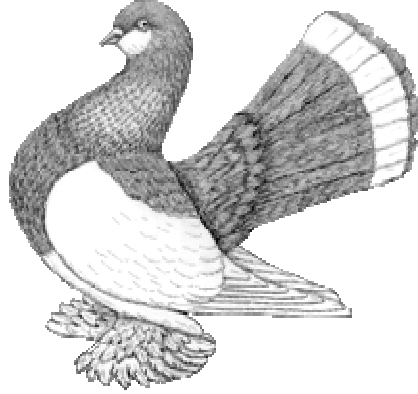


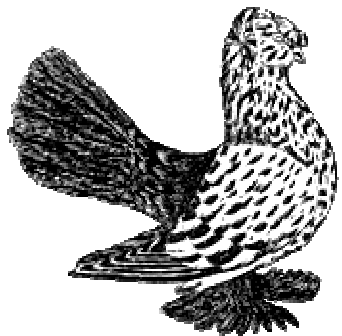
The Volga tumbler

By: Marcel Poelen. Drawings: Jan de Jong

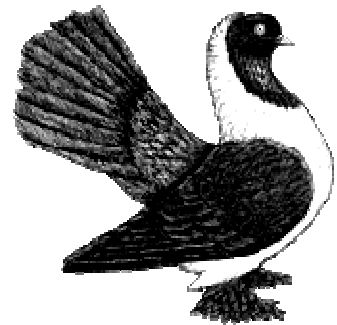


The Volga Tumbler is an old breed; no one knows exactly how old. Most of the Posture Tumblers have a common ancestor, the Kazaner Tumbler, this one being of a more moderate type than the present Posture Tumblers, but still clear to see why these breeds are called Posture Tumblers.

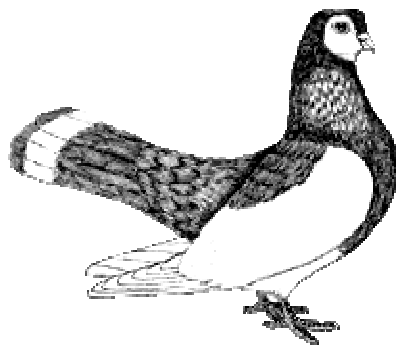
In Russia there is no System of Standardizing like we know; one has to do with a description. In this country the distances between the fanciers are very large, that is why many breeds were of a local variety and one often disagreed, that's why there were many different breeding lines. When you open a Map of Russia, you will easily localise many villages with the same names as the Tumbler breeds that we know, such as Taganroger, Krasnodar, Tullaer, Volga, or Rostower; all being breeds that are more or less related to each other.



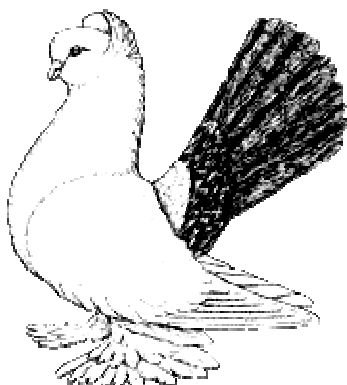
Eisker tumbler



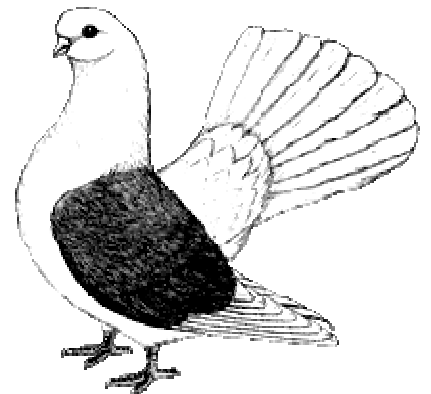
Rostower tumbler



Rschewer tumbler



North Caucaser tumbler

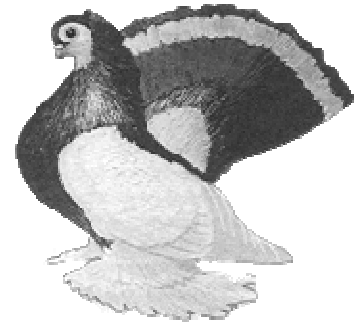


Taganroger tumbler

In fact there are at least 3 pied breeds, such as the Sissraner, Astrakhan- and Urjupinsker tumbler. These 3, or at least one of them, has been 'posing' for the Volga Tumbler. There have been importations by different fanciers and one simply did not know what they got in hands. The Russian language was another problem of course. When these different lines were brought together in Holland, it seemed that the breed characters were not well defined yet. During these early years everything was combined just like that. I myself had many lines and varieties in my lofts and only lately I was able to separate chaff from wheat and set out the ideal line.

