



INDIAN RUNNER DUCK CLUB

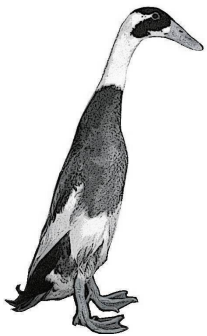


Aren't we cute? Cover and inside cover pics are Fawn & white (American Pencilled) plus Fawn & whites heterozygotes for blue (the paler ones). These are half way to American Fawn & whites which are the paler, apricot (homozygous blue) colour.

In the fluff. Two heterozygotes and one not-blue. Cover photos: James Rigby



NEWSLETTER • SUMMER 2020 • VOL LVI



CONTENTS	Page
Secretary's Report	4
Notes & Queries	7
Duck Facts	10
At home with James	11
Silver Runners	18
Advertising	21

Chairman
Julian Burrell
Vice Chairman
James Rigby
Secretary / Treasurer
Dr Christine Ashton
Red House, Hope, Welshpool, Powys,
SY21 8JD Tel 01938 554011
Email: runnerdux@yahoo.co.uk

Editor
Chris Ashton

Committee Members
Mike Ashton
Judith Barnett
Graham Hicks
Antonia Hudson
Keith May
Mike Mayers
Rachel Mayers
Roy Pryce

Belgium
Bart Poulmans
Canada
Colin Davis

www.runnerduck.net

INDIAN RUNNER DUCK CLUB

SECRETARY'S REPORT

When the full impact of Covid-19 on the world's health and the nation's economy hit early this year, it certainly made us re-think what we were going to do with the birds at that point. Travel for buyers and sellers was limited, specialist bird food was hard to get, and what on earth would happen to the birds if their owners became ill?

I think a lot of breeders re-assessed their plan for 2020 but, for the general public, hatching seems to have become an absorbing distraction during lockdown. There's plenty of information on everything you need from hatching to rearing on the internet. Facebook and YouTube can provide the details on what to do, and everything comes by carrier or post!

Facebook, of course, has no particular structure and there is repetitive question after question by people just starting off with hatching ducks. The same topics recur: incubation, hatching, feeding the ducklings, how they behave, bedding them down and keeping them safe. More than one experienced person has commented on the several Facebook pages for Indian Runners (and geese) that anyone hatching birds needs to find out about them BEFORE they incubate or hatch them – and not ask dull questions. There were also comments that the birds should be well looked after and not just a passing first-time duck-keeper fad.

The breed is unfortunately a victim its own success. It is almost a re-run of the popularity of the Indian Runner around 1900 when everybody wanted them. There is now money to be made from selling hatching eggs on Ebay because the Runner is the must-have, popular pet duck. The eggs are readily available over most of the year, and a mixture of colours in a mongrel Runner type will hatch easily in an incubator. Although Runners do have the reputation for being scatty, they can be tame if carefully hand-reared and tempted with attractive foods.

Not so well publicised are the management problems of having mucky duckies in a limited space, and the problem of clean water supply; nor what to do with surplus drakes, and the hard-headed decision to cull the surplus males for the health of the ducks. This certainly is the down-side of hatching a few of your own birds.

Facebook pages

Our own Facebook page for the IRDC has a club structure which is different from Group pages. Anyone can post on the IRDC page without first being accepted as a member. However, the posts tend to be buried in 'Community', which few people realise is there. Nevertheless, community posts have gone up this year, as have messages.

The information which is on this IRDC page is not aimed at the first-time duck keeper but at the specialist breeder, long term keeper and exhibition addict. Anyone can post a string of comments which can follow the information posted by administrators. Posts which attract the largest audience are undoubtedly pictures of good quality birds. These often reach over 1000 hits and James Rigby's beautiful picture of his Black ducklings attracted an astounding 8000 hits!

There is also useful information in a 'Files' section regarding, for example, bedding for birds, fermenting wheat and washing hatching eggs, but the section seems to be pretty well buried and rarely accessed. These files could be better developed and are sometimes used as links for queries on welfare.

