

Old German Magpie Tumbler

Oud-Duitse Ekstertuimelaar
Culbutant Pie Allemand
Elsterpurzler
Old German Magpie Tumbler
Старогерманский сорочий турман

Text: Nico van Benten

This breed is not only listed by the large German Specialty Club, but also in the Modern German Pigeon Literature it is mentioned as "one of the oldest German pigeon breeds".

In an attempt to trace back its history in the old books from the famous Dutch pigeon historian C.A.M. Spruijt, i.e. the 'De Tuimelaarsrassen' from 1935 and 'De Raskenmerken' from 1948, I found out that very little has been written down or documented on this breed.



Left: Old German Magpie Tumbler with a light coloured beak, a dark tip on the upper beak is allowed for the blacks and blues. The light coloured beak varieties also have red eye ceres. Photo: Mick Bassett.



Right: After the reunification of the West and East German states, the Old German Magpie Tumbler with a dark coloured beak was added as a new colour in the standard. This dark beak variety also has a dark eye cere. Photo: Mick Bassett.



In the Netherlands, the Old German Magpie Tumbler was possibly looked at as being 'too common', not being a true pigeon breed, the same as the Old Dutch Owl was looked at in the early days. A breed like the Old Dutch Owl was so ordinary and common everyone had them to fly out; such birds certainly didn't belong at an exhibition. Today the Specialty Club of the Old Dutch Owl is the largest in the country!

Left: Old German Magpie Tumbler ash red with a light coloured beak and scarlet eye ceres. Photo: Mick Bassett.



Right: Old German Magpie Tumbler yellow with a light beak.



Left: Ash silver coloured Old German Magpie Tumbler with a dark coloured beak and dark eye ceres.

Right: Old-German Magpie Tumbler in blue with dark coloured beak and eye ceres.

The great popularity in Germany, the old German Magpie Tumbler (*Elsterpurzler*) does not transfer into other countries and doesn't have a chance of success in the Netherlands. As none of the Specialty Clubs promotes the breed. Unknown, unloved and this is how it still is in Holland with the Old German Magpie Tumbler.





The breed is recognised in the Dutch Pigeon Standard and every now and then it pops up at a show, where it is always undervalued by the judges, and will never gain an adequate award. So you will never see that fancier and his pigeons again at the show. However, another group of fanciers discovered this breed, being the group of 'flying pigeon fanciers'. They are especially interested in the typical flying capacities that this breed has, but as with the show quality, you also have to select and train for this performance too.



Above and right:

The attentive reader will have noticed that apart from the beak and eye cere colour, there are more differences between the pigeons. We might say that the dark beak birds have a less robust beak than the light beak ones. Also the forehead of the light beak seems a bit more filled and they are less slender built. Apparently these differences have to be watched and adjusted in the breed. The flying pigeon fanciers prefer the dark beak type, the more slender pigeon.

The History

In the German book 'Handbuch der Taubenrassen' from Joachim Schütte, Günter Stach and Josef Wolters from 1994,

*there are two breeds described, namely, the Magpie Tumbler (**Elsterpurzler**) in the old days also called the South German Magpie Tumbler or the Old German Magpie Tumbler, and the Magpie Tumbler from Lausitz (**Lausitzer Elsterpurzler**) which has been created in Oberlausitz since the 1950's; this is a variation from the first breed. Lausitz is situated in the German federal state of Saxony, situated against the Polish and Tszechoslowacian border. Saxony was at that time part of the German Democratic Republic (DDR). So after the reunification of the West and East German states in 1990, there have been two almost equal breeds that have been exhibited at the shows under two different names.*

In the book from Erich Müller, band 6 'Alles über Rassetauben' from 2002, there is an acceptable explanation found about the history of the breed, which is confirmed by other sources. The breed is very old, it goes way back to the Old Persian days (today Iran) from the old tumbler breeds and there must be a connection somewhere along the way with the Danish (Longfaced Magpie) Tumbler. According to the German Specialty Club for this breed, remarks on the breed have been written as far back as 1764. In the 19th century the predecessors of the Magpie Tumblers where known under several denominations, depending on the country region where this breed was kept and there must be a variety of different types in existence. The popularity of the breed in the 19th century had been very strong, especially with the eye catching colour and marking, and also it had a great following for the flying performance especially with the farmers in the German Federal States Bayern and Baden. Despite its popularity in that time, it almost went under because

