

Homer pigeons: history, breeds with common standards, available plumage colors and patterns

Ashraful Kabir

Department of Biology, Cantonment Public College, Saidpur Cantonment—5311, Nilphamari,
Bangladesh

Email: ashraful.mission@gmail.com

Abstract: Homer pigeons are common and available in Bangladesh except for utility homer, short beak homer, and white flying homer with many colors and patterns (Plates 1-13; Table 1; Figure 1). It is an ideal pigeon breed for understanding the genetics of plumage colors and patterns. Homer pigeons kept sending letters in war fields, so it has a long history in their learning behavior. An online book (*The Homing Pigeons*) by Levi (*The Pigeon*) helped to understand those colors and patterns. The result suggests that in the racing homer group of pigeons in Bangladesh, most were blue, then silver, mealy, and ash-red in colors in the case of patterns bar, checker, T-pattern, pied, spread black, and grizzle was available.

Keywords: Homer pigeon, breed, standard, plumage colors, patterns

Introduction

The homing pigeon is also called a mail pigeon or messenger pigeon. Until the introduction of telephones, homing pigeons were used commercially to deliver communication. These pigeons are often incorrectly categorized as English carrier pigeons. Egypt was using this homing pigeon for pigeon posts by 3000 BC. By the 19th century, homing pigeons were used extensively for military communications (Clarke, 1933). Homer pigeons remain close to wild rock-pigeons (*Columba livia*) in appearance and hardiness (McNeillie, 1993). Development of this breed, dragoon, English carrier, French cumulet, horseman (extinct), and smerle used. The racer homer was used in the USA for commercial purposes (Levi, 1992). The Taliban banned the keeping or use of homing pigeons in Afghanistan (www.rawa.org/rules.htm), and now pigeons are still entered into competitions (www.pigeonmad.com). The United Fancy Homer Club focused on show homer produced among scandaroon, antwerp, tumbler, and English owl.

Bangladesh Racing Pigeon Owners Association (BRPOA) mentioned more than 40,000 pigeon fanciers take part in racing competitions in different categories. The term ‘type’ refers to the combination of the bird’s conformation, station, and profile (NPA, 2010). The common standards of homer pigeons are homing ability, average-sized bird, slim and slender-bodied, strong breast muscle, and eyes are clean and clear. The racing homer is the official name of a homing pigeon. Most homing pigeons, like their feral cousins, and these birds are muscular and real avian athletes (Brown, 2015). Racing competitions with trained racing homers and highfliers are fulfilling the mental demand of different ages of people of Bangladesh (Kabir *et al.*, 2020). Kabir (2023) mentioned a short beak homer in a newsletter on pigeons’ genetics. The objective of this study is to know the colors and patterns in homer pigeons used to produce for generating feral pigeons in the world.

Observations

Table 1. Homer pigeons with their features

Name of breeds	Origin	Features
Hungarian old homer	Hungary	It is descendant of sports and messenger pigeons. Highly developed nasal bulge and regular circular tow-row eye ring. Head is horizontally held; jaws are nearly parallel (www.pigeontype.info).
Racing homer	Belgium, England	It has huge color and pattern diversity in the world even in Bangladesh.
Utility homer	USA	Poor quality pigeon from the flying standpoint was obtained from their breeders and used as commercial purposes (Levi, 1992).
American giant homer	USA	Giant homers are from the ordinary squabbing homer. It is bred in many colors and patterns (Levi, 1992). Carried crosses with French mondaine to increase size of agency (www.pigeontype.info). American Giant Homer Association has mentioned many colors and patterns of this bird (AGHA, 2014).
German beauty homer (German racing homer)	Germany	This is an exhibition bird produced by outcrossing the racing homer upon the show

		antwerp and the show homer. It has varied colors (Levi, 1992).
Genuine homer	England	Genuine homer is an exhibition pigeon, was created from performing or racing homer. Eye color subdued to snowy whiteness (Levi, 1992). Crossbreeding with racing homer, show homer and dragoon, this is the last output and broiler pigeon for human consumption (www.pigeontype.info).
Show homer	England	Scandaroon was used as an outcross for the show homer (Levi, 1992).
American show racer	USA	Colors and patterns have been greatly improved; blue bar is very regular (Levi, 1992).
Exhibition homer	England	Exhibition homer is really a sub-variety of the show homer (Osman, 1932). This is a general type bird, erect, clean-legged, broad breasted, hard and close feathered, tight-winged, straight headed, stout beaked, long faced, and pearl eyed (evidencing the cumulet in its ancestry) (Levi, 1992).
Short beak homer	India	This is rare breed and only found in South India. Similar to normal racing homer but has short beak. Wattle and eye ceres develop very slowly with age. It has many colors (Tanveer, 2011).
Persian homer	Iran	Ancient species of Esfahan, Iran. Ancestor of the birds today called 'Lahore' in the west. This is rare breed and breathtaking color patterns but most are found in blue and black. It has short-distance turning instinct (www.pigeontype.info).
White flying homer pigeon	Greece	This bird is the symbol of peace. It has great flying ability, form type pigeons and uses many ceremonial events. The magician uses this pigeon while performing on the stage (www.pigeontype.info).
American saddle homer	USA	It has great flying skills. Also look attractive and beautiful (www.pigeontype.info).



