

The small budgerigar

Melopsittacus undulatus

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The budgerigar, also known as common pet parakeet, is a small long-tailed, seed eating parrot.

They are the only species in the genus *Melopsittacus*.

They are found in Australia. Naturally they are green, yellow and black. In adults the upperparts barred with black and yellow, rump and underparts green, forehead and face yellow, feathers of cheeks tipped with blue-violet. A series of black spots across throat, tail greenish-blue, lateral feathers centrally banded with yellow, bill olive-grey, cere blue (males), brownish in breeding female, iris white, legs greyish-blue. They were first recorded in 1805 although *Melopsittacus undulatus* has existed unchanged for more than five million years in its present form.

There are two subspecies *M. Undulatus intermedius* and *M. Undulatus pallidiceps*.

They are closely related to the Night parrot and Ground parrot.



Budgerigar
Length 18 cm
©DM



Night parrot
Length 23 cm



Ground parrot
Length 30 cm

The birds are found on the whole Australian continent. The wildtype budgie is about 18 cm long and is the ancestor of the "standard budgie" who is today between 22 and 24 cm.

The nests are found in hollow tree trunks preferably from Eucalytus trees. Budgies are colonial birds so it is no exception that you find in the same tree different cavities. Because they live in a colony they have also developed a warning cry to warn one another of danger. Because the chosen cavity does not always meet the need of the female it is normal that she adjust the cavity by using her beak. It is no rumour that female budgies have a harder bite then the male ones. The incubation is only done by the females, the males are responsible for nutrition.



Budgie land



Budgerigar habitat

Their diet consists of grass seeds such as spinifex grass, wild oats, canary seed and other various seeding grasses.

John Scoble wrote in his book *"The Complete Book of Budgerigars"* that they also eat charcoal from burnt out trees.

To search for food and water they move usually in fairly large flights. At the same time they produce a lot of noise.

Budgerigars seldom bath they prefer to roll in seaking wet grass.

Their natural breeding season is from October till December. A normal clutch is five till six eggs. The hen starts the breeding from the first egg. The incubation period is between 17 till 18 days. The young leave the nest about 30 days after hatching. A week later they are able to fend themselves.

Occasionally appear in the wild mutations but they don't live long, not because they are ill but they are a easy target for predatory birds. Selective breeding has led to numeros color forms.



Canary—seed

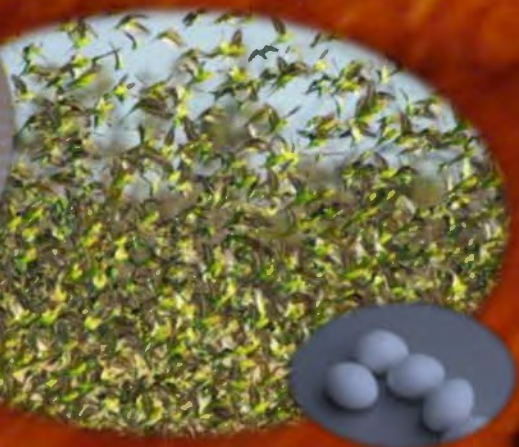
Spinifex grasses



Mitchell grasses



Wild oats



The practice

The wild type budgerigar has been brought for the first time, a live, to the United Kingdom by the naturalist **John Gould** in 1840 and a relative of him, **Charles Coxen**, was the first to breed with them in captivity.

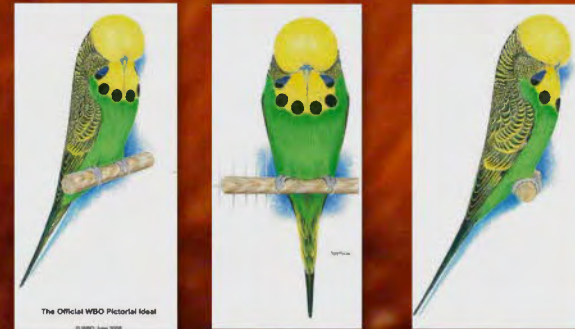
Since then a lot of mutations occurred in different countries.

In the United Kingdom breeders start to develop a show budgie or what we now know as a "Standard Budgerigar".

Over the years the wild type budgie has evolved to a pet budgerigar. The so called "hobby breeders" put all their effort on the standard budgerigar. Around 1925 the first budgie clubs appeared and their view was to develop a show budgie by paying attention to size and color.