of the new types of pigeons: the long faced (beak) tumblers that became very popular around 1900. Also take into account the result of the two World Wars in the 20th century, so after that chapter in history the originally mid length Tumbler had been almost extinguished. After the last WW, the Magpie Tumbler was re-found and re-established in West Germany, with the creation of a new standard for the breed in 1951. This does not apply to the Magpie Tumbler in the East part of Germany known as the Lausitzer Magpie Tumbler. This pigeon had different points and had (different from the West Germany type) a dark coloured beak and dark eye ceres. This dark beak is also called a 'Pitch beak' (Pechschnäbel).

In the mean time both varieties are joined in the German Standard of the *Elsterpurzler* and so also in the Standard of the *Oud-Duitse Ekstertuimelaar*, such as the breed is named in the Netherlands. This was done on agreement of both German Clubs and also on approval of the fanciers of both clubs. In fact the Lausitzer Elsterpurzler was added as a colour variety in the standard description of the Elsterpurzler. To everyone's astonishment in 2003 at the VDT Cologne and in 2004 at the National Show in Leipzig both varieties, thus the South German type (as Elsterpurzler) and the Lausitzer Elsterpurzler were showed as separate breeds, and this was disliked by all of the Specialty Club.

SV der Elsterpurzlerzüchter

German Specialty Club of the Old German Magpie Tumbler

*This is an active Breeders' Club with 215 breeders, celebrating their 50 Year's Anniversary this year 3 -5 October in Hotel Jansen in Sörgel (Germany). The Club Show will be held in Fulda (Germany) December 20 and 21 2008, expecting over 700 Old-German Magpie Tumblers as usual. For more information please contact the President of the Club: Ralf Keller, Turmbergweg 10, D-97640 Stockheim, tel.: **49 (0) 8337 / 8425*

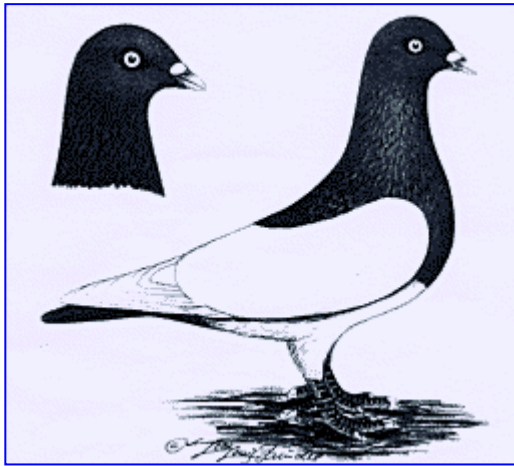
The Club states that this beautiful Tumbler breed is found all over Germany and is especially loved for its characteristic flying style, being the 'Tumbling' and 'Positioning'. With this 'tumbling' one doesn't refer to the whirling of young pigeons in the air, but the tumbling backwards during flying. Further questioning learned that the 'positioning' is a special way of holding the wings during flying; they are kept in a high and stretched out, almost vertical position, like the Steller Pouter does. This positioning should not be confounded with the 'sailing' when the wings are kept in a V-shape at the most.

The general impression is an active, lively bird, not too narrow in type and with an almost horizontally station.

Breed characteristics are:

Head: good rounded, no flat parts and filled in the front. **Eyes:** pearl coloured, as pure as possible. **Eye ceres:** small and smoothly, scarlet red at the light beak and dark at the dark beak birds. **Beak:** of middle length. The colour is light for the light beak birds; the upper mandible having a slight dark colour on the tip is permissible at the blacks and blues. At the dark beak ones, the colour is in conformity with the feather colour. **Wattles:** small, rose-coloured with a powdery finish. **Neck:** of middle length with a clear throat. **Breast:** broad forwards but not too high carried. **Back:** long and almost horizontal or slightly sloping from shoulders towards the tail. **Wings:** strong and of good width and length, covering the back, lying smoothly on the rump and tail, without reaching the end of the tail. **Tail:** good closed. **Legs:** clean legs, of middle length.

Faults: too narrow body, too high station, too long neck, too long beak, not enough filling in the forehead, full dark coloured beak in the light beak variety, thick eye ceres, Not fully coloured beak and pale eye ceres at the dark beak birds, white colour at the back and poor feathering.



