



CANARY CALENDAR

with Barry Mills



Letters



Send to: *Cage & Aviary Birds*, Cudham Tithe Barn, Berry's Hill, Cudham, Kent TN16 3AG. Alternatively, you can email: birds.ed@kelsey.co.uk

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NE'ER CAST A clout till May is out" is an oft-quoted proverb in Yorkshire and approximates to: "Don't start shedding clothes until the end of May."

Never more apt was that saying than this May in Leeds. With the exception of perhaps four sunny days, two of which came around the last weekend of the month and actually approached being warm, the temperatures have been chilly and below average for most of the month, with the occasional night-time frost.

The birdroom has not been all that cosy and my hens have been hunkered down on their eggs, reluctant to come off even to feed. Those with partners in residence have been nagging them constantly to come over and "top them up" with food, so they don't have to vacate the nest. To be fair, the cock birds have worked well at this and with subsequent feeding of the few chicks that have hatched so far.

I've had the expected clear eggs in the first round and two nests with dead-in-shell, which is most unusual for me and I think must be due to the low temperatures. I've turned the heating up a little to avoid this and hope later rounds won't be affected. A daily dose of sunshine would make such a difference!

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On the penultimate Monday of May I was able to report back to the Rodley Nature Reserve for my voluntary duties after three months off with a "frozen shoulder", which several sessions of physiotherapy, daily exercises and painkillers have finally restored almost to normal.

That Monday, fortunately, was one of the sunnier days, though still blustery and I was able to spend a few hours "fettling" brambles alongside the access path around the main lagoon.

The mute swans were in residence on their raised nests close to the water's edge and the floating rafts intended for nesting common terns were tethered mid-lake in anticipation of the terns' arrival. Noisy Canada geese had taken over the main island and one pair had "half-inched" one of the tern rafts. The hen sat in nesting mode on the shingle-like surface honking at the cock bird, which stood beside her bobbing his head and honking his chat-up lines. Just like the birdroom, I thought!

After a few minutes I heard some gull-like calls and looked up to see four common terns wheeling over the lagoon, chasing one another and dropping down to the surface of the water. When they saw the geese on the raft war was declared and an immediate Dambusters raid was commenced as they dive-bombed their hapless Canadian cousins. The attack was brief and fierce. The result: geese gone, two terns in situ, the other pair airborne and circling the second raft. Within two minutes those on the first raft mated before flying off again in a courtship trip.

Now if my Yorkies could set about their breeding mission with that level of determination my second round would be a doddle!

Barry Mills is chairman of the Yorkshire Canary Club.

Canary Calendar returns on June 26

AVIARY ATTACK

I AM emailing so that you can pass on to your readers a little warning: I have had my aviary for more than 30 years and have kept a mixed selection of budgies, cockatiels, ringnecks, lovebirds, quail and other parrot-like birds.

I had nearly 40 birds up until last weekend when a fox managed to gain access into my flight area by attacking my aged (I hadn't appreciated how weak it was) aviary wire and breaking through. The flight area has been devastated, with nest-boxes and perches knocked down, feathers everywhere and my 40 birds reduced to just eight.

I don't know how many birds have been killed and how many may have escaped through the hole, no bodies have been found.

Please advise your readers to regularly and vigorously check their caging, particularly if it's elderly like mine. I wouldn't wish any fancier to be faced with the scene that faced me.

Having now secured the failing wire I have already started replacing some of the birds (I didn't realise how much they have gone up in price, as I have for years bred my own).

Peter Duffy,
via email.

MALTA TRIP

RECENTLY, I was privileged to visit the immaculate birdroom of Maltese Gloster canary champion Mario Zahra.

Mario's setup is absolutely perfect. Of course I'm delighted with his feeding regime, but the



Security warning: Mr Duffy lost 32 birds from his aviary – including budgies, cockatiels and lovebirds – after a fox got in and killed them

cage design, flights for young birds and record keeping (both computerised and with little magnetic plates on the cages) is incredibly impressive.

I particularly liked the fact that Mario has an app on his mobile phone that enables him to access a CCTV camera in the birdroom. In summer he points the camera at a thermometer.

By checking regularly he can assure himself that the air conditioning is working perfectly! **Malcolm Green, Marketing and research director at The Birdcare Company.**

BUDGIE JOY

I ENJOYED the article on the highs of budgie keeping ("The pleasure principle", May 15).

As a retired person, the highs of my own budgies start with my first job of the day.

As I get up, I look out the bedroom window to see if my birds are up too. Yes, all is well and they are out in the flight. I get dressed and go downstairs to the garden.

I go to say: "Good morning. How are you?" Then I open the shed door for a bit of fresh air and do a quick check round. I turn the radio on for my birds and say: "I will be back soon."

My exercise is walking up and down the garden path several times a day to stand and gaze in wonder at the different colours of the same birds – they make me smile every day.

Patricia Curr,
via email.



From left: Alice Sachs of FB Imports, which distributes The Birdcare Company's range into Malta, with Malcolm Green and Mario Zahra

NEXT WEEK

Success with softbills

Expert TERRY SAYERS outlines a few basic husbandry principles for keepers of foreign thrushes and starlings

Canaries Month by Month

June is the time to assess your stock, says BRIAN KEENAN

Embrace the 'dark side'

RICHARD MILLER reckons it's time the budgerigar fancy managed its media opportunities proactively

Is it time to downsize?

Fed up with birds? Don't quit, urges GWEN PALMER



PLUS:
Readers' Gallery,
pheasants, turacos,
parrots and more!
**ON SALE
JUNE 5**

Terry Sayers is a leading breeder and exhibitor of foreign softbills