

THE BOKHARA TRUMPETER

By: Theo van Dissel (NL)

In that dimension in which mystery and imagination meet, resides the Bokhara Trumpeter.

Photo Dick Hamer.



Edited by Frank Povah

Origin

Little is known about the exact origins of the Bokhara Trumpeter, even the famous English and German writers of the years before us knew very little.

This also applies to the origin of the term "trumpeter"; many unproven and at times incomprehensible theories are circulating.

Even the Russian pigeon literature is silent on this, but when I was allowed to see correspondence in the estate of Mr Spruijt, the known Dutch pigeon fancier and writer, I saw to my great surprise that he had spent a lot of time researching the origins and creation of the Bokhara Trumpeter. In his famous book *De Structuurduiven* (The Structure Pigeons) he pays a lot of attention to the Bokhara. Together with C.S. Th. van Gink, who was his good friend – especially in the pre-war period – he did extensive research into the origin. Both gentlemen, and Spruijt in particular, were seasoned pigeon traders with extensive international contacts whom they could consult.

Left: Van Gink, right Spruijt.

The well-known German pigeon expert Edmund Zurth - who also wrote an extensive series of handbooks about pigeons - even gives Persia as a possible country of origin.

Spruijt shared his opinions with the Englishman Herbert Smith; the man who, like a true grand master, perfected the breed. After investigation he, too, was convinced that the south of Russia, central Asia, Turkestan and in particular Bokhara should be regarded as the cradle of the breed.



It appears that the Bokhara was bred in the region's monasteries, mainly by clergymen who, most likely intentionally, kept it more or less hidden from the outside world.

Anton Kral of Prague, a friend of Herbert Smith and also for many years a well-known breeder of Brunner Croppers, *Double-crested* Trumpeters and especially Bokhara Trumpeters, was closely connected to the Czech magazine *Animal Kingdom*. Because of this he had good contacts in the Russian fanciers' world. He, too, held the same opinion on their origin. Their correspondence regarding the origin of the Bokharas was extensive.

History

The Russian city of Bukhara (known as Bokhara in 19th- and early 20th-century English publications), located in the province of Uzbekistan, was in ancient times a well-known trading city and the gateway for many products from Asia. Priests traditionally had a great influence on daily life in which faith played a major role, and there was an extensive trade in all sorts of goods and animals in the city's many markets.

As such, Bukhara also played an important role in the increase in pigeon breeds known in the Western world at the time.

In the numerous mosques, many pigeons were traditionally kept. Flocks of pigeons were such a familiar sight in the city and in the surrounding fields, that the locals paid little attention to them.



Above: View over the Old City of Bukhara. Photo: Atilin. Wikipedia [CC BY 2.5](#)

Coincidentally around this time, traders - usually from the west - were in search of unknown pigeon breeds. Such pigeons were often in the possession of merchants accompanying the itinerant caravans that at that time plied between various countries. They bought or traded pigeons in exchange for other merchandise. As a result, pigeon breeds still unknown to a large part of the world were regularly present in the city.

However, a trade war between Russia and the then influential Emir of Bukhara was a barrier that caused many problems.

One of the earliest individual imports to Britain, was by the well-known Irish author George Ure. He describes in his book *Fancy Pigeons* - the best Irish pigeon book ever - the arrival in Ireland of some Bokhara Trumpeters from Moscow around 1850.

It was a miracle that the birds arrived unharmed in Dundee. They were housed in a large wooden box closed at the top with a grid. The birds had travelled the long overland route from Moscow to the port by horse and wagon; a long journey of some weeks. From there they went to Dundee as deck cargo on a sailing ship. This also took a few weeks, and when Ure finally got hold of the crate, its

internal state after the long journey was not entirely impeccable; think in particular of the abundant heavy foot feathering.

However, after an extensive washing and a few days of good care, the Bokharas appeared to be in good health. This is still characteristic of the breed today; they are very different in everything but very strong and rarely ill.

