



Member Profile

Ian Hanington

Anyone who hasn't been to a National Show should, at some time, try to make it.

How did you get started in the Fancy?

Birds are something that I have had a fascination with since I was very young – a friend and I kept pigeons in the early 1960s. In the early days I had Budgerigars in a small colony flight as did a lot of people, but when I went to the local agricultural show in 1979 I was amazed at the difference between the birds there and what I had at home. That was when petrol was cheap (thank goodness) as every weekend for the next couple of years I seemed to be on the road, going to breeders' aviaries to look for potential purchases. Like most people I wanted to have every variety that was known to man.

From where did you obtain your first birds and are there any particular birds that formed the basis of your stud?

The first quality Normals I purchased came from John Scoble in 1981. The day I got them I saw two Opaline Greywing Greys at his residence, which were pure Grey (the body colour blended perfectly into the wings) except for the white heads. I have not since seen birds that come near them in this colour. In 1983 I was not able to access any more of this line of birds so, much to the dismay of my father, I swapped a registered Stud Hereford Bull for a Sky Blue Hen and a Light Green Cock that originated from the same aviary.

You are well-known as a successful breeder of Fallows. What drew you to Fallows, what are the challenges of breeding this variety and what advice would you give someone wanting to breed Fallows?

The man who impressed me most during my early days was a Joe Willmot who at the time was in his eighties and lived in Newcastle – only about three hours away from me. I honestly don't remember how many times I went back to his place, but, in hindsight, he must have been getting sick of the sight of me. At the time, Joe had a Yellow Face Violet Fallow in his cage. It was the most stunning bird I had ever seen, but he wouldn't part with it.

I purchased my first Fallow off Joe – it was an Opaline Greywing Yellow Fallow/Recessive Pied. It cost me \$50 and it was the foundation bird for the Fallows which I still breed today. One of the Greywings that have come from this bird went on to win a National title for a breeder in Victoria a few years later. I have culled every bird that was carrying the Greywing factor.

Thankfully, I now have not bred a visual Greywing for four seasons because Greywing Fallows are not popular with the judges on the bench.

The first thing to remember when breeding any of the rarer varieties is that you must keep the shape of the Budgerigar, first and foremost, and then work on the variety, colour and wings, etc. One of the biggest problems I have encountered is trying to get the size up, whilst still keeping the wings under control.

Anyone contemplating these rarer varieties would be well advised to only take on one at a time as they swallow up Normals almost as fast as Coccidiosis. I have always had my best results by pairing two splits together, but there is an enormous amount of waste because if they don't exhibit a red eye, the only way you know if they are split is by test-mating them to a red eye. I have never once paired two Fallows together, which may have been to my detriment. In the last five years I have used a couple of Spangles and I have been very happy with the resulting young, although you do end up with a number of Spangle Fallows which are not going to do much good on the show bench. I have paired over 200 pairs of Greys/Fallows together since I started, trying to breed a Grey Fallow, but it has never happened. There must be some type of gene which won't allow it to happen. Not at my place, anyhow.

Are there any other particular varieties that you specialise in?

Normals, Opalines and Cinnamons are, in my opinion, really important varieties to keep, irrespective of which colour or variety you may wish to specialise in. Everyone needs Normals; and the Opalines and Cinnamons will help you with the feather quality, which is becoming more prominent in Australia every year at the National Show. I still keep a few Spangles and Yellow Faces as well. Hopefully, before long, I will blend the Fallows and Yellow Faces together.

When did your birds first go to the Australian National Budgerigar Championships? Please give a history of your involvement at the Nationals as an exhibitor and a team carer.

The first National win I had was in 1985 at the Gold Coast – the birds which I swapped for my bull produced the parents of the Light Green which won that year. Since then I have been lucky enough to win with a Normal Blue, two Cinnamons, a Yellow Face, an Opaline and eight Fallows. Running first and second with the same variety is something that I have been lucky enough to do six times as well.

The job as team carer is something that I have been involved in now for 14 years. I guess I saw it as my way of doing my bit for the BSNSW, because at the time I wasn't willing to give up one weekend every month to travel to Sydney to do the judges course while I had two young kids who I wanted to spend time with.

