

The Old German Owl

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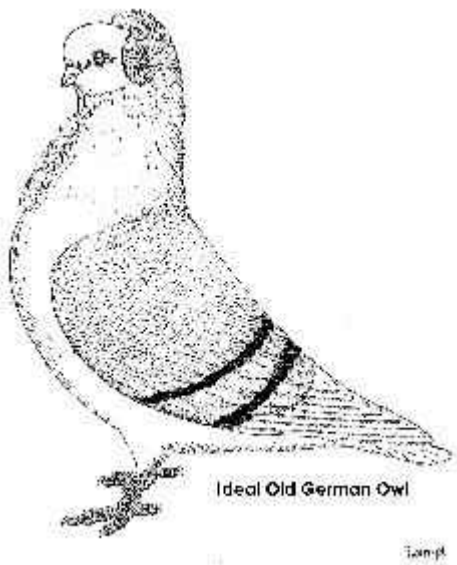
Translated by John Verburg

History

When reviewing the history of this breed, one cannot help but notice the high degree of similarity to our Old Dutch Turbits. Therefore, to gain an understanding, we must start near the beginning of the previous century, when German Owls were already being bred. All sorts of outcrossings were undertaken to improve the breed. The Saxon Shield was used to improve color, but these attempts alone were not enough to produce the desired results. Around 1870, Oriental Frills and Anatolian Owls were imported into Germany, creating quite an interest in these short-faced breeds. The interest in these new frill and owl breeds also furthered the interest in the German Owl.

Further crosses were undertaken with the Anatolian Owl and other varieties, and the head properties of the German Owl became considerably altered. The German Owl now became a short-faced breed. This unwelcome result required the breeder to use feeders in order to raise the young. But this certainly was not an insurmountable difficulty for the breeders and did not dampen the revival of interest in the Old German Owls along with the new short beaked German Owl variety.

Shortly thereafter, around 1894, a dedicated group of owl/turbit fanciers developed a standard to facilitate judging this new version of the German Owl.





This had the consequence of quickly diminishing the spread and number of the original German Owl, and it returned to a near state of oblivion. The original "old" German Owl could soon only be found in farmers' barns and the loft of the occasional fancier that remained a faithful believer in the original breed. Just as he did in the Netherlands for the Old Dutch Farmer's Owl/Turbit, C.A.M. Spruijt was in the forefront, singly warning us that the Old German Owl should not be lost. We should remain in his debt for his efforts. Because of the political situation, the planning for the repatriation of this owl breed was not possible between 1933 and the end of the Second World War. In the following years, the improvement effort went very slowly. Very few of the birds survived the war and together Dutch and German breeders searched everywhere to find some. One lucky fact was that the director of the Duisenbergse zoo still had a pair of the medium length beak owls, while in the Rheinland another single specimen was found.

A specialty club was established in 1956. One of the first activities of the club was to establish a standard. This was aided by a portrait of the Old German Owl found in *Mustertaubenbuch*, van G. Prütz., 1886.

Initially, plain-headed, peak crested and shell crested varieties were accepted. Now, however, only the shell-crested type is recognized in the German standard. The argument that is always offered for this is that it will inhibit outcrossing with other breeds, such as the Aachen Lacquer Shield or the Old Dutch Turbit.



It is the faithful, friendly and lively character of this breed that has led to its speedy acceptance by many fanciers, as it continues to interest and entertain them. The Old German Owl is very popular now, being exhibited at numerous shows throughout Germany, where it is not unusual to see a large class with between 200 and 300 entries.

Breed Characteristics

Our written standard calls for the Old German Owl to be a medium sized and cobby pigeon. It must possess that definitive, outgoing owl/turbit character, being faithful, friendly, coy and cute. In the more general, larger context, they can be compared in size with that of a field pigeon, except the station is somewhat different: being more cobby, broader in the breast, and narrowing sharply toward the tail. Another comparable element is the legs. As in the field pigeon, the Old German Owls are fairly short which makes for a fairly low stance, and have a mild sloping station as well. Actually, because of the broad, protruding chest, the bird gives the impression of an even more upright station, especially when viewing the bird from the front. When viewing the bird from the side or back, one sees a definite downward-sloping angle



Improper beak setting

The tail is carried just above ground level, which by implication means that it is not carried horizontally. The full figured, broad chest is carried upward, outward and with a slightly backward tilt. The neck is also short and thick, and these characteristics accent the bird's typical, coquettish owl/turbit character. As with all of the owl/turbit breeds, the head is one of the most salient and important attributes of the entire bird.

The Old German Owl's shell crest is the most striking attribute of the head. The crest should set high up on the back part of the head, being full, corpulent, and as broad and uniform as possible on both sides. The base of the crest should be at about the height of the eye, terminating in obvious, but not too large rosettes. The center or eye of the rosettes should resemble a pencil point. The crest must stand upright vertically, leaning neither forward nor hanging backwards.

From this last point we note that at times the feathers on the top of the head push at the base of the crest, which causes it to hang backwards. This fault can be corrected by cutting back, just a little, the furthest rear feathers pushing against the crest. This takes a bit of practice. People are apt to cut away too many feathers, and then the crest loses its support and starts to fall forward, introducing another undesirable element. The crest is supported on the back of the neck by a well developed mane. These mane feathers, when of the proper length, also aid in obtaining the broad neck. The rosettes must not be set too low or too far backwards, because this frequently causes the entire crest to be set too low also. This then causes an interruption or separation in the mane of the neck. The neck feathers must not lie too loosely, for they also become too long.



Insufficient forehead

The front of the neck and breast is decorated with a rich full open frill, and a dewlap can be expected to grace the throat. The wings are carried tight against the body and rest upon the tail.

