



Dazzling spectacle: an ornate lorikeet

good plumage.

In the non-breeding category, all birds can participate, as single birds, pairs or in groups. They are judged only on their condition and coloration, including of course healthy nails and beak.

Young visitors to the show are not forgotten. There is a popular painting competition to depict the birds seen in the show. The winner gains two tickets to Copenhagen Zoo.

Another Danish friend, Povl Jorgensen, belongs to the same club. He told me that several other bird clubs stage similar shows, but that most are not as big as this one. At the Koege show, canary clubs were also invited to exhibit their birds in show cages – but more

than 90 per cent overall of the exhibition comprises birds in family groups or just the offspring.

Hand-reared birds can be exhibited but are they are not judged against

**“The range of species being bred by members was extraordinary, some of them perhaps not represented in aviculture in this country**

parent-reared birds. Mutations can also be exhibited, although there are so many new mutations that it is impossible to make standards for all of them.

Povl told me: “Sometimes mutations



In line: a group entry of red-headed parrotfinches

cause the normal-coloured birds to disappear from aviculture. One example is the pied green mutation of the [Tasmanian] rosella [*Platycercus caledonicus*]. Germany, Denmark, Holland and Belgium had, until a few years ago, a wonderful strain of natural-coloured birds. Then a pied mutation turned up in Germany and a lot of people paired their nice natural-coloured birds with these. The gene for pied is

dominant so now all, and I mean all, the natural green rosellas are gone in Europe. We had many hundreds of these fine birds only 10 years ago.”

But back to the exhibition. Povl

continued: “A team of members make the decorations outside the cages and aviaries (which are the club’s property.) The week before the exhibition, about 20 people go to a wood where we have a permit to collect branches, twigs and other natural items for decoration.

“Each person who exhibits birds decorate his or her own cages or aviaries. Some do a lot and others only a little, since you need to be able to see the birds and not allow them to hide from the public and the judges.”

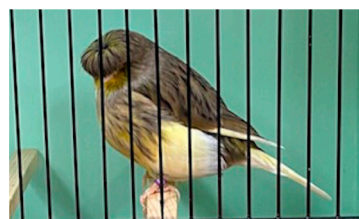
### Enjoyed by all

Povl participates because it is a good way to show our hobby to the public and to recruit new members. This year he exhibited a clutch of four blue-fronted



Rosemary's favourite: green araçari

Amazons and they gained the Best in Show award! Congratulations Povl and to everyone else who made this such a remarkable event, and thanks to Claus and Povl for their information. ■



Variegated corona hen, staged by George Nichol: she finished the top bird of the day at the NofEGC show

second spot, too. Colin Lowe showed a varied team of old and rare varieties, and took best novice with a Rheinlander, while the partnership of Rob and Ian Wright dominated in the Lizard section, taking specials for best colour-fed and natural colour, with John Topping showing the best Blue.

It was an excellent turnout and I think everyone feels as I do, that the show is enhanced with the inclusion of all these varieties. Of course, the Gloster section was of great interest and unsurprisingly numbers were up for our first show since Covid struck. As many other shows have seen, the interest due to the enforced absence was heightened and this was the first time some birds were able to be shown in the flighted classes by their owners, having missed out on the opportunity to show these birds as unflighted youngsters last year.

We had engaged an old acquaintance, Mervyn (Merv) McLaughlin, to come over from Northern Ireland and it was great to see him after so many years. He had an entry of more than 330 to sort through,



Welcome novelty: these new colour Gloster canaries – satinette corona (left) and agate consort – added to the interest, with the consort coming out on top for best AO colour

which included some of the largest flighted classes we've seen for some time. As a traditionalist, I thought I would find myself dismissive of the new colour birds but was pleasantly surprised and impressed, both with the type and feather quality.

Merv certainly had his work cut out with the quality on show. But a good bird will

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filter to the top and so it was to prove when George Nichol's unflighted variegated corona hen just pipped Adrian Short's unflighted three parts dark corona hen for best corona and best Gloster. The latter's three parts dark corona had previously won the IGBA club show but, just to prove the quality on show, the second best that day reversed the positions at our show.

On close inspection of the two birds, I can only say that I didn't envy the task of



splitting them and hats off to Merv for the job he did.

Best champion consort was a nice cobby three parts dark consort hen shown by Rob and Ian Wright. Robert Wood and Mitchell Cowen had best novice corona and consort respectively. As to the colour varieties, there were two classes for any

other colour corona and consort, and they were well supported with six and seven entries respectively. With my interest in colour-mutation British, I took the opportunity to make some comparisons. The varieties on show were agate, isabel and satinette, all colours that I had bred myself either in common or mealy redpolls or – in the case of the satinette – with my song thrushes. The satinette looked the most familiar to me and I reckon I would have had to examine the Gloster and my song thrush together closely to notice any difference.

I viewed the agates (dilute) and isabels (cinnamon dilute), and there was a difference that I think mainly derives from the fact that a canary is a yellow ground bird and a redpoll a white ground bird. So

an agate redpoll is a silver colour but the agate Gloster, with that underlying yellow colour, at first glance looked to have a cinnamon hue, although the markings were a grey/black as opposed to brown. Similarly, the isabels looked to have a more subdued yellow cinnamon coloration, as opposed to the cream appearance of an isabel redpoll.

I suppose it should be obvious but there is quite a difference depending on whether the overall ground colour is white or yellow. Next time you get a chance to look at colour

mutations at a specialist British show, you can see what I mean if you study the difference between an agate greenfinch and an agate redpoll. Anyway, at the NofEGC, an agate consort came out on top of the any other colour section, again for George Nichol. I thought they made a welcome addition to the Gloster ranks.

*Austin Middlemiss is best known for his outstanding Gloster canary partnership with Tony Thompson. He has recently branched out to breed native species.*

### Winter in the wild

OUT and about, I still haven't managed to track down any snow buntings or a sight of the brambling invaders – yet! However, there have been some interesting sightings, with a little egret on the River Wansbeck which flows through Morpeth. Then there was a specific target, the pale-bellied brent geese (*Branta bernicla hrota*), for which we made a special trip up to Lindisfarne (aka Holy Island). On the island we were limited to a faraway strip of black-and-white birds but, coming back over the causeway before the tide cut the island off again, I stopped to get a good look at yet another little egret.

Very lucky because I saw a group of eight or so pale-bellied brents just yards off the other side of the causeway road. The Holy Island area is favoured by this subspecies and a sighting can usually be relied on in a winter visit, albeit often from a great distance – so it was good to get such a view. The dark-bellied race favours southern Britain, but personally I think we have the better deal up north, as I prefer the contrast of dark and light. Either way, this is a cracking little goose to see – the UK's smallest.



Pale-bellied brent geese: a phone shot of these lovely birds was possible during Austin's trip to Lindisfarne. 'Still a task for a mobile phone photo, mind you!'