



Safeguarding the Gloster standard: a call to fanciers worldwide

In the centenary year of the Gloster canary, **NICK BARRETT** introduces a newly created extended version of the pictorial model that the Gloster Fancy Canary Council has produced

CANARIES

AT THE most recent AGM of the Gloster Fancy Canary Council, it was proposed that we issue an extended pictorial model of the Gloster fancy canary. This work is not simply a set of drawings. It is a declaration of our ongoing duty to protect the breed we all cherish.

For one hundred years, the Gloster fancy canary has been admired for its elegance, balance and charm. This is no accident – it is the result of dedicated fanciers and judges who have safeguarded the standard, ensuring that the Gloster remains recognisable across the generations.

But let us be honest: many have tampered with the standard in the past, and some continue to try. This is a phenomenon that neither I, nor any of my fellow Council members, can accept or understand. The standard is not a toy

to be reshaped at whim – it is the very essence of the Gloster fancy canary. To compromise it is to betray the legacy of those who built our breed.

A blessing for the fancy

That is why the newly extended pictorial model is so important. These four angles of both the corona and consort provide clarity and guidance for breeders, judges, and exhibitors worldwide. They are more than diagrams, they are tools to defend the pure-bred Gloster canary.

And we are fortunate. These illustrations were created by Mario Zahra, one of the leading Gloster judges and breeders in the world today. Mario understands the Gloster not only through his decades of breeding but also through his artistic gift. His drawings embody both experience and vision, offering us a blessing at a moment when clarity is most needed.

The proposal by Steve Chennells at



last year's AGM, which has now been brought to life through Mario's work, is an achievement that strengthens our fancy. It is innovation in the service of tradition – a rare and precious balance.

United for the future

The responsibility now lies with us all. The GFCC will continue to uphold the standard with vigilance and conviction, but we cannot do it alone. Every fancier, in every country, must recognise the importance of protecting what we have inherited.

We must stand united in rejecting any attempt to turn the Gloster into

something it was never intended to be. Our duty is to educate, to breed with integrity, and to uphold the work of the past Gloster Convention and the present Gloster Council, whose sole purpose is to defend the standard.

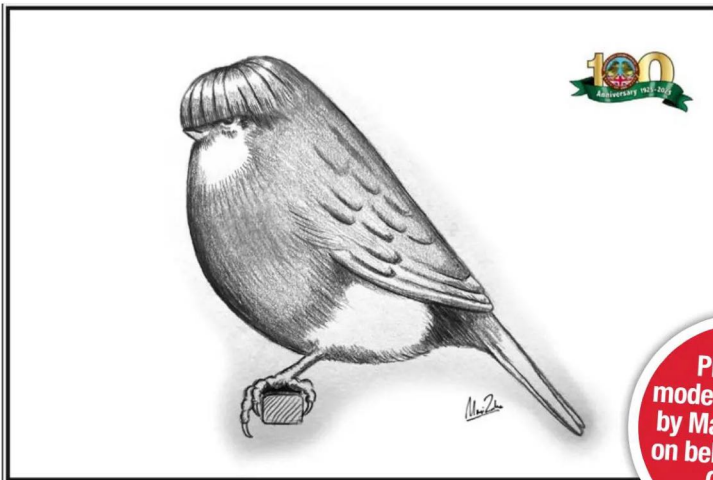
The Gloster fancy canary has reached its centenary not by chance, but by the unity and resolve of those who came before us. If we match that determination, the Gloster will continue to shine brightly for the next hundred years and beyond.

Nick Barrett is the chairman of the Gloster Fancy Canary Council UK.

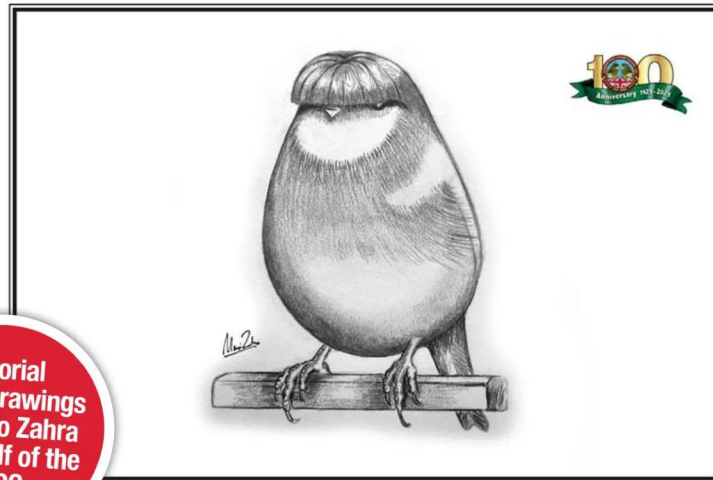


Nick Barrett: 'This extended model is innovation in the service of tradition'

