

# Old Variety Canary: Lizard

## HISTORY

The Lizard holds a unique position, it is the oldest breed of canary in existence and it is admired and valued for the patterns and markings of its plumage. The actual origin of the Lizard is not known. In Great Britain, it is accepted that the Lizard was brought in by the Huguenot refugees. While most other breeds of canaries bear the name of the locality of their origin, the Lizard is apparently named for the pattern of its plumage which resembles the reptile. Though it is impossible to designate the original home for the Lizard, it has been found in various centers where the silk weaving industry existed, and eventually, it achieved its main popularity in the North Midlands and Lancashire. In fact, for the time, the Lancashire and Lizard Fanciers Association protected both breeds. For various reason the Lizards never had a large following, and as a result, it was severely harmed by the two world wars. It was estimated that in 1945 there were less than 30 breeding pairs left alive, and the Lizard Canary Association was formed.

## CHARACTERISTICS

The Lizard is a distinct mutation which behaves as a recessive to the normal self green canary. Variegation is not a Lizard characteristic, nor is clear or ticked. All Lizards are dark-plumaged self's (basically the same pigments as the wild green canary), with an area of clear feathers on the crown of the head called the cap. No light feathering is to be found on any part of the body. The cap however, may have some variation and this is used to form the classification of the breed. The Lizard has the usual two basic colors, however, the ancient terms are still used – 'gold' and 'silver' which related to the terms 'yellow' and 'buff'. In the gold, the dark ground color of the feather is edged with a deep golden yellow, and in the silver, it is terminated by a fine margin of white. While the cap is distinctive, the most important feature of the Lizard is the spangling. This is a series of black, crescent-shaped spots running in orderly parallel rows down the back of the bird, produced by the overlapping of the saddle feathers. The spangling is peculiar because it does not appear in the young, it's as its best usually after the first molt, and with each successive molt the marginal fringe color increased in width and will eventually become faded and indistinct. Markings similar to spangling are on the breast, but are of a slightly different shape and texture, and are usually not as well defined. These markings are the rowing. In the ideal bird, they would be in perfect lines for the throat to the tail and across the breast. The covert feathers also have the lacing of lighter color around the edges. The tail feathers of the Lizard must be entirely dark feathers and quill feathers should

be a near jet black as possible. The feet, legs, claws, and each should be black. The Lizard is color fed which produces a deep chestnut color in the gold and bronze-grey in the silvers. The ideal cap is oval in shape, covers the crown of the head and follows the line of the skull; it extends for the upper mandible to the back of the head. The edge of the cap should be clearly defined and should be separated from the eye by a thin line of dark feathers known as the eyelash. Along with the clear cap, broken caps and non-caps may be shown. The Lizard must have excellent feather quality to exhibit the proper marking pattern.

### **BREEDING**

The proper pairing is gold to silver just as in other breeds. Any other pairing, gold to gold or silver to silver just be avoided. Regarding caps, it is customary to breed clear caps to non-caps or broken caps, but broken caps to broken caps can produce different forms of caps which can be very useful. Clear caps to clear caps are not advisable, since it may lead to oversized caps. Bald face and over-capped birds should not be used in breeding. Also, any birds with light feathering in the wings, tail, or coverts should be avoided in the breeding program. Birds without dark feathers (too light in ground color) should not be bred. Select the breeding stock with good deep ground color, dark wings and tail, and fins and satiny feather quality. Also the spangling on the back and rowing on the breast should be well defined. The most important consideration to be given the young Lizard is to avoid any damage to the plumage, since feather plucking can seriously affect the development of the desired plumage for the youngster.

### **MOULTING**

Since the Lizard is to be judged entirely on its plumage, it is obvious the molt is most critical for the proper development of the show specimen. The Lizard mutation produces a gradual disappearance of the melanin pigments from the extreme distal edge of each feather at successive molts. It is because of this mutation that the young Lizard before the first molt has no spangling. It is when the first molt is complete that the pattern is produced. Since the wing and tail feathers are not molted at this time, they remain dark, and the other shed feathers, combine to produce the perfect show bird. Thus, any feather which is shed early will be replaced by a feather one stage ahead of the development cycle. Of course, in wing and tail feathers this would produce an area of white at the tip and a fault.

### **SHOWING**

Since the Lizard is not judged for position, it does not require extensive show training. However, it should be absolutely steady in the cage and should move from one perch to the other to aid the judge in examining both sides of

the bird. Any wildness could lead to damaged plumage and do course lost points.

The standard show cage is of the box type with a wire front, but the top is sloped. The cage is 12 inches at the front and 9 -3/4 inches at the back. It is 12 inches in length and 4-1/2 inches deep. It is constructed with 3/15 inch thick wood. All dimensions are outside. On the right hand side of the cage a circular door is fitted; it is 3-1/2 inches in diameter and hinged at the top, the bottom of the door is to be 3 inches from the floor of the cage. Also on the right side and just inside the cage is a feeding trough, fitted on the floor; it is 1-1/2 inches from the side and 1 inch deep. The wood strips which support the wire front extend 1 inches from the top and 1-3/4 inches from the bottom. The front is made of four strips of punched bar with 9 inches between the top and bottom ones, and two supporting strips 1-1/2 inches from the top and bottom respectively. They are 11-1/2 inches in length and 18 wires are 5/8 inches apart center to center. The drinker hole is in the center at the bottom of the wire front. The cage is painted black enamel outside and Nursery Blue (a pale shade of blue) inside. The perches are not standardized. The drinkers may be either metal or plastic but should be painted black outside.

#### **BREED STANDARD**

The standard below is from the Lizard Canary Association. It describes the perfect clear-capped gold cock. However, a preface note precedes the standard – “Gold and Silvers, Capped, or Non-capped, Cocks or Hens may all attain an equal standard” and that Broken-capped birds which are equal to the ideal in all respects other than the cap will only lose a proportion of the ten points for the cap according to the extent of the blemish.

The bird is 4-3/4 inches in length, neither over-stout nor too slim. It stands quiet and confidently on the perch at an angle of 45 degrees. The ground color is uniform in depth and is a rich golden bronze entirely free from any suggestion of other shade. The spangling clear and distinct, each individual spangle being clear of another. It extends from the edge of the cap in perfectly straight lines to the wing coverts, each successive spangle being progressively larger than the one nearer the neck.

The feather quality is of conspicuous silkiness, the feathers being close and tight with no suggestion of coarseness or looseness.

The breast is round and fairly full without giving any impression of stoutness. The rowings are clear and distinct from one another and are line able. They extend from near the eye down to the base of the tail and across the breast from both sides well towards the center.

The wing feathers are compact and held closely to the body. Their tips meet in a straight line down the center of the back. They are as dark, except at the extreme edges as to appear almost black.

The tail is narrow, straight and neat with feathers of the quality and color of the wing feathers.

The head is fairly large, round and full on the top. The cap extends from the beak to the base of the skull and is oval in shape with a clearly defined edge. It is clear of the eye; being separated there from the eyelash with a well-defined line of dark feathers extending to the base of the upper mandible. There are no dark feathers between the cap and the upper mandible. The cap is a deep golden orange color and has no blemishes of dark or light feathers.

The covert feathers are clear, distinct, and lineable and so dark as to appear almost black. They are distally laced around the edges.

The beak, legs and feet are dark.

The bird is in perfect condition, quite steady and staged correctly.

Condition is taken for granted. In classes of non-capped Lizards, points to be a maximum of ten are award for the perfection of the spangling of the head.