They also developed a "Standard of Perfection and a Pictorial Ideal".

These two items change along the years.



It also means that we developed two different views on keeping budgerigars :

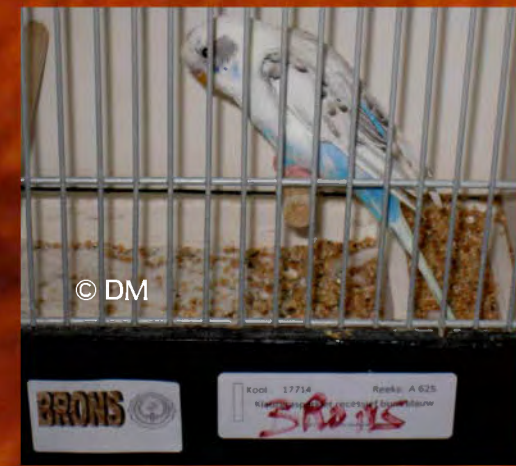
1. The "hobby breeders involved with the "Standard budgie"
2. The group of people who kept budgerigars as a pet bird.

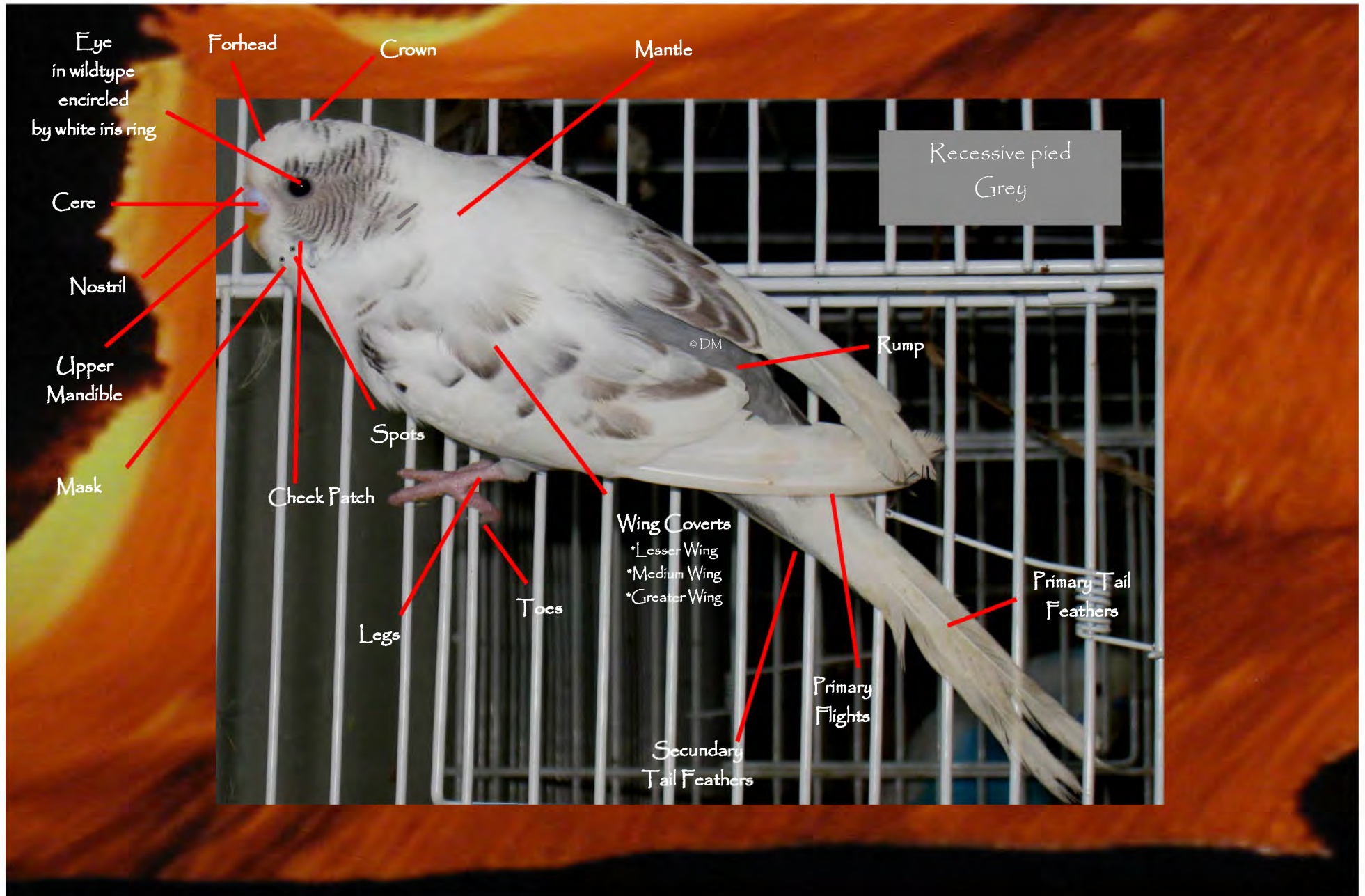
Today we often forget that there wouldn't be "Standard budgies" without the wild type or pet budgie.