A few years later another import by sea from Russia took place, under the charge of Captain Mewburn, a good friend of Ure.

John Moore was the first to describe the Trumpeters. In his famous *Columbarium*, published in 1735 - the world's first real Fancy Pigeon book - he gave a description of the "English Trumpeters", so called because the Bokhara Trumpeter was still completely unknown at the time.

Right: Black baldhead adult hen. Owner: N. Pratt England.

International Fame

Robert Fulton the well-known English pigeon trader, judge and author of *The Book of Pigeons* (1874), describes in that book the first import into England.

The Book of Pigeons, 1874, is one of the most famous pigeon books in the world, in large format and with many high-quality colour plates. The book is beautifully illustrated by Joseph Williamson Ludlow, who was a leading illustrator and far ahead of his time.



Moreover, the book shows easily recognisable Bokharas, imported in 1853 by the well known animal traders Messrs. John Bailey and Sons of London. They in turn sold the animals to a Mr. Hedley who in turn sold them to the famous Irish pigeon breeder, James Montgomery of Belfast. These last two men were "Gentlemen" and so financially independent.

These Bokharas - and in particular the blacks - surpassed in quality all Trumpeters in England at the time. Two years later, in 1865, a second import contained birds that were of an even better quality than the first.

Robert Fulton, who had been told of this import and was present on its arrival, hoped to purchase some birds, but Montgomery who had the first choice, did not want to give up any bird and bought the lot.

This second transport - of birds bought in Bukhara - was accompanied by a Russian officer, an experienced pigeon breeder and so fully familiar with their care. The long, strenuous trip in horse and wagon by land through Germany and afterwards via the Netherlands to England, was very time-consuming and the expense was significant. For this reason, the Russian officer was forced to sell a number of birds in Germany, and they ended up in the hands of Dr. Bodenius, the director of the Berlin Zoo.

When the trade war with the Emir of Bukhara ended in 1873, Russian pigeon merchants could finally do business without hindrance. From the end of the '80s, many pigeon breeds unknown at that time came to the West. Back then, the

possession of new, as yet unknown pigeon breeds became a fad – went viral as the youngsters would say –and many influential and financially well off men were heavily involved.



**Left: Red baldhead adult cock.
Owner: Peter Carruthers,
England.**

So, to his delight, Dr. Bodenius was in proud possession of a number of Bokhara Trumpeters from this transport. There were blacks and whites which were kept together and from which it is assumed that the tigated and mappied colours arose, colours previously unknown in the West.

Through his efforts, a number of these pigeons ended up

with interested German pigeon breeders, and also in the zoo in Paris. Both zoos had a close, cooperative relationship and in Paris the Bokhara Trumpeters as a new, interesting pigeon breed, attracted many visitors.

Dr. Bodenius also did a lot to bring the German Bokharas to the attention of breeders who were looking for special breeds to decorate their lofts.

In 1883 the entire loft was put up for auction; Anton Kral of Prague obtained one half and the other half went to Messrs. Bailey & Sons in London.

**Right: Dr. Bodenius, director of the Cologne
and later the Berlin Zoological Garden.**



So via Germany and the Netherlands, Bokhara Trumpeters from that second shipment eventually reached England. Their descendants came into the hands of the well-known Jacobin breeder and pigeon judge, Herbert Smith. Over the years he shaped and perfected the breed to become the modern Bokhara Trumpeter as we know it today.

Personally, I am convinced that Germany knew the Bokharas long before the shipments to Ireland and England and with its help created its many, well-known, foot-feathered Trumpeter breeds.

Because of the long journey involved in those early shipments, the pigeons were often very expensive and at first were therefore only available to the privileged pigeon breeders of the "upper classes". Moreover, the Bokhara Trumpeter is probably the most difficult pigeon breed in existence. Arrogance and stubbornness are certainly not unknown to them; on the contrary they are an inseparable part of their character.

Successful breeding is reserved for that person possessing the same idiosyncrasy (and often irony) with which the Bokharas, like no other breed, are equipped - important inherent traits indispensable for both the breed and the breeder.

