

# de Zebra

International

Promo

Edition

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Founded in 1974 NPA since 1988 CBE-number 0438.384.669

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## Photos on the cover:

To the left: blackface orangebreasted blackbreasted isabel fawn man by ©Bart Houben

To the right: grizzle charcoal gray by ©Ken Glasson

# Report from the president

## Fans of zebra finches from all over the globe: let us join!

On social media fanciers of zebra finches are seeking contact to spread their knowledge about zebra finches, to get answers on their questions, to show their breeding and show results, ...

Websites of societies and breeders are sources of information for beginners and for experienced breeders.

Most of the information of that kind is rather volatile. Our society, the BZC, has a lot of experience and a lot of contacts with experienced breeders from all parts of the globe. A magazine like this is ment to spread that experience to all who are interested in zebra finches.

Let it be clear: this edition is a test.

Generating such a magazine means a lot of effort. Certainly as English is not our basic language. Besides, we don't want to stop our effort after 2 or 3 editions. We want it to last. 'Last' means we need copy, people to translate, people to generate the magazines, people to distribute the editions, people to manage the workload, ... As I said: a lot of effort.

I already mentionned: this is a test. Generating something beautiful without an audience is absurd. So, first of all we are looking for readers. Fans of zebra finches interested to become a reader may contact our secretary by email: [bzc\\_secretaris@yahoo.com](mailto:bzc_secretaris@yahoo.com). The yearly fee will be € 25. That is the net amount for our society, the BZC. So all charges like currency rate, bank fee and others are due to the subscribing member.

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The account:

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We welcome contributions like texts, photos, ideas, help, ...

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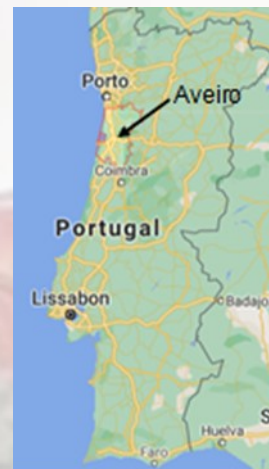
# A trip to Portugal

My name is Carlos Santos. I am from Portugal. I am 31 years old. I am a police officer, and I live in a small town of a villa Named Oliveira de Azemeis, that belongs to Aveiro City (well known as “Veneza Portuguesa”), for those who don’t know anything from Portugal it’s a city in the middle of northern part of the country, between Lisboa and Porto.



## My hobby: from exotic species to zebra finches

As a hobby I am a Zebra Breeder, a starter. My connection with birds started when I was a little kid. I still started with zebra finches in 2019, although I was already an active, registered and exhibition/breeder in Portugal since 2008. In that laps of time I bred a lot of Australian, African and South American exotic species. I had over 100 couples. At the end of the breeding season sometimes I had almost 400 birds.



But those times are past. In 2016, because of a lot of changes in my personal life I stopped breeding and sold all my birds, cages and almost all accessories...

Then the zebras became popular... In 2019 I bought my own house. Finally I found “normal life” I was looking and longed for... and wanted to get some birds again.

I bought the house in January of 2019. In February I already started seeking for birds again, without any idea of species I should start with. That’s when I met zebra finches.

I started to read a lot about the species and mutations, and that made a click in my head:

I decided zebra finches it would be...



2019 was my first year. My concern was to design a bird room and cages of my own. I started from scratch do design everything the way I wanted. That year I started with about 10 couples, a mix of all mutations and no particular color.

I first liked to see what happened and then decide what to breed in the future. Of course I couldn’t breed them all.

After raising some youngsters, I started to prefer some colors above others. My preference were the “base” colors. Then I searched for the best breeders of zebras in Portugal. I visited some of them to get my couples for the set-up of my base.

## Mutations

The colors I actually breed are grey, light back, cfw (Continental and Regular), fawn, dominant silver, blackface, and combinations of some of them.

My favorite color is the dominant silver with blackface, a combo I already bred this year in grey and fawn. I am looking forward to get the combo with lightback and cfw.



## The English type

When I started, as all beginners, I was seeking for the English type. But after seeing things clearer I believe this is not the best way to do. I prefer the European (dutch) line (most common in Portugal). I like smaller birds with better color than bigger ones with bad color.