Virtual Poultry Shows

Facebook has come into its own this year as a substitute for exhibition. Since birds shows are out, the web is the place to show off your birds. Nikki Heath and group of PCGB Poultry experts have developed the page: The Virtual Poultry Photo Shows 2020 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/307395973575730/> Included on this Poultry Show page are talks by bird keepers on their specialist subject, and James Rigby was invited to do a presentation on Runners. Nikki could not have asked a better person to do this—James has worked incredibly hard this year on producing a variety of colours from top quality stock, and his talk on July 18 was much appreciated by a large audience. If you join the group by using the hyperlink, you can see the programme. The video was taken by phone and directly streamed to a Facebook link. James' penning set-up for his exhibition pens was ideal for videoing the individual Runners for this programme. So, although Facebook does it have its downsides, it certainly does have its uses as well.

5

Prior to James' talk, Professor Kevin Smith of Australia also did a live presentation on the basics of duck colour genetics on Sunday 12 July. That is available if you join Exhibition Poultry Australia (BYP).

https://www.facebook.com/groups/exhibitionpoultryaustralia/?ref=br_rs

BYP backyardpoultry.com was created in 2004. It began as a location for Andy Vardy's poultry photography and expanded to include a discussion forum. BYP also developed two Facebook groups. These are run by a large team of people committed to supporting both exhibition and backyard poultry in Australia and New Zealand. The differences between the backyard breeders and the exhibition breeders made it logical to create the two groups. Admission to this group is mainly for those residing in Australia and New Zealand where there is actually a greater level of interest, and understanding, of duck colour genetics than there is in the UK. That's possibly because birds cannot be imported 'ready-made'. So, an understanding of colour genetics really does aid the process of developing and refreshing breeds and colours.

Certain breeders there have, in the past, promoted the pure colours of Runners. Matt (Matthew) Branagh had a collection of several colours. At Canberra Show 2008, in the AOC section, he exhibited several colours that included Apricot, harlequin phase and Fawn. His collection went on to Kym Rumball who did an amazing job in breeding them and in understanding the colours and popularising them on his website.

Bird shows cancelled

It's a great pity that, one by one, the bird shows have been cancelled this year. This is at a time when more IRDC members have been asking about the waterfowl standards, how to exhibit their birds, how to breed pure colours, and how to close ring them. And now we don't know if, and when, we will be able to get back to 'normal'! We used to worry about vaccinating birds during the avian 'flu epidemics around 2003–2009. Now there's a bigger worry about vaccinating ourselves for biosecurity!

6

In the meantime, I hope duck keepers can continue to keep the pure strains going in these adverse circumstances. Facebook pages are very useful to allow people to compare notes. There has been a lot of interest in harlequin phase Runners for example. Lisette Peters Weem (USA) went back to basics, developing hers from harlequin phase light ducks such as the Welsh Harlequin. And I know Colin Davis has been searching for harlequin phase in his Apricot Valley Runner flock. Runner ducks are now in many standard colours—across several continents.

NOTES AND QUERIES

QUERY: Hello; I hope you can help me.

I currently have a problem with leather jackets decimating my grass. A friend has offered to let me borrow a couple of his Indian Runners, as he reckons they will eat the leather jacket larvae and therefore solve my problem. Will they, do you think? Thank you, in advance for your advice.

Mary Rose

REPLY: I think that's right.

Although a Woodland Trust web page specifically mentions lapwings eating leatherjackets, I don't think ducks will be that choosy about what they eat. And crows, magpies, rooks and starlings also search for leatherjackets in the grass. These birds leave small round holes in the turf where they have inserted their beaks. I've also seen our African geese amusing themselves by snapping at the adult crane fly, and I think ducks will do the same. It's certainly worth a try.

QUERY: Do I have to register my birds to exhibit them?

REPLY: Birds don't have to be registered for exhibition. If they have a closed Poultry Club leg ring, then that stays on in the show pen. That ring is fitted when the ducklings are about 3-4 weeks of age, and the growth of the leg and foot then keeps it on.

7

Any other leg ring which is put on as an adult (referred to as a split ring) must be removed for a show since it could be construed as a 'marked bird' by the judge, and a potential for cheats.

There are about 7 major Championship shows where the birds collect 'points' for the records. These are the ones advertised and usually recorded in the Newsletter. Unfortunately, the nearest one to you is, I think, Stafford. People do travel miles for these shows which are in the winter when the birds' plumage is in best condition.

