Violets

By Mike Rankin

We had just finished talking about single factor cobalt violets in our last segment. But I did give you fair warning that we had not covered all that is the violet Budgie.

Let's start out considering the dark factor. If you will remember, there were studies of the dark factor links with a color gene. To explain this linkage of the dark factor, Taylor and Warner in *Genetics for Budgerigar Breeders* investigated the question of dark greens split blue. In the TYPE I, dark green split blue, the dark gene is linked to the green gene which will produce mostly, if not all, dark greens and sky blues when mated to a sky. In the Type II, dark greens split blue, where the dark gene is linked to the blue gene it will produce light greens and cobalts when paired to a sky. The difference in the results was the linkage of the dark factor to the color gene in the bird. Basically the dark factor and the color factor traveled as a unit. This accounts for the difference in results when breeding dark green Type I and Type II birds.

Now we add the violet factor in much the same way. The violet factor travels with the gene to which it is linked. So now we can say we have violet cobalt Type I and violet cobalt Type II, the difference being linkage of the violet trait to the dark or light gene in a cobalt. If you breed a violet Type I to a sky you will get all cobalts and violet skies. If you breed a violet Type II to a sky you will get violet cobalts and skies. When you place violet cobalt Type I along side violet cobalt Type II you can see the difference in coloring. The Type II is a shade darker with more life to the color. For years I exhibited my violets against Crawford Maddux's. Each time I noted the shade difference in my violets. My violets were just not as rich a color as Crawford's. Crawford's violets were the Type II with the violet factor tied to the dark factor.

In order to produce the violet of my dreams I needed both the violet factor linked to the light gene and the violet factor liked to the dark gene. I wanted a cobalt double factor violet. We are in new territory now. No one except Peter Bergman had ever ventured this far with violets. I set up my pairs and waited. In the first round I had two cocks that looked like they could be my dream birds. They are, in nest feather, as dark or darker than their father. Time will tell if they are the true cobalt double factor violet.

Somewhere along the way, I made a mistake and paired violet cobalt to cobalt. I mistook the cobalt to be a violet sky. In the chicks that I produced I had a violet mauve. What a difference the violet factor makes in mauve. In the normal mauve the dull color is replaced with a deep blackish purple. The bird is no longer a blackish slate. By now you know where we are headed with this. It's on to double factor violet mauve. My guess at this point is a bird that is a vibrant violet black. This would be a truly lovely bird.

In the past, the dark factor was always associated with small stature and fine feather. In the past several years this problem of feather and size has been resolved. There are many dark greens that hold their own with light greens and gray greens. Not only do we see good dark greens and cobalts, but we see them in good numbers. With good dark factor stock available, the show violet became possible. The Mikie line violets have both size and feather. We traced the dark factor in the Mikie line dark factor back to the Moss stud in Britian.

So far we have discussed the dark factor and the violet factor in the production of violets. In my breedings I encountered other factors that will modify the color of a Budgie. You need to be aware of these factors in order to produce the style of violets that you can show. These are not officially recognized factors with a set standard for their effect. Rather, these factors are very subtle but never the less affect the final coloring of Budgies.

The first is the pastel factor. This character is not recognized as a genetic mutation as the change in coloring is so subtle. If this factor is present, a sky's body coloring would look something like a shade between a cinnamon sky and a normal sky. This factor modifies all shades of color in both the green and blue series. Old time breeders would refer to this as a poorly colored sky and suggest you dip back into the green to get the richer sky color back. As this pastel factor is recessive to normal coloring, the resulting chicks would all be of a richer color. However each chick carried the pastel factor, which would reemerge later when paired to another Budgie split to pastel. This is a factor you do not want to get into your violets. I made the mistake and it took me a while to back out the trait.

The second factor is the wash. This is often referred to as the opaline wash. This genetic factor is also not recognized as a distinct mutation. This is another undesirable recessive trait. Many have reasoned that this is a result of a Budgie split for opaline. We have found this not to be the case. In this mutation the shading around the neck and head is modified. You may even see some body color in the wings. This causes the color in those areas to be diluted with the ground color. In cobalts you may see some violet effects around the neck and back of the head. The end result is an uneven coloring on the bird. In show competition you may lose to an evenly colored bird.

The third is the blotch. Blotchy color does not show much in a sky or light green. If you add a dark factor then you start to see the mismatch in color on the body. In good light, these areas appear to have a tint of gray added to blotchy segments of the chest and stomach. I believe this is also a recessive mutation. If you breed a blotchy bird to a good normal the even color returns. Again this is a minor issue, but something you do not want to get into your violet stock.

The last is the sparkle factor. I believe this to also be a recessive gene. You may have noted in your travels a really fine colored bird. The bird just stood out. The color just glowed. There is an extra shine and life to the color. This is a factor you should really cultivate. This is a difficult trait to acquire as you do not see this sparkle very often. However this sparkle trait is well worth your consideration.

So now we have covered all the information on violets to date. That is not to say we, the violet breeders of the world, are not working on a better violet right now. A deeper color and darker shade is just one nest away.

Lastly I would ask of you, if you see a bird whose color just stands out, take a second look. This may be the trait we are searching for to build a better violet.

To those light green breeders: look over your shoulder - we're coming.

Happy Breeding from the Hi Hopes gang!