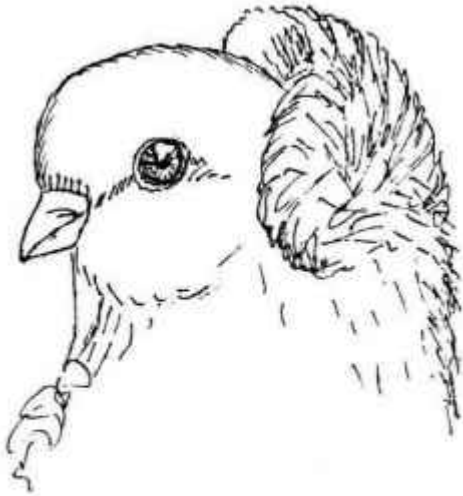
The feathers are broad. This can be easily seen quite readily by spreading out the wings or the tail. If you want an Owl to have good proportions than this is a predicate. Should the wing or tail feathers be too narrow, then the entire bird's stature is negatively impacted and it also becomes too long in the back. With a good closed wing position, the bow of the wing will be completely enclosed within the breast feathering. Owls which hold their wing bows out and away from the body, not only look thin, but indeed they are too thin. It is also important, as well, that the back be broad in order to shelter the wings completely. Unfortunately, we still see birds that fall too short in this respect.

The tail feathers, as already mentioned, are broad and must be tightly closed. The backs of birds with good station slope slightly downward and the breast and underbody must be full. The legs are fairly short, causing the upper portion of the legs to be nearly completely covered by the underbody.

feathering. The legs and toes are smooth and unfeathered, while the nails are clear.

When judging, a total impression must be acquired from the mentioned details before any bird should be taken in hand, not after. Taking the bird in the hand, causes the bird's crest feathers to drop at least half a centimeter (3/8 inch). When viewing the head from above, the crest must be broad between the eyes and then curving forward and inwards, decreasing in width, towards the front of the head. Heads which are either pointed or pinched in shape must become unacceptable. The forehead makes a prominent feature and takes a very important place in the order of the elements. It is broad and full, rising as steeply as possible upwards from the base of the beak. The beak actually hangs down somewhat in line with the forehead while, however, still retaining its distinctly visible blunt, shallow angle with the forehead. Birds whose foreheads and beaks form a smooth, unbroken arch have an insufficient rise and body in the forehead. This is a serious fault.

The beak must be medium length, tightly closed, and substantial and broad at the base where it joins the broad forehead. You cannot expect to obtain the desired broad forehead with a narrow pointed beak. When drawing an imaginary line through the beak line, the extended line runs through and under the center of the eyes. If the line is carried through and under the eyes, then the beak is also then incorrectly set, being too horizontal.



Missing rosettes

The eyes should be proportionately large, lively in appearance, with a trusting faithful impression. All color classes have dark bull eyes, encircled with fine pale eye ceres.

The wattle is of medium size and of fine, delicate structure. Coarse wattles are not desired and must be considered a serious fault.

There are 19 known color varieties, with red self being the newest. Next to that, a white storked marked is also known. The colors of black, red and yellow must be deep and glossy, while in the barred varieties the shield color is pure and clear and endowed with good strong distinct continuous bands. With the checkered variety, it is very important that the checks are very distinct with clean sharp lines.

The shield should be even and completely saturated with color. Between seven to ten white primary flights are ideal, and there should not be more than three white primaries difference between the wings. The thumb feathers should also be colored. In order for any bird to get a highest rating, it must have at least two colored thumb feathers on each wing. A little color behind the legs is still allowed to pass.



Hooked and poor beak



Head too flat

A seldom seen variety is the colored tail variety. It will be necessary to breed those with the desired old owl characteristics. They are often found with white feathers in the undertail, which must not be permitted. A clean straight line is desired.

The current state of the breed in the Netherlands

The Old German Owl has become very popular, and with this popularity many in depth requests concerning the birds have become quite common.

The most common variety found is the blue bar, but red bars and their respective dilutes are also often shown. Very good specimens can be found in these colors. The same can be said for the white self, but there are far fewer breeders.

There are but few of the red shield marked varieties, but even here we see a beautiful example of this difficult color variety exhibited occasionally.

Many good birds in various colors have been brought into the Netherlands from Germany to improve the breed. These, combined with the current good quality birds present in the Netherlands, ensure that very high quality specimens are sure to be in our future

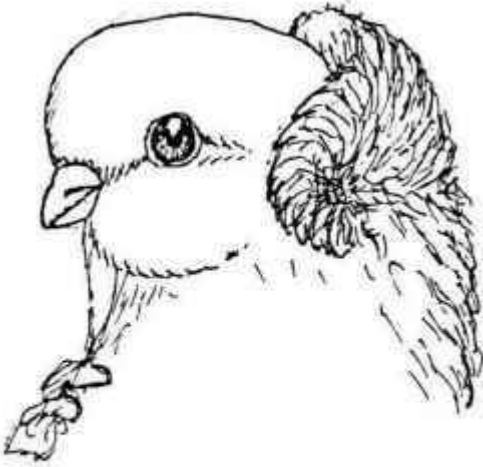


**Beak too long and
Crest too loose**

Nevertheless, it is also true that strong dedication and much hard work remains to be done to bring this utmost of pretty breeds to an even higher plane.

Whoever wishes to receive more information about the Old German Owl may contact the secretary of the

"Meeuwencub", Goutumerdyk 20, 9084 AE Goutum/
Leeuwarden, tel:058- 2883391.



**Beak too short
and crest too low**