Since a few years the pet bird is coming to the shows of the specialized budgie clubs. It is in 2009 (in Italy) that we found the two, pet budgies and standard budgies, on one show each with their own rules.

For some a sluggish for others a way to generate interest for new members.

Also in other European countries you have now the same shows. The interest from the breeders to keep the small budgies increases and some breeders stopped breeding the standard budgies in favor of the small ones. There are many reasons for, such as the high prices for the top standard budgies, the economic situation, their age, the politics in budgie clubs, standard birds who are winning shows only because they are big, judges who have only an eye for size and don't pay attention to all the other points of the standard of perfection, such as colour, position etc. In my opinion a real problem for the show budgerigar. In that way the small budgerigar is an alternative.







Budgies in the wild



Example of a standard of perfection

Type:

The bird, must show a beautiful slim figure . The backline shall be substantially straight, but still slightly inwards (a small nod).

The widest point of the bird is at the wing bends, they continues to be a narrow type. No bump and/or backpack prevention.

Headline:

The head is small and narrow focus should be without forehead curvature. That both in the front and side view. The back of the head should show no rear fill but gradually to move in a little nod, and then in the backline. From the cere the line of the head is going backwards to the backline.

Neck:

The wing bends, there is a small incursion to the somewhat pointed headform. The neck is somewhat long to mention.

Beak:

The upper beak is completely visible. The beak is rather higher than longer, to the sides and the top rounded. The upper beak is almost perpendicular bent down . It must not disappear into the feathers.

Eyes:

Should be clear, frank and well-placed from the front, behind skull and top of the head.

The eyes must be clearly visible not only in the front and the side view. They stabbing, as it were from the head. The color of the eyes will differ according to the mutation.

Wings:

These should be worn tight, without crossing, to just above the encounters.

The wing length should be proportionate to the body and in 45:100 ratio.

The wing length is measured from the wing bend to the tip of the longest primary feathers. Seven primary wing pins to be wholly matured visible.

Tail:

The tail is straight and compact and consists of 12 fully mature tail pins. This long tail, the middle feathers far beyond the other out, is stepped so that the outer pair is only one third

part of the extended length of the middle pins. The length of the extended tail pins is about 10cm and should be proportionate to the body . In a tightly closed tail, only the two long tail pins visible.

Legs:

The legs are thin, slim and relatively high and with long toes and nails. Compared with the whole bird, the toes rather long

Size:

The small grass parakeet has a length of up to 18 cm, measured from the crown of the head to the tip of the tail.

Condition:

Is a prerequisite if the bird is not in shape he can never high rating given. The perfect condition may be defined as a bird is fully feathered. The feather, the glossy display, which evidence of good health and show preparation. All body parts intact and are of normal form.

Gender:

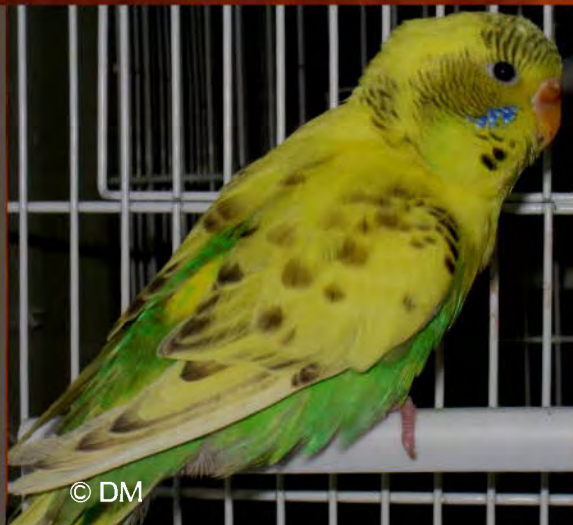
Like in standard budgies depending the mutation