How have the Nationals evolved over the years? Do you have any thoughts about future directions for the Nationals?

In my opinion the National Show has become far more competitive in the last 10 years than what it was beforehand. Much more work is being done on the birds prior to the event. Small details, which were ignored in the past, are all hopefully seen to now. And, thankfully, some of the 'old wives tales', such as 'we won't put hens in as they never win', type of attitude are thankfully gone forever!

For some years now I have stated that I would like to see all three birds which go away take part in the Show. I believe this could be achieved without a lot of drama. All three birds from each state would be benched, but only the first two would be eligible to score any points. This would then give every bird which is selected an equal chance to compete and hopefully stop SOME of the complaints which surface every year after the show. Some people may only ever have one bird selected to represent their state and it must be frustrating to have your bird travel to Perth, only for it to sit in the cage for the three days.

The part of the National Show which I really enjoy is meeting up with people from the other states that I have come to know so well over the last 25 years. Although, there is a special place for the breeders from Victoria, which, hopefully, is behind NSW!

Would you like to comment on the selection process for Nationals?

I think the selection process that we now use in NSW is one of the main reasons that we do so well at the National. Like so many others, for many years, I was not happy about the way in which it was done.

If people don't want their birds to go away, I understand that; but for those of us that do, for me anyhow, it is the show which I want to win at more than any other. The state judges on the day can only do their best with what's in front of them and the same goes for us the following weekend.

Please tell us about your experience as a team carer and what is the carer's role?

The role of the carers is to present the two birds, which we have selected on the day, in the best possible condition to be judged. There has in the past been times when a bird which was selected first in Sydney does not make it to the bench for one reason or another, but a lot of things, such as condition, can change in a week, even though the bird may have had as much care as the rest of the team. This is the one thing which some people don't seem to understand.

We really can't be worried who a bird belongs to, as long as it is one of the best two we can bench. A couple of years ago three birds in the team, which were owned by Des and Matt Campbell, were all left out of the show because of condition – and Matt was one of the carers. But, for some reason, every year there is someone who feels that they have been hard done by and puts in an official complaint. I don't ever remember any complaints from those people who have had a bird elevated into the team. One of the advantages we do have as a carer is that we get to see all the birds from the other states prior to the show. This can help us decide which ones we believe will score the maximum points for NSW. One positive thing, which is sadly now gone forever, is the thank you card I used to receive from Irene Darman every year that she and Joe had a bird selected in the team, whether it was benched or not.

You have been described as one of the best preparers of birds for shows. Can you please describe your preparation regime? While the physical preparation of a bird is important, how do you instill the right show temperament?

Preparation of the birds is something which these days can mean the difference between 1st and 2nd place. There are so many birds which deserve to win, but only one can. So the more effort you put in, the greater your chances of victory will be. My preparation regime is as per my article in the April/May 2007 issue of *Budgerigar*.¹

As for the temperament of the bird, I personally think that a good show bird is born with it. I have tried to train birds to show themselves to the best of their ability, but a bird that doesn't like being in a show cage never seems to settle properly. The only time I have had success is by putting a young bird with an older bird which is quiet and shows itself well.

What are some of the pitfalls to avoid in preparing your birds? What advice would you give the novice exhibitor?

One of the biggest pitfalls which newcomers seem to get caught up in is over-showing a bird. I can recall a number of times when a breeder has bred an exceptional bird and then fallen into the trap of taking it to every show within 500 kms. The sad result is, that even if the bird survives the travel experience, they will at times not do what we want them to in the breeding cabinet. As far as preparing birds goes, anyone who is not confident about the whole process should contact an experienced person and go to their place to watch the process from start to finish. Then go home and pull out any birds that you are obviously not going to show and practice on them. You will be amazed how quickly you will pick it up.

¹ Ian Hanington, 'State Team Challenge and the National Show: preparing your birds', *Budgerigar*, April/May 2007, pp. 10–11.

