

western Water Works

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(Richard Rolloff, Editor & Bonnie Black, Layout)

Fifth excerpt from:

THE CANARICULTURE of SONG CANARIES: ROLLER-MALINOIS

—a Parallel Study of the Harz-Roller and Malinois-Waterslager Song Canaries

by Sebastian Palo Guerra and translated and edited by Sebastian Vallelunga

In order to form a line, whether in a harz-roller or malinois-waterslager breeding plan, one must depend on two “zoo-technical” methods: selection and functional trial. In order to breed a canary with certain specific characteristics we must choose birds, individually, which possess those qualities we wish to see expressed in a unique type. In order to obtain a unique and uniform type, one must resort to a system of selection and consanguinity, approached with insight and good judgment, with which we can fix within the descendents the relevant characteristics of the progenitors. One must seek homozygosis (the concentration within the germ plasma of those genes which are most favorable to the desired end) within the genotype, as opposed to mere resemblance of the phenotype. Moreover, one must perform a functional trial, an examination of the song aptitude of the progenitors compared to that of the offspring. For this reason, one must evaluate the songs of the males and regulate the use of the hens based on direct descent from male birds of high song quality. By means of this process, one discards those birds which do not combine the exigent characters and keeps those which possess them; that is to say, one concentrates the favorable characteristics that exist within the line of descent and which must be made manifest. Also coming into play is the fact that consanguinity which is habitually managed in such a way that it accumulates unfavorable factors will have a cumulative effect on later generations. In virtue of all that has been said, within each song race there can exist different song lines, each with certain determined characteristics of song but still falling within the corresponding song standard of the race and which all good aficionados recognize. These characteristics must be fixed by means of selection within a certain determined breeding plan. Thus, when it is time for the selection of the males we must take into account the following requirements: ❖ That they are from a good family (that is to say, that they are direct descendents of examples of high quality) ❖ That they tightly match the phenotype and proper constitution of this line ❖ That they have a very good quality of song These requirements are normally met by about 2 to 5 % of the birds born each year. The males selected in this way become trial breeders which must transmit their genetic

characteristics by being paired to various hens; when there is a positive outcome, a male becomes a tested breeder. With respect to hens for the most part, we use selection on the basis of direct descent from male examples of high song quality, but we must also keep in mind the genetic strength of families. In this sense, a hen from a family of good genetic transmitters, both males and hens, may be considered a sort of guarantee at selection time. Thus, one may seek to establish a pure lineage, a line with a homozygosis which has been obtained by means of scrupulous, conscientious, and able selection, with an inheritance that is both fixed and transmittable. Moreover, in this process of selection it is necessary to keep strict control; for this reason, it is useful to keep a written breeding registry where all of the birds in the breeding program are identified, likewise the good and the bad young that are produced. Occasionally, one may see signals which can be more or less appreciated as signs of deterioration. The most frequent is the degeneration of one or more tours of the song of the canary (for example, on the score sheet of the hollow line of the harz-roller, a degenerate gluken; on the score sheet of the malinois-waterslager, a high, sharp flute, etc.). Other anomalies might be: weak embryos which will not develop completely and give rise to nests with few or, sometimes, with no chicks; at other times, the results might be chicks with deformations of the legs and feet, etc. In these cases, one must begin again with the selection process outlined above; consanguinity must be accomplished with skill and care, without abuse and with a measured approach.



TO REMOVE OR NOT REMOVE?

By Richard Rolloff

I had just finished following a dialogue on the canary List about removing the first eggs and replacing them with dummy eggs, then "setting" them later so they all hatch on the same day. Later I was reading a book on chickens when I came across some related information.

Vocalization is important even during the brooding process. "When a hen is brooding eggs, it is very desirable for the hatching of those eggs to be synchronized, says Dr. Munch. There is communication going on between the hen and the chicks (or chick embryos at this point) that ultimately leads to the eggs' development either speeding up or slowing down so that they hatch around the same time."

