The Budapest Short-faced Tumbler
by Jan Parrott-Holden
Vancouver, Washington

Woody Woodpecker may have been hatched from the brain of cartoonist, Walter Lantz, but the Budapest tumbler certainly never originated in the mind of Steven Spielberg. True, the angular head with protruding eyes and skull bears more than a slight resemblance to Spielberg’s E.T. Yet it is doubtful the author ever raised this unique little pigeon.

The Budapest tumbler originated in Hungary and quickly established itself as one of the most popular tumbler varieties. Bred for its high flying, it was not until 1900 that the bird began to earn praise as a show pigeon. Its acceptance in this country has never been great, and only recently has the breed made itself prominent at larger pigeon exhibitions.

I’m happy to see the emergence of the “Budi.” It’s the kind of bird even a novice can pick out in the crowd (definite proof that a pigeon is not a pigeon is not a pigeon). After all, there aren’t many pigeons with such distinctive physical features.

Description
The Budapest “short-faced” tumbler really does have a short face. This is due mainly to the fact that a good specimen possesses a very short, straight, black beak. His eyes could easily belong to a frog, for they bulge in the same frog-like manner. A third bulge juts from out the back of his skull, giving him that “extraterrestrial” look. It is not likely you’ll see a Budi in red or yellow, for there are only three recognized colors in the local showrooms. These colors are blue, a blue bird with black wing bars, grizzle, and stork, a white bird with traces of gray-black on several primaries and the tail. Although the bird is slight, weighing anywhere from

The profile of a “Budi” blue hen reveals the angular head that breeders prize in a showroom bird.

This stork Budapest cock possesses those large bulging eyes — a distinguishing feature of the breed.
five to seven ounces, it possesses an unusually long "stove-pipe" shaped neck which sets off the unique head magnificently.

The Budapest tumbler is definitely a rare breed, and its odd appearance may well be one contributing factor. Still the greatest reason for its scarcity is the fact that raising these bug-eyed babies is the ultimate challenge. Probably the main discouragement for Budí breeders is the high mortality rate. Culling less than quality birds may not pose many problems for the breeder, but inability to retrieve a bird out of the shell is no laughing matter. Certainly a healthy long-faced pigeon has little difficulty pipping out of his eggshell prison. It's an entirely different proposition for short beakers, and especially for the Budapest with its triangular head and enormous eyes. That head and those eyes act as a cushion, seldom allowing the miniscule beak to chip away at the walls of confinement. Thus, it is often up to the breeder to extract a youngster before it dies of exhaustion. This demands meticulous record keeping during incubation and marking of the egg with a pencil just above the air space so that extraction will be facilitated. A lot of work for just one creature. Maybe, but the short-face breeders consider it well worth their time and effort.

Many a short face has been snatched away from its biological parents early in life due to the fact that the beaks of both parent and offspring were equally minimal, making milking difficult. Survival chances were found to be greater if the birds were fostered by long face breeds. For this role, many hobbyists select rollers or tipplers. Those with no room in their loft for foster parents must accept the challenge themselves. Through my own experimentation and considerable reading I have found that syringe feeding, while quite time-consuming, is certainly possible. And with handfeeding, you can produce a much calmer, more trusting creature. Adjectives like "cute" seem rather trite when referring to pigeons, but if there is a more appropriate description for the pert little Budapest, I can't think of it. In addition, there are few birds as rewarding to the breeder since he or she can actively participate in the birth process.

Author's Note: For interested parties seeking additional information or names of Budapest breeders, contact:
The Empire Short Face Tumbler Club, 88-02 Cooper Avenue, Glendale, NY 11385.

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