

President's Message

Chris Auer

Here we are, December 2020. COVID has changed all of our lives or at a minimum put a large part of our lives on hold. The same can be said for the USC. So far the USC has not been able to hold any district meets and recently the NPA has cancelled NPA National in Louisville which eliminates our annual meet also.

The next few months look like they are going to pretty busy for the USC. Here are a few of the activities that are planned:

- In the last bulletin Brad Stuckey brought up the idea of creating a few USC promotional items. With approval of the executive committee Brad has ordered magnets and lapel pins which should be available later this month. I hope you find the items interesting and decide to purchase a few. More details later in this bulletin from Brad.
- USC VIRTUAL SHOW, since we have had all of our meets cancelled for this year the idea came up to hold a Virtual show the first week of February 2021. More details will be covered later in this bulletin
- In the 1st USC Bulletin of 2021 nominations will be opened up for the annual meet and judge along with new officers and directors. The reason I bring this up now is that it would be good to have some of the "newer" / "younger" members take over some of these roles, particularly as District Directors.

As 2020 comes to a close let's take a look at how we have done with the "initiatives" that were outlined in the first bulletin of 2020.

- USC breeder's matrix was completed and is available on the USC website
- Jim Grober has volunteered to be the new member program chairperson and has already reached out to some of the new members that joined the USC in 2020.

Inside this issue:

Ron DeClement's discussion on Velvet Factor. Is it needed for good color in Black, Reds or Yellows?

The pictures on the right are from the 2011 Saxon Color Pigeon Show in Germany. Black and Red Fullhead Swallows by Klaus Hentschel. They show very good color but, are they with Velvet Factor? Maybe. Photos by Gary Romig



- Membership has climbed to over 60 members (let's keep it going)

- A rough draft of the USC pamphlet has been put together

One new suggestion has been brought up by a couple of our members is that since the muffs on our birds have been getting larger and larger that we change our bands from a size 11 to a 12. Elliot and I have discussed this and decided that for 2021 the official USC bands will remain 11's BUT we will buy a limited number for size 12's from the NPA and send 5 or 10 bands to the members that buy the most bands and let them try them out with the intent of gathering feedback in the May/June timeframe and then make a decision on the direction that we go when ordering bands for 2022.

In closing, 2020 has been a rough year in many ways. Hopefully we all come out of it stronger and build for a positive 2021. The one thing we can all do as a team is to focus our efforts on increasing our membership. I know that several of us are rehoming birds across the country, please encourage those people to join the USC and participate in our district and annual meets starting in 2021. New members are the life blood of any club and we need to encourage and nurture their participation. Also, we have had several members not renew their membership for various reasons, WE need to reach back out to them and see if they will renew their membership and also find out why they dropped out in the first place. A few examples of members that have recently not renewed their membership are: Lance Newman, Dave Holloway, Ray Kolinski, Mitch Slagle, Freddy Moore, JR Miller, Lukas Smith, etc. If you know these guys please reach out and invite them back.

Remember please send your 2021 dues and band orders to Elliot Yeske as soon as you can.

Keep in touch and be SAFE, see you in 2021

From USC Secretary Elliot Yeske

Hello everyone, I hope this message finds all of you well. It is that time of year again to renew your membership to the United Swallow Club. Our dues are still \$10 per year and we will be selling club NPA bands again this year for 50 cents each and \$6 postage we have them in the 8 MM size for the clean

leg birds and 11 MM size for the muffed birds. Please get your orders in early as some years we sell out of the bands. Also members not renewed by March 15th will have to be dropped from our membership list.

Stay safe everyone,

USC VIRTUAL SHOW

I have heard from many USC members that 2020 has been a "downer" for a lot of reasons and that not having many (if any) opportunities to show birds and rekindle the competitive spirit has made times even more trying. During those conversations the concept of having a Virtual show on Facebook or some other social media platform like Zoom or Microsoft teams has come up. This would at least give US a chance to show off a few birds and more importantly give us a distraction from the world we live in right now. So with the concept that no idea is a bad idea we are going to try it. This event is in the developmental stages, below I have listed some of the proposed show rules (subject to change).

- Entries are open to USC members only
- Entries will consist of 2 or 3 pictures per bird. Somehow each picture will have to be identified with breeder name and band number.
- A member can only enter 2 birds per type (black wb fairy, red wb fairy on down the line). And no more than 10 birds total. Thoughts?
- "Show" dates will be Feb 6, 2021. Entries would have to be sent in by Tues Feb 2, 2021.
- Judging is totally open for suggestions, right now I see a couple of ways this could be done. First option would be to have a panel of 3 judges (at least 1 would need to be a certified judge) do all the judging like we normally do in a live show or secondly a panel of certified judges could rate the birds and the highest combined score would determine the top birds in each class and those "top" birds would be rejudged for Champion and class winners.

