

The Swiss lead the way

On a judging trip to Switzerland late last year, **ROGER CARR** was impressed by the club's balance of tradition and innovation. And the birds were pretty useful, as well

BUDGERIGARS

LAST autumn, I had the privilege of visiting eastern Switzerland to judge the ZEW National Budgerigar Show.

ZEWA, which was an original member of the World Budgerigar Organisation, stands for the Swiss National Society for Breeders of English Budgerigars.

Hans Ruosch founded it in 1986 and the shows are always held in the Sarganserland area of Switzerland. This is on the border with Liechtenstein and is in close proximity to Italy, Austria and Germany. Over the years, exhibitors have come from all of these countries, as well as France, to enjoy one of the most friendly and sensibly run international shows in the world.

In the early days, it attracted up to 350 entries per show. However, like all organisations it has gradually suffered from decreasing membership and is now pleased to attract 150-200 entries –

Previously, ZEWA had used the traditional schoolroom, but for 2014 the show was moved to a car showroom

which is on a par with English bronze championship shows.

How this Swiss show differs from English bronze patronage shows is that it does not have 500 classes, but only 58. These classes are equally divided between young birds and old birds and cater for all sections.

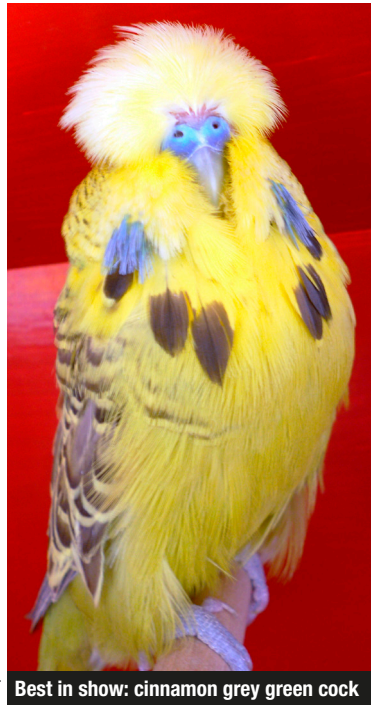
Some may say that only one section discourages newcomers from showing, but not here. Those new to the exhibition

fancy appear to accept their status and gladly enter their birds in the hope that they will dislodge the senior fanciers from their perch.

I can already hear people saying: "Well, it depends upon the class of the opposition." But can the opposition come any stronger than Daniel Lütolf, who has exhibited

for the past 20 years?

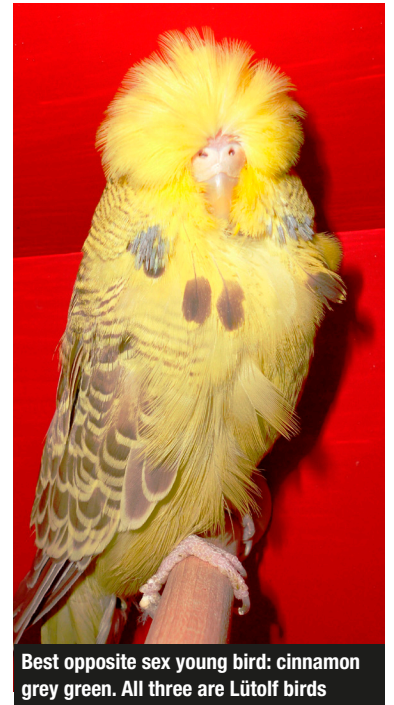
ZEWA also never ceases to amaze with its innovations and last year one of these was the club's choice of venue. Previously, it had used the traditional schoolroom and part of a railway station,



Best in show: cinnamon grey green cock



Best opposite sex any age: grey cock



Best opposite sex young bird: cinnamon grey green. All three are Lütolf birds

All photos: Hans Ruosch

but for 2014 the show was moved to a car showroom. With natural light pouring in through all the walls and the roof, there were no excuses for me to miss quality of colour, markings or missing feathers.

What this society proves is that there is room for change, but at the same time there is no substitute for proven methods. It continues to demonstrate its regional and national pride by flying the flags of each canton, but members are also pleased to welcome visitors from

other countries. They stick with their tried-and-tested classification, but are flexible enough to change the venue of their show to add to the mix.

What this continues to prove is that there are many lessons to be learnt from overseas societies which could be advantageous to ours back home.

As far as the birds were concerned, the best in show young cinnamon grey green cock benched by Daniel Lütolf would win many gold championship shows in this country. Meanwhile, the

best opposite sex young bird hen would probably win the Club Show.

Ask me why I did not make the hen best in show? Simple. Unlike most modern judges, I do not like birds with split head caps because I believe it takes away a degree of the beauty of the bird. However, I would like to have it at home as part of a breeding team.

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

Time to move on

For many, the end of the breeding season can be a tense time if you're unsure of how to split up your cock and hen budgerigars. Here, **RAY STEELE** offers some much-needed advice

BUDGERIGARS

NO MATTER how successful your breeding season is, the time will inevitably come when pairs have to be split up. It can be a difficult period for established breeders, so it is not surprising that beginners in their first few seasons worry about the right way of doing this.

The main consideration is to separate the cock and hen without causing harm to them or the remaining chicks. Eggs are a different matter – sometimes they have to be sacrificed or the breeding season would never end.

Once a pair has completed the required number of rounds, be it two or three, the first move in preventing a hen from breeding is to remove her nest-box. You may find that the hen has

already laid one or two eggs and these should be removed and discarded.

In the case of a pair that has produced outstanding chicks in the previous breeding rounds, these eggs could be transferred to another nest for fostering, if one is available, rather than discard them.

The hen should not be deprived of the box until the youngest chick is at least four-and-a-half weeks old. A chick of that age – even if it has not left the nest-box of its own accord – has sufficient feathering to permit it being placed on the breeding cage floor, quite safely, without risk of becoming chilled.

Most youngsters are capable of eating a certain amount of seed at this point in their development, although they still generally need to be "topped" up by their parents for a few days.

Once the last chick has been

removed, the hen can be placed in a double or treble breeder cage with the dividers removed to recuperate. The cock can stay to finish rearing the chicks. Alternatively, the hen can be left in the breeding cage along with the cock until the youngsters are self supporting. If the hen lays another egg, after being transferred, it will do her no harm. It is the effort involved in rearing

chicks that debilitates hens, not laying eggs.

This "halfway house" accommodation is almost always better than returning breeding hens to a flight. Each hen needs to be treated as an individual and her condition must be the deciding factor on when she is

going to be put in a large flight. Many tend to build up a surplus of fat during the time they are confined to a breeding cage. Being in a stock cage gives them the opportunity to tone up flying muscles gradually.

Even hens that have not put on weight should not be placed in a large flight. A gradual change of housing is much less likely to cause stress, and stress can trigger illnesses that would otherwise have lain dormant.

Cock birds usually do not pose the

The hen should not be deprived of the nest-box until the youngest chick is at least four-and-a-half weeks old



If you find eggs in the nest-box when you move the hen and she has a record of producing outstanding youngsters, these can be given to another hen to foster



Rounding off the season: hens should be transferred to double or treble breeders to recover from rearing the chicks, while the cocks are likely to be ready to go into a flight

same sort of problems when the time comes to split up breeding pairs. They tend to be quite fit and are even ready to be returned to large inside or outside flights. However, the odd cock bird does get fat during the breeding season and these should be treated in the same way as the hens. However, they should not be housed with the hens.

Ray Steele is a champion breeder and exhibitor, and a BS panel judge.