Forever faithful to the ‘Vinkduif’

About Archangels and Gimpels,

The fanciers of this breeds, and

Hans Meijer of Laren (NL)

Text and photos: Remco de Koster
Edited by: Frank Povah.

Was that a shock! Only 13 Vinkduiven at the last Federal Show in Nieuwegein! Those who have been following the history of the breed in the Netherlands in recent decades, will know that the Vinkduif has seen better times, with larger numbers in past national exhibitions. The Vinkduif was once bred to a high level in the Netherlands and has always had loyal breeders who greatly loved this breed and were internationally oriented in the Vinkduiven Club – Ritzema of Ikema, Dr. Kuipers, Van Camp of Apeldoorn, Van Dijk, Amersfoort, and Cor van der Post of Gouda, lately of Zevenaar among them.

Above: Hans Meijer with one of his Gold blue wing Gimpels.
For more than 50 years, Hans Meijer of Laren in North Holland has been a breeder and fan of the Vinkduif. In the old magazine *Avicultura* of January 23, 1964, a club post by secretary JM van der Swallow reads: "A good start in the new year: We can present to you this time no fewer than five new members ... and J. Meijer, from Laren NH (sponsored by our member Mr van Dijk), who breeds copper (red) black wings". That was 50 years ago, and Hans Meijer still keeps Vinkduiven in the loft behind his beautiful and stylish house in the equally beautiful North Holland village of Laren. Old things, memorabilia, antiques, fine paintings and art in general, along with a love for all animals, have always been a passion for this former house painter.

**Above: Gimpels in the aviary, very energetic pigeons and full of vitality!**

After surgery five years ago, Hans had to slow down on doctor’s orders, but he has taken things up again, together with his wife, who took over caring for the animals (besides the pigeons there are also Cochin bantams and a pony) during his illness. Once more he is focused on breeding his beloved Vinkduiven. “Beautiful, aren’t they?” he says, while I photograph a group of (yellow) blue wings in the aviary.

The Vinkduif is still his favourite breed, although in recent decades one and another breed (mainly from the colour pigeon group) has been tried, including Thurgau Crescents, which were rarely seen about 30 years ago, while today we know much more about the Swiss pigeon breeds.

**Right: Portrait of a very loyal Vinkduiven man!**
Above: Gold blue wing Gimpels in the loft.

It had to come, as did the Vinkduiven and the different Colour Pigeons, because here, on Smeekweg Street, his father, J. Joh. Meijer kept a whole collection of colour pigeons and other breeds. As a schoolboy I could often be found here, especially when something new and special had entered the collection; the rare blue Old German Moorheads for example. Who had heard of such pigeons in those days? The Ice Pigeons, clean-legged and muffed were the passion of father Meijer, but also Saxon Breast Pigeons, Saxon Whitetails and later, Crescent Pigeons, first the “Saxons” with muffs and later, by selective breeding, clean-legged. At that time, no-one knew of the existence of the Thuringian Crescent Pigeons. Mother Meijer, meanwhile, preferred the white Saddlebacks and white Old Dutch Tumblers. And so at Smeekweg Street there was a whole menagerie of pigeon breeds, along with Faverolles and other chickens, some ducks and geese, and so on. On Wednesdays they often visited the poultry market in Barneveld, and when I could not go with them, I was always very curious to see if they had brought some poultry home to Laren. I was impatient to see of course, so, after school it was on the bike and off to Smeekweg Street!

Left: Another thing Hans Meijer has been doing for years: collecting beautiful birdcages.
It was in Smeekweg Street that the young Hans Meijer kept the Vinkduiven. His first examples came from Jan Snip, a member of Pigeon Breeders Club 't Gooi was and known mainly for his Holle Croppers.

The copper (red) black wings and white wings came from Van Dijk and the gold (yellow) black wings and white wings came from Mr. Kuipers, (Chairman of the club for many years and known for his Dragoons and dedication to the Ornithophilia Show.

