A brazen hawk

Having seen my recent remarks about the visit of a Peregrine, Dick Lipski from Milwaukee wrote the following: “On Friday last, I was pairing up my old bird race team, when as usual, two of the cock birds decided that they both had to have the same nest box. 14 cocks and 40 boxes, you know the story. Well, I removed one of the birds, and was checking him over for damage in the hallway of my loft, when through the open door flew a Coopers hawk, and hit the bird I was holding in my hands. Feathers flew all over the place, and I hollered causing the hawk to take flight down the 20 foot aisle that is in front of the show racer loft. After hitting the far wall, he came back with a vengeance, and hit into the dowelled wall of the old bird section and hit the floor. I tried to catch him, but only got some tail feathers, but I was able to kick him out the door. I can tell you this, that I do now know that I won't be falling victim to a heart attack. This is their breeding season now, and the male has to do all the hunting, with the female not leaving the nest, staying to protect the eggs, or young. At this time they have no fear and hunt boldly, doing things they wouldn’t do normally.

I lose about 4 to 6 old birds and around 15 to 20 young birds a year. With the game preserve abutting my property, there isn't much else I can do. I keep switching outside times and skip days for settling young birds, but that is about it. With the old birds, after the first two days out around the loft, I just start roading them. Short tosses at first, and then farther down the road once they are coming good.

Dick Lipski’s judging of the Blackpool winners

Hello Doug, Well the boys gave me a break and let me read the Blackpool show issues first. As always, the birds look the part of big class winners. One day, John and I talk about taking a mad weekend trip to the show. I was really happy to see that Tony Baugh did so well in quite a few classes. At least there were some names that were familiar to me. Following, are my selections They might differ from some of yours, but, they are all pretty attractive birds. I like six birds very much. They are, class8 Silver ck. hen, (Colin Carter) class11 lace black ck. cock, (J.C.Robilliard) class12 lace black ck. wft. hen, (Mr and Mrs Howman) class16 lace black ck. grizzle hen, (E.Macpherson) class17a cream bar hen, and class19 Mosaic hen (J.& D. Fisher). I would love to have any or all of these birds in my loft. They all have one attractive feature to me, and most have more. This year, colour seems to be the main attraction. I was not aware of the
grizzle colour in different patterns were being bred. The blue pattern is usually the most popular, but, I prefer the laced black ck. pattern. I believe for colour breeding that the laced white flight hen would lend herself to being the mother of a beautiful family of powder blues. What powder colour she shows in her neck. Both the cream and the mosaic hens are of clean tight feathering and good colour. The laced black ck. cock, has a very masculine station and look to him. My choice for best in show, is narrowed down to three birds, the Silver ck. hen, and the lace Black ck. cock, with the lace Black ck white flight hen as the group. The Silver ck. hen is very nice in all aspects, but, is a little too long in the neck for me. The lace Black ck white flight hen again, is very nice, but, for a hen for showing, is a bit coarse in the wattle. That leaves the lace Black ck. cock (John Robilliard) as my choice for best in show. His overall balance, expression, colour pattern, and tight feather wins me over.

With that being over with, I do have an observation to make, not a criticism. Just in looking at the birds in some it is hard to tell the sexes, and some are a little too coarse in the wattling. One can notice it the most, when you compare them to the race class winners. Most of them are cleaner and smoother in appearance than the show racers. But again, this is not a criticism but an observation. I don't want to get into the same situation that I did a few years ago, when I said that I thought the birds were getting too big. I don't want to hurt any feelings. I do know just from photos alone, it is very difficult to get a true view of the birds, knowing some birds just don't look as good in a photo, as they do in real life. My congratulations to all the winners and wished I could be there to behold the grand show at Blackpool.

Fred Frendo’s judgement

Fred Frendo from Sydney was also asked to do the same exercise and he came up with his winner as Class 6, red hen of Alistair Tankard, followed by Colin Carter's silver cheque hen and then class 11, the dark cheque cock of John Robilliard.

What it shows is that it is about ideas and that judging is a chance affair with a subjective judgement. The way forward is to present the birds in the best possible condition for the show and then hope for some luck. In every class it is a case of one man’s judgement on one day and I always advise fanciers that as they have to keep the birds for every day of the year, their own judgement is best in the end. I think that when we look at the card winners in any class, it is good to note a consistency of quality and to be able to see where the judge was coming from. There is a great deal of luck and good fortune involved but it helps no end if all exhibitors start on a level playing field, entering only what they are entitled to and without building up an advantage for themselves. This way, each exhibitor, whether a small team entrant or a larger team establishment have the same chance.