Another thing is the breeding of different markings, like:

1. **White or coloured back.**
2. **Bearded or white head/white capped**
3. **Pearl or dark eyes.**



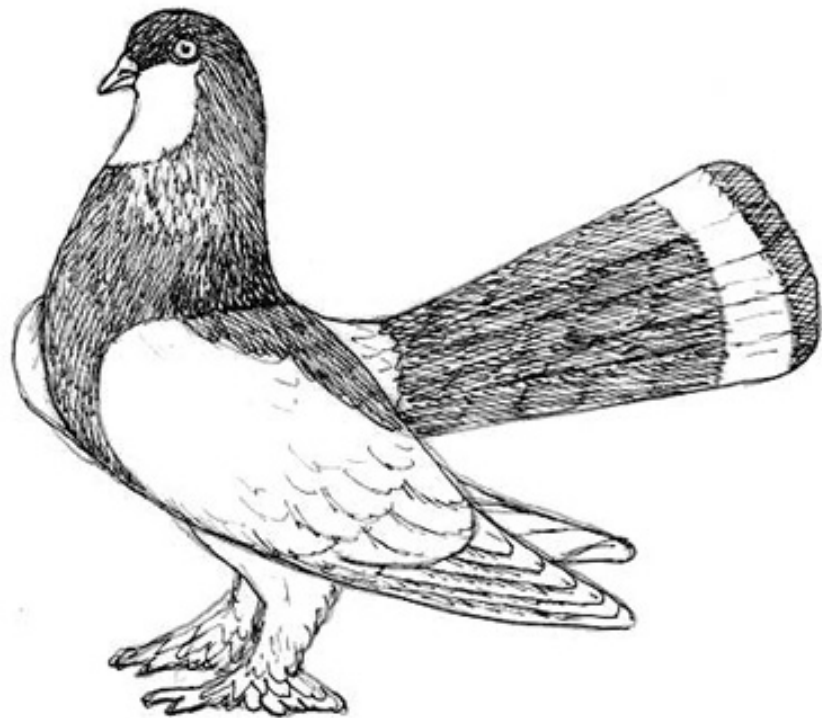
Drawing from a Russian Book

Shortly: The Volga Tumbler is

- *A breed with rich and old history, that almost disappeared in World War 2.*
- *Its origin is in Siberia where it is still bred in a perfect quality.*
- *Russian Fanciers are less organised, so many local breeding lines.*
- *As we got various lines from our imported birds as well as from the German imports, it seems that the breed is not a true bred yet. But we make great improvements.*

Sissraner Tumblers

In Russia this breed is called 'drop wing Sissraner'. They belong to the group 'Statnie' which is Russian for imposing and well-built. In Germany and The Netherlands they are one of the group of Posture Pigeons. Different from the Germany variety, which is described as a long beaked Volga Tumbler with a flat back, Romanov en Rassbesov describe a different type of pigeon with the name Sissraner, namely a very short beaked bird with a long neck and a very short back. One refers to the Standard of 1914. However, the breed is over 50 years older than that and is bred in the southern regions of the Volga, around Sissran, Baku, Samara, Orenburg and Astrakhan.



Sissraner Tumbler

Astrakan Tumbler

This tumbler breed originated in the towns along the Volga River, from Astrakhan to Llaroslawl. They are also seen in several towns in central Russia. They are excellent flyers which are able to fly for 3 to 6 hours. The body is about 38 cm / 15 inches tall and the wide tail has 14 to 20 feathers. The beak is of medium length. So far they only come in a blue pied marking.

The biggest difference with the Urjupinsker Tumbler lies in their rather high carried tail.



