

Lütolf's latest: a new

In his third bulletin from the birdroom of the great Swiss breeder/exhibitor **DANIEL LÜTOLF**, Fred Wright examines the fantastic recent progress made in this stud, focusing on the normals. His conclusion? 'Daniel's birds are the future'

COVER STORY: BUDGERIGARS

DANIEL'S birdroom is impressive and so are his successes at the shows – but I was blown away by the quality of the stock on my first visit to the birdroom last autumn.

Inside the first 10 minutes I knew I was seeing something very different. It all reminded me of when I entered the birdroom of Jo Mannes in Germany for the first time in 1993. With Brian Byles, we had judged the Karlsruhe European Championship show and had travelled down to Jo's home on the Sunday afternoon after the show where he had taken all the top awards. We travelled with Jac Cuyten and Cor Booster, both from Holland.

We went straight to the Mannes birdroom and Brian and I were amazed at the birds. It was the first stud I had seen that excelled in what quickly became known as "directional feather". That's the feather in the cap which radiates from the centre and pushes out over the eye. Within a couple of years it was THE feature that everyone in Europe was craving for. When I saw it in Jo's birdroom, I instantly knew it was the new trend to hit exhibition budgies.

On this visit to Daniel I had the same feeling: a new type of budgie in big

numbers and a birdroom that contained many of the features of Jo's birdroom. It was quite uncanny.

Past development of exhibition budgerigars

Budgies have changed over the decades, of course. I came into the hobby in the early 1960s and by the end of the decade budgies were very different. By the end of the 1970s, the birds had become much more feathery and there was talk of different types of bird in the North and South of the UK. Big spots had become the order of the day – so flecking walked in

through the door. There's a massive connection between flecking and big spots!

During the 1970s, top winning budgies not only became bigger but the heads changed – the feather became longer and

there was much more "lift" in the head. Through the 1980s, budgies just seemed to improve but it was in the 1990s that those heads changed. Directional feathering was the order of the day, with slightly flatter feathering in the cap but it did extend over the eyes. Directional feathering was so appealing: it displayed a much rounder cap which was pleasing to the eye.

Every time I look at the photos, the birds have brought a smile to my face

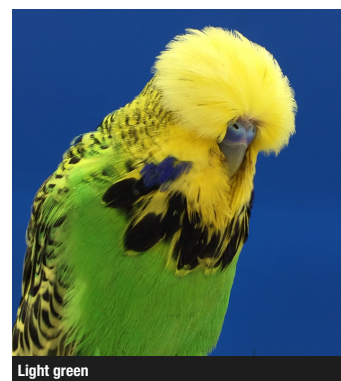
GREEN SERIES



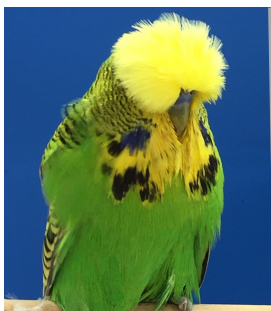
Light green cock: this was Fred's favourite out of all the birds he looked at. All photos: Fred Wright