BIRDS FROM THE HANINGTON AVIARY



Fallow Cock



Split Fallow Cock
with his son (left)
& grandson (right)



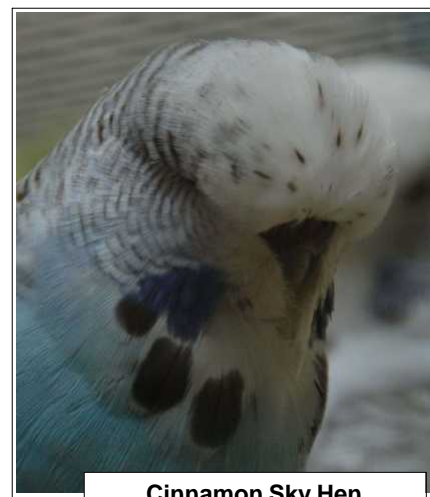
Fallow Cock



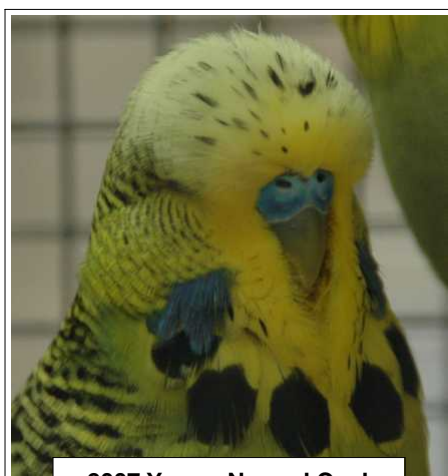
Violet Sky Cock
2007 bred



Fallow Cock
Father to the Split Fallow above



Cinnamon Sky Hen



2007 Young Normal Cock



Opaline Spangle Grey Cock
2007 late bred



Opaline Grey Green Cock
2005 bred

One of the common exhibitor laments relates to primary and secondary flights falling out at that critical time before a show. Is there anything that can be done to minimise this problem?

Flight and tail feathers which don't grow back at all are becoming a very serious problem. But I know of nothing that can be done to alleviate this problem. I have tried all sorts of remedies, but as yet have had no luck with any of them. As I have stated before, I am not a big fan of pulling feathers prior to shows. Twice I have done it and both times the feathers never grew back. Perhaps I did something wrong, I don't know.

When were you admitted to the Australian National Budgerigar Council (ANBC) Hall of Fame? What have been some of your other major highlights?

I received my certificate in 2004 from the ANBC along with a few other people on the night. I have at times contemplated getting rid of the Fallows because they can swallow good birds faster than a poker machine swallows money. As a matter of fact I sold all my Fallows in August 1985 to a chap for \$500 – there was 38 Fallows (27 were Greywings) and 71 splits. In June 1986 he had a sickness go through his birds and lost most of them. I purchased back the three remaining splits when he left the Fancy in December 1986 and what I have now have all come down from them. I have only introduced one Red Eye bird into them since then.

The last breeding season was probably the best I have ever had to date. I am pleased in general with the young that I bred. The overall shape and feather is far better than I have produced for many years and the Fallows are the best I have ever had. They have a good outline, some nice head feather and last but not least, the flights are back to the length they should be.

What is the most memorable advice about breeding and exhibiting Budgerigars that you have been given?

In 1983 Joe Willmot told me that people who breed these rarer varieties are not ever going to make any great fortunes from them. After 25 years I am now certain that he was telling me the truth. But he did tell me that: 'You will meet a lot of real quality people. Some that you meet don't seem to be heading in the same direction as you. So listen to them, decide for yourself how much information you wish to retain from them, then let them sail by'. This has certainly come true for me.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

With the birds that are available in Australia, I believe that anyone who is committed enough to a particular variety can get them up to a standard where they are doing well or even winning at the National level. But this goal is made much harder when you try to breed more varieties than you can seriously handle.

Anyone who hasn't been to a National Show should, at some time, try to make it – even if it is only to the show which is on in your state. You will make friends with some of the nicest people in the world.

Interview by Marilyn Harrington