There are also smaller poultry shows spread over the country at various times of the year. Some of these are listed on the IRDC website and on the Poultry Club pages link which gives you other pages for info. The Runner sections are likely to be smaller, and the judge a non-specialist. But they are often a nice day out e.g. at a county shows. Unfortunately, the shows are not running this year due to Covid-19

QUERY: What size leg rings are people using on Fawn&white runner ducks, I bought the size it says, but they look very small.

REPLY: Closed (close) leg rings for pure colours of Runners seem to have become more popular this year. But the right time for fitting them is easily missed. I've used 15mm for years for all colours of Runners and Light ducks (Abacots). Legs grow fast on waterfowl so they can keep up with their parents in the wild. You need to fit the ring before the hallux sets in position (around 3.5 weeks). At that point in time, the toes and webs are held together as the ring is fitted, and the hallux bends back, out of the way. When the ring is a snug fit it will stay on the leg permanently.

Shortly after that point, the hallux is fixed, and will only bend towards the webs. That makes it more difficult to slide a small ring over the 'ball' of the foot.

Years ago, the Germans were using 13mm for their Runners! They seem to like a tight fit. The UK size of 15mm should leave enough room to clip it off if necessary. Large strains of Runners such as Fawn&white drakes and some White drakes may be better with a 16mm ring. I usually get a few of those for birds which grow very fast, and who miss the 15mm fit. Also, F&W can be sturdier than the aver-

8

age Runner. If you place the ring across the leg of the adult Runner you can check the diameter needed for your strain.



This 15mm grey 2020 PCGB is only just big enough for a white drake. He has a green 15mm ring from 2019



The blue 2018 ring has just enough room to allow metal clippers to be used to snap the plastic if necessary.

DUCK 'FACTS' FROM FACEBOOK

- Look! His drake feather has come through. Although, silly question, he has 2 of them is that normal? So far he is still being good with the girls.
- Yes very normal. Like a kiss curl.
- They go when their penis falls of at the end of each mating season
- Their penis falls off??
- Yes after mating season, like an umbilical cord!
- I thought they just reduced size and retracted inside the body until the next season?
- They have huge corkscrew penises. If you have to many males they grow bigger. Females have fake vaginas to Chanel unwanted stuff into lol.
- Duck sex is not pretty!!!!
- I know its not pretty. I've just never heard it 'falls off'. It shrinks back and regrows to different lengths. Jeez, could you imagine finding ducky dicks every season down on the farm.
- Woah, Monday morning just got weirder
- Holy crap, I never knew that
- This is incorrect. They don't fall off.
- Proper put me off my breakfast these comment .
- Just to be clear, the penis does NOT fall off! If you're too stupid to do proper research about these things and believe comments like that then please rehome your animals. They shrink at the end of the mating season, and then enlarge again the following year. Ring a vet if you don't believe me, or even use the Internet. if you can't learn actual facts around ducks physical characteristics then you shouldn't be allowed animals. This isn't aimed at any one person, but this bullshit old wives tail is spouted on loads of these pages and it's terrifying that people are too thick to learn the truth.
- Phew

AT HOME WITH JAMES RIGBY

By Jed Dwight

I was delighted when James agreed to be featured on our June front cover alongside some of our fancy's other heroic covid-19 key workers, and as a local GP on Anglesey, I know that James has had an exceptionally busy time over recent months, so really appreciate him taking the time to do this feature with us!

James is one of those fanciers who knows what he's aiming for and won't be content until he gets there. Recently praising his Buff Orpington Bantams, James told me 'They're a work in progress! I won't show them until they are perfect - maybe 2021.' Having held off showing my Calls for a few years, that's a sentiment I can relate to and respect, and I'm sure many of you reading this will be the same. That formula has certainly worked for James, consistently winning awards with both his large Buff Orpingtons and his Indian Runner ducks at our classic shows, including Best Opposite Sex to the Show Champion at the 2018 National Show!



December 2018 - Best Indian Runner, Champion Waterfowl, Champion Light Breed Duck and Best Opposite sex (best male bird) to show champion at the National Poultry Show. Two weeks later this Trout drake did me proud again - Best Indian Runner and Reserve Champion Waterfowl at the National Federation of Poultry Clubs Show. Photo by Joshua Kittle

So, first of all, thanks so much for agreeing to do this interview with us! For those reading who don't know you that well, how long have you been breeding / showing poultry, and how did it all start?

