

Afghaanse Musafer duiven

افغانی مسافر کفتر
Afghan Musafer Pigeon

Text and photos: Aviculture Europe.

Saturday 21 March we went to visit Shafik Nader's in Helmond (NL). Another pigeon fancier living in the same town - Ben Kocken, gave us the tip about this special fancier. Our visit was very worth while indeed, especially with the warm welcome we received. We had the pleasure to see a new pigeon breed, the 'Musafer Pigeon', with a marking that was absolutely striking.

Shafik was born in Afghanistan, he is 41 years old and has lived in Holland for 12 years now. In Afghanistan he lived in the capitol Kabul and he is very experienced in the pigeon sport – which is very popular there – and is a dedicated fancier.

Today Kabul has about 3 million inhabitants, so you can say this is a true Metropolis. For centuries the pigeon sport has been practised there in a way that does resemble the Amsterdam flying pigeon sport, similar to how it was practised in the past in many of the larger cities and towns of Europe, such as London (GB), Barcelona (E) and Modena in Italy.

Right: In this picture Shafik is showing a Musafer pigeon with that specific marking: one complete wing is white and the other is completely coloured. The coloured wing can be on the left or the right side; either is correct. The value of the bird depends on the accuracy of the markings. One white flight feather is deemed a serious fault.



Left: Two young Musafer pigeons. Both have the required head marking, which - according to experts – resembles the marking of the Lahore, that Breed being one of the Ancestors. The young on the left has the one-side marking (often referred to as 'an Odd-Side' in English), while the other young is fully white feathered, except for the coloured head marking.

Right: A yellow and a blue Musafer pigeon. The yellow one is left side marked and has a white wing shield on the right side. The Blue is right side marked and white at the left side.

It is a pity Shafik doesn't have pigeon photos from Afghanistan, he told us that the pigeons are flown in 'Kits', in typical 'Thief' Pigeon Fashion, with the aim to catch pigeons from a Kit of a Rival Loft. Several technics are practised.

Basically the pigeons are trained to react to flags; these flags are in different colours. By waving a particular coloured flag, the pigeons will fly a further distance from the loft; if for instance a red flag the Kit will start circling closer to the loft but not drop, with another colour, the Kit will drop down to the loft, hopefully bringing in one or more of the Rivals pigeons, or the Kit is 'refreshed' by adding a new bird or some young pigeons.

In this way it is easier to exhaust the other kit, which will make it easier to catch some of those pigeons. The pigeons in the Kit are not by any means of the same colour, as such was the case in Amsterdam in the old days when usually one Breed, one Colour was flown.



Apart from the Flags the Pigeon keeper has also a catching net at hand; the number of caught birds also depends on how handy you are with the net!

Left: This blue young has a very good head marking, the Colour should not touch the Eye (as with a Lahore). The Wing shield is fully coloured with also coloured flights. This pigeon is showing some leg feathering though.



Another very remarkable fact is that the kit is composed of males only, with just ONE female, the latter 'leading' the Kit.

The pigeons are kept in three separate lofts; one with the flying pigeons, one with the breeding pairs and one with the young birds.

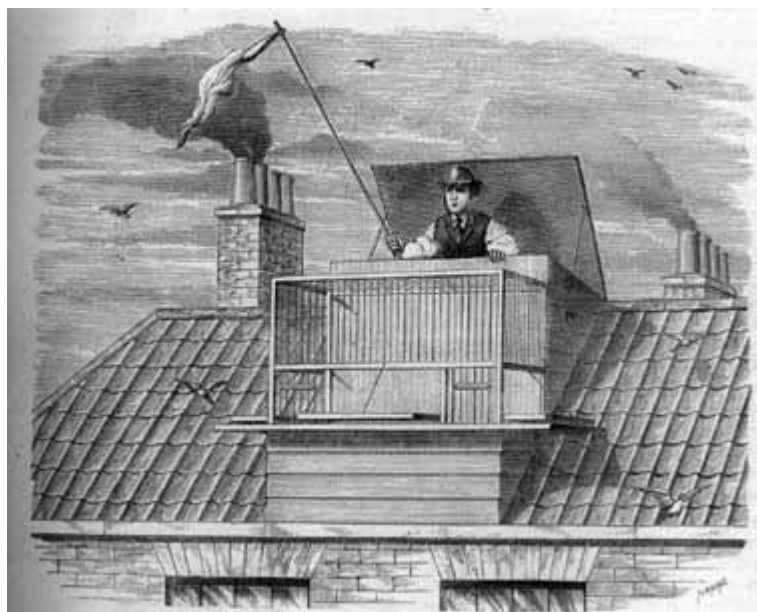
Right: A flying pen on top of the roof, as could be seen in many European cities in former days. Drawing by Fleming.