Scientists have discovered (using tiny micro-phones connected to eggs and placed in the nest) that the hen hears vocal responses from embryos to her vocalizations. These responses give her clues as to how the embryos are developing compared to each other. Based on that communication, she turns the eggs at different rates-moving one that is maturing a little more quickly out to the edge of the pile to cool off and slow down, while moving one that is maturing more slowly to the center of the nest to speed development.

Human manipulation of the chicken have bred some varieties, and individuals that never go "broody", let alone manage incubation to have all hatch at the same time. Have we done the same with the canary? I still hear my hens making soft chirping sounds on their nests. By pulling eggs are we selectively breeding this instinct out of our birds?

I personally do not remove/replace eggs because I am clumsy, and limit disrupting my hens as much as possible. They seem to reach incubation temperature about the third day, and young hatching a day or two later usually make it. This year I would have been lucky to average 3 young per nest. Number 4 or 5 could be "fill in" for any of the first three that didn't make it.



DOMINION ROLLER CANARY JOURNALS

Bill Friend has completed his six year project to produce six Journals that contain the most complete and comprehensive gathering of material ever written by some of the most prominent Elders in the roller fancy. I have purchased a set and have Bill and Kent Donnelly's permission to share some of the articles. The song canary breeds have much in common, and we can all learn from each other. ~ Richard Rolloff, Editor

"TRAINING ROLLER CANARIES FOR SHOW"

By: Bill Friend

Date: October 2006

'It is the first week of September, and the Roller Canaries' molt is finally finished. As the molt is a busy time of the year, it is always nice to see the end of it. The next stage is Roller schooling, training, and selection for show. I will talk about these activities that are ahead, but first I will recount what the present situation should look like in the bird room, and then move on.

- The light in the training room is subdued.
- The temperature is somewhat reduced.
- The cocks are separated from the hens, and are in their own flight.
- The tutor is in a separate cage, positioned to lead the school.
- The molt has gone really well, as they are sleek, fit, vigorous, and are nicely colored. This was the result of feeding them a rich diet through their molt, giving them daily baths, keeping them undisturbed, and keeping them out of drafts.
- The tutor is busy doing his job, leading the school of young cocks that are now eight weeks old and twittering. To accomplish this he was given special treatment to push him into an early molt, and have him in full song at the right time.
- The tutor is in a small breeding cage with all sides closed except the front. He was housed this way to take advantage of the echo-effect which tends to enhance the hollowness of his tone. The cage was positioned in front of the young cocks' flight, and angled in a way which allowed some light in, while at the same time allowing his song to be directed into the flight. The idea here is that the tutor's song tone will be as ideal as is possible, the young cocks will listen intently, and they will learn their strain song. They are now in school which lasts about six weeks.
- The perches are individualized, so they cannot pester each other while learning to sing.

- Adjustments were made to their food program. During the molt they required, and were fed, a rich diet, which if continued at this time would push them. This is not desirable, so changes were made. These consisted of a reduction in the quantity of their egg food, Canary Seed, groats, green food, and Niger, while at the same time increasing the Canola Rape Seed, and continuing with sprouted Rape. Although reduced, their diet has been kept reasonably balanced to ensure that their weight is being maintained. This was determined by a periodic examination of all birds, to look for a thin layer of fat on their tummies. If they were not in this condition, the food would have been adjusted up slightly, to increase the nourishment and vitamins. They must be healthy to sing well and to withstand being caged up so long during the shipping and showing periods.
- Having described the *present situation* as I outlined it, I will now move on to the next step which involves various pieces of canary equipment. It is an ideal time to get started with the annual tasks involved in the bird room, while the school is in session.

Ready the Equipment: I am going to describe my equipment and my process of getting them ready. They consisted of five-team training cabinet, show cabinets, shipping cabinets and training/show cages. The equipment must be thoroughly cleaned and given anti-mite treatment. It takes a while, but it is essential that this be done. My procedures follow:

- The show cages are individually inspected for any required repairs, and were then repaired and cleaned.
- The glass water and seed feeder cups were removed and put into a pail of hot soapy water for thorough cleansing.
- The trays and perches were removed, scraped clean, and put into another pail of hot soapy water to soak.