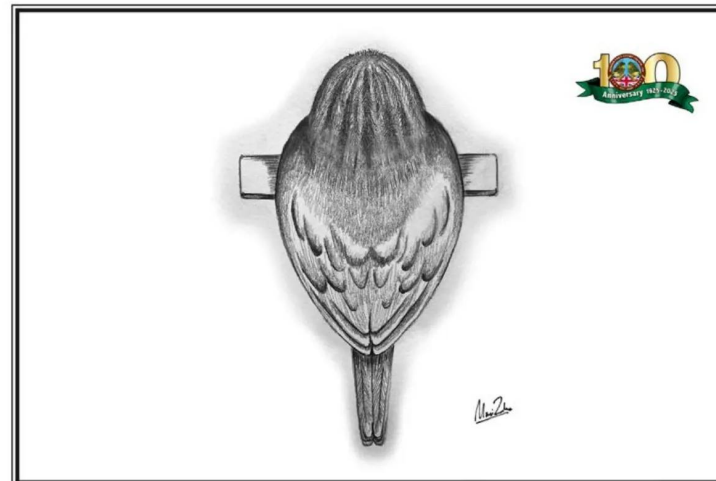
THE CORONA



Pictorial model drawings by Mario Zahra on behalf of the GFCC



THE CONSORT



My quietly confident ground doves

An enjoyable addition to **CHRIS GREEN**'s collection has been his well-matched pair of blue ground doves, whose character is a delight and parenting effective if patchy!

DOVES

WHEN a friend offered me a pair of blue ground doves, I didn't hesitate. These charming little columbids had long intrigued me, and the opportunity to keep a 2024 hen paired with a 2023 cock was too good to pass up. Now, having spent several months observing and caring for them, I can confidently say they are one of the most rewarding dove species I've kept.

Native to Central and South America, blue ground doves (*Claravis pretiosa*) are typically found in open woodlands, forest edges and scrubby clearings from southern Mexico down to northern Argentina. In their native habitat, they forage quietly on the ground, often in pairs or small groups, feeding on seeds and fallen fruits. They have a steady

nature even in the wild and this calm demeanour transfers well to captivity, making them ideal for aviary life.

One of the standout features of the species is its strong sexual dimorphism, which is useful when establishing stocks in aviculture. The cock sports a striking powder-blue plumage with darker wing spots, while the hen is more subtle, with browns and greys being the predominant plumage colours. This contrast not only adds visual interest but also makes sexing easy, even at a glance. Juveniles, on the other hand, resemble the hen in coloration, though their plumage is softer and less defined. It's only after several months that young males begin to show hints of blue, then gradually make the transition into their adult splendour.

My pair are housed in a covered outdoor flight measuring 6ft square. It's a modest space, yet with a few potted plants and perches it offers enough variety to keep them engaged. They share the aviary

with a pair of normal Java sparrows, and the two species coexist peacefully. The doves occasionally peck at the plants but they never cause significant damage. I've found them to be hardy birds, capable of living out year-round in our temperate climate without issue.

What struck me early on was their calm nature. While they are not tame in the sense of seeking human interaction, they are not flighty either. There have been no incidents of panicked flight or head injuries from hitting the roof, which is something I've unfortunately seen with other dove species. They move with a quiet confidence.

Shortly after settling in, my pair began nesting. Despite having several sites available at varying heights, they chose a canary nest-pan positioned high up. What surprised me was the cock's dedication to nest-building. Using coconut fibre, he constructed a proper nest – far more substantial than the token twig



Chris's female (left) with her true blue mate in their aviary Photos: Chris Green



Squabs in nest: and a surprisingly robust nest it is, too, Chris notes

arrangements that many doves are known for. He then sat in the nest and called for the hen. She approved, and together they raised two healthy youngsters, which hatched two days apart.

The chicks were attentively fed and brooded in the nest and then once they fledged the parents' involvement became noticeably more hands-off. The fledglings left the nest in a rather clumsy fashion, crashing to the floor. Although the adults did come down to feed them, they didn't bother with brooding or even sitting nearby. Instead, they perched above, watching the world go by. It was a curious shift in parental behaviour: devoted in the nest but putting in minimal effort once fledged.

Diet-wise, my pair thrive on a simple mix of budgie seed and a small amount of pigeon tonic seed, supplemented with grit. I've experimented with offering fruit, both chopped and spiked, but they show no interest whatsoever. Currently, their dietary preferences seem firmly rooted in dry seed.

Fortunately, I am in contact with several other breeders of this species, so we should be able to make up unrelated pairs in the future.

Chris Green is a professional birdkeeper at Cotswold Wildlife Park and a breeder, exhibitor and judge of cage birds.