

# RARE LITTLE BIRDS

## When Three Legs Are Better Than Two

"Lost, three-legged budgie. Horticultural Hall, Laing's Road, Lower Hutt."

**S**O ran an advertisement in the Wellington papers the other week. Smart advertising, I reflected, or else bad luck for the most curious oddity since the pin-headed Chinaman, the 40-stone woman, and a potato I once grew which resembled an uncle of mine on my mother's side.

Inquiring cautiously at the Horticultural Hall in Lower Hutt, I was relieved to find it was, after all, merely clever publicity calculated to attract the public to the Grand National Cage Bird Show, which was being held in the Horticultural Hall. This must not be construed as suggesting that the Lower Hutt Cage Bird Society, which conducted the Show, had stooped to deception. The three-legged budgerigar was there, all right, hopping about in its cage as alive and bright as you and me, and probably a good deal more contented with this world.

Inside the hall there were also approximately 850 assorted cage birds, all making the very deuce of a noise, and a number of busy officials, including J. R. Walker of Auckland, who is the President of the New Zealand Cage Bird Society. The three-legged budgie is actually the property of the society, but Mr. Walker looks after it, and naturally knows a good deal about its history, habits, and temperament.

A yellow-green hen bird with small patches of blue feathers on her chin and

faint markings on the wings, she has a fully developed third thigh, with the foot and claws tucked against the breast. She was bred a little over three years ago by an Auckland breeder who promptly presented her to the New Zealand Society, and Mr. Walker has had her in his care ever since.

### A Bad-Tempered Bird

Looking after such a valuable bird is not without its responsibilities. What it is really worth in hard cash, Mr. Walker can't say, though he does know that side showmen have made small fortunes out of less remarkable freaks. He had a worrying few days when the bird escaped twelve months ago. A reward was immediately offered, but when two days passed and there was no news of her whatever, Mr. Walker was beginning to think she had fallen victim to a cat or some larger bird.

But she turned up again, three miles from where she had escaped, flopping down exhausted through lack of food, on to the roof of an aviary. She had apparently been attracted by other budgerigars.

Not long afterward, she celebrated her return by laying an egg, a thing which Mr. Walker had not thought possible in view of her physical deformity. And not only did she lay it, but she made a valiant attempt to hatch it.

Whether or not she is sensitive about her deformity, she is a bad-tempered little bird, and packs into her few ounces of weight the belligerency of a parachute trooper. Mr. Walker carried her down to the National Bird Show in the same cage as two Pencil Buttercup budgies, and she fought them all the way.

### Pencil Buttercups

These two Pencil Buttercups, incidentally, are also rare birds. There are only six in the world, all of them bred by Mr. Walker, and from a scientific point of view they are priceless. Budgerigar fanciers all over the world had maintained that it was impossible to produce the strain.

Another rarity in the show was a Blue Opaline budgerigar, a beautiful little bird which looked as though it had been painted a vivid blue and then covered with a coat of clear lacquer. This Blue Opaline represents another phenomenon in breeding, as a study of its parentage shows that it does not conform to the Mendelian Law governing inherited characteristics. The Blue Opaline is said to be worth £25, but even though this is almost the bird's weight in gold, it is not a high value for a really rare bird. The first specimens of a certain sky-blue budgerigar developed by Japanese bird financiers were valued at £120.

**Incidental Intelligence from the Bird-fancying Front:** Mr. Walker, who used to broadcast regularly with Reg. Morgan and "Cinderella" in the IYA Children's sessions, has judged 48 bird shows and

four dog shows. This is believed to be a record; the unusual yellow colour of several canaries and one or two budgerigars at the show was due to colour feeding; two varieties of finch are known,



Alan Blakey photograph  
J. R. WALKER, and friend: Looking after her is not without its responsibilities

for obvious reasons, as White-Hooded Nun and the Black-Hooded Nun; one of the smallest birds in the show, a tiny woodfinch, has the reputation of being a killer, and is supposed to be death to any bird up to twice its own size; all the varieties of love birds at the show

came originally from Africa; love birds undoubtedly become very attached to each other, but it is a fallacy, according to experts, that immediately one of a pair dies the other sickens and dies also.