For insect control I used a 5-gallon can, which was roughly 10x10x16 inches, filled $\frac{3}{4}$ full with kerosene (coal oil). Using a hook made from a wire coat hanger, I suspended each cage into the liquid, leaving it to soak for about 3 minutes. They absorbed the kerosene well, as the cages were made with Western Red Cedar, a very absorbent wood. Following this they were left out in the open air for several days to allow all the excess to dry off. This treatment kept them free of red mites, and it had no adverse effect on the birds.

- The glass cups were scrubbed and rinsed; the trays were brushed clean and both were dried. They and the perches were then returned to the cages.
- The training, show, and shipping cabinets were cleansed, and then brushed with kerosene on the inside surfaces. They were then left outside for a while to dry off the excess, after which they were ready for use. I used Creoline for this purpose in the flights.

Training and Selection for Show: The six weeks of schooling, led by the tutor, has brought most of the young cocks into their full strain song, and during this period I made notes on their progress and tone. Next I will start the training and selection process which is essential if they are to perform on the judge's table.

Two or three weeks prior to the first show dates, I would cage them up, and put them into the five training cabinet. This cabinet held 20 training show cages, or five teams of four. It was into 20 compartments, each one housing an individual training show cage. Each shelf and was cut back slightly at the front to allow the song to travel more easily.

When I put the cages, containing the young birds, into the cabinet for the first time, I position them so they were left protruding 3-4 inches out in front. This is done so the birds can see each other, and assists them to get accustomed to being in the small cages, and to learn where their water and seed are located. In a day or so they are pushed all the way in.

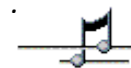
Each stack of four cages will then be covered on the front with a moveable individual board, each a piece of wood 1 x 1 inch glued and nailed across the top. This design allowed me to hang each board from the top of the cabinet, in front of a single stack of four cages. There were four 1 1/4 inch diameter holes in each board, which were so located as to be positioned in front of each cage between the glass waterer and seed feeder cups.

This system was very flexible as it allowed me to shut down the light gradually, as I proceeded with training process. This was done by sliding the board a bit at a time from partially covered to eventually fully covered. At the fully covered position, the only light the bird got was through the hole discussed above. If I wanted one team to sing freely, I removed the one board. If I wanted all to sing, I removed all the five boards and so on. If I thought they had enough training for I would remove all five of the boards for a day, and then again resume the training.

With this arrangement, it was easy for me to make position changes. I could interchange the cage and bird within the team, between the teams, or by introducing a new young cock from the young cocks' flight. When I had the teams sorted out the way I thought was best, I would start to handle them as you do at a show. Keep them darkened down. Bring them out one team at a time, putting a cover on top of the top cage. If all four in a team sang, they were kept out for 20 minutes. If any of them did not sing immediately, the team was put right back into the darkened cabinet. This process is repeated until they all sing as soon as they are placed out. The judge may say, "They have had their 20 minutes; the Show Manager must decide if they get a second chance."

Gradually I finalized the birds and their positions within the teams. In each case I selected four birds that sang my strain song about equally well. The bird that sang first got the bottom position, sometimes called the table position. If one was too loud or too dominant I would move him back into the flight so he would quiet down. This would then give the other birds in the team a chance to sing, and be heard.

As the training continued, I made notes about them in my breeding book along with their ring numbers. After about 2 weeks of this selecting and training, I returned them to their flight for some exercise and baths. The light was kept low so they would not push their song. The tutor was kept in place. Now they were ready to be caged and shipped to the shows. Their food at this time was mostly Rape Seed, a small amount of Canary seed, and sprouted Rape. They did not have anything that was stimulating, like Niger. Now I was excited, for I knew they would sing for the judge at the shows. I do not know if they will come back home winners, but in any case I am pleased with them.