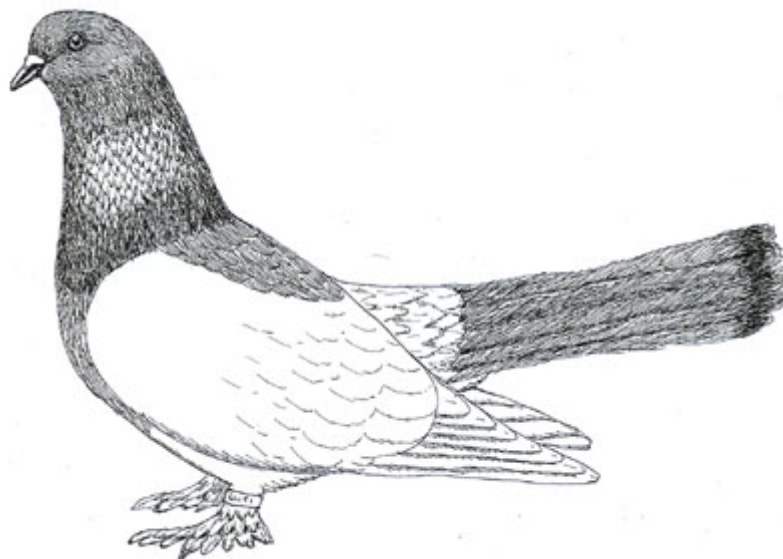
Astrakan Tumbler



Volga Tumbler

Urjupinsker tumblers

This tumbler is very closely related to the Astrachner Tumbler and the Volga Tumbler. The most striking difference is the white back, the yellow eye and the larger posture.



Urjupinsker tumbler

Volga posture Tumblers

According to the German Standard there are 4 different varieties in this breed; same as in Russia. Namely: the already described Sissraner; the Lentotschnije with its coloured back; the Red breasted with its white back and the Schalewie, which is crested. The German Standard also recognises a combination of these four breeds, which were showed for recognition in 1976 by the writer of this article. Since then the breed has been developing very well; in Europe the best birds are in Switzerland. These Volga posture Tumblers, as they are called today, can become very confined. They take good care of the youngsters during a long period, but before they start breeding they need a warm spring, just like all the other breeds from the South.

In the loft

Volga Tumblers don't have special demands in the loft. Keeping an open eye for overcrowding and hygiene are the most important things. Because these pigeons have no oil (tail) gland, it seems that they attract dirt. The only adaptation that I made are the perches being a lot deeper than the usual ones, just to keep the tail and foot feathers in a good condition. I don't use litter so I have to scrape every day; that's my own choice. Litter may cause a lot of dust, which is not good for human and bird.

My 'regime' is as follows:

8:30 in the morning: Scrape the floor, clean perches, refresh drinking water and feed (tightly).

11:30 or noon: Scrape the floor, remove the feeders.

16:00 afternoon: Scrape the floor, clean perches, vacuum cleaning, wash out the drinkers with chlorine and feed (tightly).

19:30 evening: Scrape the floor, remove the feeders.

Floor scraping at 11.30 and 19.30 is to clean out any eventually spoiled feed or grits.

My pigeons don't free fly and are always kept inside. In the breeding season I give each pair a separate pen; these are 80 x 80 x 80 cm and contain 2 perches, a roost and a shelf with a breeding pan. In here the couple stays during the total breeding season. In this way I am sure of the origin of the offspring. Above that, these pigeons need more time to mate and in this way they are not disturbed by others. These measures still don't guarantee a good fertilization at this breed.

Briefly:

- 1. No special demands, watch out for overcrowding.*
- 2. Proper hygiene.*
- 3. Larger perches.*
- 4. Larger breeding compartments; keep the pigeons closed in during the breeding season.*

Below: Volga Tumblers in the pigeon loft of Marcel Poelen



Qualities

Mentioned step by step

- A kind, non-aggressive pigeon.
- The various breeding lines make various characters, from very confiding to very shy. I had them all in my lofts. You should try to select on character (choose the ones that 'show' in the training pen)
- In common good breeders and good parents that use to bring up their youngs well. In the beginning I had males that did not breed or feed properly, but I selected that out.
- They are not very energetic pigeons so I keep them apart from other breeds, to prevent them from being worsted.
- No other breed reacts so strongly to weather changes; on a rainy day they are all hunched up and on a warm day they revive. This is a legacy of the continental climate in their place of origin. In South Russia there are warm summers and cold winters and the rain periods are not as intense as over here.

Breeding problems

You will need a relatively large number of breeding pairs to get adequate youngsters. I use to breed with 12 pairs. Last year I had 45 youngsters and this year 30, this in a period from the beginning of March to mid August. The biggest problem is the unfertilised eggs. I don't know what causes this, maybe:

- The breed loves a warm spring and needs warmer weather to 'get started'.
- Male and female don't match.
- Extreme types with a deep stand will have fertilisation problems; they often have short backs and wide tails. Some females lay down while mounted by the male; here the fertilisation is often good. However, some females keep standing up and draw their tail, so the male falls off and there can be no fertilisation.

