

# The Hitch-hiker's Guide to the Lizard canary: Episode 7

Determining gender in order to make up true pairs can be a fraught business with many birds – but not with the Lizard, says **HUW EVANS**, as he brings his introductory series to a close

## CANARIES

"I REALLY wish I'd listened to what my mother told me when I was young."  
 "Why, what did she tell you?"  
 "I don't know, I didn't listen."  
 – Douglas Adams: *A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

**A**T LAST, the final hike across the Lizard landscape. A chance for those of you who have been listening to test some of the knowledge that you have gathered along the way.

I have chosen the topic that scores highest in the search statistics for my blog. It has nothing to do with the Lizard's history, its technical points, or the latest show reports. It is not even "the Ultimate Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything".

The ultimate question, as far as visitors to my blog are concerned, seems to be... how do you sex Lizard canaries?

It's a fair question, especially for newcomers to the Lizard fancy, and the good news is that it is much easier to answer than for most breeds of canary.

I mentioned previously that the Lizard

GOLD LIZARDS		
GROUND COLOUR	ROWINGS	SEX
Very intensive	Modest	<b>Male</b>
Intensive	Good	<b>Female</b>
SILVER LIZARDS		
GROUND COLOUR	ROWINGS	SEX
Bright	Good	<b>Male</b>
Muted	Very good	<b>Female</b>

**Lizard canary sexing basics: test your skills on these eight examples** All photos: Huw Evans

canary is sexually dimorphic: a technical way of saying that the sexes look different. There are two key features to look out for: colour (see Part 2, September 9 issue) and rowings (Part 5, September 30 issue). Other major features, such as the quality of the spangles and the shape of the cap, have no material bearing on the sex of a Lizard.

I will start with the colour. Males have deeper, brighter colour than females: a common trait among canaries, but the difference is more obvious in Lizards.



(Although see Note below.)

Silver Lizards are the easiest to sex. The ground colour of true-bred silver males is much brighter than the muted colour of the females; it's in a different league. Any drabness in a silver male Lizard should be a cause for concern.

There is a further difference in the colour of the cap. Many silver hens start with a bright pigment over the beak, which fades progressively towards the back of the crown, whereas the cap of silver cocks is much more consistent in colour.

The difference in colour between male and female gold Lizards is not quite so obvious. Both should be intensive, although the colour of a true-bred gold cock will always be deeper. A brownish suffusion, or perhaps a frosty edge to the spangles, will normally signify a hen.

Beware that colour feeding can hide colour faults, more so in golds than in silvers.

Fortunately, the rowings provide a

useful cross-check when it comes to sexing Lizards. As a general rule, hens carry more profuse rowings than males. There is likely to be a significant difference in golds, less so in silvers.

There will always be exceptions to the rule, but by using a combination of ground colour and rowings as a basis for comparison, the sex of a Lizard canary can be determined quite easily. I've summarised the key combinations in my hitch hiker's guide to sexing Lizard canaries.

Now to put you to the test. I have selected photographs of eight Lizards. Can you sex them? Answers on page 15.

That brings us to our journey's end. I'm going to leave you with a final thought from Douglas Adams:

*"The world is a thing of utter inordinate complexity and richness and strangeness that is absolutely awesome. I mean the idea that such complexity can arise not only out of such simplicity, but probably absolutely out of nothing, is the most*

*fabulous extraordinary idea."*

Substitute "Lizard canary" for "world" and it would be just as true.

**Note:** A word of caution: I am referring to true-bred classic Lizard canaries here. Their ground colour is fundamentally different from those of colour variants and their yellow-ground offspring, which lie outside the scope of this series.

*Huw Evans is the author of Fine Spangled Sort, a blog about the London fancy and Lizard canaries. The web address is: [www.finespangledsort.com](http://www.finespangledsort.com)*

**i** I HOPE you've enjoyed the ride, and want to discover more. If so, please look up the LCA website ([www.lizardcanaryassociation.com](http://www.lizardcanaryassociation.com)) because that is where you will find out how to join the band of breeders that are committed to conserving the world's oldest breed of canary: the classic Lizard canary.