Colour varieties

The Old-German Magpie Tumbler is called the colour pigeon among the tumblers, although the breed only comes in the Magpie pattern: Body with the exception of the head, neck, breast, saddle and tail pure white. The colour extending down throat to the tip of the breast bone, it either forms a straight line. The colour cutting down over the shoulders in a convex manner. The colour on the back should form a heart shape with the narrow portion towards the tail. The colour of the tail to extend only a short distance from the base of the tail stopping before the vent. All colours to be deep, even and very

lustrous. The breed is recognised in 12 colour varieties, the light beak Blue Chequered being the latest one that was added in German Pigeon Standard.

Colour varieties with a light coloured beak: *They also must have scarlet eye ceres*

Black magpie, *a black spot at the upper mandible is allowed*

Red magpie

Yellow magpie

Blue magpie, *a black spot at the upper mandible is allowed*

Blue chequered magpie, *a black spot at the upper mandible is allowed*

Ash red magpie

Silver magpie

Silver chequered magpie

Colours varieties with a dark coloured beak: *They also should have dark coloured eye ceres*

Black magpie

Blue magpie

Silver magpie

Ash silver magpie, *a pure, silvery grey colour, without any darker shade, only a red lustre in the neck feathering is allowed.*

At the Club show of the German Specialty Club in Fulda (Germany) December 16th and 17th 2006, 726 Old German Magpie Tumblers were entered. 29 Pigeons were awarded with Excellent-97 points and 50 birds with Outstanding-96 points. Most popular were the Yellows, Reds and Blacks.

150 in yellow

134 in red

128 in black

76 in blue

63 in silver

36 in blue chequered

32 in ash silver (dark beak)

24 in ash red

20 in black (dark beak)

20 in blue (dark beak)

18 in silver chequered

25 in the AOC-Class (the remaining 3 not recognised colours)

Total

726 Old German Magpie Tumblers

Now let's get back to what I established before, the very low interest with the Dutch Exhibition Fancier in the Old German Magpie Tumbler. But on the other hand there is an active market in the Magpie at diverse Internet sites. I contacted and visited some of the fanciers found through the internet and it turned out that the Old German Magpie Tumbler is attractive enough to sell itself, but only to the fancier who is keeping them for fun and/or for flying.

The pigeons at Meijers in Groesbeek

A coincidental meeting with the breed was when we visited Henk Meijers in Groesbeek for an interview on his chickens. It so happens that he also had a few pigeons, being two Old German Magpie Tumblers and two Arabian Trumpeters.



Left: One of the problems of this breed is the covering of the back. When the birds grow broader, the colour at the back will show between the wing shields, which is not wanted. By all means the bird must be judged on this when at ease. If it was in hands just before judging, it could be stressed and show the unwanted uncovered back. This cock does show a fine heart shaped marking.



Above right: The only wish here it could be a more a straight colour limitation at the breast.

After purchasing, Henk's four pigeons turned out to be all cocks but they do not fight with each other. They are kept in one of the chicken houses and have a spacious run to free fly among the chickens, giving no problems at all. Henk is keeping them just for fun and he enjoys their characters. All I did was look and listen, and the pigeons didn't fly away from me and after a short while the Arabian Trumpeters started to trumpet in a profound way.

The behaviour of these Old German Magpie Tumbler was striking to me, being not at all shy but constantly active.

These birds were never taught how to 'pose' but they do know how to keep themselves in good condition. When a pigeon, being white in a large part of the feathering and kept in an enclosure with other birds where we were offered boots... they are still 100% clean, this is a token of vitality!

Right: Old-German Magpie Tumbler in black, with scarlet eye ceres and a light beak colour; the slight dark colour on the upper mandible is permitted in this variety.



The Old-German Magpie Tumbler at Kees Veldhuizen and son Frank in IJsselstein

Text and photos: Dirk de Jong



Left: Father and son, Kees and Frank Veldhuizen with a black and a blue Old-German Magpie Tumbler in hands.

