

## The Cumulet pigeon

Around 1873 Cumulets were imported<sup>1</sup> in England from *Antwerpen* (Antwerp), together with a lot of Belgian Racing Pigeons, all called<sup>2</sup> 'Antwerps' at that time. These 'white'<sup>3</sup> Cumulets were obtained in Antwerp (about 1830) by the crossing of Smierels with the <Pigeon à cou rouge> (= redneck), a highflyer introduced in Liège<sup>4</sup> by the Austrians<sup>5</sup> after the siege of Vienna by the Ottoman army (1683). The crossing was performed in order to combine the high-speed flight of the Smierel (itself a crossing of French Turbits with Barbs, and the first pigeon used for racing in Belgium (1820)) with the endurance of the <Pigeon à cou rouge>. The Cumulet was so named by the English fanciers by the word used in Walloon (=the Belgian-French dialect) for 'tumbling', while it was known in Antwerp under its Flemish names, *Tuimelaar* or *Duiker*, both meaning Tumbler. Up to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the bird was known in France as <Pigeon monte-au-ciel> (=sky-climber). Outcrossing Cumulets with English Dragoons (±1850) and other Persian Messenger (Carrier) crossings yielded finally the so successful Belgian Racing Pigeon.

Further crossings of Cumulets with local tumblers yielded the long flying Tippler in England, the Stralsunder Highflyer in Northern Germany, the white racing Tumbler in Köln and the Hagenaar in Holland. One can say that the Cumulet is a super-bastard of several other breeds, but, on the other hand, this pigeon appears as 'the' ancestor of all performing sport-breeds in Western Europe. In Belgium the breed disappeared in what was called the Belgian exhibition Highflyer, but in England it was further bred for high- and long-flying purposes.

The flying Cumulet must however be considered now as a (very) rare breed.

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<sup>1</sup> H.G. WHEELER, *Exhibition & Flying Pigeons*, London 1878.

<sup>2</sup> W.LEVI, *The Pigeon*, 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Genetically the white in Cumulets is streaked red: all youngsters are born with red speckles on wing and neck

<sup>4</sup> BOITARD & CORBIÉ, *Les pigeons de Volière et de Colombier*, Paris, 1824.

<sup>5</sup> The Austrian Habsburgers ruled Belgium (the Southern Netherlands at that time) from 1712 until 1794.