

# Lütolf's latest: cinnamons, opalines, specialist varieties

Following on from his article in *Cage & Aviary Birds*, January 29, Fred Wright continues his exclusive review of the latest birds being produced by the great Swiss breeder **DANIEL LÜTOLF**. Here he considers the 'non-normal' varieties

## BUDGERIGARS

**S**PECIALIST varieties have their challenges and indeed I believe them to be far more challenging than normals. The birds I know and understand best of the specialist colours are the recessive pids, the dilutes, dominant pids and spangles. I might know all about lutinos and albinos, but my experience is limited. My knowledge and interest in clearbodies can only be described as lacking. Clearwings I greatly admire but have never bred them. I have tried to breed good yellowfaces, but I have bred plenty and never one of real quality.

I describe my background with the "specialists" in order to convey how I looked at Daniel's specialist varieties.

Daniel Lütolf obviously likes all budgies and seems to have no marked preference for colour and variety. He has a huge stud of the mainstream colours and varieties and is working hard to improve the specialist varieties with the carefully considered use of those top-quality normals.

Daniel seems to target the specialist varieties by bringing in the best quality examples he can – and then trying to improve them. So the story of his specialist varieties is the story of how he is improving

those varieties. Having spent a couple of days with him and his birds, I can confirm that he is not only trying to improve the specialist birds, he is also adding those great characteristics of the normals.

Even specialist varieties need to be decent or top-quality budgies and then in addition they need quality features related to the associated variety markings. So, a recessive pied needs to be a top quality budgie in size, feather, head and department. Then we would be looking for plenty of body variegation and wing markings that are not too heavy.

A lutino needs to be a good budgie – in size, width of head, department and cap – to have a clear body with good colour, as well as the right colour flights and tails. If there is a problem with lutinos it's generally a lack of size. This is all about a lack of feather width and length. Lutino feathers are usually shorter and

finer and it's similar with the head, cap and face. The head looks smaller and the cap tends not to excel because the feather is shorter and finer. Width in the face is a product of feather and not the actual width of the bird's structure. The feather on all lutinos being less buff make the variety appear smaller though usually smarter than most of the main varieties.

There is always a problem with balance which comes not just with size but thick buff feather too. But with that buff feather comes

less intensity of colour in the body and there's where you have the compromise in balance. With lutinos we need that good budgie but we need it with good colour, too. What a problem!

There are some specialist varieties that are perhaps more challenging than others, but what Daniel has achieved across the range is absolutely amazing. Let's review a few of them.

### Lutinos

When I arrived in the birdroom I just looked, didn't chat with anyone, simply looked at the birds in the breeding cages and the flights. The first thing that hit me was the lutinos. As birds they were as good as the normals, but the colour was so good. There were not lots of them yet enough to make a great impression.

In honesty I don't know how Daniel goes about breeding lutinos, but he did show me several dark green cocks that he told me were split lutino cocks. To me that says he is using dark greens to improve the birds – and the colour. I guess it helps so much when you have such good normals to make those improvements.

### Albinos

I only noticed a couple of albinos in the birdroom and they were big feathery birds. There were a few more hens than cocks, but Daniel pointed out a couple of grey cocks that were split albinos.

### Yellowfaces

There were lots of yellowfaces (YFs), both the European and the Australian, though far more of the European in greys, skyblues and cobalts. These yellowfaces may be considered as a specialist variety though they are no more of a challenge than normals, even if any colour-run through the body is a fault. I did not see any of the European YFs with any colour-run. There were some outstanding examples in the



Yellowface dilute All photos: Fred Wright

flights and in the breeding cages.

There were a few Australian YFs, but unless they are double factors with no run through the body they are less attractive. I did notice a number of YF dilutes in the breeding cages.

### Spangles

Daniel's spangles are outstanding. Probably some of his best birds are spangles that have lovely faces with bull's-eye spots and characteristic wing markings. I don't remember seeing any double-factor spangles – the clear white and yellow birds that carry a double dose of the spangle factor – but a few of those super single-factor birds are firmly fixed in my head.

Spangles are a partial dominant, so when one is paired to a non-spangle half the youngsters will be spangles and the other half non-spangles. It's easy to see that spangles can be paired to non-spangles that are of exceptional quality and hence the young spangles should show an improvement.

The quality of this group was amazing. Daniel has obviously worked hard with

his spangles, as they are some of the best birds in his room.

### Clearwings/dilutes – yellows and whites

There were lots of what I would describe as dilutes about. Many were yellowfaces and the quality was fantastic. They were big buff birds and oozed with quality. Perhaps not all were great "show birds", but they were wonderful stock birds.

