



WESTERN WATER WORKS

Published By the Western Waterslager Club

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The WWC Mission Statement as laid out in the club's Bylaws:

The Western Waterslager Club is dedicated to the introduction and enjoyment of keeping and breeding Belgian waterslager canaries, also known as malinois canaries, the encouragement of well-planned selective breeding programs, conducting at least one annual contest, sharing information and fellowship with other waterslager song canary breeders, developing public interest in the waterslager canary fancy and its goals, and cooperation with other organizations for the preservation of aviculture in this country and promoting its reasonable practice.

A Brief Reintroduction

If you are like me, you find yourself in a busy time in the bird room either cleaning up from the contest season or getting ready for the breeding season (or perhaps both). So, I will keep it brief. I am returning to Western Water Works after a long absence. At points, I worked as co-editor with Richard Rolloff, Bonnie Black, and Jim Spindler and come to the job with a sense of pride in what we achieved together. I am thankful to our president, Ben Jackson, for the opportunity to work on the newsletter again. It is my hope to return to publishing four issues a year.

It would really help if you would reach out and let me know what topics most interest you and how the newsletter and I can best serve you.

Thanks,

Sebastian Vallelunga

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40% of Birds Scored 90 or More Points

The total number of birds for this year was 77 birds from 9 breeders with 31 birds achieving the status of *master singer*. A *master singer* is a waterslager scoring 90 or more points.

OFFICIAL CONTEST RESULTS

OLD BIRD DIVISION

BEST TOURS

TOUR	POINTS	EXHIBITOR	CAGE	BAND
KLOKKENDE	7	KUSZEK	33A	WWC-23-KK-253
BOLLENDE	4	BLACK	10B	WWC-23-BLB-318
ROLLENDE	2	BERG	53A	WWC-23-OO-209
CHORR	4	KUSZEK	33A	WWC-23-KK-253
STAALTONE	4	BLACK	10B	WWC-23-BLB-318
FLUITEN	5	KUSZEK	33A	WWC-23-KK-253
BELLEN	4	BLACK	10B	WWC-23-BLB-318
BELROL	3	KUSZEK	33A	WWC-23-KK-253
FLUITROL	4	KUSZEK	33A	WWC-23-KK-253
TJOKKEN	5	KUSZEK	33A	WWC-23-KK-253

BEST SINGLES

PLACE	CAGE	EXHIBITOR	BAND	POINTS
1	33A	KUSZEK	WWC-23-KK-253	117
2	53A	BERG	WWC-23-OO-209	96
3	54B	BLACK	WWC-22-BLB-213	96

BEST TEAM

PLACE	TEAM	EXHIBITOR	POINTS
1	10	BLACK	396

BEST OVERALL BIRDS (SINGLE OR TEAM)

PLACE	CAGE	EXHIBITOR	BAND	POINTS
1	33A	KUSZEK	WWC-23-KK-253	117
2	10B	BLACK	WWC-23-BLB-318	114
3	10C	BLACK	WWC-21-BLB-102	114
4	10D	BLACK	WWC-22-BLB-204	99
5	53A	BERG	WWC-23-OO-209	96
6	54B	BLACK	WWC-22-BLB-213	96
7	44D	JACKSON	WWC-23-BCJ-0068	90

BEST TEAM KLOK: TEAM 10 / BLACK / 19 POINTS

BEST IN CONTEST: CAGE 33A / KUSZEK / WWC-23-KK-253 / 117 POINTS

YOUNG BIRD DIVISION**BEST TOURS**

TOUR	POINTS	EXHIBITOR	CAGE	BAND
KLOKKENDE	7	BERG	2B	WWC-24-OO-1137
BOLLENDE	5	BERG	2B	WWC-24-OO-1137
ROLLENDE	3	IBRAHIM	13A	WWC-24-1678
CHORR	4	IBRAHIM	14B	WWC-24-1681
STAALSTONE	5	IBRAHIM	14C	WWC-24-1700
FLUITEN	5	IBRAHIM	14B	WWC-24-1681
BELLEN	5	IBRAHIM	14B	WWC-24-1681
BELROL	4	SOTO	7C	WWC-24-MS-145
FLUITROL	4	BERG	2B	WWC-24-OO-1137
TJOKKEN	5	BERG	2B	WWC-24-OO-1137