The judgments in Portugal are the same in Belgium and Holland (COM rules), so the English type is not well appreciated...

## Breeding

My breeding space is small: 3,5m x 1.8m. Inside the room are 24 cages for couples, 4 cages for youngers of 1,20m and I also have some exhibition cages to train them for exhibition. All the cages are made of expanded white PVC.



Every day in the breeding season I control all the nests. It's a daily routine. I also add some seeds, water or egg food if needed. One day a week is planned to clean up all and change all the food and water either its needed or not.

The food for my birds: I give a professional line of seeds for Australian Finches and add seeds, like "painço" (seeds in grapes), eggfood from "Meeks". I add vitamins and other seeds to the eggfood, for example calcium and proteins.

My cages are cleaned once every 2 or 3 weeks. I exchange the paper at the bottom of the cages. Once a year after the breeding season I clean up all the breeding cages with natural products like vinegar and lemon.

My breeding season starts in Winter because the natural breeding season of zebra finches is also in our Winter. That means in Australia it is Spring with a high level of humidity. As the exhibitions starts at end of the summer we need to start breeding early to send birds to the exhibitions.

Most of my birds because have no longer a English bloodline. They are for almost 90% non English bred. I have one or two couples left who don't feed well the youngers. I help them in the first days and if that is not enough I change the couple by exchanging another male or female that breed well. I hope they the new formed couples make a good start.

I don't have any "Manons" (Lonchura Striata Domestica also known as "Bengalins" in Portugal) to breed the youngers. I prefer helping the way I already explained. If needed I put the eggs to a better breeding couple.

## The selection

Well, I select the birds most likely by my eye, started to separate some in August to see how they evolve, in Portugal we can only show individuals or team of 4, not in couples.

I select my couples all by my eye either, I separate a few of the color I want to select I and the most complete birds, for example I use the method of not joining birds with the same bad points, like huge beak, or bad type, I always try to compensate the male with the female points, still I hope in futures in the next 3 or 4 years, I will get a homogeneous line, and not have to worry too much in selecting my couples...

## Breeding difficulties

I don't have a lot of breeding problems. First of all I am a starter in breeding zebras. But I said it before: I have more than 10 year of experience in breeding exotic birds. I prepare the birds for breeding season and up to now I did not have any big problem at all. The success I have is due to the good condition my birds have. All my birds are within the house in my breeding space. Still there some small problems, for examples couples that don't like the the nest and started to making one on the bottom. Then I add an open the nest on the bottom. If they start over there I leave them until they have youngers. Then I put the nest up again at the "right" place and problem is solved.

## The color of the zebra finch

The most difficult to my opinion is the color of my birds. I always want to like more colored but it's a hard job to achieve the color I have in mind. To achieve my goal I use a line of the grey zebra finches. This grey line should be the best birds we must have in our breeding room because a good grey line is the better base to work with for all mutations.

## My opinion about a club dedicated to zebra finches and some advise for starters

Sadly, in Portugal there is no dedicated club for fans of zebra finches as exist in a lot of other countries. I hope and expect in the future we can start such a club. I would be a member and I like to help starting up such a club.

I am a member of the Club Ornithologic from Tondela. That is the club most nearby to my hometown. To participate in exhibitions in Portugal you need to be member of a club. The club gives you a breeding number and the official rings with your number.

For a starting breeder, like myself, I have only one advise if you want to start with zebras: don't waste your time with low quality zebra finches. If you want to be successful look after the best breeders in your country, go them and get some quality top birds. Besides ALWAYS get young birds from the actual year not older. This is my biggest advice: ... better to have 1 good couple of high quality than 10 couples with bad shape and color.

Even being a starting breeder, I already got some award for my zebra finches in Portugal. And I look forward to get way more soon. To be a National and World Champion is my goal for the next year. I hope Covid-19 give us all a break.