Ann as a judge

Recently I decided to spend some time with my young birds as they are now starting to clear the body moult. I penned all the mealies I had bred and to my astonishment found that I had a dozen as well as four cream bar hens. I went through them carefully, at the same time spraying them and adding Ivermectin drops to their necks. I selected two cocks and a hen as my choice and then invited Ann to go through them.
She did so and came up with the same three as I had, reinforcing my belief that after so many years with the birds she is an excellent judge and could be trusted to judge at any show. I just mused to myself at the thought of a female judge here in Australia – it would go down like a lead balloon as this is a very ‘blokish’ country. It is a shame that it has to be like this for apart from our National, very few ladies will be seen at any of our shows.

**Two recent shows**

Geoff Nelson and I have attended a couple of club shows in the last couple of weeks. The first one was just an awful experience with a dreadful atmosphere and suspicion over our attendance. It seems that there has been an unfortunate incident at a meeting and as a result some of the members are on edge and unable to get on with their pigeon enjoyment. It was genuinely one of the worst pigeon evenings I have ever spent. Yesterday we went to the monthly Sunday morning meeting and show in Melbourne and what a difference. There was a good attendance and an excellent entry with members enjoying the social contact. I was pleased to win best in show overall with a young powder blue white flight hen, leaving Gerard Thorp in the runner-up spot with an opal mosaic. The club is in a healthy state and the membership is based on many ethnic groups – including Cornish!

**Our Dog.**

Our border collie Pippa has been a terrific animal, full of life and willing to run all day. We noticed that she was limping and the resulting examination revealed a torn ligament in her rear leg joint, requiring x-rays, an operation and a prolonged period of convalescence. It has taken a lot of work to keep her quiet and to walk her on the lead only in the garden, though these can be longer walks in another week or so. My bank balance now requires a prolonged period of convalescence because as we all know, veterinarians do not come cheap. To add to our work with Pippa, we now have our daughter’s two dogs staying with us for nearly three weeks, a whippet and a bull breed type. Both are charming dogs but we could have done without their presence at this particular time. Pippa enjoys her visits to the beach where she swims with enthusiasm but how far such visits are off is yet to be determined. I am using a photo of her.

![Pippa](image)

I must say that the whippet would not be my choice of dog but to see him in full flight along the beach is truly a wonderful sight. He wanders off and is deaf to calls but when he decides to return it is always at full pelt. It has been hard work exercising three dogs but made all the more difficult in the last couple of days. Ann took the two visiting dogs out for their final outing in the garden, when she fell and somehow broke her heel bone in her right foot resulting in a plaster and an inability to do very much, leaving me to do most of the chores.
Doctor Colin Walker

Some readers will have met Colin when he came across to Blackpool a couple of years ago as a judge. As well as being a top racing man he is also a lover of show racers and we are able to exchange birds from time to time. His latest book, entitled ‘The Pigeon’ is a mammoth production, providing me with endless pleasure and information. It is a big lump of a book but is crammed full of information and photographs. Not surprisingly there is a great deal of information on pigeons and their health but there is plenty of more general interest and I would recommend this volume to anyone. It is a worthy addition to any library of pigeon books and will provide a reference source for many years to come. How he manages to fit everything in is beyond me because when writing this huge volume he was a practising bird veterinarian and running an estate of land with his pigeons, parrots and sheep. I mentioned before that he is building a new house on land in this area and the house will also contain his racing lofts with wonderful views over the Mornington peninsula.

Colin will be judging our National show at Penrith near Sydney in July so I have had to tell him that loft visits are off the menu until after the show. I am hoping to be able to get to the show but as it entails a ten hour journey each way with an overnight stop, it requires a lot of thinking about. The alternative involves flights with all the frustrations of getting baskets of birds on board, then the hiring of a large car to travel from the Sydney airport to Penrith. I am not as young as I used to be and such stress is not very welcome to me. This is a huge country geographically and it amazes me that fanciers are so determined to exhibit that they put themselves through this, when there is absolutely nothing in return – no prize money. It is just for the pleasure and prestige of winning.

Old Photographs

One of my folders is listed as ‘Groups’ and this month I am producing a couple marking good times within the sport. Remember the wonderful showing event at Bournemouth staged and driven by Tony Cowan in 1996, well, one is of me with Brian Stubbs and John Staddon at the show prior to an excellent social evening which followed.

Myself with Brian Stubbs and John Staddon

Some Scottish flavour in the other, which portrays another social evening with Ann McClary, Donna Lipski, Audrey Taylor, Harry Taylor and David Rose. It is good to note that poppies are being worn and everyone fortified by some of the famous Scottish liquid.
In Conclusion

Another month and another article. I am in need of news, comment and opinion from Britain so please let me have some at 3 Kunyung Road, Mount Eliza, Victoria 3930, email mcclary.douglas@gmail.com.