Shafik told us that in Afghanistan young boys often start the pigeon keeping hobby when they are 7 to 14 years old. They usually start with crossbreeds, but after a certain time, a number of boys get seriously interested and better (pure bred and more expensive) pigeons are purchased, although this very much depends on the financial situation.

Today in Afghanistan, a pure bred and correctly marked pigeon will cost between 20 and 200 euros; for most Afghans this is a fortune comparable to us buying a Car here in the West! Thus the ones who cannot afford these expensive birds, concentrate on keeping flying pigeons with the right character to catch other pigeons.

The most beautiful (and most expensive) pigeons are kept in aviaries and admired for their beauty. At best they are allowed to fly out late in the evening for a short fly.

Apart from this keeping Pigeons for Sport, there are also pigeons that are simply kept for manure and meat.



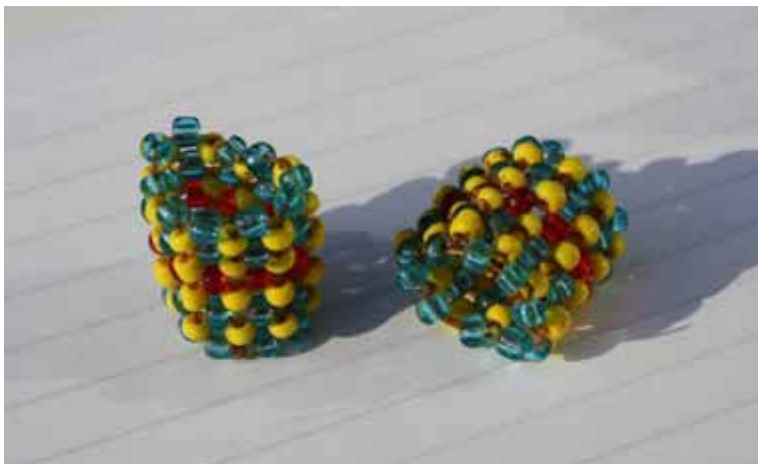
Shafik got interested in pigeons because of his Grandfather's birds, although in Afghanistan it is almost inevitable you come into contact with the Pigeon hobby, whether you want it or not! You are right in the middle, it is all around you and you grow up with it.

Pigeon keeping is for the Afghan people, almost in their Genes. As far as one knows, pigeons have always been here. There are no written facts on pigeon though, as 90 to 95% of the population is

illiterate, thus there is not such a thing as written breed description or specification. There are also no 'Organisations' or things like Clubs for Pigeon keepers. There are 'teachers' and every flying pigeon fancier normally gets guidance and works under the supervision of a teacher, who passes on his 'secrets' on keeping pigeons. During the flying season the birds are fed mainly seeds that are rich in oil; in the resting season the teacher instructs on 'secret' mixtures.

The 'apprentice' (*Taliban* in Afghan) pays his teacher by giving him the better pigeons that he catches. Other caught birds are taken to the pigeon store and sold.





Above: A right side marked Musafer pigeon and right: a left marked blue Musafer.

Left: Pigeon rings from Afghanistan; colourful jewellery for flying pigeons.



Above: These decorated pigeon rings are very old and valuable. They are in fact little bells and when a group of pigeons land at the roof, it sounds like an orchestra.

Left: A felt 'cushion' is put between the bell and the pigeon's leg, to protect it from rubbing.



Right: Some more ancient - but not decorated - pigeon rings/bells.



Left: These are the cheaper 'modern' pigeon bells. The pink one is put between the green bell and the pigeon's foot.



In the last five years Shafik succeeded in contacting several Afghan pigeon fanciers living abroad and exchange birds between them. Recently, he traced another Afghan fancier living in Holland. That was by means of an Internet sale and he is not completely convinced of the pedigree of those pigeons, also because there is no openness about the way that man got hold of these birds as, there has been an export ban for many years. Therefore things had to be done in secret, and it is logical that one is not very communicative on these matters.