Many Thanks Jed and the Fancy Fowl team for the invitation to do a feature this month!

Like many other fanciers birds became very much a way of life at a young age. My lifelong journey with them started with Racing Pigeons in 1992, aged 8 years old when I lived in Staffordshire. A family friend Peter Porter asked me and my parents to take an Irish Racing Pigeon that had entered his loft in Staffordshire to our holiday home on Anglesey and let the bird out - hoping it would fly across the Irish Sea and finds its way home back to Ireland. In fact when we released it the pigeon returned to its new preferred home back in Staffordshire; from that point on I was hooked on the Sport. I bred and raced pigeons to a high competitive level for 6 years in total.

Through the pigeons in 1996 I met four different influential poultry and waterfowl breeders. The first were the Harding Family from Newchapel, Staffordshire; Eric Harding was a PC Panel C judge and I had Silkies, Scots Dumpies and Buff Orpingtons (all in bantam) from him. His nephew Chris Harding kept waterfowl and I had Cayuga Ducks from him. In 1994 when I was 10 years old, I met Philip Boon of Brown Lees, Staffordshire and had my first Trout Indian Runners; the only breed I continued with for 26 years. I used to show my birds locally at summer agricultural shows and also attended regular rare breed sales at Leek and Chelford at weekends. It was at the Leek Sales in 1994 that I sourced a pair of Vernon Jackson's White Indian Runners. I also met Anthony Stanway and his wonderful late mum Linda Stanway. I had my first Call ducks in whites and dusky mallards from Anthony and Linda. I look back with fond memories of my visits to their smallholding on Caverswall Common, Staffordshire and often reminisce about this when I meet up with Anthony and Michelle at the Nationals.

Aged 14 years old, I disliked school and preferred to be at home with the birds. I was falling behind academically and at a key stage when I had the opportunity to change before it was too late. I had to

make a choice of becoming a doctor or making a living out of birds. I made a tough decision to sell my entire stud of Racing Pigeons and continue with the Poultry, since they were less demanding and easier to manage. I also relocated from Staffordshire to Anglesey with my parents in 2000 and the poultry moved with us. From that time onwards I studied hard, moved away to Medical School and lived and worked away from my birds; returning home every weekend to spend time with them. Over this long time period, my parents cared for the waterfowl and I continued to breed and hatch a small number of Indian Runners and Call ducks each year. Ten years ago I managed to really start focusing on breeding to exhibit at the national shows.

As I've said in the opening, many will know you for your success with large Buff Orpingtons and Indian Runners. I know you keep a number of other breeds / varieties, but don't show them. What made you decide to focus on your large Orpingtons (below) and Runners, and could you see yourself showing your other breeds in future?



Best Buff Orpington at UK National Poultry Show 2019 and Club Show Champion.

13

Well Jed, I have just read your feature in this month's (July) edition of Fancy Fowl about focussing to achieve success. Personally, I feel this is one of the best gems of advice anyone could be given. I focus entirely on Indian Runner Ducks and Buff Orpingtons and have had consistent success with these at the Nationals. I regard myself as being very lucky to have found two breeds that play such an important part in my life. When I am not working as a GP, I am thinking of my two breeds! Not sure if I should admit to this but when I attend the National shows (Welsh, Telford, Federation and Scottish) I don't even look at all the other fantastic birds on display—I'm only ever found around the Indian Runner Duck and Buff Orpington pens!

I do keep and breed a handful of high quality Calls; hatching around 20 a year. Even with these I have focussed on the Mallard Varieties (Mallard/Blue Fawn/Apricots) over recent years. I have no intention to ever show them. I keep threatening to give them up altogether but Linda Stanway started me with them all those years ago and I think I would miss not having them around.

Over the past 12 months I have really cut back on the number of birds I keep and retain; if I stands no chance of getting best of breed at the club shows or isn't a worthy breeder then I don't keep the bird! Years ago, I had that many birds that were not being used for these two key purposes!

Over the years you've seen quite considerable success with your birds, including Best Opposite Sex to the Show Champion at the 2018 PCGB National. Alongside that, what other wins would you say have meant the most to you and why?

Yes I hope to regard myself as being consistent at the shows winning many club shows. I've never won a show in my life yet so hoping to achieve this at some point over the next 50 years...