BTW.....Linda Ferzoco went to the site of the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology and found a list of recent publications. Some will be of interest to canary breeders.
http://www.orn.mpg.de/rec_pubs.html

INTRODUCTION OF OUR 2010 SHOW'S JUDGE, DIRK DELSEMME

Submitted by Darrell Horst, Co-Show Manager



Dirk Delsemme was born April 6th, 1960 in the small town of Herentals, Belgium. Near Antwerp and Brussels. Dirk was married in 1981 to his wife Lydia. They have 4 children, two sons and two daughters.

Dirk became interested in birds as a child. His father raised birds and pigeons, but Dirk wanted his own birds. His father suggested waterslagers. Dirk bought his first waterslagers from Alfons Vansprunge, a former world champion. From Vansprunge he learned the important steps to becoming a successful breeder. Other older breeders, such as Frans Palmans and Albert Van Eynde passed on their knowledge also. One of Dirks other favorite canaries is the German Harzer Roller with its smooth song. Dirk says he tries to raise approximately 100 waterslagers each year.

Dirk is the only “bird person” in his family, but his wife and kids help when needed. What he enjoys most about his waterslagers is the training time between November and December. “After months of waiting in suspense you get to find out if the sons will sing as good or better than their fathers.”

Dirk received his first judges training from Henri Rosseau, then president of the Belgian Judging Federation. Simon Peeters, aka “Monneke”, completed his judging education. Dirk became a judge in 2001. Dirk judged in the USA at the 2006 National Caged Bird Show in Chicago.

We are delighted to have him and his wife join us in January for our annual show.



IN MEMORIUM

Fellow Canary & Avian Aficionados,

It is with a heavy heart that I received the news this morning that Mr. Gino Abbate has passed on Friday, 7-17-09, losing a long bout with cancer.

May we wish him a safe haven as his final resting place. He and I have had many memorable conversations. Many times, we took opposite sides in discussions over our long period of knowing each other. He was one of my mentors when I was much younger and very instrumental as the liaison in my becoming one of the very first C.O.M. overseas O.M.J. Type (Canaries of Posture) Judges when the USA was once affiliated with the C.O.M. overseas. Let's keep him in our minds and hearts today.

I offer my sincerest prayers and meditations to our Creator in memory of Mr. Gino Abbate. He was a serious avian fancier who will long be remembered as a pioneer in the fancy not just in North America but worldwide. ~ Don Perez

LESSONS LEARNED...

Submitted by: Bonnie Black

Other breeders tease me about my "heroic" attempts to save chicks but I remain unreformed This year I learned that if I mix the hand-feeding food with unsweetened/organic applesauce instead of water (sometimes I add some for a thinner consistency for tiny babies), the chicks perk up faster. This trick is especially valuable to keep in mind if you are trying to revive a weak baby.

Also keep in mind that few drops of honey can often provide just the boost of energy needed for a weak chick or adult to turn the corner by providing quick energy as well as some mild antibiotic and antifungal properties. I saved two young adults who were extremely underweight (going light?) this year with this trick.

While on the subject, I also was reminded this year that some of the things we do that we take for granted aren't quite so obvious to the novice breeder. Be careful to explain everything. For example, When suggesting to a new breeder to keep hand-feeding food on hand for emergencies, don't forget to tell them not to be too eager to rush to feed baby chicks because their crops are empty. As long as they seem active and appropriately strong for their age, don't interfere. They need to get a little hungry so they will beg loudly for their parents to feed. If we step in too soon, the hen usually will sit tighter to protect the chicks from us resulting in less feeding and before you know it, the hen will give up and let you take over.



BIRD SONG CHANGES WITH ENVIRONMENT

Submitted by: Linda Ferzoco

Do you like your waterslager song to be low and slow, with trills distinctive to the human ear? Well perhaps you need to change you canaries' environment.

Scientists have compared the lovely White-crowned sparrow song in the same locales both before and after clearing of trees. The 1970s work was done by local ground-breaking Cal Academy scientist, the late Luis Baptista. Recent work by Elizabeth Derryberry of Duke showed the differences between the songs recorded in the 1970s and now.