## Finally

I want to thank the BZC for the opportunity of this questionnaire, mostly because I am still a starter for breeding zebra finches. I intend, in future, to become a reference for younger breeders. I intend to participate in the biggest zebra finch exhibitions in Europe and meet the best breeders.

for information you can reach me by FB Carlos Santos Mandarins  
[www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100058385833391](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100058385833391)

Regards

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# From Belgium: white cheek zebra finch

## 1. Introduction

End 90 Jacques Vanduren showed us a bird with white cheeks. He asked us if he had a new mutation, a new mutation of the markings. Jacques was not lucky as he did not succeed getting young white cheek birds. End of white cheeks? Some years ago Paul Chabot, founding president of BZC (Belgian Zebra finch society) found a 'strange' bird at a merchant's shop. We all remember Paul as the father of the orange breast mutation, meaning Paul has a lot of knowledge about genetics. Paul remarked a remainder of black in the cheek lobe and decided to couple a bird to a black cheeked bought at the same shop. Result: Paul got white cheek youngsters in the first brood. So he decided white cheek is dominant. Paul indeed had the luck to couple two partners closely related (bought at the same shop). Surfing on internet one can find white cheeks in different countries, but the passionate ones don't see them as white cheeks. And stories of members of different zebra finch societies tell us that white cheeks has been seen a lot of times. But the birds had always been marked as bad greys.

Jan Van Looy and I interviewed Paul for an article about his 'special one'. He thought a lethal factor was closely coupled to the white cheek factor because the second year he almost had not youngsters at all, neither white cheeks or non white cheeks. So to spread the risk of a second distinction he gave each a pair of white cheeks. Jan and I promised him to search for the genetic background. Together with Wessel Vermeulen we set a up breeding scheme and noted all the results. This article is about the things we found.

## 2. Phenotype of the white cheek

The first question we had to answer: is this a mutation or a combination of existing variations?

The results of our broods had only one direction: Yes for a new mutation. Now a few year later we stay with our results: SURE for 100%.

Starting with our birds Jan and I had two options. Or we continued the way Paul was doing: keeping white cheek coupled to black cheek. Or starting from scratch to see the effect on a basic (grey, fawn) zebra finch. We choose the long way: the second option. We made a short cut by coupling the birds from Paul to multiple partners the first year. So we got a good number of youngsters we a lot of work gathering the results. And we got an bonus advantage. The birds of Paul had a small format. Our youngsters had a format and type closer to the standard.

Back tot title of this chapter. What is het effect of the white cheek? What does a white cheek looks like?

First: in the following text we see a white cheek as a bird with white cheeks? Looks obvious, but to get the white cheek the bird must 'possess black cheeks'. That means the mutation white cheek has an influence on the black color in the cheek. A white cheek always hides a black cheek.

And beware: up to now we only mentioned the cheek pattern. White cheek also influences other parts of the 'marking' of the zebra finch. But as you will guess the white cheek pattern is a reminder for the name of the mutation.

### Feature 1

White cheeks: male and female have them. There may be a arch of black at the end of the cheek.

### Feature 2

Tear mark of the eye is missing: the white cheek seems bigger than normal.

### Feature 3

The flanks become white: there is no remainder of the normal pattern for male and female.

If one finds a remainder of the pattern of the flank the normal dots are replaced by a vertical wave on the feather.

### Feature 4

Throat Stripes and breast bar are less pronounced than normal. We are convinced that a strict selection will reset this imperfection to normal.

its is good to known that other features do not change.

### Feature 1

The wedge remains white.

### Feature 2

The tear of the bill remains intact.

### Feature 3

The marking of the tail are not modified.

### Feature 4

The color of the bird is not modified. This means the white cheek can be combined with all existing mutations.

### Remark

Behind a white cheek there is always a black cheek. That black cheek may influence the combination with other mutations.

### **3. Genetics of the white cheek.**

Up to now we distinguish recessive and dominant mutations in the breeding of zebra finches.

However when we studied our results we found a kind of mix. So we got together, Jan and I, and compared the results with possible other genetic possibilities. I had already written an article about the different ways a dominant mutation can be expressed: complete dominance, co-dominance, incomplete dominance, pseudodominance. That piece of text lead us to incomplete dominance.