All of this contributed to the fact that astronomical amounts were sometimes paid for top birds in the past – and is still the case today. Worldwide, the top breeders who really would give anything for their Bokharas and therefore manage to breed them in true top quality despite the characteristic extra difficulties, can be as counted on the fingers of both hands – as it was then and is now.

Left: A letter (1928) from Herbert Smith to Spruijt.



The
"BEEHIVE,"
Herbert Smith & Sons,
Victoria Square,
WORKSOP,
DRAPERS.

Dear Mr. Spruijt I have just recd a letter from Mr. Woods
saying that the V.P.C. is to be held (1928) in
the Palace Committee meeting room that their number
is too many for the two large upstairs of the Woods has advised
Mr. Woods to transfer the Pigeons. I hope you will be able to do so.
You are here no longer here that can be made to do so.
I will be there. - 18 birds to - 17 birds to - 15 birds to -
I have just read the difficulty for anyone to be admitted
into the room - especially when the Pigeons are so numerous. I have
seen nothing but (100 birds) 200 (100 birds) (100 birds) 100 birds. Red, Blue,
White. - This number would be most difficult to estimate -
and I am not sure if I should be able to do so.
I am sure you will be able to do so.
Yours faithfully,
Herbert Smith

The imports of quality birds from Russia created great interest in the breed in England, at that the most prominent country in the world in many fields, and Herbert Smith, and others, energetically took up breeding Bokharas.

There was a great, worldwide demand for good pigeons, by which Herbert Smith in particular was able to profit. He now possessed many quality birds, and especially America and the many then British colonies, European countries and notably America received Bokharas from his lofts.

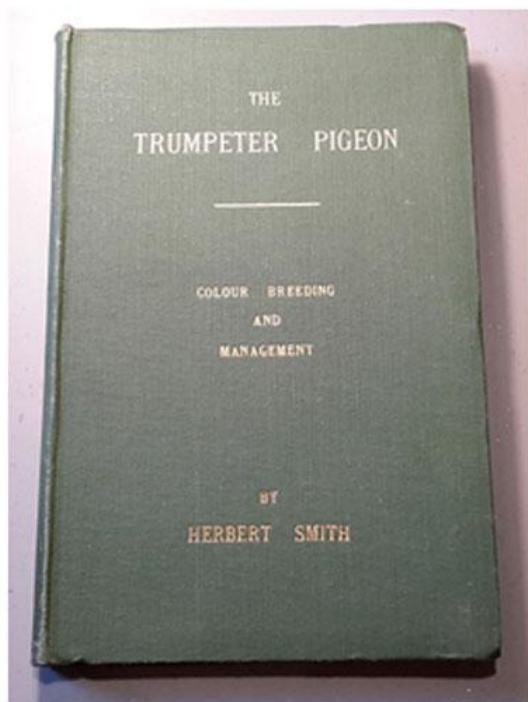
Smith was a canny businessman. Friendly but flamboyant he was, among other things, chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in his home town of Worksop in the county of Nottinghamshire, where he had a large drapery shop.

Because his breeding results eventually declined, in 1913 he

appealed to his friend Anton Kral of Prague – a well known breeder who owned a large drugstore - with whom he corresponded for many years –with the intention of obtaining new blood, as he describes it in his book.

So just before the outbreak of the First World War he left for Prague, partly by sailing ship and by train, but where necessary even by bicycle. Here he found Bokharas that he could use, and he also picked up a couple of Double-crested Trumpeters.

For a lone Englishman, travelling in Europe aroused suspicion and was not without risk, and the account of the return journey is even more exciting than that of the outward journey to Prague. To make matters worse, movement towards the First World War had become noticeable during the return journey, which did not make things any easier. He describes the entire, difficult journey – a journey that is also the story of his lifelong love, the Bokhara Trumpeter, and a life spent in its service –in an engaging and sometimes touching manner in his famous book *The Trumpeter Pigeon*.