Right:
Volga tumbler.
Photo and owner:
M. Poelen.





Left: Volga tumblers in black and red at M. Poelen.

Solutions for breeding problems

- Don't aim at too short legs (especially at the males).
- Start the breeding season a bit later in spring, when temperature is higher.
- Switching the couples may give better results.
- Cut some of the down around the vent; cut the foot feathers, cut some tail feathers to get a smaller tail.

There is no uniform rule. Birds do great in one year, and the other year opposite; we as breeders have not yet solved this mystery. Some say that this has to do with a lack of vitality, but I don't think so, as in the land of origin the birds have a much more sober life than over here. So they should do fine here. However, due to these problems the breed will never become popular and will be always in the hands of only a few breeders.

So I cannot give you a proper breeding advice (except for strict selecting on vitality) The 'feeling' and 'eyes' for the breed will be the most important, because breeding is all about having 'the eye' to see if some of your birds have something extra. This is what makes the difference between a fancier and a top-breeder. After all we cannot all be star-football players, can we?



Left: Volga tumbler red. Certificate winner Keistadshow 2003, U (97 points), Owner: G. van Doorn. Photo: J.F. Korver.

Right: Volga tumbler.
Owner: Marcel Poelen.



Type and Standard description

The complete description can be read in the Standard of Perfection of the NBS (Dutch Pigeon Union) or in the official standard of your own country. However; I should like to give you some completion:

- The body must be short; I often compare them with the Old English Game bantams that I used to breed.
- The breast is deep and preferably carried before the wing bow.
- The body is wide at the front with a significant narrowing to the back, where the tail appears as wide as possible.
- The tail is wanted wide and nicely closed; some curving is permitted, but never too much.
- At the red and yellow the tail should have a clean and sharp marked ribbon tail, which is not wanted too far at the end of the tail. Preferably a ± 1.5 cm coloured ribbon at the tail end. The tail feathers should be totally coloured, as much as possible.
- The neck should be elegant, long and somewhat bent to the back. It is to be seen as a plus, when the pigeon shows some action.
- Feet feathering should be rounded and closed, and as far as I concern, the feet feathering can be an impressive one. Never groused.
- Rounded head shape with an according beak that might be somewhat coloured.
- Positioning deep; they must not stand too high.

There are only a few pigeons that satisfy all these requirements and have a nice colour and marking at the same time. We must be careful with this nice breed and for this reason it needs to be judged on the show in a positive way.

Defects in type

- Too long, too high and narrow in body.
- Neck is too thick and short
- Tail too much curved or too narrow.
- Split tail and split tail feathers.
- Badly formed or too few feet feathering.
- Insufficient elegance and harmony in type.

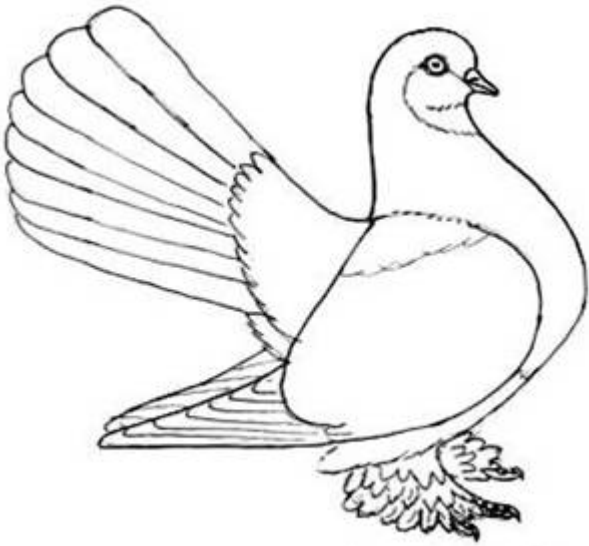
Colour and marking

Volga tumblers are recognized in:

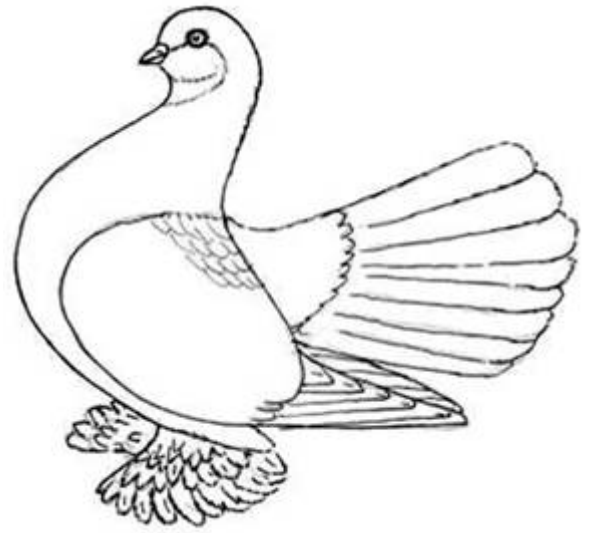
- Red..... Genetically dominant red with Lebanon factor.
- Yellow
- Black
- Blue

From the blacks you can produce blue chequered, blue diluted chequered and dun chequered. Crossing between black and yellow gives 'strawberry' colour.

Explanation on the defects in type, see drawings below



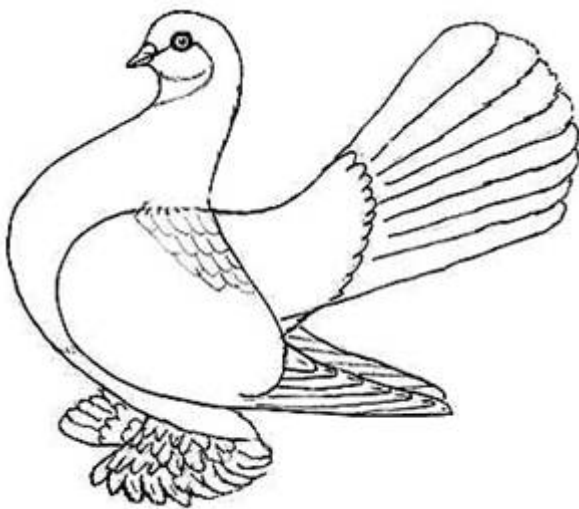
Neck too short, too thick. Foot feathers too short



Tail carried too low



Stance too high on its feet



Back too long



Neck/breast too steep. Needs more breast

The marking is a magpie marking with beard and the so called 'Rschewer head' marking. Besides that a white or coloured back is possible. This diversity gives the following problems: not really or well coloured backs (tigered) and many pigeons with two different eye colours, due to the beard marking influence (pearl eyes) or 'Rschewer head' marking (dark eyes).

- Reds and yellows have a ribbon tail.
- Blacks do not have a ribbon tail.
- Blues have a black tail bar.

Defects in design

Colour in belly and leg feathers, bad ribbons, white lower tail cover and an irregular marking.

Sicknesses and accidents

In my experience, I have very little or no problems with sicknesses. I keep my pigeons sober without any supplements or all kinds of preventive resources.

My pigeons get:

- Good quality pigeon food
- Two times a day fresh drinking water
- Proper hygiene..... new pigeons are placed in quarantine for \pm 4 weeks

Before the breeding season I have some pigeons tested for trichomoniasis; if nothing is found, I will not treat for trichomoniasis. For times a year there will be an extensive droppings test. One time a year a vaccination against Paramyxo and that's all. There are breeders, which think that Volga tumblers do have a chronically paratyphus infection and this will also influence the fertility. I never found proof for this, and I never found the droppings test to be positive in the case of paratyphus. So far - nock on wood - I never had one dead pigeon during the 3 years of breeding the Volga Tumbler, and that is not bad!

Plea

I should like to plea for this breed; together we can see to it that it will stay around and is seen on Shows. It is a breed with many qualities:

- Elegant type.
- Attractive colour and marking.

In short, a masterly East European appearance. Although, with all these qualities it will be a difficult breed, of which it is the art to breed some presentable youngsters. So let us be chary of the few breeders that are devoted to this breed and let us take care to behold this breed for the Shows.



Volga tumblers in the loft of Marcel Poelen, left black and right yellow.



Volga tumblers in the loft of Marcel Poelen, left yellow and right red.



Volga tumblers in the loft of Marcel Poelen, left red en right a black female on the nest.

For further information you can always contact me by the editor of this magazine redactie@aviculture-europe.nl

M.G.T. Poelen, Beneden Leeuwen.

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