I talked to Daniel about these birds and he suggested that some of the birds that I saw as dilutes might well be clearwings and some were greywings. I believe Daniel is working with this as a group of specialist colours and that he may be working to a plan, though I did not quite get hold of what the plan could be. I would suggest they are a bit of a mixed bag of super budgies and he will breed plenty of birds from them before sorting them out and then decide to concentrate on the clearwings, the dilutes and maybe a few greywings.

Lots of Swiss and German breeders, as well as UK breeders, are keen to acquire recessive pied stock from him. I saw about



Spangle light green

bet in a couple of years I will be able to understand what he was doing! It's a case of watch this space and regroup in two or three years' time.

### Clearbodies

There are two types of clearbody: the Easley and the Texas Clearbody. The Easley is dominant and the Texas is sex-linked. Daniel has both but although I expected to see quality Texas clearbodies, I was amazed at the good quality of the Easley clearbodies.

### Recessive pids

There were lots of recessive pids in the room but only good quality ones. Some of the cocks were exceptional with clear heads – big feathery birds – and plenty of width in the face. Daniel shows them at the top events, including the Karlsruhe European Championship show. He frequently takes the top recessive pied awards with his exhibits.

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six or maybe eight recessive pids that were of exceptional quality with the desired width in the face and all the required variety markings, such as limited dark markings on the wings, good body contrast and a clear head without flecking. The best recessive pied that I saw in the birdroom was a cobalt cock. In fact, many of the best recessives were dark factor birds.

### Dominant pids

There were plenty of dominant pids in the Lütolf birdroom, both cocks and hens. These might be specialist birds but they are no more challenging to breed than non-pids. The key to breeding good-quality pids is brightness of colour, body variegation and clear caps.

I believe it helps if the best show birds are dark factors: cobalts and dark greens. This means the birds display an even better colour contrast and are more appealing to a judge. Many of the dominant pids were dark factor birds.



Spangle grey



Spangle light green



Texas clearbody

### Cinnamons and opalines

These are not regarded as specialist varieties, but for the purpose of this article, let's think of them as "specialist". It gives us the chance to look at these two varieties and how Daniel treats them separately and when they are combined together.

Daniel has some outstanding cinnamons albeit not in huge numbers. He loves showing them and frequently takes the best cinnamon at the European show. Like all of his birds, they carry that good strong positive colour, with none of that wishy-washy buff. His cinnamons are some of the best birds in his room.

It's a similar story with opalines. Throughout the world, quality opalines have almost disappeared, apart from a few at the top shows. Years ago, opalines were used to increase shoulder in most birds and improve spot size. They brought great help in improving normals and in fact most types of budgie. However, with those big spots came flecking.

Over the past 25-30 years, flecking and opalines have been a massive problem

## Daniel has taken the best cinnamons and opalines and improved them

throughout the world. In general, fanciers have found the best way to control flecking has been almost to eliminate opalines. As a result, the numbers at the shows have dropped.

It's been the same story when opalines and cinnamons have been combined to produce cinnamon opalines. Generally, the better cinnamon opalines are flecked and the way fanciers have dealt with the problem has been to walk away from them.



Texas clearbody



Recessive pied cobalt

Daniel has taken the best cinnamons and opalines and improved them. Cinnamons are generally good throughout the world and Daniel's are top quality.

What he has done is to take the very best opalines and work with them to give them good wing markings and clear backs. He has obviously put in plenty of work with them, because improving opalines, without the flecking, is not easy.

Daniel has taken this one step further and combined these good opalines with cinnamons to produce cinnamon opalines: a wonderful variety that were frequently seen to be taking the top awards in the 1970s and early 1980s.

I am not saying that Daniel has a birdroom full of top-quality opalines and cinnamon opalines, but there are lots of them and they are lovely birds – lovely show birds which are quality budgies, well marked and with no flecking.

Yes, I was mightily impressed with Daniel's normals, but I was impressed too

with his non-normals, too. I think he is working hard to improve these varieties. He can only work with maximum effort on a few of those "specialists" at a time, but I believe he is making amazing progress. So perhaps it's best described as a "work in progress" with the specialist varieties and we need to return in three or four years to see what he has achieved with them.

I think we will be amazed! ■

### 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.



Alive with quality: a glance into one of the flights



Lutino



Yellowface grey



Yellowface dilute



Yellowface dilute



Yellowface grey



Yellowface grey



Yellowface skyblue



Recessive pied cobalt



Cinnamon grey green



Baby cinnamon grey



Cinnamon grey green cock and cinnamon grey hen



Cinnamon grey green



Cinnamon grey green