Hans’ first successes were with copper black wing Archangels and gold black wing Gimpels. In a show report from 1980, R.K.W. Kuipers writes: "In the Gold black wings 14 cocks and 9 hens entered, good to very good birds. Fine ground colour, like a golden 10 guilder coin, the black feathering a deep ebony black with ample lustre, although a bit less than in the Copper black wings. Kluskens wins First, followed by Meijer and Gerritsen. In the hens Schrage wins and Meijer is second best, both hens achieved 96 points."

There were white wings and blue wings at Smeekweg Street. And I think the blue wings have always played a major part in the breeding program, since they remain Hans Meijer’s favourite colour to this day. He also began breeding white bars, his first birds coming from Denmark, as well as white spots (white heads and white flights). These two Gimpel varieties were really something rare.

Left: A breeding pair of yellow Thuringian Crescent Pigeons.
Forty years ago, Germany was still far away, but some Dutch breeders did keep contacts with their German counterparts. Today Germany still is the home of Gimpel breeding, the breed widespread there in all its varieties, even in the aforementioned white spots. White bars remain difficult to breed, so you see them only at a few breeders’. For those fascinated by the breed, a beautiful book of 375 pages with the revealing title: Alles über die Gimpeltauben. (All about Gimpel pigeons) was published in 2009.

That breeding these pigeons in the three varieties of wing colour is not an easy job is well known, whether we are talking about producing the slightly creamy white wings, the pure colour of the blue wing (a bit darker in the hens), or the black wings with the beautiful green lustre on each black feather that holds equally for both sexes, as Mr. Kuipers once stated. That ‘beetle’ lustre on the black wings – and on the head, neck and rump – is a very important characteristic. I recall very well how the judges used to carry each Vinkduif into the daylight to get a proper assessment (in those days most show halls had large windows).

The colour of the head, neck and rump on the one hand, and the colour of wings and tail on the other have their own ideal, and to achieve both colour aspects without the influence of the one colour on the other requires skill and, above all, patience. Vinkduiven do indeed have distinct, even unique colour combinations – copper and gold, combined with blue, black or white wings and tails. This makes for a challenge for true colour lovers who do not want merely quick success, but know how to approach the ideal with patience and common sense. Experienced breeders can tell by a young Vinkduiven’s juvenile plumage if they will get the right colour after moulting. That, too, is associated with patience.

Today Hans has restricted himself to breeding the gold coloured blue wings in barless, with black bars, and in white flights. Apart from these and in memory of his father, there are also a few Thuringian Crescent Pigeons and Saxon Breast Pigeons in his loft. At the most recent Champion Show he showed his blue wing Gimpels and four Crescent Pigeons.

Right: Catching up; The author of this article Remco de Koster (left) and Hans Meijer (right).
When after a long time I unexpectedly knocked on the door at Smeekweg Street, Laren, I soon heard: “The door is open, come in.” So Hans Meijer, has always been a little different, a little rebellious, _bon vivant_, frank and tolerant; he takes people as they are, and expects they take him as he is.

Whether it was with more or less success, he has always remained faithful to his Vinkduiven. I wrote this article not only because Hans Meijer is a very fine person and a friend, but also because he has remained faithful to his beautiful Vinkduiven for such a long time. Someone who, after decades, can still say: “Beautiful birds, huh?” about his pigeons, does indeed love his birds and will take them with one or other little fault into the bargain. Of course I also wrote this article because I hope that the Vinkduif in all its interesting and unique colour varieties will once more return to the spotlight.

**Concise Standard description**

**Archangel & Gimpel**

*Drawing by: Jean Louis Frindell (F)*

*Entente code SBI: D / 402*

**Origin:** Presumed though not proved to be from Dalmatia/Illyria. The Copper Blackwing (the Archangel) was developed and is being perfected in England, all the other colours were bred and refined in Germany. From 1884 until 2004 the Copper Blackwing in the UK was catered for by its own specialist Archangel Club. In 2004 all the colours, in common with other countries throughout the world, became united into a single group. For the purpose of this Standards Book the UK ARCHANGEL standard and the country of origin GIMPEL standard have both been included.

