

A foreign bird show on another level

Leading parrot expert **ROSEMARY LOW** reports on a recent Danish exhibition which, for her, sets exemplary standards in terms of enterprise, imagination and the wellbeing of the exhibits

COVER STORY: SHOWS

IN EUROPE, bird shows are staged in a way that is more attractive to the public than the lines of small show cages we see in the UK. Among the exceptions are the events held by the Parrot Society, including the National Exhibition where, in recent years, aviary displays make the occasions more appealing and informative.

With European enthusiasts, it has long been the practice for foreign birds to be exhibited in aviaries rather than small cages, usually decorated with foliage. Recently, Claus Nielsen from Denmark sent me a video of the show held in

October by the Koege Bird Association. You can watch it on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXnMgCCzuFc>

Founded in 1934, the club is the second oldest in Denmark. It has about 130 members. The show, normally an annual event, opens at 4pm on the Friday, after judging, and closes at 4pm on the Sunday.

The video of the exotic bird section amazed me. More than 50 species were exhibited in small aviaries, each one with its own lighting. Some birds were in pairs; others were pairs with their young of the season! The range of species being bred by members was

extraordinary. Some of them are perhaps not or no longer represented in aviculture in this country. They included long-tailed glossy starlings, ferruginous pygmy owls, Sulawesi ground doves and trumpeter finches. Perhaps my favourites were a pair of green araçarís (small toucans) with their young one.

Claus Nielsen told me that the birds are divided into groups, as follows:

- 1 Australian finches
- 2 African finches
- 3 Other finches
- 4 Fruit- and insect-eating birds
- 5 Doves, pigeons and quail.

Finches included grey-headed silverbills, Cuban grassquits, tri-coloured, red-headed and Fiji parrot-finches, and painted finches.

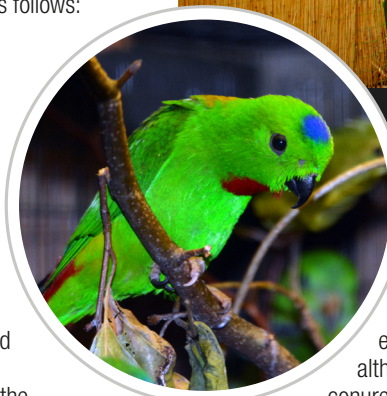
Parrots are arrayed in the following groups:

- 6 Australian parakeets
- 7 Parakeets from other countries
- 8 Grass parakeets
- 9 Lovebirds and parrotlets
- 10 Lorries, lorikeets and hanging parrots
- 11 Other parrots.

Plumheads, various grass parakeets, Barraband's parakeets and their young,



Green to the rooftops (above): the Koege Bird Association show hall, lovingly converted for the event from its regular use as a basketball court! In the peak of condition (left): a blue-crowned hanging parrot was among the stars Photos: Claus Nielsen



and beautiful Papuan king parrots were in evidence, although the only conures depicted in the

video were Emma's and painted. Notable among the parrots were vinaceous and lilac-crowned Amazons, and ornate and red-flanked lorikeets.

Each group is divided into breeding and non-breeding sections. In the breeding group, the young are exhibited alone or with their parent. They must be from the year up to the exhibition.

How is the breeding group judged, I asked Claus? This is based mainly on "difficulty", he told me. For example: rosellas are considered to be "medium-difficult", bluebonnets "difficult" and golden-shouldered parakeets "very difficult".

