

Breeding Opaline Cinnamons & Other Varieties

By Cyril Rogers - January 1983

During the forthcoming breeding period there will no doubt be many breeders wishing to produce birds having the double sex-linked characters of cinnamon and opaline in their genetic make-up. It will be realised that when dealing with two sex-linked characters the breeding programme may not be quite so straight forward as with the recessive and dominant colours. For those interested in breeding opaline cinnamons I will briefly and simply outline a breeding plan.

The first cross pairing is to get the two sex-linked characters together and this can be achieved by mating a cinnamon to an opaline. It does not matter in this case which is the cock as it is only the resulting normal/cinnamon opaline cocks that are required for further pairings. Although such birds have both of the sex-linked characters they are not yet on the same chromosome which is necessary to obtain the visual effect. When one of these normal/cinnamon opaline cocks is paired to any ordinary hen a number of visual cinnamon opaline hens will appear as the result of a crossover. However, to produce cock cinnamon opalines, a cinnamon opaline hen must be mated with a normal/cinnamon opaline cock and crossovers take place to give both cocks and hens of the desired cinnamon opaline combination. Other colour characters carried by the parent birds do not alter the occurrence of cinnamon opalines, which appear in the ratio of about one in three. In actual fact there are two kinds of normal/cinnamon cocks each producing a different percentage of colours.

The above is roughly what happens when the cinnamon and opaline sex-linked characters are crossed and re-crossed together, but as there are two genetical kinds of normal/cinnamon opaline cocks, results may vary somewhat in the production of visual cinnamon opalines. I have seen a few examples of cinnamon opaline violet cobalt and they are certainly very lovely coloured birds, having the soft cinnamon shade together with the bright opaline and violet tones. What an opportunity there is for breeders to produce beautifully coloured birds by carefully crossing together some of the lovely shades that already exist amongst budgerigars.

Lacewings

I am particularly interested in another of the sex-linked varieties - the red-eyed lacewings. For a great many years now there have always been a few examples of this variety on show. In the early days it was mostly the white form that was seen, but now it is the yellow kind that find the most favour amongst exhibitors. The depth of the cinnamon or fawn undulations on lacewings varies according to whether they are the normal, greywing or dilute (yellow or white) forms. This being so, it is always preferable to use good quality, well-marked normals when developing a lacewing strain. The normal birds selected can be of any colour and whenever possible should not be split for albino, lutino, white, yellow, fallow, greywing, pied or cinnamon. If opalines are used, lacewings with the attractive opaline markings can be evolved and by using the grey character good clear markings will result.

Being a sex-linked form the easiest birds to obtain for foundation stock are normal/lacewing cocks and lacewing hens. By pairing a normal/lacewing cock to a normal hen the theoretical expectation is 25% lacewing hen, 25% normal/lacewing cocks, 25% normal hens and 25% normal cocks. From such a pairing, lacewing hens will be bred in the first season together with some split cocks. However the split cocks from these matings cannot be visually recognised from their pure normal brothers, the difference can only be discovered by test pairings.

To breed lacewing cocks normal split lacewing cocks must be mated with lacewing hens that give the expectation of 25% lacewing cocks, 25% lacewing hens, 25% normal/lacewing cocks and 25% normal hens. Once having reached this stage in the breeding programme the lacewing cocks can be used to

improve the overall quality of the strain by mating them with first class normal hens. Usually hens produced from this mating are of better quality and therefore useful for further improvement. From then onwards the breeder can continue to advance the quality of the stud by careful selection of the lacewings and the use of good quality normals at regular intervals.

Greywings & Clearwings

Although a few are still to be found in breeding aviaries it is only on rare occasions that greywings are seen on our show bench nowadays. At one particular show, a number of exhibits were pointed out to me as being greywings but on close examination they all proved to be whites of dark suffusion. This is an understandable error of recognition by fanciers whose knowledge of greywings has been confined to written descriptions. Whites of dark suffusion in all colours carry quite a heavy suffusion and have distinct narrow undulations whereas true breeding greywings have wider soft grey markings which are very distinct. Once having seen greywings in the flesh as it were, it is quite easy to see the colour difference between them and the white of deep suffusion. However, as the greywings are in such short supply it certainly makes it difficult for fanciers to make the necessary comparisons.

I can thoroughly recommend clearwings to any prospective budgerigar breeders who like colourful birds with a very good potential. Whitewing violets have always been thought of as being the most vividly coloured birds of the clearwing family. Single whitewing violets are undoubtedly striking, but four together in a team are really eye catching. Amongst clearwings I have noted a number of birds that have the cinnamon character visible in their colouring and as such they are two variety birds and therefore not eligible for normal clearwing classes. I hope that breeders are taking this fact into consideration when mating up their clearwing breeding pairs.