Light green



Light green



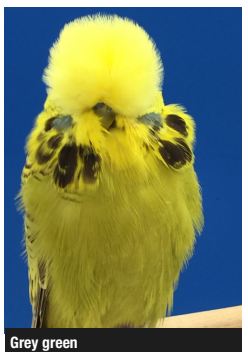
Light green



Baby grey green



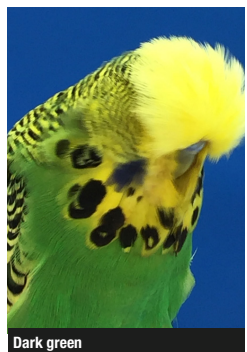
Light green



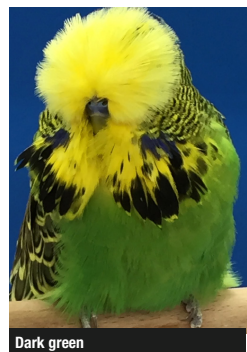
Grey green



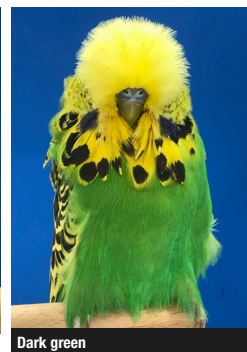
Grey green



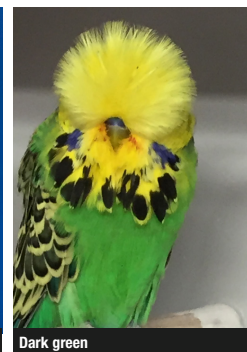
Dark green



Dark green



Dark green



Dark green

In the past eight or 10 years budgies have changed again! That directional feathering has stayed with us, but the feathering on the cap has extended – become longer. For one who loved the directional feathering and roundness, I also

soon came to love that extra length of feather in the cap. Budgies were moving on!

However, at the same time, I had taken the view that as the cap feathering was getting longer, so was the feathering on the bodies. I believed that with a lot of birds the feathering had become far too long. It had begun untidily to cover the feet of showbirds and we had lost most of that department, style and real quality of exhibition budgies.

We might call it a transition period. Suddenly, some fanciers expressed the view that we were producing top budgies that were in excess, quality wise, to the show standard as set by the Budgerigar Society. Few would be able to agree and take a view on the state of the top exhibition budgies in recent years, but just throw "longtails" into the pot and it's fair to say the hobby does not speak with one voice!

The show bird is back

Daniel's views changed slightly a couple of

years ago. He decided that the best birds in the world had become somewhat too big and too feathery, and tended to have lost their "charm". Deep down Daniel believes that exhibition budgies should be show birds, as distinct from stock or breeding birds. He went about tackling that excess feather, tidied up the body feather and reduced the feather length. At the same time, he was keen to keep the characteristic Lütolf extended length of feather in the cap.

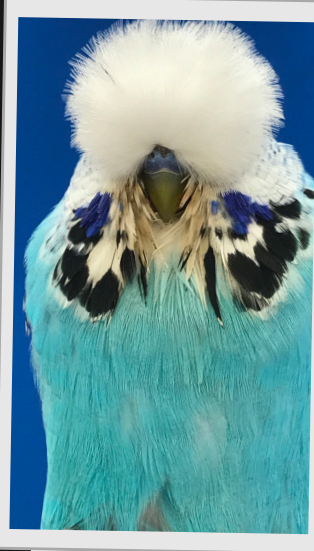
He went about this by nothing more than selective breeding. He decided to concentrate on the type of bird he wanted and bred well with them. He found that the less feathery birds bred better, and it greatly reduced the number of feather problems, namely, problems with flights growing properly and some birds not growing a tail in their second season. When I saw the birds I did not see flight or tail problems, so I believe he has moved in the right direction. The birds ooze with

... type of budgerigar

BLUE SERIES



Violet cock



Skyblue



Skyblue



Skyblue

quality. They really are show birds! His efforts have been rewarded, by working with the birds and the type of bird he wants to produce. With the breeding of more real show birds Daniel's breeding results are improved, too. He is regularly breeding 800 youngsters per year, and I don't believe he is encountering too many breeding problems either. Those slightly smaller, less feathery birds are far more fertile and the hens seem to be more equipped to rear their youngsters. His results are amazing, and his efforts are being totally rewarded.

Comparisons with the former style

Daniel suggested I visited another fancier in Switzerland with him – a friend of long standing. He was someone I had visited a couple of times probably about 20 years ago and remembered as a top Swiss breeder. I had not seen him or his birds for a

long time. Daniel wanted me to see his birds and suggested we should talk about what we had seen on the way back to his birdroom in Zürich.