The crosses with the Double-crested Trumpeter pigeons from Prague was successful and yielded red, yellow and dun-coloured Bokharas; a valuable addition to the then still limited colour palette.

Left: Herbert Smith's famous book: "The Trumpeter Pigeon".

In the meantime, there was also great American interest in his pigeons, but the hefty prices meant they were reserved exclusively for the financially better-off breeders. The American brothers Al and Brian Grace, both well-known Jacobin breeders, were very interested in Bokharas, but really top animals were out of their reach, thanks to the high prices. This gave them the idea to cross their Jacobins with the Bokharas already in their possession. It was an uncertain undertaking, but one that achieved great

results after several years of experimenting. The long feathers of the Jacobins perfectly matched the plumage of the Bokharas, who were also provided with long feathering, and besides providing energetic renewal and revitalisation, it was a great advance for the breed and also gave rise to a number of new colours.

Such a crossing had always been discouraged by Smith, because he had a great fear of an adverse impact by the plumage of the Jacobins, especially on Bokhara's crest. However, the experiments of the American breeders proved him wrong; the Grace brothers' cross turned out to be very successful. Jacobins have pearl-coloured eyes, and so another persistent and frequently recurring problem was overcome by this cross, whereas Smith, many years later with his birds crossed with other breeds to obtain new colours, still often had birds with a divergent orange eye.

The efforts and enthusiasm of both brothers led in 1948 to the establishment of a successful American Specialty club. As a result, the breed speedily gained unprecedented popularity. Initially, the name International Russian Trumpeter Club was chosen - with the clear reference to the probable country of origin. This was also the name that the old English breeders gave to the Bokharas, to indicate the differences between the old and the new type.

In 1949, Herbert Smith deservedly received the NPA Master Breeder Certificate, which he regarded as a great honour. It also rewarded his many international efforts.

In 1956, the name of the American club was changed to the International Bokhara Trumpeter Club - in short I.B.T.C.; after all, this name was considerably more appropriate. A club magazine was also published which, from the very beginning up to the present, goes through life with the pet name "The Drummer".

However, the investigations into the breed's origin went further. I can still remember the efforts of Igor Gagarin, an American of Russian origin. His uncle gave him a book written by Messrs N.A. Vasiliev and N.S. Darketch that included some pictures of Bokhara Trumpeters. Although providing interesting information, it did not reveal any information about the actual origin. It was, however, indicative of the renewed enthusiasm and interest for the breed in America.



Among the men of that hour were Jay Brushart, Clair Hetland, Al Grace and John Heppner - the latter being the best known pigeon judge and pigeon breeder in the USA. These men also helped establish the I.B.T.C. which had major consequences for the development of the Bokhara, which thereby gained world-wide recognition.

Left: The IBTC plaque comemorating the 50-year Anniversary Show in The Hague (NL).

Due to the I.B.T.C. requirements for feather structure and development, differences arose between European and American birds. Today, the true top birds are well-matched thanks to reciprocal imports.

Some very conservative forces in this country (NL) still seem to have trouble accepting this, although a professional study carried out in Germany within the framework of the so-called

Qualzucht breeds – breeds in which extreme features may lead to suffering daschunds for example in dogs – has shown that the rich feathering does not adversely affect the well-being of the Bokharas. It seems obvious that these men do not have practical knowledge of the breed which encourages narrow-mindedness because of the popularity and high quality of the breed. Progress is unstoppable, as is proven by the development of our breed in the past and present.



The Club began organising World Championships with the participation of all countries in the world, including for the first time (in 1998) the Netherlands. That year there was large worldwide participation with absolutely top material; John Heppner came over from America especially for the judging.

Left: Marleen Brouwer made this statue of a Bokhara especially for this show.

Right: Dick Hamer was also present, of course, and brought something very special: a Bokhara made of leather.



There was also much interest from the Far East. There the fanciers certainly have not been idle and have seriously taken up breeding; the result is that the Bokharas are very popular there and the quality of the Eastern birds are among the world's best.