BEST SINGLES

PLACE	CAGE	EXHIBITOR	BAND	POINTS
1	48D	SOTO	WWC-24-MS-143	75
2	47C	SOTO	NSC-24-MS-75	75
3	30B	SOTO	WWC-24-MS-98	75

BEST TEAMS

PLACE	TEAM	EXHIBITOR	POINTS
1	13	IBRAHIM	436
2	14	IBRAHIM	435
3	2	BERG	420
4	12	BLACK	394
5	1	BERG	357
6	7	SOTO	354
7	11	BLACK	321

BEST OVERALL BIRDS (SINGLE OR TEAM)

PLACE	CAGE	EXHIBITOR	BAND	POINTS
1	2B	BERG	WWC-24-OO-1137	120
2	14B	IBRAHIM	WWC-24-1681	120
3	14C	IBRAHIM	WWC-24-1700	120
4	13A	IBRAHIM	WWC-24-1678	117
5	13D	IBRAHIM	WWC-24-1655	111
6	14D	IBRAHIM	WWC-24-1667	111
7	2D	BERG	WWC-24-OO-1129	111

BEST TEAM KLOK: TEAM 14 / IBRAHIM / 26 POINTS

BEST IN CONTEST: CAGE 2B / BERG / WWC-24-OO-1137 / 120 POINTS

Please Note: There is an official way to break the ties among the birds for the many awards. This consists of first comparing the total score of each bird followed by comparing the scores of each tour until the tie can be broken.

PART TWO: THE 2025 BREEDING SEASON

As the days begin to lengthen, it is natural for us to begin to contemplate the 2025 breeding season. Soon the cherry, almond, and apple trees will begin to blossom, making way for the new life of spring. European lore has it that wild birds begin to pair up on the feast of Saint Valentine (February 14th) which is also about the time that the earliest of the trees begin to swell their buds.

That being said, we probably all know breeders who have already begun pairing their birds.

It is in the hope that breeders will find it useful that the following article was included.

An Excerpt from the book *Song Canaries* by Sebastian Vallelunga

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Canary Breeding Systems

Although it should be stated up front that song canaries can be bred in exactly the same systems used by breeders of other kinds of canaries, the truth is that they frequently are not.

Most type canary breeders, if one can trust the available literature, tend to breed their canaries in a pair system. That is, one male is placed in the same cage as one female and nature takes its course. Song canaries can certainly be bred using this system as well. It is much more typical, however, to find song canaries bred in trios or other groupings.

For example, the traditional way to breed rollers in the Harz Mountains, according to the surviving records, was flock or colony breeding. Here, a few males and many more hens were kept in a closed off part of the miners' cabins. There was a little wood and wire (or wood and dowel) open-front box, similar in design to the ones still hung on the outside of breeding cages in Europe, for each hen (and a few extras) that contained a little nest cup inside. Each hen was bred by one or more of the males and built a nest in her own little private cup. I am not aware of anyone having much success with this method now-a-days, despite the fact that many beginners try colony breeding canaries in backyard aviaries. For whatever reason, the birds will squabble like mad, poach each other's nesting materials and nest sites, and lay very few fertile eggs, most of which never hatch for one reason or another (mainly the fact that social stress is not conducive to sustained periods of incubation).

More success is achieved using a trio method which I like to call "shuttle cock". Here, the breeder sets two hens up in adjoining breeding cages or in each half of a double-breeder cage with a partition in the middle. The well-conditioned hens are placed in the cages first with a nest cup with a liner (never use the liners made from synthetic carpet pads as they contain almost invisible nylon threads that will wrap around legs and toes, eventually causing them to desiccate and fall off; I only use jute or other natural fiber pads from Belgium) and safe nest material (short burlap threads or cotton string that is short enough not to cause accidents—two or three inches at most—or even unscented toilet paper strips) for each, as well as nutritious food, clean water, and cuttlebone for calcium; if you wish, you can supplement the diet of both sexes with a breeding vitamin for a period before nesting. Please note that hens tend to come into condition more quickly than cocks (two to four weeks earlier), so any special attention in the form of added light, heat, or protein-rich diets should be given to the males first in order to help them "catch up". If this step is omitted, the first eggs of the year will usually be infertile. Both hens should be able to hear the male from their cages.