Hungarian old homer



Racing homer



Utility homer



Giant homer



Beauty homer



Genuine homer



Show homer



Show racer



Exhibition homer



Short beak homer



Persian homer



White flying homer



American saddle homer

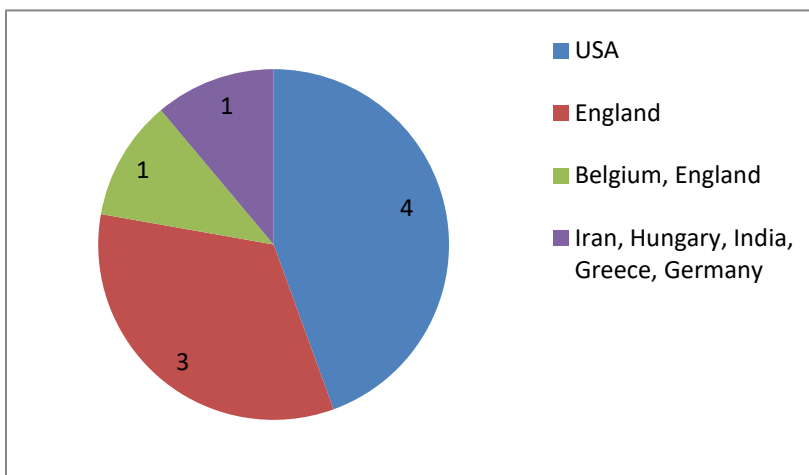


Figure 1. Number of pigeons in accordance with countries

Discussion based on colors and patterns

Available colors and patterns of homer pigeons are ash, blue bar, blue check, mealy, pied, red checker, and white flight (Brown, 2015). The color of the upper body and wings determined the base color of the pigeons. When a pigeon has white patches of feathers on its head, classed as pied, patches extend to its body as splash. Black, blue, silver, red, black checker, dark checker, blue checker, red checker, dun, mealy, grizzle, and their combination are available in homer pigeons (Ulio and Marshall, 1945). In addition, other outstanding colors are available in homing pigeons (www.falconlofts.com; www.roysfarm.com). The American Giant Homer Association (AGHA, 2014) has mentioned many colors and patterns in this group of pigeons.

References

AGHA. 2014. <https://docplayer.net/101931175-American-giant-homer-association-standard-color-classifications.html>

Brown, L. 2015. *Pigeon Racing*. NRB Publishing Company, 140 pp.

Clarke, C. W. 1933. Signal corps pigeons. *The Military Engineer* 25(140): 133-138.

<http://www.falconlofts.com/>

http://www.pigeonmad.com/beginners_guide_to_racing_pigeons.php

<http://www.rawa.org/rules.htm>

<https://www.roysfarm.com/?s=racing+homer+pigeon>

Kabir, A. 2023. Indian fancy pigeons with their past and present status. *The Pigeon Genetics Newsletter, News, Views & Comments*, May 2023, 6-20.

Kabir, A., Hawkeswood, T. J., Makhan, D. 2020. Pigeon flying in the world: a brief review.

Calodema 809: 1-4.

Levi, W. M. 1992. *The Pigeon*. Levi Publishing Company, Sumter S. C. 640 pp.

McNeillie, A. 1993. *Pigeons of the World*. Magna Books, Leicester. 160 pp.

NPA. 2010. *NPA Book of Standards*. Purebred Pigeon Publishing, USA. 231 pp.

Osman, A. H. 1932. *Pigeons and How to Keep Them* (3rd edn.) London: Cassell & Co.

Tanveer. 2011. Pigeons in India.

https://www.angelfire.com/ga/huntleyloft/images4/Pigeons_in_India.pdf

Ulio, J. A. and Marshall, G. C. 1945. *The Homing Pigeons*. U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington. 91 pp.

www.pigeontype.info