In England, the land of perfection, the breed has always remained in the hands of a small number of loyal supporters; which is also the case in this country. The great Spruijt was for many years a loyal breeder and possessed many Bokharas imported from Herbert Smith, apart from those he had from Germany. In my own country, the Netherlands, I remember Mr Crutsen, Mr Speek and Mr v.d. Swan; my Bokharas originate from the loft of the latter, but I also got excellent material from Denmark, England and Germany.

The 'Drumming'

These pigeons are named for the sound of their voice - the Dutch and the German fanciers call it "drumming", the English and American fanciers "trumpeting". Bokharas have a very peculiar kind of drumming. Personally, I don't make it difficult for myself and divide the drumming into two groups, the Bokhara drumming and the other Trumpeters'. The drumming of my Bokharas is a deep sound that the birds, with short interruptions, can maintain for a long time, especially during the breeding season, both on the nest and during the defence of their place in the loft. It is a deep woek-woek-woek, interrupted by a wak-wak-wak, often accompanied by trembling, particularly of the wings. Bokharas are certainly no sissies and both cocks and hens can show their dominance over other breeds with loud drumming.



See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vD5H04FbIbc>

I have also bred several other Trumpeters including Altenburger, Schmolner and Arabian Trumpeters; their drumming sounds more like singing, and is much higher and lighter than the Bokhara's.

It can thunder in the throat of a Bokhara, especially during great excitement; in earlier days there were even organised drumming matches. This is feasible in the loft, but becomes more difficult in the cages during the show; it sometimes seems that the insubordinate Bokhara laughs at us full of irony with our unsuccessful attempts to make them drum.

Altenburger and Arabian trumpets can be true masters in drumming, although their voices are very different from the Bokhara's. In the '80s I visited a breeder in what was then East Germany who had for years selected his Altenburgers for their voices. Altenburgers are suitable for this method and the result was remarkable. I myself possess neither the ability nor the patience to select and train my pigeons for this.

Breed description

The Bokhara Trumpeter is a large, squat bird and is well developed both in length and width and belongs to the larger pigeon breeds; however, they are not Runts, as some mistakenly think.

The loose feathering makes them appear more robust than they really are. The English have the only appropriate expression for this phenomenon: fluffy..

The very deep physique is striking; the breast is very broad, well rounded and is of great importance in obtaining the right depth.

Good birds seem to lie on the ground as it were, a trait even more emphasised by the very short, deeply bent legs which are provided with exceptionally well developed foot feathering. In really good specimens, no light can show through under the body and a sitting bird must give the impression that it is lying, because of the rich and abundant plumage of the legs, hocks and feet.

Everything about the body of the Bokhara Trumpeter is full and well rounded; angular body parts are absolutely out of the question and often indicate the introduction of blood from other breeds.

Again, a Bokhara at rest must give the impression that it is lying down. The back is broad and flat and flows almost horizontally into the tail; a well-built Bokhara gives a horizontal impression in everything, the broad full and flat back is carried horizontally.

Left: A beer mug, decorated with Bokharas by C.S.Th. van Gink.



The body feathering is loose, rich and abundant. The feathers are long and soft with a lot of down. The breast feathering is also long and provides an important part of the optical effect of body depth. If one takes brooding birds from the nest, the eggs are often completely hidden in the heavy breast feathering and can sometimes stay there. Because of the abundant feathering, which is considerably richer and provided with more down than with average

pigeon breeds, the moulting period lasts longer. It is usually late in the season before the birds have completely finished their moult. Often they are not ready to show earlier than January.

The head rests on a very short neck that goes straight into the body; the feathering of the neck and mane exhibiting no breaks when viewed from any angle, such that it forms a complete unity with the body. This largely determines the appearance and the impression of the entire bird.

