The Greywing Budgerigar.

The Greywing is the result of a mutation of the gene which controls the intensity of the normal black markings (melanin pigment) on a bird. As such, most colours and varieties of budgerigar, can exist in the Greywing form, the exceptions being Clearwings and Dilutes (yellows and whites).  
Archival material indicates that two types of Greywing have existed in Australia. That is, one with a pale body colour (about 50% full intensity), and another with a rich body colour, close to that of full intensity. Comparison of British and Australian Show Standards indicates that the paler version was preferred in the United Kingdom, with the richer darker form being preferred in Australia. Selective breeding in Australia over the last 40 years has virtually eliminated Greywings with light body colour, but they are now appearing among British imports.

Visual Characteristics:   
Greywings with the normal distribution of markings (that is those preferred on the show bench) can be identified by the grey rather than black markings on the neck, back and wings. In addition, they have grey coloured flight feathers and a grey tail which shows suffusion of body colour. Their cheek patches are violet, except in grey factor birds (Greys and Greygreens) where they are grey. Pale body coloured Greywings can vary from very pale to very dark, the ideal being a medium grey halfway between black and white, that is 'midgrey'. There are three easily definable shades of grey, that is, pale, medium, or dark, and this is best observed in the flight feathers rather than the wing markings. When viewed under fluorescent or poor lighting, dark flighted Greywings look more like a stylish Greygreen Greywing hen of British origin, the type of Greywing often confused as a Cinnamonwing when shown under poor lighting ,with Cinnamon wings because of a distinctly brown caste.  
Unfortunately, pale-flighted Greywings can look like three other genetically different varieties. That is:   
1. Full Body Coloured Greywings (the first generation cross between a Greywing and a Clearwing).  
2. Poorly marked Clearwings (invariably single- factor).   
3. Dilutes of heavy suffusion (also called Suffused Yellows and Whites).   
There is always an element of uncertainty when trying to separate these, so careful observation of body colour, wing markings, colour of flight feathers and tail colour is essential.

Mode of Inheritance:  
Pure Greywings are genetically recessive to most varieties, but co-dominant with Clearwings and dominant over Dilutes (yellows and whites). They can be in combination with all varieties of budgerigar except the Dilute. In their most rudimentary state, Greywings are recessive to Normal and their breeding follows the simple laws of inheritance below.  
Greywing x Greywing = 100% Greywing.  
Greywing x Normal = 100% Normal/Greywing.   
Greywing x Normal/Greywing = 50% Greywing. 50% Normal/Greywing.  
Normal/Greywing x Normal/Greywing = 25% Normal + 50% Normal/Greywing + 25% Greywing Normal/Greywing x Normal = 50% Normal/ Greywing + 50% Normal.  
There is now way of visually differentiating a Normal/Greywing (normal split for Greywing) from a pure normal or a normal split for any other variety. Moreover, any divergence from the above laws is attributable to another hidden recessive gene being present in the supposedly pure Greywings or the Normal. Recessive varieties are however, a lot more complex than that shown above, as a Normal cock or hen may be split for two different recessive varieties simultaneously.   
Another peculiarity is that one recessive variety can be split for all other recessive varieties (one at a time of course) and these in turn can be split for it, or in combination.  
For example, a Recessive Pied may be split for Greywing, a Greywing may be split for Recessive Pied, or a Greywing Recessive Pied may also exist. Greywing cocks may also be split for all of the sex-linked varieties such as Cinnamon, Ino,opaline or Texas Clearbody. Hens cannot be split for these, but both sexes may be in combination, eg. a Greywing Opaline or Greywing Cinnamon. In fact, the Greywing used to be a prized outcross by Lutino and Albino breeders, because a greywing version of these has very few ghost markings on the head, back and wings. In addition, two genetically different types of Greywing exist. the Full Body Coloured Greywing ( a compound Greywing Clearwing) is the result of pairing a Clearwing to a Greywing. As the name implies, it has a rich body colour close to that of a Normal, or realistically the same as that of a Clearwing. Its wing markings and flight feathers are paler than that of a Greywng and close to that of a Clearwing. Unfortunately, it is identical to a poorly marked Clearwing, and separating the two is almost impossible because of their widespread interbreeding. It is probably better to question the genetic background of all pale Greywngs, and use them only with caution. Of course, you may prefer this type of budgerigar.  
Interbreeding the various shades of Greywing has never been recorded, despite being acknowledged by all experts of the variety. By pairing pale-flighted Greywings to mid-grey flighted Greywings, I have produced Greywings in both shades of grey. Whether this result holds to any genetic relationship is unknown. Show bench Standards once specified that Greywngs should have mid-grey coloured wing markings and flight feathers. This is easily attainable and once established can be perpetuated, so can the other shades of grey in the Greywing, so really the choice is yours.