Over the past five years I have won best Indian Runner twice at the PC National and twice at the Federation. Achieving Best Indian Runner, Best Waterfowl and best Opposite Sex to Show Champion at the PC National in 2018 was one of my best achievements. The same Trout Drake 'Called 007' went on two weeks later to win best Indian Runner and Reserve Best Waterfowl at the Federation. I was told that this achievement has never been done with an Indian Runner before.

14

Don't think I will be repeating that again soon – simply one of those 'once in a lifetime' achievements. Similarly, with the Large Buff Orpington's I have won 10 consecutive best of breed awards over the past 3 years at the nationals. They have failed to go further to Best Soft Feather Heavy – so this is my next aim.

Due to time constraints and the fact that I have a busy life aside from birds, I now only show at the four nationals – Welsh, Telford, Federation and Scottish. The Poultry Club National is the main show for me since the club shows for Indian Runners and Buff Orpington's are both held there—its tempting to reduce to this one show annually.

Forgive me for saying I don't really enjoy attending shows. I always feel stressed and look forward to boxing time. This may partly be due to the fact that I show a big team of Indian Runners and Buff Orpington's. My enjoyment comes from breeding the birds at home and watching them grow and develop. As you can see from all my photos here and on Facebook, I much prefer to take my own photos at home with the birds in their natural environment. However, as with all other breeders, if I don't show the birds then I have no benchmark for comparing my birds to others – so I will continue to attend a small number of shows each year.

What in particular are you looking for in your birds, what makes a bird 'stand-out' to you, and at what age can you tell?

With Buff Orpington's type, size, a neat comb and even buff colour are vital to win top honours. I select for combs at day old by using a special magnifying head torch that I use at work when I examine skin lesions on patients. A bird with a poor comb – especially a male is unlikely to win best of breed. I can usually tell if a Buff Orpington is going to be a big bird at around 12 weeks from early skeletal mass.

Regarding Indian Runners, I feel they have to be fully grown at 24 weeks before you can select. Head, type and carriage is very important. With the coloured birds there is extra complexity since you are selecting for correct markings - Fawn & White, Trout and Fawn are key examples. Not to mention underwing faults in Blacks and Chocolates.

15

Black ducklings 2020. Photo: JR



Large Buff Orpingtons are definitely a favourite among the poultry community, and one of the few breeds that random members of the public would be able to pick out, alongside Rhode Island Reds and Sussex. What do you think makes Buff Orpingtons so popular, not only with fanciers, but with the public too?

Buff Orpingtons have a lovely temperament and I think this is one of the reasons they are popular. I've never had an aggressive male. They are easy to handle. Particularly with large fowl, I think their size is a wow factor for the public who have plenty of space. Most are also aware of their Royal heritage!

Strong competition can often be what drives us towards a particular breed; what is competition like with the Orpingtons and the Runners, particularly at the big shows?

Competition with Indian Runners is strong at the Nationals. Our club show typically averages 170 birds. At the Federation Show there are around 100 plus birds. Competition with Buff Orpingtons is not as

16

strong. Our club show at the National averages around 70 entries in both Large and Bantam.

Having seen such success with your birds, have you ever judged classes either at the classics or at our smaller shows? If so, what did you enjoy about it / find most challenging, and if not, is it something you'd think about doing in the future?

Due to time constraints and only attending four shows a year, I am keen to avoid judging. I have judged some classes of Calls at the British Call Duck Club Show and Welsh National. I have also judged Indian Runners in Ireland a few years ago which I enjoyed. One of the main challenges which many will agree with is when there is a class of not so good birds and they all have different faults! I am not keen on taking on judging commitments in the future. My interests are breeding and to a lesser extent exhibiting at a small number of national shows each year. I do believe that having some experience of judging enables the exhibitor to appreciate what a difficult task a judge has to complete!

How you feed your birds, particularly your Buff Orpingtons, can make or break their chances in the show pen - what do you feed your birds and is there anything that you feel throws them out of show condition?

I feed my Buff Orpingtons the very best food - a combination of Garvo and Fancy Feed brands.

All the skills I learned at a young age when conditioning a Racing Pigeon to win is transferable to Buff Orpingtons and Indian Runners. In my opinion, Nutrition and Conditioning a bird makes the difference between winning the club show and being a runner up. I feed them the very best corn and spend a lot on nutritional supplements. I could talk about this for hours - may be that's for another day?

