

When the Best Comes Late

A timely reminder that some Glosters only reveal their very best form after the traditional show season has passed...

In December 2025, during a visit to Portugal, I had the opportunity to spend some time in the birdroom of one of the country's most prolific and respected Gloster breeders, "Fernando Silva".

The visit came about thanks to "Joel Cordeiro, GFCCI Councillor for Portugal", who was quite insistent that we should make the trip and see Fernando's stud. I had never met Fernando before, so apart from the opportunity to see another leading breeder's birds, it was also the chance to finally make his acquaintance.

Anyone who has spent years in the Gloster Fancy will know what happens when you enter a good birdroom. You look around, admire the general quality of the stud, perhaps discuss breeding lines and individual characteristics, but inevitably there will be one or two birds that immediately catch your eye.

And when you are visiting the birdroom of a top breeder, that feeling can become even stronger.

On this occasion, one bird in particular stopped me in my tracks: "a beautiful Cinnamon hen".

Fernando caught the bird and placed her into a show cage so that Joel, Fernando and I could take a closer look. Once she settled, the quality became even more apparent. She possessed that wonderful combination of balance, type, feather quality and finish that makes you want to keep looking at a Gloster.

There was a precision about her. Everything seemed to fit.

In my opinion, she was an easy winner and a bird capable of competing with some of the very best Glosters on the show circuit.



Mario Zahra
International Judge
GFCCI Councillor

Had she been entered at a major show in that condition, I have little doubt that she would have been fighting for the top honours right to the very end.

So why am I writing about this particular hen?

Is it simply to praise Fernando Silva?

"No, not at all."

Fernando does not need my praise. His years of hard work, dedication and commitment to his stud speak far more loudly than anything I could write about him.

The real reason for writing this article is because that Cinnamon hen demonstrated something that I believe we sometimes overlook within the Fancy: "not every great Gloster reaches its absolute best during the traditional show season."

Some birds simply peak later.

The show calendar gives us a relatively narrow period during which we are expected to present our birds at their best. Yet nature does not always work according to our calendar. Feather development, maturity, body



Unflighted Cinnamon Hen
Bred by Fernando Silva in 2025

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condition and overall finish can vary enormously from bird to bird.

Climate must also play an important part.

The conditions experienced by breeders in Portugal, Malta, Italy, Northern Europe or the United Kingdom can be very different. Temperature, daylight hours, humidity and the timing of the moult can all influence when a bird finally reaches its optimum condition.

For this reason, it is difficult to say that there is one perfect show period that applies equally to every country.

For much of Central Europe, however, I personally believe that some Glosters can reach their finest condition during "December and into the middle of January". By this stage, birds that may have appeared slightly unfinished earlier in the autumn can suddenly come together. The feather tightens, the body fills, the head develops greater definition and the complete bird begins to show itself.

Fernando's Cinnamon hen was, for me, a perfect example.

Perhaps several weeks earlier she would still have been a very good Gloster. But when we saw her that December day, she had reached another level. She had matured into the bird that her breeding had always promised she could become.



This is what the Gloster Fancy is about - Friendship

From Left to right: Mario Zahra, Fernando Silva and Joel Cordeiro

And that raises an interesting question for exhibitors.

"How many outstanding Glosters do we never see at their absolute best simply because their peak condition arrives after their final show of the season?"

It is easy to judge the quality of a bird from what we see on the show bench, but the show bench only captures one moment in that bird's development.

Sometimes the bird that finishes second, third or perhaps does not feature prominently at all in

October or November may look completely different several weeks later.

That is also one of the great pleasures of visiting other breeders' birdrooms. Away from the pressure of the show hall, you sometimes see birds at a stage of development that the wider Fancy never gets the opportunity to witness.

Fernando Silva's Cinnamon hen was one of those birds.

I still remember standing with Fernando and Joel, looking at her in that show cage and thinking what a formidable Gloster she would have been had there been a major show taking place at that exact moment.

For me, she was a reminder that "the show season may finish — but the development of the Gloster does not."

Sometimes, the best comes late.