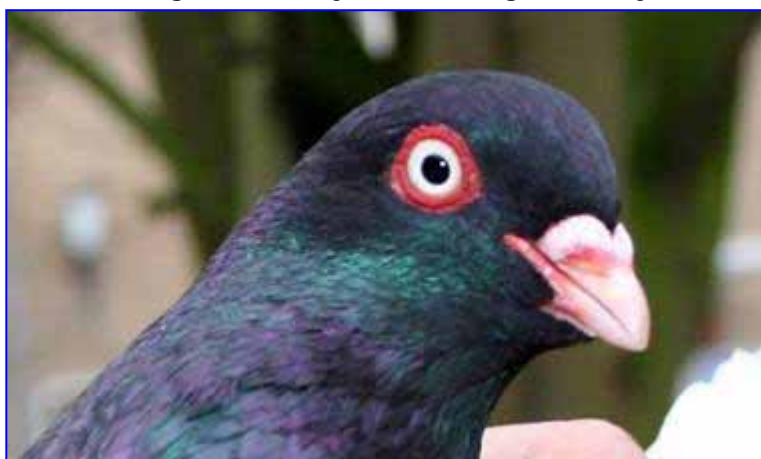
Kees first met with the breed right here in IJsselstein, when he was only a little boy. He saw them at Koos Murk, a true pigeon fancier who kept lots of pigeons in a huge aviary at the attic of a wood factory. For Kees, this was the first contact with the Old German Magpie Tumbler. Deeply impressed by the beauty and litheness of the breed, he thought: "Those I will have when I grow up". Today Kees is 60, but some 30 year ago he finally ran into a couple of Magpie Tumblers at the Pet

Market in Mol (Belgium) and immediately he remembered his 'first love'. He purchased the couple and started breeding and also showing, but that wasn't a success. Youngsters were born but he couldn't find fresh blood to improve his birds. Until one day, after having entered at the Avicultura Show in The Hague, there was a man waiting at his cages asking if those birds belonged to him. "Yes, they do" Kees answered proudly. But the man told him they weren't any good, no show value, and he had better dispose of them. If Kees was interested, he could provide him with better stock.

Right: Old German Magpie Tumbler in yellow, with fine colour and marking. Also fine in type and station.



The outspoken man was John Dickens, an English regular soldier living in Nieburg, Germany and being a fancy



pigeon judge there and also 'Zuchtward' (an authority on breed characteristics) of the Old German Magpie Tumbler Club. A few weeks later Kees plucked up courage and together with a friend he travelled to Germany. After a hearty welcome they could not wait to see the pigeons, but that was out of the question; on no condition were 'strangers' were allowed in the lofts.

Left: Good head shape of an Old German Magpie Tumbler black.

It was a real disappointment to Kees, although he was presented with an antique framed aquarelle showing all colour varieties of the Magpie (dated before the joining with the Lausitzer Elsterpurzler). Then they had to go into the garage where a series of baskets stood ready to take, containing over 40 Magpies, free to take, and being a couple or more in every colour variety. At home, Kees selected the best birds to keep to himself and sold the rest; now the real breeding could start!

Right: Old-German Magpie Tumbler; the chequered marking at the wing shield is the just visible. The colour at the breast is extending too far down. Max is up to the tip of the breast bone.



Left: A couple black Old-German Magpie Tumbler.



Right: Blue Chequered Old German Magpie Tumbler, showing a fine chequered marking. Pity the bird lacks fullness at the front of the head. The line of the skull should rise to the top.



Left: A couple of Old German Magpie Tumblers in blue chequered. Note the permitted dark tip at the upper mandible.



Right:
A colourful collection of Old German Magpie Tumbler in Kees' aviary.

At Kees' the pigeons are no more allowed to free fly, due to a complaining neighbour's wife. Keeping them at the Children's Farm nearby also wasn't a success, because they reproduce very quick; from the 3 couples he had over 20 young birds flying within one year's time! And being such incredible quick and skilful flyers, he almost couldn't catch them again. That skilful flying I witnessed with my own eyes; they flew without interruption in full speed through a small opening in the wall of only 8 cm high.



Left: Beautiful picture of a splendid black Old German Magpie Tumbler, with only a slight remark on the colour intensity; there is some chequering visible.



