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# It was only a year ago...

Remember before you-know-what and the 'new normal'? When we were just coming off a full show season? Let's share our memories of the year before Covid! A show, a club event, or a magic bird that you'll never forget. Tell us why it's a stand-out memory and send us a photo to bring it to life. Send your memories to: [birds.general@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:birds.general@kelsey.co.uk)

# 2019

**Ian Adcock, secretary and communications officer for the Lizard Canary Association**

**N**OW that 2020 is over, instead of looking at the year prior, I thought I would reflect on the year that seemed to pass most of us by. 2020 was a year unlike any in living memory and it never really got going at all. Like many, at the end of 2019 I had big plans for 2020. I had selected my breeding birds for the season and breeding cages had been cleaned and were ready for the Lizards to go in. I wasn't expecting them to start breeding until towards the end of March, but nevertheless, everything was ready.

I had selected the cocks I would use based on how well they had done at shows in previous years. The cocks that made the cut were best novice silver and second-best novice, along with best novice non cap and third best novice both from the 2018 Southern Lizard Canary Club (SLCC) show. From the SLCC 2019, I selected the best novice clear cap and third best novice. In addition, I planned to use a good-quality cock from a top European breeder – one that had given me some excellent birds in 2018 and 2019. These birds were matched up with appropriate hens.

In January 2020, I was planning to get some more cages so that I could house more than 50 birds individually to prevent feathers being



damaged by the chicks pecking at each other. By February, the Lizard hens were put into their breeding cages and conditioning started. My seed comes from Belgium and with news reports on the virus, I was a little concerned it might be in short supply. I ordered an additional 20kg sack of canary conditioning seed.

As the situation in the UK worsened, the nest-pans went in on St Patrick's Day and many of the hens started to build immediately. Time for the cocks to go in! And just as the first eggs were laid, we went into lockdown. I was aware that not being able to go anywhere or see anyone, it would give me the opportunity to spend more time with the birds. However, I was conscious that if I did that, my "interference" might just disrupt the birds breeding. I kept my activity in the birdroom to what would have been the normal for that time of year.

By the third week in April, many of the nests in the first round had clear eggs and those that did produce chicks did so in ones or twos only.



**Above: 2019 SLCC winners. Last year, Ian made a decision to keep activity in his birdroom to what would have been the normal for that time of year, and not to be tempted in to the birdroom too much**

Thankfully by round two, in mid-May, I saw some improvement with decent hatches. And by the end of May, when the last nest was set, I was anticipating being able to produce just short of 30 chicks, which is a little over half the number I would normally expect.

I found that with the size G rings I had to ring very late – 10 or even 12 days after hatching – but now with size E, I ring at seven days. This is a much more sensible time, so the decision by the LCA council to move from size G to E proved to be the right decision.

As we approached July it was time to start thinking about colour feeding the chicks ready for the show season. My preference is for colour-fed birds, even though it takes more work. The cost isn't high but, in my view, the extra work is well worth it. I find it easier to sex the birds when they are colour fed. At this time I also gave them vine to help with leg and beak colour.

By August I had feathers everywhere in the birdroom and I could start to see the colour coming through on some of the Lizards; enough for me to see that some would be golds, and most likely cocks. As the month progressed and the moult continued, I was able to sex quite a few of the birds. The gold hens and cocks were clear but the silvers took a bit longer to determine the sex. It was still way too early to make the selection for the upcoming shows, if there were to be any with the Covid-19 restrictions still biting. Many shows had already been cancelled, but there was a glimmer of hope some may be able to go ahead. Some of the restrictions were lifted in August so the preparatory work for the LCA Classic continued.

Unfortunately, in September Covid cases were rising again so the outlook for the LCA Classic was rather bleak and although we had everything in place for the show, it was clear that we could not proceed as further lockdowns were highly likely. The decision was made and the LCA Classic cancelled on October 1. I finished the colour feeding even though none of the birds would now grace the show bench.

During October I started to sort out the Lizards. Initially they were housed by family groups, but I moved them into colour and sex groups to make it easier to compare the birds as they completed the moult. That way I would be able to determine which of the birds I would shortlist for next year's breeding. I had a couple of new top-class birds coming in from trusted breeders whose stock "gels" with mine. I would have been well into show training by now, but as the pandemic ended the 2020 show season, I was not putting the time into that activity.

At the end of October, I had received a small number of the new Lizards and they settled in nicely. I had also made the selection of the Lizards I would keep for next season. It was a real shame that the season ended without a single show as I believed (like many other breeders) that some of my show team of Lizards would have fared very well on the show bench. But I will never really know so the focus will now be on the coming breeding season and the show season at the end of the year. Time to press reset and start all over again!

● *The LCA Classic in 2021 will be held, providing restrictions allow, on the second Sunday in November: November 14, 2021.*



**Left: silver hen for 2021 plans. Right: quality gold hens**



**Third best novice and best novice non-cap**



**More silver hens for 2021**



**A second best novice and best novice silver winner at the SLCC in 2018**