—J.G.M./

## "PUNCH" AND NEW ZEALAND

(Written for "The Listener" by C. R. ALLEN)

**I**N a recent issue, Pat Lawlor gave instances of New Zealanders who got into *Punch*. His list is representative, but not complete. Could anyone supply such a list? He makes no mention of a syndicate of students at Selwyn College who sent in the following:

**Stump Orator:** We want financial reform, we want social reform, we want licensing reform.

**A Voice from the Crowd:** You want chloroform.

This was submitted and paid for by money order. The proceeds were dissipated at a little party. Hiscocks, who was cartoonist-in-chief to the *Free Lance* in the days of Dick Seddon's zenith, had a penchant for drawing George Fisher. He succeeded in getting an *enfant terrible* joke into *Punch*. The picture showed the enfant at the side of the breakfast table, Paterfamilias at one end, and Materfamilias at the other. Paterfamilias was simply George Fisher. Noel Ross collaborated with his father Malcolm Ross in a collection of prose sketches entitled "The Light and Shade of War."

### A Golfing Joke

I know a New Zealander who encountered the following joke which *Punch* used. It may be said that he took part in it. He was playing golf on some sea-side links, and noticed a lady seated on a bunker. He called out "Fore!" with no avail, so he approached the sedentary one, and said "Don't you know it's dangerous to sit there?"

"It's all right," she replied, "I'm sitting on my mac."

In the *Punch* version the lady's age was advanced to the sere and yellow,

and a piece of newspaper substituted for the mac. I cannot say who the artist was to illustrate this perfectly good new joke.

I have never got into *Punch* myself, but I once took a novel into the office in Bouverie Street. I was met by an office boy who passed me on to a young girl. It appeared to me that a state of things existed such as is prognosticated in "News From Nowhere," by William Morris. London was being run by children. However I was ultimately introduced to someone who seemed to have come to years of discretion.

"It's very unusual for an author to bring his own novel in for review," he said severely. "The proper channel is the publishing house."

"But I do like your reviews," I pleaded.

"Very well," he replied, noticing the catch in my voice, "I'll run my eye over it, and if I think it worth while, I'll send it on to one of the reviewers. They're all in the country just now."

I was swept by an intolerable nostalgia for the Cumberland moors or the hop-fields, or the rolling Sussex downs, or the red roads of Devon. I envisaged the reviewers with daisy chains about their necks scarfing the latest lucubration of Oliver Sheep-Bleater or Sigismund Poppoffski. But he must have thought the thing worth a paragraph, for he sent it on to one of those bucolic appraisers who professed to be baffled by it.

A programme celebrating the Centennial of "*Punch*," heard recently from 2YA, will be repeated from 1YA on Sunday, August 24, at 4.0 p.m.

## Rolls, Bells And Flutes

**THE National Cage Bird Show** was probably one of the first shows of its kind in New Zealand at which a section was judged by a blind man. It was the Roller Canary Section, in which points are allotted according to a bird's singing ability, no other qualifications counting. During the judging, the birds are kept in darkness by means of shutters attached to the cages. One by one the shutters are opened, whereupon the canary within, enraptured at this sudden breaking of day, bursts into song.

There is a quaint system of awarding points. What is termed a "Hollow Roll" counts 10 points. Bass 10, Water Glucke 9, Glucke 9, Glucke Roll 9, Koller 8, Schockel 6, Flutes 6, Hollow Bell 6, Water Roll 5, Deep Bubbling Water Tour 5, Bell Glucke 3, Bell Roll 2, Bell Tour 2 and general effect 10. Six points are deducted for a faulty Glucke, 6 for faulty Flutes, 6 for bad Nasal Tours, 6 for faulty Bells, 6 for ugly interjections in song, and 3 for an aufzug (hard) tone.