

BREEDING RARES, my challenge

By Didier Mervilde



My name is Didier Mervilde, I was born in 1952 and live in Aalter Belgium. I first became interested in Budgerigars in 1965 and at that time I kept about 5 pairs in a mixed aviary. It was in 1986 that after a visit to the aviary of Gerald Binks I decided to breed budgies of show quality to compete in shows. Since I was always fascinated by the colors, I decided to build an aviary for only "Rares". This was not the easy way to start but it was a challenge and I still have the "Rares" today.

History

As a boy I was always fascinated by birds and other animals, but I think it was in my genes because my grandfather was a well known racing pigeon breeder and my father kept canaries. So, I was destined to do the same. First, I started with racing pigeons, later on canaries and then I concentrated on budgies.

Many years ago I became a member of a local club and soon after that I became a member of the Boards of several clubs. First the parrot clubs, later on I started with some other fanciers called the B.G.C (Belgian Budgerigar Club). I became first Vice-president and after that I became President. I was also one of the delegates at the W.B.O. for Belgium.

It was Gerald Binks who taught me the way to breed and keep budgies. After a while I became a correspondent for B.W. for my country and I am still a member today.

Meanwhile , I became involved in the Belgian Lovebird Society as editor and judge and still I have the same interests in the "Rares".

I was also the editor and member of the board of BBS, one of the three budgie clubs in Belgium





Breeding

To keep "rares" is one thing but to breed them well it's a challenge. So I bought a lot of books, video's and attended as many meetings possible to learn about other aspects of the birds such as genetics , colors, feeding, standards etc.

I contacted Mr.Inte Onsmen, from MUTAVI, and through him I learned about the genetic rules. I was so involved with this situation that I became the liaison for MUTAVI in Belgium.

Breeding "Rares" needs to have a base of genetics, otherwise you will miss a lot. You can breed good budgies without knowledge but specializing

in Rares demands the knowledge of genetics.

In the past my aviary contains Slate, Saddleback, Texas Clearbody, Easley Clearbody , English Fallow and recent Recessive Pieds.

Breeding Rares without some good Normals is not possible, you need them in order to obtain a better standard in the Rares. That is why I always try to put a good normal to a mutation, that makes the birds stronger.

My Normals came from two different lines namely, BA23 (Mr.Gerald Binks - U.K.) and RE 08 (Mr.Roger Reynders-Belgium).Now I have also birds from Mr.Dieter Keller Germany (100% Mannes line) and Mr.Gerd Bleicher (Germany)

Every year I visit one of those breeders to obtain one or two out crosses and due to the mixing of bloodlines I used in my aviary from different breeders I developed new genes from Mannes and Moffat through the BA23 bloodline , Ommerod and Mannes through the RE 08 and Keller bloodline.

With that base I try to build up my own strong bloodlines.

For a few years I do not attend any of the shows with my birds in my country and the reason for that is a lack of time on my part and a lack of cooperation within the Belgium clubs. In Belgium we have 3 clubs. There is a lot of discussions and politics going on between those clubs and members so I decided to leave that and concentrate only on breeding.

With the modern way of the internet and websites I have no problems in keeping contact with breeders all over the world and selling my birds to countries like Germany, The Netherlands, France, U.K., Portugal and the U.S.A. (where I introduce the Slate)

I like to enjoy myself in this hobby and that is why I do this.



Slates : My first Slate came from a breeder in the Netherlands who stopped breeding Slates because of the small interest of the breeders in the mutation. I concentrated on the normal Slates without darkfactor, one darkfactor and two dark factors, I am getting rid of the Opalines because I do not like them.



Slate is a sex-linked variety, if anyone should want to start with Slates it would be better to start with a visual cock or hen, just to be sure you have the mutation. Later on in your breeding program you can use split birds.

To improve the mutation I have

never paired Slate to Slate and prefer to put a blue split cock to a slate hen.

It is also possible to breed Green series Slates but in my opinion it is better to stay in Blue series birds. Always avoid the grey factor as it masks the Slate. The Slate mutation is sex-linked .

Fallows : Breeding Fallows is a challenge, not everyone is able to do this because it takes years of breeding to obtain a very good bird. If you want to breed Fallows you must understand the differences between the three mutations (English Fallows, German Fallows and Scottisch Fallows.) Most common are the English and German Fallows. English Fallows are supposed to have an iris ring with no white so the eye seems to be red. In fact, there is an iris ring but it is deep pink in color. German Fallows on the other hand have a white iris ring, and between the two mutations there is not much difference in body color.

Paring German and English Fallows together is not a good practice because the youngsters are all "black eyed" and split for German and English Fallow. The Fallow mutation is recessive.

Most Fallows are small birds so when you are breeding this mutation you have to use your better Normal birds, this is why I said earlier that it is always good to breed back to a Normal.

I prefer not to use Cinnamon because I found that it did not improve the Fallow mutation.

In my breeding room I have only English Fallows and after 10 years of breeding I do not have the standard bird that you would expect.

In conclusion, I can say that the Fallow is a very attractive budgerigar but is a bird for the experienced breeder.

Clearbody : Here we have two types who are common, the Texas Clearbody and the Easley Clearbody. The Texas Clearbody is sex-linked the Easley Clearbody is dominant. The Texas Clearbody is the most common variety to be bred in Europe. It has close links to the Ino mutation to which it is dominant. An Ino cannot be split for Texas Clearbody, a Normal can be split for T.Clearbody and Ino, but T.Clearbody can be split for Ino. In my aviary I have two different lines which can produce Clearbody. The first line is a mating between Clearbody and Ino, the second line is a combination between Clearbody and Normals. Later on I have put the youngsters from the two lines together to produce a Texas Clearbody with the correct markings. Texas Clearbody coming from the first line have a better yellow color but the wings are white, those coming from the second line have better wing markings and color on the flights. Putting them together gives me a bird who has a nice body color, good wing markings and a better standard.

Since 1999 I have in my aviary the Easley Clearbody and I am trying to breed a DF Easley Clearbody, so the challenge goes on.



Anthracite : Since 2007 I have introduced the Anthracite mutation in my aviary. More about this in other articles on my website.

Aviary

My aviary has a wooden construction and isolated walls, tile floors and just that big enough which can be managed on one's own very effectively.

Inside the aviary I build breeding cages and a flight for the surplus birds and young.

The breeding cages measures 30 – 30 – 80 cm, the inside flight is 4 by 6 m.

In recent years I built a second flight which measures 3 by 3 m.

I use outside boxes for the breeding cages and keep a record of all my birds on the computer so it is easy to see which pedigree and bloodline they have.

As seed I use a mix of 50 % canary seed and 50% millets. As additives I give Abidec (multivitamin solution) and Cytacon (vitamin b12 solution) a product that I buy in the U.K. because in my country it is not available and for the youngsters I use Biovit soft food. I also give grit and iodine blocs.

The additives I give continuously in the breeding season, twice a week in the non breeding season. The soft food once a week in the non – breeding season, every day in the breeding season.

Certainly when you are breeding rare budgerigars it is an enormous challenge, in terms of years one day with a little luck you will achieve success. Enjoy your success and be aware that breeding budgerigars is a challenge but first of all it is a lovely hobby.