I entered the birdroom, which was different from the one I remembered. This breeder had just paired up and the hens were starting to produce eggs. I looked carefully at the pairs and the spare birds in the flights. They were huge: generally much bigger, longer and more feathery than most of the top birds in the UK. Yes – impressive, but my thoughts were instantly about being possibly too big and buff. I thought about potential breeding problems. It seemed impossible to breed lots of birds of this type and not get feather problems.

These were birds that lots of UK breeders would have given their right arm for, yet for me there were potentially too many problems and they would be unlikely to be prolific breeders. The pairs were fit and they all looked well. The spare birds in

the flights were mighty impressive, yet the type of birds that ran consistently running through the stud was beginning to scare me ever so slightly.

We drank that wonderful Swiss coffee and ate cake and started the journey back to Zürich. Daniel opened the conversation quickly and asked what I thought. I told him I thought they were wonderful birds but they were beginning to frighten me with so much size and feather. Daniel explained that he had supplied most if not all of the birds in this stud. They were his "old-type" birds. They were wonderful, yet I could see why and how Daniel had taken his stud forward and understood the reasons why he had taken that route.

Back in Zürich, I took another look at Daniel's birds and birdroom. It was an excellent session. The difference between the two studs made me even more positive towards Daniel's birds.

Conclusions

It's three months now since I visited Daniel and his birds. I have needed to think it through and not just respond to what I saw there. Probably every day for a couple of months I have thought about the trip and

the birds. Many times I have looked at the hundreds of pictures I took. Every time, the birds have brought a smile to my face. I was so impressed with the birds – especially those normals.

More and more I go back to my thoughts and experience with Jo Mannes. All those years ago, Jo became a pioneer with budgies. It was not just that he produced lots of birds that set the standard, but he set up a Mannes-type bird that most fanciers wanted to work towards. Everyone wanted birds with those Mannes-type features.

Daniel is doing exactly the same. History always repeats itself. Daniel has

Those light greens, the skyblues and the dark factor birds are strong in colour.

For me, the heads and caps are the exceptional features. I love that longer feather extending further back over the head. The longer clear cap just extends that bit further. It's so appealing. It's a wide cap that pushes over the eye, without pushing into the eye itself. But there are so many advantages of there being less feather in the body.

Back to the Mannes experience: Jo set the standards for at least 20 years. Everyone wanted the Mannes-type birds. Jo was the leader and others followed. I am sure we will see the same with Daniel.

He is another clever breeder who can look into that crystal ball and see the future. I am convinced he is on to a winner!

Daniel can see that the future is with a bird that excels in the top end and

drops back a degree in the body. He is looking for a bird with show qualities and charm, which breeds well. My money is on Daniel being around for all of another 20 years and he will be leading the way. Not necessarily with Daniel Lütolf birds, but it will be Daniel's new-type birds. Ignore him at your peril! ■

“The future is with a bird that excels in the top end and drops back a degree in the body”

set a new standard. His birds are the future. Those new-type birds have character. That extended, longer feather in the cap is so pleasing. Maybe the bodies are slightly smaller, but size is not everything. His birds are show birds. They breed well. They are good colour birds and by that I mean a positive strong colour.



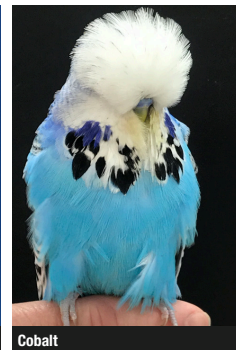
Grey



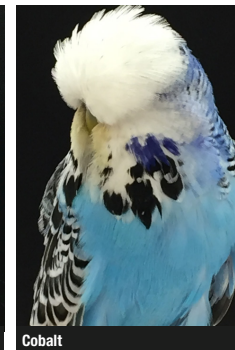
Grey



Grey



Cobalt



Cobalt

About the author

FRED WRIGHT has been around top quality budgerigars since the mid-1960s. He has visited most of the top studs around the world over the years – and still keeps looking. He has judged in many different countries where good budgies are bred and exhibited, and has judged the BS Club Show at least five times, the first back in 1982.

Fred has been a regular contributor to *Cage & Aviary Birds* for more than 30 years.