Best Pairings:   
Greywing cock to a Greywing hen.   
Greywing cock to a Normal split Greywing hen.

Pairings Which Lead to a Loss of Unique Characteristics:   
The only pairings which detract from the unique characteristics of Greywing are those which allow the inclusion of a Cinnamon or Fallow. In the case of Cinnamon, the birds are a diluted pastel shade but with paler cinnamon wing markings. The Greywing gene enhances neither the Fallow nor Lacewing and is not generally sought after.   
To the traditional Greywing breeder the only true Greywng is that with the normal distribution of wing markings. However, Greywing Opalines are one of the most visually stunning birds, being referred to as self-coloured Opalines. This name has been adopted because the body colour is also present over the neck, back and wings. This is most impressive in the blue series particularly Violet, cocks being significantly more brilliant than hens, unfortunately, Greywing Opalines are frowned upon by purists as they are not visual Greywings.   
They are not shown as Greywngs, but in the Opaline classes (take it or leave it). Nevertheless, they are unique in themselves and most attractive.

Failings and Faults:   
Perhaps the most common fault with Greywings is their confusion with two other varieties, that is the Clearwing with the heavy grey markings, and the Dilute (yellow or white) of heavy suffusion. This is a particular problem with grey Factor birds, and also with Opaline versions of each, as they all take on the appearance of self coloured Opalines. Positive identification is best accomplished by comparing the intensity of the body colour in conjunction with the colour of the flight feathers (and tail). If the body colour is full intensity, and the flights are mid grey, then it is a Greywing. If the flights are off-white or pale grey, then it is a Clearwing. If the body colour is very pale and the flights also very pale, then it is a Dilute of heavy suffusion. A true Greywing will have comparatively dark flights but may have a pale body colour. The method is not 100% foolproof but accurate in most cases.   
Full body coloured Greywings bred from Clearwings are the exception as these tend to look like very heavily marked Clearwings. Using the colour of cheek patches for positive identification is not appro priate because the subtle dilution effects are hard to describe. The incorporation of a full body coloured ( FBC) Greywing into a stud of greywings can eventually lead to the production of a Clearwing. This is achieved by the following simple pairings.  
1. Greywing x Clearwing = 100% FBC Greywing/ Clearwing.  
2. FBC Greywing/Clearwing x Greywing = 50% FBC Greywing/Clearwing + 50% Greywing.   
3. FBC Greywing/Clearwing x FBC Greywing/ Clearwing = 25% Greywing + 50% FBC Greywing/ Clearwing + 25% Clearwing FBC = Full Body Coloured.   
It is for this reason that if you are hoping to breed Greywings seriously you should be alert to the possibility of breeding birds with very pale wings, they may be poorly marked Clearwings. Also, perpetuation of the Clearwing gene through pairing number 2 above is a very real possibility. Dilutes of heavy suffusion are perpetuated by similar pairings. In addition, the Dilute may be accidentally brought in when out- crossing a Normal. How this is achieved is outlined in the following pairings.  
4. Greywing x Normal/Dilute 25% Normal/Dilute + 50% Normal/Greywing + 25% Greywing/Dilute.  
5. Greywing/Dilute x Greywing = 50% Greywing + 50% Greywing/Dilute.   
6. Greywing/Dilute x Greywing/Dilute = 25% Greywing + 50% Greywing/Dilute + 25% Dilute.   
Worse still is the possibility of perpetuating Dilutes, Clearwings and Greywings in the one stud without even knowing.  
In the following pairing, two visual Greywings are paired together, but all these genes are involved.  
7. FBC Greywing/Clearwing x Greywing/Dilute = 25% Greywing + 25% Greywing/Dilute + 25% FBC Greywing /Clearwing + 25% Clearwing /Dilute. This is not such a bad thing if you like the pastel like shades of Greywings and Dilutes, and don't particularly care about genetics.

Conclusion:   
Throughout the 1960s. the Greywing was one of the most popular varieties of budgerigar. The mutation originated in Australia and is still common among colony bred birds,its demise as a show bird is unexplainable, perhaps because of its recessive mode of inheritance, perhaps because of its rarity among British imports. its breeding is straight forward but somewhat interfered with when paired to Clearwings or Dilutes.

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