Incomplete dominance is found in nature in flowers and in animals. A good example is the 'dragon flower or snapdragon' (*Antirrhinum*). See the picture: a purple, a white and a pink version. The pink version looks like the purple and the white is blended. And that is what incomplete dominance means: both colors are blended: we see white dominating the black but the domination is not complete. We concluded that if both 'white-cheek-genes' are present the female possess complete white cheeks and the male has white cheeks with a little black arch at the end. That arch can be 'whited out' by selection. If only one 'white-cheek-gene' is present then the black arch at the end of the cheek pattern is much bigger and covers up the half of the cheek pattern at the right.

So we introduced the 'white cheek gene' as single or double. Or a good white cheek the gene should be double as we know for recessive genes.



female grey white cheek (double factor)



male chesnut flanked white white cheek (double factor)



male grey white cheek (single factor): remark the waves in the flanks





female lightback grey white cheek (double factor)



female grey white cheek (single factor)



female chesnut flanked white white cheek (double factor)

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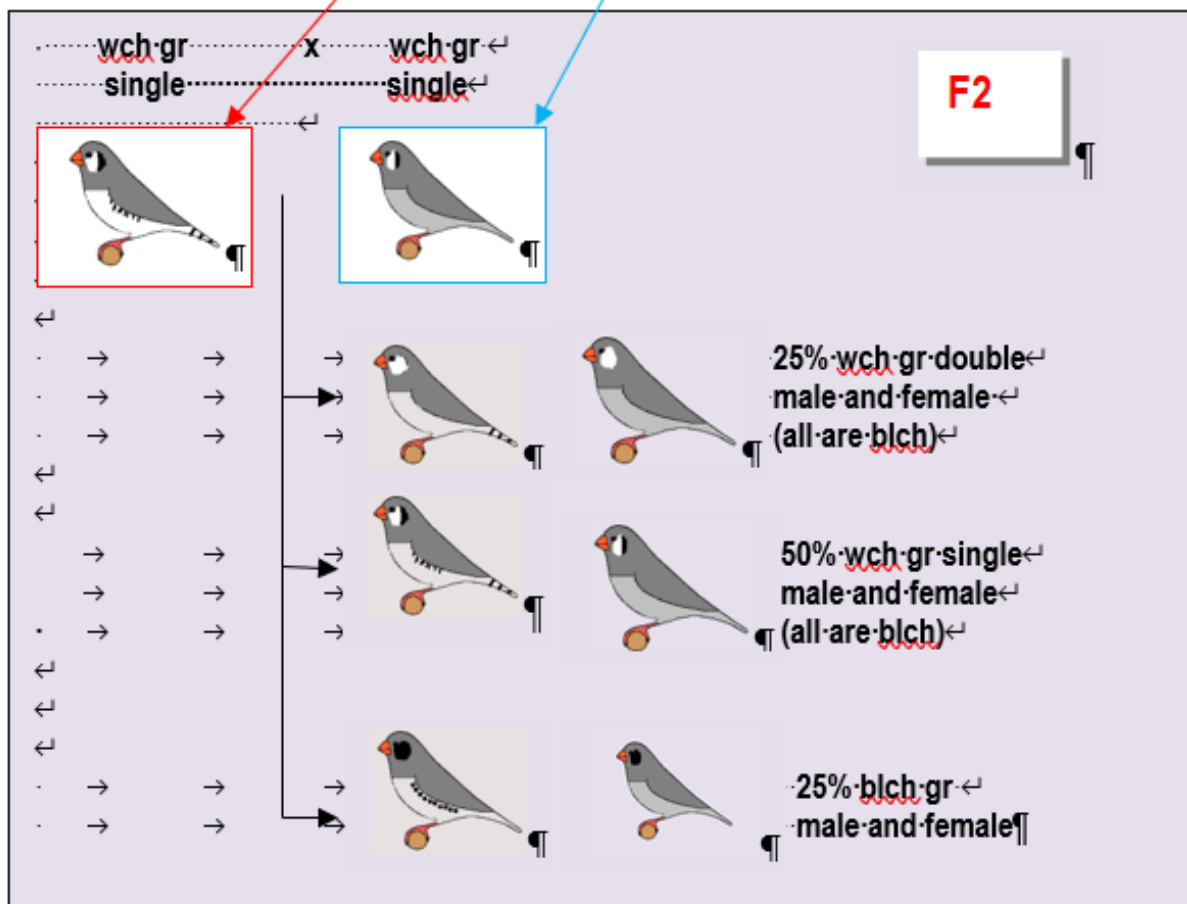
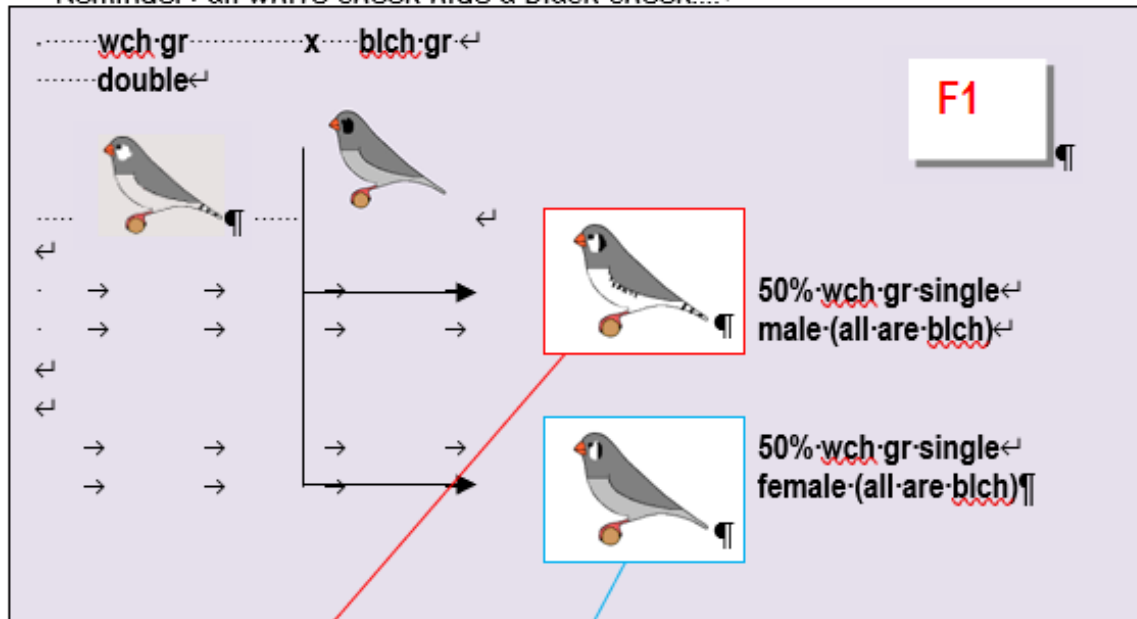
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#### 4. Breeding scheme