My question what he thinks best in the Magpie is answered without hesitation: "The eyes and the feather colouring; those pure, deep and even colours. Look at this black one, blacker isn't possible." Do they still tumble, I asked. "Yes, when I had them free flying they performed very well. Also the positioning, that special way of flying with their wing high up towards each other, and then falling down, even making a sort of spin before landing." When I asked him why he didn't exhibit his Magpies any more, he explained: "Well, I am always the only one entering this breed, so no competition. There is a lot to pay attention to. The marking at the back should form a heart shape. Before I often had birds with an 'open' wing shield carriage. You should also

pay attention to the beak colour; the Reds and Yellows must have a light beak, only at the Blacks and Blues a dark tip is allowed. Or they must be in the dark coloured beak variety. In the beginning I had to do a lot of conditioning to get a straight Magpie marking, now this is rooted very well."

Kees likes to speak his mind about the judging in the time that he exhibited his Magpies. Many judges remarked that the breast should be wider. But Kees thinks that is wrong. It is rather a slender pigeon, who when bred wider and broader cannot fly properly and also the wing shields will not close at the back.

A positive point of the breed is that they are easy to breed and very fertile. "In no time you have a loft full of young, and you can mate the colours as you like, no need to keep only red or black birds in your loft."

Right: Back covering could be better; the white flights should touch each other. Also the heart shaped marking could be better.



The Old German Magpie tumblers at W. de Rijk in Maarsssen

By: Nico van Benten

This fancier is a flying pigeon keeper, who prefers to see his pigeons fly, which will preferably take as long as possible. His flying breed is the Dutch High Flyer and he planned to cross with the Old German Magpie Tumbler to create a Dutch High Flyer with a Magpie marking. Going back in his memory, he thinks it was the so called 'farmer's magpies' that he kept in his loft during the 60's when he still lived at his parents in Zeist. He had bought them at a well known pigeon merchant who lived in Zeist in those days.



Left: This is what he was looking for: a large wing surface, with strong flights. He found that at the Old German Magpie Tumbler. In the picture a silver chequered.

Right: The same silver chequered Old German Magpie Tumbler as above, here we wish to see more filling in the front head.



Lately, when again searching for this breed, he ended up with Mr. Velthuisen, manager of the Children's Farm in IJsselstein, who supplied him with some couples of the Old German Magpie Tumblers.

Mr. De Rijk was mostly impressed by the vitality of the breed, the powerful, compact type of bird with an enormous wing surface, enabling it to even fly very well at wind force 5. Yet they didn't show the characteristic tumbling capacity as praised by the German; but he thinks it will again show during time, after training and selecting. He did see them 'sailing' through the air, but keeping their wings at about 60 degrees, that isn't quiet the wanted 'positioning'.

Right: Another task De Rijk had put himself too, is the creation of the smallest Cropper breed in the world, still able to fly and behave like a Cropper.

Meaning the wing clapping, the blowing and showing the characteristic Cropper behaviour.

He is experimenting with breeds as Voorburg Shield Cropper and a very tiny white Tumbler breed.





Left: A couple of Old German Magpie Tumblers in a separated breeding pen.

In the meantime he is also convinced of the fertility and breed lust of the breed; the cocks are fond of the hens and even try to mate them at the feeder while eating. They can breed up to 7 times a year, raising 14 young. They are certainly not shy in the loft, very lively though. And during breeding some aggressive reactions towards their neighbours can appear; they do seem to need their own territory. That is the reason why Mr. De Rijk has them breed in a separate breed pen.

When visiting it was January 18th; a windy and rainy day, but no objection for De Rijk to have his birds free fly; they have to be able to coop with that. They are only a bit jumpy due to the heavy banging of the fireworks that took place here during New Years Eve.

Right: Although rainy and windy, the pigeons still love to go out and fly, presenting this beautiful picture of a black light beak Old German Magpie Tumbler, clearly showing the permitted dark tip at the beak. The marking at the breast forms a reasonable straight line at adequate height.

De Rijk uses the 'flag method' to keep the pigeons in the sky. In his case it is a fishing-rod with a fluttering plastic bag; an effective way. It takes a while before the different breeds have grouped in the air. Finally the whole group, 'lead by' the Dutch High Flyers, should be air-borne for some 3 hours.

At Mr. De Rijk, the Old-German Magpie Tumblers only stay air-borne for half an hour, when solo.

With the Flying Pigeon keepers, a strict balance between feeding and performance is very important. On the one hand they should not fatten, because that would only stand in the way when flying. On the other hand food is guidance in the flying behaviour; they are kept 'greedy' to the food, although De Rijk thinks the Old German Magpie Tumbler is behaving very hungry with that system.



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