Shafik's search for the Musafer pigeon in the surrounding Countries was not successful.

Right: Shafik is very proud of his Afghan Musafer pigeons. He even had them pictured on the bottles of his favourite wine. Visiting friends get a warm welcome and to our surprise we were presented with 2 bottles of this wine when we said goodbye.

Several years ago Shafik joined the Fancy Pigeon Club 'Het Zuiden' in Eindhoven. He feels fully accepted and welcome there, although the other members don't really fully understand his aspect of the Hobby. This spring however he was invited at the provincial Pigeon Judges Congress and here he experienced a truly great interest in his specially marked pigeons.

Now he seriously intends to found a Club for Afghan pigeons especially for Afghan pigeon fanciers in Holland, so that the Dutch pigeon keepers' culture can be passed on to the Afghans. The first step has been taken: Shafik drew a provisional Standard for the Musafer pigeon and anticipating the founding of the Afghan Pigeon Club, he wants to invite interested pigeon keepers to his house, organising a sort of exhibition to show them his 'Special' aspect of the Hobby.



Shafik's big question is how to explain the a-symmetric pattern of the Afghan Musafer pigeons. Even today he has not been able to ascertain a 'rule' in inheritance of left or right marked wings, or what happens when pairing a left marked and a right marked bird. Or a properly marked bird to a self coloured one, or to a self white one. But these questions will hopefully be answered in the coming time, thus unravelling maybe more on the Breeds background.

In conclusion

The Afghan Musafer pigeon is a vital bird, easy to keep. They don't make high demands for housing and raise their young very well. This pigeon has all opportunities to become – with help of this dedicated pigeon ambassador - a very special exhibition pigeon, without neglecting the flying capacities of this pigeon breed.

Above: A left marked yellow Musafer pigeon. Photo: Shafik Nader.

Right: Young Musafer, left marked.

**Provisional Standard:
Afghan Musafer pigeon**

Country of Origin: Afghanistan

Overall Impression

Rather strong flying pigeon type; normal stance and carriage

Characteristics

Type:	Rather long with broad breast
Stance:	Rather low, horizontal
Head:	Rounded, with a slightly arched forehead
Eyes:	Dark
Ceres:	Red
Beak:	Normal, flesh coloured, also for the Blacks and Blues
Wattle:	Fine
Throat:	Well cut out
Neck:	Strong at the base, tapering to the head
Breast:	Broad and well rounded
Back:	Broad
Wings:	Normal
Tail:	Tail carriage normal
Legs:	Medium length
Feathering:	Smooth



Left: Black right side marked Musafer pigeon. A left or right side marked pigeon is called 'Tjap'.



Colours

Black, Red, Yellow, Blue with black bar.

Amri: both wings coloured blue with black bars.

Shirazi: both wings coloured black, red or yellow.

Tjap: one wing coloured, the other wing white.

Khal: both wings white.

Colour and Markings

All colours should be intense and pure.

Coloured are: the head in the form of a 'Cap' with ideally a fine white band beginning at the beak and going around the eye; this white marking ideally becoming gradually broader behind the eye, the coloured 'Cap' marking ending in a neat curve at the base of the back of the Head.

One or both wings coloured – depending on the variety.

The tail may be fully coloured, the same colour as the wings and head marking, or completely white.

Right: Of course there are mis-markeds, such as white flights. This is not wanted. Also this chequered variety is not (yet) mentioned in the provisional standard.

Faults

To weak in body, too high on the legs, too upright carriage, too elongated head marking (helmet); the marking around the eye not to be too broad.

Judging

Order of importance in judging:

- Breed type
- Body form and posture
- Head marking
- Eye colour and beak colour
- Colour and markings

Ring size: 9 mm



Left: The lofts and aviaries of Shafik are very neat and clean. Even the breeding compartments have a wire floor, see below.



For more information
Feel free to contact:
Shafik Nader, tel.: 0492-532950.



[m1u2s3i4](#) wants to share a video at YouTube:

This video is for you at You Tube, greetings, Shafik
[aanse duiven/ Kaftar Afghani](#)
Afghaanse Musafer duiven
Afghanische Musafer tauben
Afghan Musafer pigeon.