Reminder: all white cheek hide a black cheek!!!!



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Abbreviations for the breeding scheme  
 wch: white cheek  
 blch: black cheek  
 gr: grey

Combinations with orangebreasted



Female oranjebreasted isabel fawn



Male yellow bill oranjebreasted masked grey



Male blackface orangebreasted blackbreasted lightback grey



Male blackface orangebreasted blackbreasted masked fawn



Male orangebreasted blackbreasted grey

Photos ©Bart Houben



Male oranjebreasted blackbreasted masked fawn



Female oranjebreasted blackbreasted fawn



Male blackface orangebreasted blackbreasted grey



Female blackface orangebreasted blackbreasted grey



Male orangbreasted blackbreasted fawn

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# The eumo mutation

The Eumo Zebra finch has become a very popular and highly sought-after mutation of a zebra finch in the last few years, both its very attractive appearance and the great possibilities provided by combinations with other mutations in colours and markings.

**History:** The Eumo Zebra finch mutation appeared in 1966 in the Netherlands in the city of Stiens in the province of Friesland with a breeder named Mr. Piet Kars. He is also the first breeder who exhibited this mutation at the COM World Championship in Rotterdam in the Netherlands in 1973.

**Name:** The name eumo is derived from the term "eumelanin", which marks the main characteristic of this almost black Zebra finch.

