

A delightful afternoon at Daniel's

Whose budgies are at a higher level than anyone else's in the fancy? For **ROGER CARR**, the answer has to be Daniel Lütolf

BUDGERIGARS

LATE last year, I visited Switzerland to judge one of their small national shows. (See *Cage & Aviary Birds*, February 25.) It was here, at the ZEWA Budgerigar Show, where Daniel Lütolf exhibited a team of budgerigars that needed to be seen to be believed.

I did not see Daniel at the show, because he had left his birds before I arrived and did not return until the Sunday afternoon after I had left. However, he did leave a message with my old friend Hans Ruosch that if I wished to visit him, I would be most welcome.

I always take my wife with me on foreign trips and I am not a great visitor of other people's aviaries, but after several hours of indecision I decided to take the plunge and travel the 130km (80 miles) from Sargans to Würenlos.

How glad I am that I made the journey. On arrival, we were made very welcome and shown into the main breeding room. Here Daniel's love of his birds quickly became apparent to Janet and me. The way he handled them and his instant recall of their pedigrees proved the birds were not just numbers.

Every bird appeared steady, self-assured and bright of eye. It did not matter whether Daniel or I caught them; they would sit resolutely in an open cage without moving and demonstrate their supreme qualities.

As the afternoon progressed, we talked about many things, especially head feathering. Here we tended to disagree. Daniel said he preferred the cinnamon grey green hen that he had shown compared to the cinnamon grey green cock I had awarded best in show. No question, the hen had greater length of feather and a wider head.



Supreme critic: Daniel Lütolf casts an expert eye over the cream of 'our' show budgies at the 2012 Budgerigar Society Club Show

However, I pointed out that I personally did not like the split-cap effect that came from the feathers rising so far above the head. In my opinion, the cock was closer to the ideal and portrayed a bird of greater beauty. Daniel accepted this, but he still preferred the hen.

One nice thing about the afternoon was Daniel's acceptance of criticism, as well

as praise. His birds generally appeared to be at a higher level than any I have seen elsewhere. The greater majority were in proportion, with tails and wings consistent with the overall length of the bird. This is unlike most in England where the tails and wings are far too long.

However, he was prepared to accept that some of his birds would benefit from larger bodies. One bird that caught my eye was a beautiful young grey green cock that had a perfect head, but when in hand definitely required a larger body.

Another interesting aspect of the birdroom was the absence of any pensioners. Nearly all the birds were 2014- or 2013-ringed. The previously mentioned young cinnamon grey green cock and hen were already in breeding

In this day and age, it is often maintained that budgerigars do not need flight space, but not so in the Lütolf establishment. One external and two internal large flights are available for the non-breeding stock.

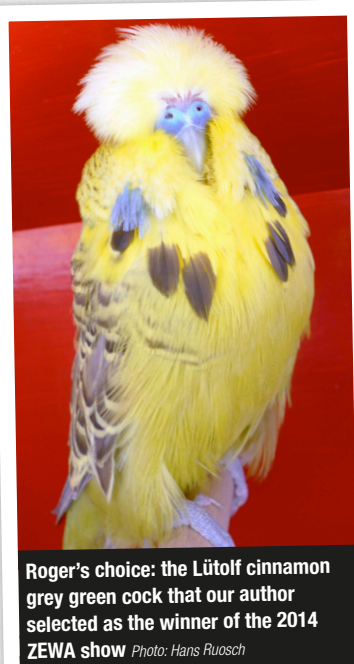
The internal flights are carefully laid out, so that the perches are over litter bedded areas. In addition, the feeding and viewing areas are on tiles that are kept clean on a daily basis.

The entire aviary gives an air of professionalism, but the fact that Daniel lets his daughter keep a few pairs of lesser birds for her own pleasure in the same room demonstrates his caring side and dedication to family.

After four hours of sheer delight, we took our leave with the sincere hope of returning in the future.

A former Budgerigar Society president and chairman, Roger Carr is a recipient of the society's coveted Silver Bird award.

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Roger's choice: the Lütolf cinnamon grey green cock that our author selected as the winner of the 2014 ZEWA show Photo: Hans Ruosch



Cinnamon grey green hen: Roger's criticism of this fabulous bird was that it showed a split cap, so he placed it below the cock pictured left Photo: Hans Ruosch

Let's get back to helping

Meetings, speakers and shows are the core attraction of clubs, but have we lost sight of mutual assistance? **FRED WRIGHT** argues in favour of co-operation not competition

BUDGERIGARS

WHEN I first started with birds, I joined my local cage bird society in South London. There were two other budgie fanciers and they both helped me enormously. I was keen to learn and, during my frequent visits, they showed me what breeding budgies was all about.

One was a beginner who showed in partnership with his wife, while the other was an old fancier who was a judge – hence, obviously, a champion. They looked after me at club meetings, but most of their teaching went on in their birdrooms. Sunday mornings were always the time to visit club members and I know that, like me, other newcomers were being helped by experienced

fanciers who kept the same variety.

I don't think that my club was any different to most other societies at the time. Help was freely on offer and, in time, as I later became more experienced with the birds, I was the one that new fanciers visited.

In recent years, I have attended plenty of club meetings – as a speaker, rather than just a club member. However, I get the feeling that clubs are very different these days. All too frequently there seems to be an undercurrent of rivalry between members, rather than helping each other out.

The emphasis seems to be on the top table and officers wanting members to do things that they don't really want to. Members are encouraged to attend events they would rather not, and organise shows that most of the

membership are less than keen to be involved with. Clubs don't seem to be the places where new fanciers learn, and at some point they are going to walk away.

I think it's about time that club officials took the time to step back and look at what they are doing for their members. It's not just about running a club, organising speakers and shows – it's about taking care of the members who attend your meetings.

Clubs need to find ways to teach their members, such as running Sunday morning visits for newcomers to visit experienced fanciers within the club. Offering support and information about their birds might be the first thing, but other members need to be helped with their birds, too. In addition, clubs should think about inviting new members to be coupled with a mentor within the society.



See for yourself: aviary visits are a great way for members to gain knowledge of birds and management. Last year, Forth Valley BS members paid a visit to Paul Redford's birdroom

Decades ago, the bird fancy was all about visiting or being visited on a Sunday morning in the birdroom. What happened to those visits? If you are a club official, step back and think about

whether your club is doing its best for the new members.

Fred Wright runs a champion stud and a seed business in Surrey.