With Buff Orpington pullets laying really throws them out of show condition. Mine often lay their first egg on their way home from the National. The Buff Orpington cockerels hold onto their condition better and don't lose this until the breeding season.

17

I've also got some secrets for maintaining show condition in the females - here's one - Has anyone heard of the darkness system before?

Do you keep your birds inside or are they outside on grass? If your birds are penned outside, with youngstock well in abundance, what age do you move your youngsters outside, and how do you get over damage to the Orpingtons feathers?

My Indian Runners free range in paddocks every day of the year no matter how bad the weather. The key with Runners is to get them outside on grass at a young age - ideally by 14 days old, to help prevent Foot problems and to ensure they are exercising to facilitate with building strong thigh muscles. This can only be achieved by hatching in late Spring. Early hatches have to be kept inside for longer due to cold weather and this can have a detrimental effect on their long term development and adult health.

The Buff Orpingtons are outside in an Orchard every day except when it's raining or too windy. The Orchard has good coverage in the Spring and Summer months and protects them from sun bleaching. I have no respiratory illnesses in my birds and I think keeping them inside would increase the risk of this.

Some people will breed hundreds of birds in the hope of breeding 'the one', others just a handful. How many do you set out to hatch and rear from each breed, do you use incubators or broodies, and do you find there's a high demand for surplus stock?

I have no time or energy to be hatching hundreds of birds! Isn't there a thin line between a hobby becoming a full time job - especially in the winter months? I work 60 hours a week as a GP and as a result I don't want another full time job when I return home in the evenings and weekends.

As a result, I spend hours contemplating which birds to pair together at the start on the breeding season. Knowing that if I get it wrong then because I only breed a small number of birds then there will be no coming back.

I aim to hatch 6-8 Indian Runners of each colour that I keep (all standardised colours) except Mallards and Cumberland Blues. I hatch around 30 Buff Orpingtons all through Artificial Insemination and select hard from day old onwards.

18

Hatching a small number of birds enables me to give them lots of space, the very best food and all of my free time is given to the two breeds I keep. Sounds like your recent Fancy Fowl feature Jed!

I always prefer to swap birds with other Club members than sell them. That way I am getting something useful back. Many Thanks to all the Indian Runner Duck breeders that have done swaps with me over the years.

Earlier you spoke about how you got started in the fancy, who would you say was most helpful to you in those early days, and who in the fancy do you most look up to?

As mentioned above, I was met those four breeders at a young age and that sparked my interest particularly in the Waterfowl. However, around 10 years ago when joining the Indian Runner Duck Association (now Club), I was very fortunate to meet Chris & Mike Ashton and we have since become close friends. There are very few weeks when we don't chat or exchange ideas on Indian Runners. I really need to acknowledge them both here for all their help over the years both with their generosity in sharing knowledge and also with providing me with breeding stock when I have been short of a particular bird. I owe a lot to them and I will be grateful for everything they have done for me!

I am now Vice Chairman of the Indian Runner Duck Club and we welcome new members. Find us on Facebook and our Webpage. There are other key breeders that have helped me over the years. Without listing them all here they know who they are and hopefully they have felt my gratitude. Some breeders are like family to me!

And finally, what are your hopes and ambitions for the year ahead, and what advice would you give to aspiring breeders and exhibitors of the breeds you keep?

Hopefully, I will continue to breed a small number of high quality Indian Runners and Buff Orpingtons each year. My aim is to keep fewer birds over the winter months. I live here in a very remote part of Anglesey and the biggest challenge is surviving the extremes in winter weather.

19

My next aim is to achieve Best Large Soft Feather Heavy award with a Buff Orpington. To win the national with an Indian Runner is on my lifetime achievement list - we can all dream!

Finally, thanks again for asking me to feature in Fancy Fowl. We are all very fortunate to have a great hobby that brings us all together, in what's been a difficult year for all of us. I wish all readers a happy and successful 2020 and look forward to catching up soon. Take good care and all the very best.

James.