- The USC would reserve the right to use any pictures submitted for club purposes.

Obviously, there is a lot of work to be done to develop the "real" show rules and most importantly I need help from someone more knowledgeable than me on social media platform options to help figure out how this would all work.

Dave Gazaway has already volunteered to make a Champion award and I will put something up for best Black White Bar Saxon (wing or swallow). If anyone else wants to put up an award please let me know. It would be good to have awards for each class of birds.

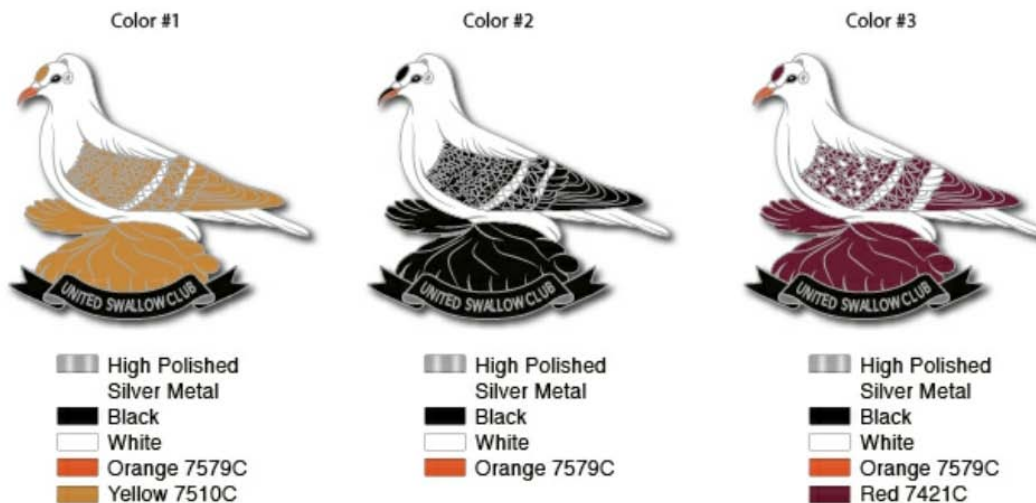
If you do not have a Facebook account and don't want one but would like to enter a few birds let me know, you will be able to email the pics to me or whomever volunteers to be show secretary.

I have had a couple of members ask me how I can support a "show" and judging that is using pictures since I am usually very vocal after shows saying that it is unfair to criticize a rating or a judges decision when looking at pictures online. The difference with this event and a live show is very simple, a "live" show is just that, the judges vision of the bird changes every instant and a picture is just 1 instant in time not a compilation of views over several minutes. In the case of this show the judge and EVERYONE else will see the exact same instant in time that is captured in the picture(s). And more importantly this is just for FUN, a distraction during a long winter.

I will keep you up to date via email or facebook.

Chris Auer

Promotional Goodies



With the interesting year we all have faced, hopefully these United Swallow Club collectibles will bring a smile to everyone's faces. We ended up settling on three different pins and seven unique magnets. The Pins will go for \$4 each or \$10 for 3, while the Magnets will run \$2 each or \$10 per set of 7. The magnets can always be glued to non magnetic surfaces like carrying cases or in

highly visible areas around the loft, for a couple examples. These items can be used as an inexpensive way to build interest in the hobby by sharing an item or so with someone who is buying birds from you, or as a fantastic gift for someone who collects pigeon memorabilia. We only ordered a limited supply so please reach out to Chris Auer, Elliot Yeske, or me soon to get your order placed!



(Velvet) Thuringer Wing Pigeon, Black Barless E-97 Jay Beals. 2013 Pageant-photo by George de la Nuez



(Velvet) Saxon Wing Pigeon, Black White Bar HS-96 Bill Griebel. 2013 Pageant-photo by George de la Nuez

The Velvet and Non-Velvet Swallow

Breeders of swallows and other breeds of color pigeons will often select for the velvet factor in the colors of black, red and yellow. The velvet factor is the result of grease quills that are a yellowish colored firm quill found near the base of the tail under the wing and sometimes spread almost to the shoulder in some pigeons. This quill contains an oil somewhat similar to the oil produced by the Uropygial Gland just above the base of the tail. This oil is spread through the feathers during preening. The purpose of the oil is believed to be for feather maintenance. The biochemical composition of preen oil varies among different species of birds but contains mostly medium to long chain fatty acids. Grease quills are found in several breeds of pigeons and this factor is not rare. In color pigeons this oil adds a luster and more glossy shine to the feather. The velvet factor makes the feather appear a somewhat darker color by saturating the bloom on the feather with oil which is similar to taking your 10-year-old golden haired daughter and wetting her hair with oil or water. It will make her pretty blonde hair instantly appear darker even though it is not. Hopefully the child's hair is not covered in pigeon bloom but the wetting effect is the same as the oil from the grease quill having the

darkening effect on the feather. The velvet factor is dominant in inheritance and the non-velvet factor is therefore recessive. From the breeding experience of fanciers, it appears velvet pigeons carrying the non-velvet recessive factor and will produce non velvet birds. The velvet factor effects the color of the entire bird and this includes the white feathers. When breeding two pigeons both containing heavy velvet quills the young do not appear as white as non-velvet pigeons with a powdery bloom on their feathers.

