Lacewings

From an article by Colin Putt, courtesy 'The Budgerigar' (UK)

Basically, the Lacewing is found in two body colours: yellow (green series) and white (blue series) with red eyes but all markings as in a Normal being cinnamon brown, including the spots. The variety is sex-linked, the same as Opalines, Inos and Cinnamons, and can therefore be developed more easily than a recessive variety.

*Starting in Lacewings*

Since a hen bird cannot be split for Lacewing, you will need to get a start by obtaining a cock carrying the Lacewing factor either in visual or split form and if possible, two Lacewing hens. I would pair the cock to one of the Lacewing hens, aiming for a progeny of 50% visual Lacewing, 25% Normal split Lacewing cocks, 25% non-Lacewing hens ratio. The visuals would be cocks and hens.

And the other original hen? I would pair her to the best normal cock that I have, thereby breeding better young- sters - and all the cocks would be split Lacewing. These splits would be mated to visual hens from the first pairing. Within three seasons there would have developed a growing family of Lacewings and splits. The best of the non-Lacewing hens can even be very useful if used with a visual cock.

You can see that one does not need to get a lot of Lacewings initially to enjoy the challenge of a new variety. Patience and commonsense will pay off. Should you be offered just one Lacewing cock don't reject it if you have no visuals. I well remember letting a fancier have such a bird although I couldn't supply a visual hen to go with it, and hey presto! - three visual hens in a nest of four when just one would have been a bonus! So don't rule out splits.

*Forms of Lacewings*

The Lacewing can be bred of course in many forms such as Opalines, Spangles and Pieds, however in my experience over many years I prefer normal Lacewings, with only Opalines second. It is the depth of markings which really enhances the beauty of this pastel variety.

There are three colours in the yellow variety, or to be more accurate, three shades - light, medium and dark - corresponding to light, dark and olive green. The olive green shade gives the richest colour, nearing mustard. Suffusion in yellows can be very noticeable in the light green shade, so, prudent use only! In the case of white Lacewings the depth of blue is nearly irrelevant, except that the use of blue does cause create suffusion, a factor found in Inos.

My experience is that the grey variety used with white Lacewings reduces the suffusion fault and that greygreens when used over two or three generations with yellows tends to dull the body colour. With that knowledge,I would like to only use excellent olives and dark grey normals with Lacewings, but breeding or indeed purchasing such coloured normals presents a challenge in itself.

Never use Inos, especially cock birds, with Lacewings as the result causes considerable problems when nests of redeyed youngsters, particularly hens, appear. Use of dilutes reduces the markings on Lacewings, sometimes to the point where such birds can look like Lutinos. Intensity of markings in Lacewings is so important in this variety, as is the absence of suffusion.

*Size or Colour?*

Should a fancier wish to go in for this variety, type, colour and size all have to be of paramount concern. The vast majority of Lacewings are of the 'yellow' type, so one must maintain a concerted effort to increase size. What must not happen in the quest for size is the sacrifice of colour. As a Lacewing breeder your thoughts have to be three seasons ahead if progress on type, colour and size together is to be made.

Whenever non-Lacewings are used they should ideally be massive and heavily marked birds,preferably Normals,and paired to the best Lacewings you have or can get. I am not against breeding Lacewing x Lacewing,providing birds of quality are used,but I find the second generation are better paired to splits or non-Lacewings,basically to improve size.I accept that initially one's enthusiasm demands that many Lacewings be bred,but the numbers game does not usually improve the variety.If you already have a main stud which includes good normals,Lacewings can be run alongside beneficially and will certainly add beauty and interest to any aviary as well as being of help to your club and the budgerigar fancy generally in lifting this beautiful bird from its present "lesser variety" status.

Being sex-linked,the breeding expectations in theory are predictable.