Fawn & whites on Anglesey, 2020

Photo: JR

20

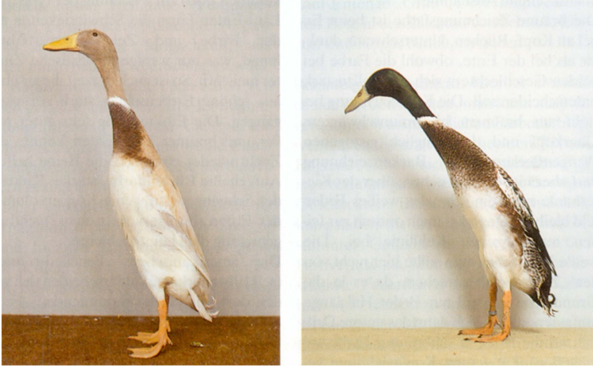
REVITALISING SILVER DUCKS

by Chris Ashton

Silver Runners (harlequin phase) were probably first produced in Germany where they were referred to as *Silber-wildfarbig* (Horst Schmidt, 1989).

Als Neuzuchtung wurden 1986 in Hannover 15 Lauf-Enten in 'Silber-wildfarbig' ausgestellt, wovon schon 5 Tiere die Note 'sehr gut' erhalten konnten. Inzwischen wurde dieser Farbenschlag anerkannt.

"As a new breed, 15 running ducks in 'silver-wild-colored' were exhibited in Hannover in 1986, of which 5 animals were given the 'very good' mark. This color form has now been recognized."



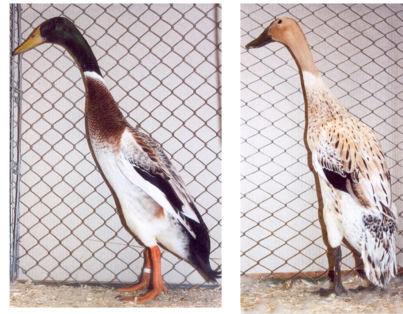
Left: Erbbsgelb drake; right Silver drake, Horst Schmidt, 1986.

It's likely that the Silver Runner was created from a cross with the Abacot Ranger ('Streicher' in Germany). As Bart Poulman's work with yellow belly colour breeding has shown, it takes around 4 - 5 generations to transfer a colour variety from another duck breed to the Runner type.

Right: Streichers illustrated in Platzbecker – Abacot Rangers UK



Below: Silver Runners at a show in Germany in 2003.



In the USA today, Lisette Peters Weem has also created harlequin phase Runners by using breeds in America such as the Welsh Harlequin with the traditional brown dilution, as a well as the variety without the brown dilution (silver). These harlequin phase birds are ideal because they are the correct colour and have proved a good pathway. It does take a while to change the type of a birds from a light duck to a Runner, but at least the colour is stable.

Development in the UK: Why not use Trouts?

In the UK, another route has been used. German Silver Runners were imported from the late nineties onwards, but they were few in number and seemed very inbred. They were small, did not walk easily, and were very 'German' in type (as in the photograph from Horst

Schmidt). They were not suitable for the UK show pen. Thus the Silver imports were crossed with other colours of UK stock.

And that is where the complications begin.

Superficially, the Silver appears to have affinity with the Trout. After all, drakes have a green hood, white collar and black rump! The females just seem to just need lightening in the plumage. Unfortunately, that Trout x Silver combination does not work well because it takes no account of the colour genetics. The first cross produces strong birds—but these hide the recessive harlequin phase characteristics. The 'Best Runner' at one large show (a Trout) was later found to have arrived from a batch of hatching eggs which produced more than one 'colour' - but he showed little evidence of his 'mixed' ancestry. It is in subsequent generations that the problems show up because the birds simply do not breed true.

There are more obvious problems in the females. Trouts are light phase mallards, thus they show eye-stripes in the head feathers. Abacot Rangers and Silvers do not. In addition, Trout Runners do not carry genetic information for the brown hood. The females obviously lose the brown hood. Trouts therefore introduce problems from the mallard pattern rather than desirable features of the dusky, and they are also the wrong phase (light rather than harlequin).

Using dusky runners

The fact that Silvers are dusky confuses people a great deal, because 'dusky' is thought to mean coloured underwing, and no claret bib (in the males). However, that is with dusky, dark phase mallard (md) birds. Harlequin phase changes the rules: the whole pattern of the feathers alters, giving pale white/cream underwing feathers, and ragged claret bib. Drakes have a claret breast fringed with white, and the claret also extends along the flanks as in the Welsh Harlequin and Abacot Ranger.