Accent on condition

After "difficulty", the judge looks at the number of young compared to their normal clutch size for the species. Then they are judged on their feather condition compared with the difficulty in keeping the species in good condition. Some species need special foods to obtain

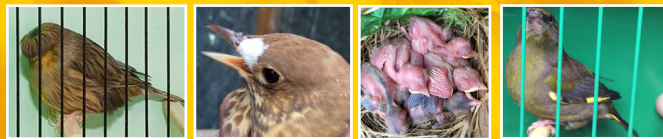


Young talent: entries in the painting competition



Northumbrian Notes

with Austin Middlemiss



Strong and enthusiastic support of the restored show scene has been a happy theme this autumn. Austin certainly has enjoyed his own outings and reports here on what is now a major annual highlight in the region: the North of England Gloster Club show

AS I write these final "Northumbrian Notes" of the year, I'm busy with preparations for what will probably be my last show of the year. That is the North East British Bird, Mule and Hybrid club show, on the last Saturday in November. As with other specialist British bird shows, there is also a Norwich canary section. The connection is obvious, as the Norwich is

the favoured choice for the production of exhibition mules. Any cross is technically a hybrid, but in the British bird world, crosses involving a canary are known as mules.

This is less cut and dried with the bullfinch mule, which is shown among all other bullfinch hybrids in many shows – certainly most CBS shows. But at a specialist event such as this, the canary x bullfinch cock has a class of its own, although any hens are still lumped together in an "all bullfinch hybrid hens including canary x bullfinch" class. Here, again, it is the Norwich canary that is used in that pairing but, since any bullfinch hybrid is bred from the hen bullfinch, it is a Norwich canary cock that is traditionally used in this pairing.

These days there is a thriving colour and miniature mule side to the hobby but, by and large, to be successful at the top level on the show bench, a Norwich canary needs to be utilised in mule pairings. So the connection is long-established and a specialist British show gives me a chance to show both Norwich and some of the British together.

An extended show

I have had a chance to show a few Norwich between the Morpeth event and this specialist British show, however. That was at the North of England Gloster Club show on Remembrance Weekend. The club extended its interest to the old variety breeds quite a number of years ago and this has further been extended to a Lizard section, "rare" breeds section and an any other variety (AOV) section, where I got the chance to exhibit a few Norwich.

It is type canaries that are catered for, of course, but this year there were some new classes added for any other colour Glosters, of which more later. The AOV section, which was of interest to me, currently offers specific classes for Fife, Irish and Norwich canaries, together with three catch-all classes for AOV cock, hen



Above: Austin was pleased with the Norwich cock taking best AOV. 'It's been a while since the last NofEGC rosette – they just have to be black and white, being so close to Newcastle (United),' he jokes. Left: best Lizard canary (pictured) as well as best consort went to the partnership of Rob and Ian Wright



Photos: Austin Middlemiss

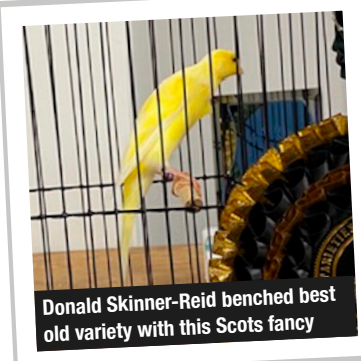
or white ground canary. The Lizards have a full section for colour-fed birds and separate smaller sections for both natural colour and blue lizards.

Included in the rare breeds are Fiorino, raza Espanola, Rheinlander, Mehringer frill, Japanese hoso, Portuguese harlequin and any other rare variety. The highlight, of course, was the old varieties, with the show incorporating the OVCA Northern club show and all the varieties that the Association has taken under its umbrella to preserve them. Thus we can still see Lancashire, crests, Belgian and Scots fancy, together with Parisian, North and

South Dutch frills and also gibber Italicus and Padovan canaries. In spite of being historically a Gloster man at heart, I am in no doubt that extending the coverage has enhanced the show and it was interesting to see these other breeds on display.

Hard work to judge

We were delighted to have the services of Gary Mann, who made the journey all the way from Bournemouth to judge this section. I was especially pleased to win best AOV with the same Norwich cock that had taken best in section at Morpeth. More importantly, though, fellow C&AB contributor Donald Skinner-Reid came to the top with his Scots fancy canary, while a Belgian canary gave the same exhibitor



Donald Skinner-Reid benched best old variety with this Scots fancy