The head is large, round and full so that there is sufficient space available, to accommodate - exactly in the centre and as large and round as possible - the rose, the most important attribute of the Bokhara. It is precisely in the centre of the head just between the eyes that the rose emanates. We demand a perfect circle, densely feathered with soft yet sturdy feathers. This body part is the most difficult to perfect, but determines the real value of the bird. The rose covers the entire head including the well-developed beak. The presence of sufficient supporting feathers is of the greatest importance; they support and carry the rose, and ensure that the eyes remain free and the view is not obstructed. We also do not want any feathers sticking out of the rose or emerging crookedly from it; we want a well-carried and elegant-looking rose that gives the head a smooth and impressive appearance.

Freedom of our pigeons' sight is of the utmost importance, so high demands are made of this. The earlier Bokharas sometimes had an overhanging mushroom-shaped rose; with modern Bokharas this is completely out of the question and is a serious fault. An improper rose that complicates eating and drinking or prevents the realisation of the daily routine, is absolutely inadmissible. Animal

welfare is of the utmost importance in our modern times and should be pursued without delay; the judge also fulfils an important role in this.

Like the rose, the shell is a striking characteristic of the Bokhara. It is a greatly exaggerated crest of feathers, extending as widely as possible around the entire head with long, fine feathers, which are multi-layered and as dense as possible, gradually continuing in the feathering of the neck and mane. The shell starts low and ends high on the head, reaching higher than the rose. It should wrap around the entire head to the throat immediately beneath the beak, nearly meeting there, but falling just short of touching to form a complete circle.

The topmost edge of the shell feathering reaches over the back side of the head and the rose, and is very mobile. In emotion, the shell feathers rise and the fine structure and the divergent shape of the feathers will become clearly visible; another distinct feature of the Bokhara.



Left: Jan de Jong's impression of a Bokhara Trumpeter.

In discussing the head, the eye is also of great importance. We want a pure pearl eye that does not meet the absolutely high requirements as in, for example, some Tumbler breeds, but we still prefer the eye without red veins in the iris. The eye is surrounded by a small eye cere. The required pearl eye is often overlooked for the sake of convenience by many judges, which I have already noticed on several occasions. Self white birds have a dark eye. This is also permitted in

so-called baldheads, although pearl-coloured eyes are preferred.

We want a good size beak, medium in length and strong. Its colour correlates to feather colour, being flesh-coloured in the whites and light horn colour in the yellows, reds and duns. Black and blue Bokharas have a dark beak and tigereds have beaks coloured correlating to the colour of the marking.

Right: Peter Carruthers' drawing of an ideal black baldhead Bokhara.



The broad wings fully cover the sides of the body. The flights are not too broad but considerably long, the tips reaching the end of the tail or even a bit beyond, but they should be carried

above and rest lightly upon the tail. Hanging wings are a nasty fault and disturb the overall impression of the bird.

The tail is wanted long, spread slightly at the end, the tail feathers covering each other like roof tiles. In action the tail is carried wide, but normally hanging in rest behind the body. Some action in tail carriage is still wanted, as it adds a more alert look to the Bokhara.



Left: Max Holdenried had his own vision of the Bokharas.

The short legs are widely set, provided with a royal foot feathering (muffs or boots) and are strongly hooked backwards. The long hocks (long feathers growing from the lower part of the thighs) are to bend backwards, closing the possible opening between the legs.

The toes are also densely feathered with feathers that round away to the rear; this is very important for the freedom

of movement of the birds.