**Overall Impression:**

A strong field-type pigeon with a good shape, elegant, and full of character.

**Archangel**

*Head:* Rather long and narrow, nicely curved from beak to peak.

*Eye:* Dark orange colour, with cere of a very fine texture of a reddish tint.

*Beak:* Rather long and slender, of a horny colour, the upper mandible darkening towards the end, the wattle being of a fine light texture.

*Peak:* Should stand erect from back of head, tapering to a point and as high as possible.

*Colour:* (a) The bronzing should be a deep brilliant copper colour, free from green, not smoky or foggy in appearance and should extend from the crown of the head right on to the elongated feathers beyond the vent, including the hocks.
The wings, back and tail should be of a deep ebony black.

**Flights:** When closed, should be black; when spread open, the inner webbing should be a rich bronze.

**Legs and Feet:** Bright coral red, free from any feathering below the hocks. The nails of a dark horny colour.

**Lustre:** That on the bronzing should be of a bright fiery hue and the wings, back and rump, a rich metallic beetle green or with a slight admixture of pink.

**Size:** Medium, rather long and slender, tapering from shoulders to tail.

**Carriage:** Upstanding, sprightly in appearance and altogether of a racy character.

**Faults:** Colour: Green in neck and bronzing, purple head, plum or sooty in appearance, mealy underneath, dark or black hocks. **Wings:** Ticked or chequered. **Flights:** Blue or grizzled. **Back:** Grey or slatey. **Tail:** Blue. **Eye:** Pearl or white. **Peak:** Open, shell, twisted, or with gap at the back of the head. **Lustre:** The lack of.

**Scale of Points:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General shape, size, stance</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solid Bronzing throughout</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peak</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape of head</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colour of eye, beak and feet</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid colour of wings, rump and tail</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flights (chestnut webbing)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metallic lustre</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL:</strong></td>
<td>100</td>
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</tbody>
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**Ring size:** B

**Gimpel (other colours)**

**Head:** Lightly curved, longish and narrow, forehead fairly flat. Both peak crested or plain headed; the crest developing from the back of the shoulders up to the apex. The feathers from both sides of the shoulders converging into a sharp ridge which runs up the back of the neck to form the peak.

**Eye:** Orange-coloured.

**Cere:** Very slightly developed, light-pink coloured.

**Beak:** Medium to long; light to dark horn for the black-winged (a bright coloured beak is not an advantage), pink for the white-winged, dark for the blue-winged.

**Neck:** Fairly long and comparatively thin. Throat well rounded out.

**Breast:** Moderately wide and slightly pronounced.

**Back:** Sloping down.

**Wings:** Moderately long, tightly closed, resting on the but not reaching the end of the tail.

**Tail:** 12 feathers. Narrow, closely following the shape of the back line.

**Legs:** Clean legged.
Feathers: Well developed and tight.

Faults (general): Body too weak, crest too broad (shell-crest), lopsided or very poorly developed.

COLOUR and MARKINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Copper Gimpel</th>
<th>Gold Gimpel</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black wing white flight</td>
<td>Black-winged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White-winged</td>
<td>White-winged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-winged</td>
<td>Blue-winged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Order of Importance:
Presentation of the whole pigeon - Copper, gold and all other colours - Body shape – Crest - Eye colour and beak colour.

Pigeons with the Monk or Priest marking must have coloured tails and the ground colour should not be too harshly penalised or judged. When judging or assessing, always begin with the basic standard rules, the pigeon to take high awards must be fault-free having an even copper colour or gold colour from head to vent, with much sheen or lustre, the wider the lustre lacing on the feathers the better the pigeon. The judges and Breeders should put a lot of value on the beetle green lustre on the back, wing and tail coverts. Small colour differences in the beak are of little significance and do not mean it cannot be placed for the highest awards.

Ring size: B

For more information about Archangels and Gimpels you can always contact the Specialty Club for Vinkduiven breeders in the Netherlands and Belgium.

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