Once all the birds are ready, the breeder must decide which hen looks to be closer to laying and begin by placing the male in with her. If this hen seems to be far in advance of the other (i.e.: she has built her nest but the other is just still carrying string around), you can leave the male in with her for a few days before shuttling him to the other cage and he begins his daily trips to each. If both are equally ready, the male must be shuttled back and forth morning and evening from the start in order to ensure that both hens' eggs are being fertilized. Please note that one cannot be sure that fertilization has occurred for the day if one sees the male tread the hen once in the morning. It can take multiple treadings before active sperm is ejected because the first treading

in the morning is thought to utilize the older sperm left from the day before. Between egg laying, the male can be rested or assigned to help one hen with the feeding. When the breeder keeps to the shuttle schedule, this can be a very effective and productive breeding system. Missing a move, or even mistiming one, however, can result in multiple infertile eggs in a clutch.

The next system can be thought of as the “conjugal visit” system. It is similar to the shuttle cock system, only here the hen goes to the male and is then returned to her breeder cage after copulation. Again, the first hen of the day should be allowed multiple treadings. With this system, as many hens as the breeder has time and inclination to move back and forth may be used (I’d stick to 2 or 3). A friend of mine runs 5 hens to each cock using this system and has good results. I should in fairness add that he is retired and can devote a lot of time to his birds. Just as in the system above, a lot rides on moving birds at the right time to ensure full fertility of the clutches.

Finally, and this is my favorite, is the trio-colony or “lazy trio” system. It has the advantages of both the productivity of the trio system and the ease of the colony system, *if* the breeder has a little luck. The well-conditioned hens are set up in a large double-breeder cage, but this time there is no divider. The nest cups are placed as far away from one another as possible and at the same height so that neither can be considered a better nest site by the hens. It works best if the two hens have been overwintered in the same flight cage and know one another. Once one begins to build a nest, the male is introduced and left with both hens for the season. If the situation is ideal, the two hens will alternately be laying, incubating, and feeding young in turns. The male will help each hen feed her chicks as they become large enough for a father’s less patient attention. The up side to this system is that it can be every bit as productive as the “shuttle cock” or “conjugal visit” systems without the pressure of moving birds at the ideal moment. The down side to this system is that it helps to have some extra hens in case one or more prove unsuitable to this system, once acclimated to the cage. If they are unsuitable (i.e.: display some of the problems mentioned under colony breeding above; namely, squabbling and poaching, etc.), they should be substituted. Rarely, the cock will favor one hen over the other and not fertilize any of the second hen’s eggs.

Introductions and Other Interactions

When one is a new breeder and working with birds that may not be well-conditioned for breeding, aggression between two birds being introduced to one another in order to pair them may result. When the birds are well-conditioned real, serious aggression almost never happens.

My first year of breeding song canaries brought what I thought was a pretty serious situation that caused me quite a bit of worry. A large hen attacked a smaller male and pinned him down flat on his back while she scolded and pecked him; that was unexpected because, from what I had read, males are usually the ones that wear the “bully” label. Needless to say, I panicked and pulled the male out of the breeding cage. This was the right move for the wrong reason: I had mentally noted this hen as a “psycho bitch” quite unfairly (and I use the descriptive label here advisedly as a technical term). After a week of hand wringing and indecision, with the two birds in adjoining cages in a well-lit room and a nutritious diet, nesting material at the ready, etc., the

two began to make quiet love noises to each other between the bars; she begging for food and he eager to get nearer and whisper sweet nothings.

The first lesson here is condition, condition, condition: the right amount of light (up to 13 or 14 hours), the right amount of vitamins, greens and protein (supplements are not a must but can help and protein should approach 16% to 18% of the total diet), frequent baths (cool water), and the right temperature (it should never be too cold or too hot in the breeding room, say between 50 and 80 degrees with 60 to 70 as an ideal). The second lesson is that sometimes a gradual introduction is needed, although I found this rarely to be the case as I got better at conditioning the birds.

Some breeders bend over backwards to keep breeding pairs from seeing each other because when they do see each other they want to fight through the bars of the cages. When I began, I covered cage sides with old towels to keep the squabbling down: for the birds it was a matter of out of sight, out of mind. However, every time a towel slid out of place or was pulled down by a bird, the aggression began again. I think it was half way through my first year of breeding that I realized (probably because I got sloppy about replacing a towel) that the pairs got used to each other after a fairly short time of squabbling. Now, I have my banks of cages set up so that the birds can actually not only see the trio next to them but the one after that as well, and I almost never hear any squabbling between the cages any more.