**Effect:** A dark, melanising mutation.

To describe the eumo zebra finch mutation would not be possible without knowing eumelanin. This was discussed in a separate chapter entitled "Feathers" under the heading "Pigments of Feathers" and we will only repeat the basic elements here. There are two types of melanin pigments: eumelanin and pheomelanin. Eumelanin consists of black, but also of dark brown, brown and grey eumelanin, which results in black or dark brown feathers. Pheomelanin is reddish brown in colour and it is present in the cheeks and flank markings in male zebra finches.

**What kind of process has happened with this mutation?** First of all, there was an increase in the concentration of black eumelanins, especially in the tail and the front part of the body (especially in males). Hence the name eumo. The front part is darker in colour than in the normal grey zebra finch. The black triangle between the eye and the beak is intense black, which also indicates a high concentration of melanin. So, it is simple, more eumelanin - a darker bird. On the other hand, the concentration of pheomelanin in the cheek patches and the flanks of the eumo of grey males decreases greatly. The flanks in accordance with the standard requirements must not have any bright spots and must be uniformly monochrome, and "cheeks" are missing.

**A Short description:** The most striking feature of the eumo mutation is the completely black belly and the absence of patches on the cheeks of males. But there is also a problem with the feather structure, because the birds in this mutation can either not fly or fly with great difficulties and badly.

**A problem with feathers of the eumo zebra finch:** The eumo zebra finch mutation, unfortunately, has one major disadvantage due to feather problems, which is of genetic nature. This is a **malformation** that is an inherited deviation from the normal shape in the structure of feathers in the wings. Because of this, eumos have more difficulties to fly. This problem is related to the incomplete formation of all parts of the feathers, namely the feathered barbs of the second order (barbules - radii) do not have or have less the feathered hooks and hooklets (radioli) that merge the feathered branches, resulting in the fact that the feathers do not less have a compact, "impermeable" surface required for a normal flight. This leads to the eumo zebra finch's flight being very difficult. With a rigorous and proper selection, lately, this problem is on the right path to being resolved.

**A Eumo without feather problems:** In the case of the eumo mutation, these are two related mutations, that is, the eumo genes and the feather structure genes, which create a problem with flying. Theoretically, it is possible to separate them, but the practical possibility of separating these two mutations is very small, because some crossing over must occur. But, hopefully this will happen once, and then this mutation will not have a flying problem, that is, a problem with the structure of a feather. The ability to solve the problem is greatest when the breeding split X split is performed because the genes that can help overcome the problem with the genetic structure are introduced. In addition, as many breeders as possible should be involved and animated in solving the problem, as this leads to an increase in the chances of a good outcome.

**A short description of males:** In males, black is prevailing, but there are two more colours - grey and chestnut brown. All the feathers and markings of orange are mostly replaced with black. In the tail there are white squares missing and it must be completely black. The belly should be of uniform and saturated black. The black zebra markings on the breast must be clearly visible, but not on the white but on grey background and should not be smudged or completely black. (also total black breasts are tolerated because it is happening when selecting on black) The cheeks are missing and in their place is a zone of grey colour, because orange brown pigments cannot be displayed, and in that sense they resemble normal grey females. The flank markings generally have no spots and should be uniformly chestnut brown.

**A brief description of the female:** According to the requirements of the eumo mutation, the female should have a dark grey belly, that is, the front part of the body should be dark grey from the breast to the tail. The tail must be intensely black. The colour on the cheeks, chest and flanks should be grey, slightly brighter than the colour of the head. 00

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On [www.finches.nl](http://www.finches.nl) you will find a brand new book 'Estrildid Finches of the World' (available october 1 2021)



Male eumo grey



Female eumo grey



Juvenile male eumo grey  
(juvenile females lack black color in the breast)



Female eumo fawn



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Juvenile male grey split eumo



Female eumo blackcheek grey



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# Hello George



Strange? Yes.

Indeed George is the name for a zebra finch.  
Why such a name?

The next story will explain the reason why this beauty has been called George.