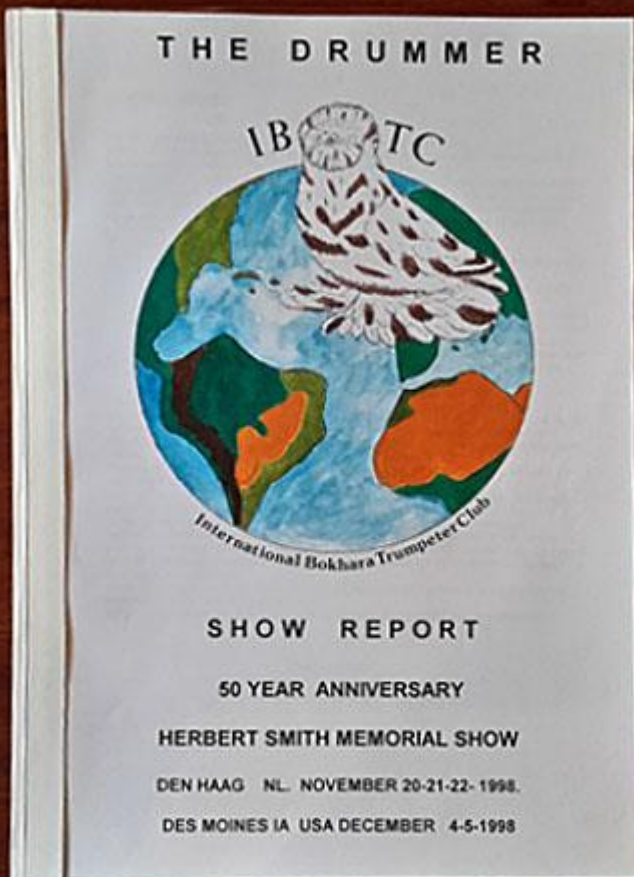
A correct shape of the feet guarantees sufficient walking ability and associated freedom of movement, which is characteristic of the well-being of the birds and also greatly benefits them and is an absolute must in the assessment. Here both the breeder and the judge have to set high standards.

The fullness, size and length of the body feathering is particularly evident in the large muffs that give the Bokhara its characteristic royal appearance in addition

to the richly feathered breast, belly and back.

Large muffs can wrongly work in as an advantage in the assessment. Many a judge is impressed by this, yet the rose must be the first and proper guide to the actual quality determination.

Left: Club magazine "The Drummer" – note the drawing by Jan de Jong.



The breast is also provided with long feathering, in which the eggs might disappear completely, so that, when the birds leave the nest, they sometimes stick between the feathers and can get lost.

The abdomen is exceptionally heavily covered with down. In order to achieve sufficient fertilization, it is advisable to remove the fluff adequately but carefully and with love, and model it with scissors. The heavy down is sometimes a reason that the birds do not properly feel the eggs in the nest, and arrange them to lie one behind the other. This will cool them

down and create a temperature difference between the eggs, which can often be felt by hand. This may be disastrous for the hatching and together with the innate awkwardness and arrogance the breed possesses, can lead to poor production, sometimes to the annoyance of the breeder.

Foster pigeons are therefore, in my experience, indispensable in order to achieve an acceptable number of youngsters, as well as allowing feathers to be removed in moderation. Unnecessarily short-trimmed birds are unattractive to everyone, and unhelpful to the birds themselves.

Right: Trophy presented by the Dutch Specialty Club in acknowledgment of the Herbert Smith Show.



Left: Bokhara shield, made by Marleen Brouwer.

Below, left: A star is born - Marleen Brouwer painting the Bokhara statue.

The colour palette is extensive, as are the marking varieties, and you can now safely set requirements here.

Many who do not know the Bokhara presume that their care and feeding is no easy task and has high demands. Their distinctive appearance and accompanying impressive structure make many people suspect the worst in advance. The opposite is true; Bokharas are no more difficult in daily care than the average pigeon and, if necessary, are satisfied with a simple show pigeon mixture that

is normally available on the market. And a supplement with some extra barley is no problem. Of course a good grit mixture must always be available, as well as sufficient minerals and regular vitamins; I give this last through the drinking water and stick to the manufacturer's instructions.



During the moult I give an extra moulting aid, also via drinking water. This has a favourable influence on the many feathers that need to be replaced, Bokharas possessing considerably more feathers and especially more down than the average pigeon. Before the moult is completely behind us, however, we are usually already in January. A lot of things go slowly and therefore require a lot of adjustment as well as patience on the part of the breeder, in this way, Bokharas indeed require a lot of understanding from their owner.

