Hen* and its near relative *Common Orache*. These two plants look very similar in appearance and both can grow up to five feet tall with both plants having greenish flowering heads branching all the way up the stem. The *Fat Hen* being the paler of the two, these again can be striped off quite easily by the hand full. When ripe the seeds of these two plants are again dark grey to black.

Meadow Sweet is the next plant to look for with its lovely slightly scented and aromatic fragrance. This plant grows mainly on marshy land or low lying meadows with bad drainage or at the side of river banks and streams. Its creamy scented flower grows in vast bunches at the end of each stalk. Easy to harvest, seeds are slightly twisted and big elongated.

Next in line is the *Knotgrass* which can grow up to six feet tall if it has something to cling to, but mostly its found on waste ground or on mounds of earth which has lain there for some considerable time. It either has a pink or white flower and the foliage is a silvery green with the fruit having a three corner look about it, dark brown in colour and rather nutty. *Redshank* or *Persicaria* is a must if you want good colour and a lovely sheen on your birds. These flowers have dense spikes of pinkish to red heads born all the way up the stem. Growing mostly on waste or on cultivated land the seeds, when ripe, are a dark nutty brown to black and very shiny.

Others to look for are the *Rumen family* - these include the *Common Sorrel* and all the *Docks*, of which there are numerous amounts. They all bear lovely nutty fruits, the dock's are especially very good for enhancing the colour on the birds as well as being a good winter food.

Plantain, which includes the *Greater* and *Lesser* and the *Ribwort* family, all produce vast amounts of seeds all the way up the stems - sometimes in excess of 12 inches. This only applies to the *Greater* and *Lesser Plantain*, the *Ribwort* has very dark brown seeding heads about an inch long right at the top of the stem. Both need to be pulled off and allowed to dry before stripping the seeds from the heads.

GREEN FOODS AND WILD SEEDS



Dandelion



Groundsel



Shepherd's Purse



Chickweed



Rye Grass



White Campion



Curled Dock



Greater Plantain



Thistle



Persicaria



Knapweed



Charlock



Teazle



Watercress