There are two main loci which affect the pattern of all duck feathers. At these loci, there are three options or alleles. The + denotes the wild form, the uppercase letter reflects dominance i.e. M⁺

In contrast, dusky (m^d) is recessive. More details can be found in Ashton 2007 and Holderread 2011. The basic research is much earlier, including F M Lancaster, 1963.

The rules:

1. Ducks must be mallard (M⁺), mallard restricted (M^R) or mallard dusky (m^d) at one locus on a chromosome.
2. Ducks must also be dark phase (Li⁺), light phase (li) or harlequin phase (li^h) at another locus on a different chromosome.

Ducklings receive half of this genetic information from the parent female and the other half from the parent drake.

Table - Basic alleles in the colour of the domesticated duck

Phase	Mallard Wild type M ⁺	Mallard dusky m ^d	Mallard restricted M ^R
Dark Phase Li	Rouen Mallard Call Mallard Runner	Buff Orpington Buff Runner USA Campbell Dusky Call	***
Light phase li	Rouen Clair Trout Runner	Fawn Indian Runner (m ^d , li) Dusky Apricot and Dusky Blue UK	Appleyard*
Harlequin phase li ^h	***	Abacot Ranger (m ^d , li ^h) Silver Call (Snowy, USA) Silver Runner	***
KEY	*** No recognised breed / colour *Unfortunately, many 'Silver' Appleyards are now contaminated with dark phase, rather than light phase. They are literally much darker than they used to be. The term 'Silver' is not appropriate.		

As you can see from the table, using a Fawn dusky Runner with a harlequin phase Silver mixes up only two phases: harlequin and light. In theory, one can therefore achieve homozygous harlequin phase in only two generations.

At first sight, this looks improbable because Fawn Runners are heavily coloured. That is partly because they are also brown. However, the brown dilution can be removed by using a Fawn female rather than a Fawn male. She determines the sex, is hemizygous for brown and cannot pass on the brown dilution to her daughters. All these F₁ birds are heterozygous for li/li^b and are uniform. Then, an F₁ mated back to a pure Silver in the following year will then produce 50% Silvers, and 50% li/li^b brown heterozygotes.



This F₁ female is a false fawn. Her F₁ brothers looked like pale fawns with faults such as an indistinct, pale neck ring. She is dusky (no eye stripes) and despite her basic 'wild colour' does not have brown dilution. She was put back to a Silver drake to produce 50% Silvers, the ones in the photo below.

These Fawn x Silver matings are only reliable because the parent birds are known to be pure. The parent Fawn was an exhibition duck. The original Silver male did not have a pedigree, but since harlequin phase and dusky are basal recessives they do not hide anything else and won't pass on anything else i.e. what you see is what you get.



Ducklings from a 'false fawn' mated back to a silver produced pure silver ducklings (harlequin phase) and heterozygotes for li/li^b. In a large enough sample this would have been in the ratio 1:1. The harlequin phase, recessive to light phase, does show up in the 'herringbone' pattern on the back of the heterozygous duckling.

I would now qualify that by saying that the pale silver of the pure harlequin acts as a background to reveal other modifications of the main duck colours. The obvious one is the brown hood which comes from the Fawn Indian Runner - but there are other colour intensifiers too which also affect other duck breeds. More illustrations of how these operate in Silver Runners, and in other duck breeds and colours, in the next newsletter.



Silver Runners bred (2009 -2010) in two generations from a single Silver drake (dusky, harlequin phase) and Fawn female (dusky, light phase). These birds in the photo are pure F₂ harlequin phase

References

Ashton, C&M, *The Domestic Duck*, page 67, (2001)
 Ashton, M&C, *Colour Breeding in Domestic Ducks* (2007)
 Holderread, D, (2011) *Raising Ducks* (2011)
 Lancaster, F.M., *The inheritance of plumage colour in the common duck* (1963) (Bibliographica Genetica).
 Platzbecker, M. *Der grosse Geflügelstandard in Farbe* (2000)
 Schmidt, Horst, *Puten, Perlhühner, Gänse, Enten* (1989), page 224



Fawn&whites 2020
 Photos James Rigby
 The flock are standard Fawn&whites plus heterozygotes for the blue dilution.