It's postulated that the reason for the lower slower song has to do with allowing the song to travel farther in the denser bushy foliage that follows clearing of the trees. And the changes were similar among many different populations. Notably, one population whose song hadn't slowed down lived in an area where the foliage was unchanged.

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More information at: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/05/090520114710.htm> Makes you wonder if this is part of reason we "darken down" during song development?

REFERENCES: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/05/090520114710.htm>
<http://research.calacademy.org/research/curators/baptista.php>
<http://www.loe.org/shows/shows.htm?programID=00-P13-00030#feature4>

ALMOST HATE TO MENTION IT

Richard Rolloff 8/4/09

It has been popular convention here in the U.S. to stage teams during training for a time slightly longer than judging. For example: when we had 30 minute judging sessions, most staged 35 minutes for training. The thought was to get them to sing all the way through judging and not anticipate the end and quit singing early. When we went to 20 minute judging, following similar logic, we trained for 25 minutes. A couple of years ago, I picked up comments from Belgian breeders and judges, that got me questioning my method. I questioned other song canary breeders that I respect, and got similar feedback. They were only training for 10 minutes no matter what the length of judging.

One comment that particularly stuck in my mind was, "you don't train for a marathon race by running a marathon every day". A prominent roller breeder and judge commented that they thought longer staging "pushed the song, and encouraged faults".

Two years ago, I took one team and only staged them for 10 minute training sessions. I had another team that were full brothers that I trained for 25 minutes. The 10 minute team sang continuously through the 20 minute judging and scored higher. Hmmm?

Last year I trained all my teams with 10 minute sessions, and was very pleased with the results. In my opinion they sounded less nasal, did not "push" their song, and I had no birds with faults. Okay, think what that means for breeder's time management. Ten minutes instead of 25, multiplied by number of teams, and times how many training stagings? I have to be honest and tell you I hesitated writing this article. The longer I am involved in this hobby the less I KNOW. I only mention this as food for thought. I do not want to suggest anyone change their system based on my results.



WATERWORKS CLASSIFIEDS...



SHOW CAGES

It's almost that time of year to "cage up"! The club has show cages available for \$45 ea. or 4 for \$160.

Contact Darrell Horst for shipping costs, and ordering at: d.horst@wavecable.com.

WWC Board News, Announcements and Reminders



- **2010 BANDS TIME!!**

October 30th is the deadline to order breeder coded bands.
Order from club needs to go in the first week of November.

PLEASE NOTE CHANGE! Membership and band orders should now be addressed to:
Donna Gary, 2618 Lafayette Dr., Davis, CA. 95618 dlgary@comcast.net

- **WWC WEBSITES...**

WWC maintains two websites. One is the member only Yahoo Group site. If you haven't signed up, we would like to recommend that you do. To join go to <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/WesternWaterslager/> Follow the instructions. Darrell Horst will get an email, and allow you access. Since this is a members only Yahoo Group, you can ask questions and get replies from other club members immediately. It's a great way to keep in touch with fellow members. May I also suggest you open the files section, and then go to newsletters. All the newsletters are available. This may be of special value to newer members.

- **AWS SHOW ANNOUNCEMENT**

The American Waterslager Society's show is scheduled December 9th through the 12th of 2009. Planned location is Gilbert, Arizona, and Joris Pieters will be judging. For more information contact: Tom Trujillo at 480 892 5464 thomas.trujillo@elpaso.com, or Rosa Pelle at 281 556 5256 ROSAPELLA@aol.com.



WESTERN WATERSLAGER CLUB ANNUAL SONG CONTEST

Annual Song Contest – January 15 – 17, 2010
Davis, California

Judge Dirk Delsemme, (All the way from Belgium!)

DETAILS TO FOLLOW IN NEXT NEWSLETTER AND OUR CLUB'S WEBSITE

www.WesternWaterslager.com

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