The pulling of feathers by hand, often foot feathering, I consider to be very reprehensible and a torment for the birds. The moult should be an absolutely perfect natural process and should be accompanied with proper care.



Above: Yellow splash hen. Owner: Claus Jensen, Denmark.

Mating can take a longer time but nevertheless gives problems, but as I mentioned before, Bokharas can be very self-willed and if the birds really do not want to know each other, they can sit next to each other for months without any contact.

Right: Black adult hen. Owner: Darrel Ferguson, USA.

Sick Bokharas are rare; their character is usually cheerful which they indicate with enthusiastic drumming. They are pleasant and confident in their relationships without being friends of all and are very attached to their daily caretaker, on whom they can be very keen.



Right: Head study of an adult black hen owned by Dusan Stojimirov.

A well-built Bokhara richly decorated with all its complicated parts has a characterful and almost royal appearance.

Their flamboyant allure is a valuable and irresistible extra and for the real fancier makes them the best that the pigeon world has to offer.

For fanciers who recognise true beauty they are invaluable; watching and admiring them is never a waste of time and is comparable with a woman's scrutiny of her reflection in the mirror – in their view, this is also never a waste of time.

Old Tradition

A typical tradition is the naming of internationally known champions. Around 1880, the famous German breeder Gerhard Heiman named his best black tigated hen Lena. Herbert Smith also had a whole suite of names for his famous birds. His famous yellow Bokharas included Pure Gold and later King Gold; some of his best-known black birds were Ace of Trumps and King Cole - one of the absolute best blacks he ever bred – but his yellow-mottle cock Marvel was also unforgettable.



Black Trumpeter, "Ace of Trumps"

Left: Ace of Trumps.

Below: King Cole.



"King Cole," the Champion Black

Later, Claus Jensen, one of the best-known breeders in the world, named his most famous yellow-mottle hen after this bird; she celebrated great successes under the name Marvella on many shows and was an international celebrity.



Gay Yellow Mottle Cock, "Marvel"

Right: Herbert Smith's yellow mottle cock 'Marvel'.

Also our compatriot C.A.M. Spruijt was a great fan of the Bokhara. His tigered cock Harlekijn, which is depicted in his beautiful book *Structuurduiven* (Structure Pigeons), is well-known. This cock was honoured in 1928 with a beautiful painting by the famous German painter Carl Witzmann and was later painted by our own known artist Marleen Brouwer in an equally beautiful way.

The most famous black Bokhara cock ever bred in America was named Old Boss by his breeder Claire Hetland. Peter Carruthers, who received the last remnants of the Smith Bokharas, named his best black cock Tyson, after the

famous American heavyweight boxer. Later this cock came into my loft where he lived up to his name; it was the most aggressive Bokhara I knew. Tyson died at the age of twenty, this too is a special feature of this breed. Many reach a very great age, meaning that people and birds can become very attached to each other; this gives the pleasure of keeping these pigeons a totally different dimension.

Below: Spruijt's pigeon Harlekijn was painted from life in 1928 at a German show by the German artist, Carl Witzmann of Berlin.



Ode to the Bokhara Trumpeter

Bokharas, like no other breed, embody the shape of the true aristocracy. The Englishman Herbert Smith, who perfected the Bokharas and brought them to the

high level of today, knows how to express it: *Never shall I forget the thrill it gave me to hear that remarkable coo.*

The American physician J.D. Reynolds, breeder of Bokharas and also collector of pigeon literature, has described the noble Bokhara most aptly. My collection contains pigeon literature that once belonged to him and he gave voice to his opinion in this way:

The Bokhara is the pinnacle of the fancier's art. They are so aristocratic, so highly bred, with such unusual feather development, with a gurgling voice which sounds like old wine being poured from musty casks, that you close your eyes and think of cloistered recesses of ancient monasteries.

Anyone who knows the mystique of the Bokhara and observes these birds will understand that its country of origin must be Atlantis, while the head ornaments will always remind me of Medusa.



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