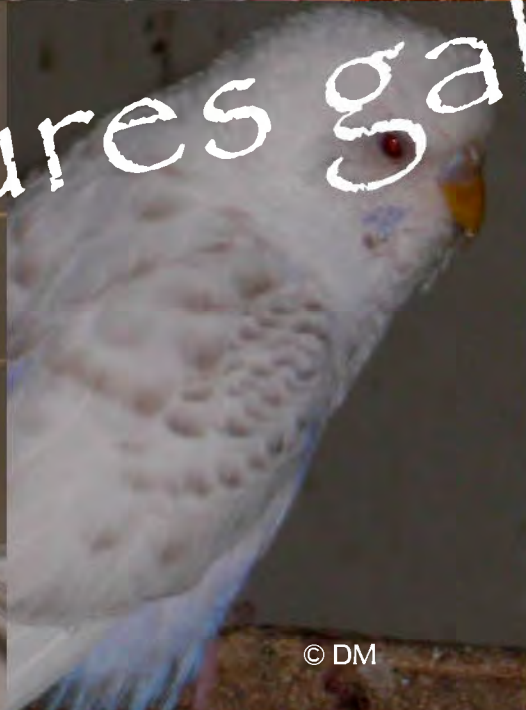
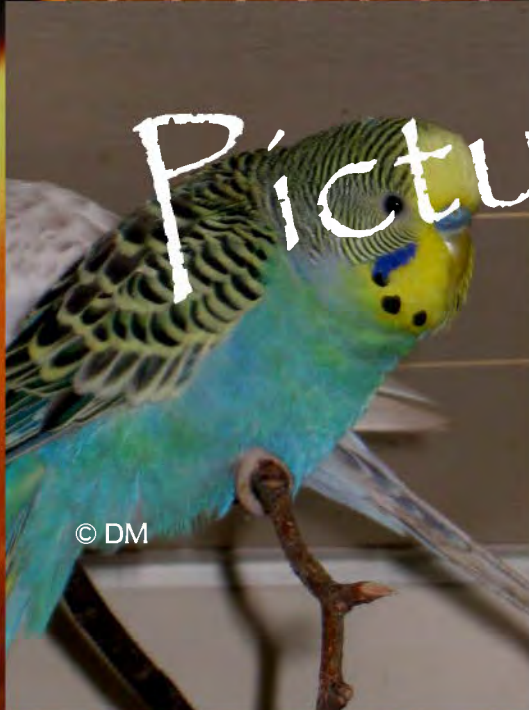
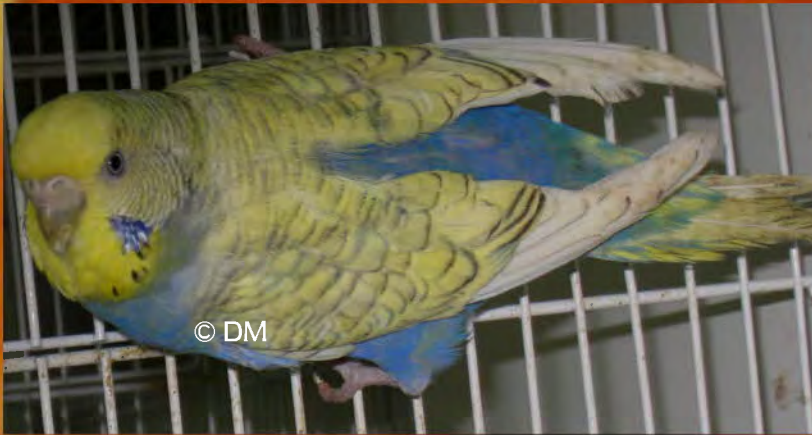
Mask:

The mask is intended to be brief from the front view et the bottom of round shape with 6 regularly distributed spots, not to large and in proportion with the small mask.

4 spots visible, 2 are hidden under the cheek patches. They have to be round and max. 2mm.

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Pictures gallery