Text: ©K. Glasson and ©L. Lievrouw

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Ken Glasson

## The discovery

Yes, it was a discovery. The couple David and Marion Reese from Adelaide (south Australia), fans of zebra finches, visited a friend. In the aviary of the friend they 'discovered' a strange zebra finch. The bird was that strange they couldn't call it like any existing zebra finch. The friend was called George. And so the zebra finch was called after the friend, George. This happened at the beginning of the 90 of last century. David thought the male was a grizzle (see photo below). They took the bird home and started to breed. The breeding results amplified the characteristics of bird. They decided they discovered a new mutation.



## Description of a George

At first glance one remarks the cheeks, the breast and the white spots on the back of the male.

Indeed, the feathers of the cheeks flare out somehow like the feathers of a frisé canary. The band of the breast together with the zebra signs are been altered into a broad pattern of black and white waves.

The marking of the flanks differs from a normal pattern of white spots on a chestnut background, to white elongated spots and even to white blocks.

Some birds have a kind of beard besides and under the bill.

The back, from the neck on, is painted with white spots: their form resembles kidneys (beans). The color of the spots may be white, white with a black border but they can show a chestnut color too.

Isn't it normal to call this beauty 'George' instead of spotted?



Another amazing thing is that the George has a bigger size than a 'normal' zebra finch.



### **Male George (grey).**

The cheeks are bigger than normal. The feathers flare out. The basic color is chestnut with white stains getting greater to back of the male.

The breast marking are replaced by a black-white banding pattern with even remains of chestnut. The normal grey background disappeared.

Besides and under the bill appears white and black whiskers.

There is no one clear description for the flanks: or they show the normal white spots or white elongated spots or white blocks.

Back and wings are decorated with white beanlike spots mostly black bordered.

Sometimes they show a remain of chestnut. The spots start small at the neck and grow bigger towards the tail.

The tail is identical to the normal grey. The chestnut color of cheeks and flanks remains unchained.



Georgette (?)

### **Female George-pop (grey).**

Females show less color than males (this is common for zebra finches). The feathers of the cheeks flare out as for the male.

### **Inheritance**

David and Marian identified the George as autosomal and recessive.

### **After the 'discovery'**

David and Marion kept this beauty and never passed a bird to others. David passed away.

Then the birds are spread in New South Wales in Australia.

I have contacts in Australia and will keep you informed when having more information.



David Reese

### **Evolution of George**

This series of photos show the evolution that made the actual beauty of George. Some pictures show the details of back, cheek and flank.

There has never been made a standard of George and the bird has never been present at a show.



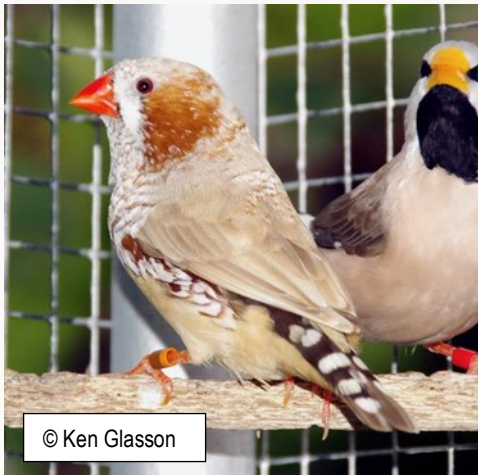
Comparison of normal and George

Details

All photos: ©Ken Glasson



The beginning



Actually



#### **Information about BZC**

BZC is the Belgian zebra finch society. The society was founded in 1974. Since it's only goal has been the promotion of zebra finches by shows, events, technical days, ... BZC is famous for it's well respected magazine 'de Zebra' which is spread and enjoyed all over western Europe.

The example you been reading is a **test** version of a more 'international' edition. We may intend to make this test a permanent edition. That depends, dear reader, on your reactions. We like to hear from you. Do you like the content? Do you expect us to continu? And if so, are you willing to support our team by sending us entries for the next copies and by making an anual subscription. The annual fee will be €25 (all currency costs and bank fees are to be paid by the subscriber). Please let us know your opinion by sending a mail to [bzc\\_secretaris@yahoo.com](mailto:bzc_secretaris@yahoo.com)

At the end of the fall (november) we will decide, upon your reactions, if this was a one-time version or if the magazine will appear permanently. We rely on you.

**It's all up to you!**

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