The feathers are made of a protein called beta-keratin. This gives the pigeon's feathers the resilient structure they need to last one year until the annual molt in the Autumn. Pigeons have powder down feathers which are specialized feathers that disintegrate into tiny particles of keratin forming an extremely fine white powder, like baby powder, called bloom. This powder has a smooth silky texture and adheres to the feathers of the bird and is believed to aid in feather maintenance like the preening oil. The bloom gives pigeons a silky feel to the feathers which racing pigeon fanciers say is a sign of both health and vitality and is therefore desirable in racing and other flying breeds. This bloom being white alters the color of



(Velvet?) Thuringer Wing Pigeon, Yellow White Bar by Leon Stephens. 2013 Pageant-photo by George de la Nuez



(Non-Velvet) Saxon Wing Pigeon, Red White Bar 2020 hen from Gary Romig

The Velvet and Non-Velvet swallow

the feathers by making them appear slightly lighter on both the light pastel colors in swallows of blue, ash red and cream and the intense colors of black, red and yellow. This bloom also coats every other surface in the loft. Unfortunately, pigeon bloom is a highly antigenic substance and is a contributing cause to breeder's lung among pigeon fanciers. Since this bloom floats in the air and accumulates over the surfaces of the entire loft it is for this specific reason all pigeon fanciers should wear a respirator if they keep a large loft of pigeons unless the ventilation is more than adequate. When pigeons fly at night it is easy to see the white bloom in the air under a light.

What all this means of course is that the pigeon carrying the dominant velvet factor will appear somewhat darker than the pigeon carrying the recessive non velvet factor. It does not mean the velvet pigeon has more intense color. As stated earlier, the velvet quills add oil to the feathers and darken the color by simply altering the bloom on the feather. The competent judge of swallows and color pigeons will therefore be aware of this and judge the two birds differently. The velvet bird will be judged as a velvet and the non-velvet as a non-velvet. This being said, the non-velvet pigeon is equally competitive with the velvet pigeon if the judge knows the colors of black, red and yellow properly. Keeping and breeding non velvet pigeons should not be a deterrent because of the bloom and many breeders will mate a velvet to a non-velvet to avoid getting too much velvet quill on the pigeon which as stated above affects the quality of the feather and the quality of the white color. The non-velvet swallow has an appearance of its own where it can be described the same as the racing homer fanciers describe their birds. The white color is bright and the entire bird appears healthy and vibrant from the bloom on its feathers which is the natural condition of the pigeon.

When the breeders select their young, it is best to evaluate each pigeon for what it is and not compare velvet and non-velvet pigeons. The fancier should evaluate each pigeon for the quality of the color and the overall quality of the bird. The non-velvet swallow has its place in any swallow loft and in any swallow show.

Looking at Velvet-pictures by Gary Romig



My Red White Bar Saxon Wing Pigeons (Fairy Swallows) don't have very much of the Velvet Factor in them. The hen above has none of the heavy feather shafts in the usual area.



This Red Fairy Swallow shows a slight amount of characteristic feather shafts of Velvet Factor. The Red color on this bird is not any better than the bird above.



My Black Wing Archangels do have a good expression of Velvet Factor in the typical area.



Red Check Silesian Swallow YC has some Saxon Field Pigeon in his family history but his parents are both miss-marked Swallows.



Red Check Saxon Field Pigeon YH is from mixed parents, a Red Bar Saxon Field Pigeon mother and Red Check Silesian Swallow father.

Progress on my Red Check Project

By Gary Romig

For my Red Check Silesian Swallow project I have begun to mate up a couple of pairs like to two birds in the photos shown above. Red Check Saxon Field Pigeon hens to Red Check Silesian Swallow cocks. After several seasons of breeding these Red Check Swallows I have only two hens that are very poorly marked. In the breeding from them I have only raised cocks some well marked and some miss-marked. So, now I am paring like these two birds shown above. The Field Pigeon hens all have pretty good type with larger muffs. The Silesian Swallow cocks have pretty good markings but lack large enough muffs.

One weakness is seen in both birds above is the color. They both seem to have a bluish tinge to the red color. I have raised Red Check Field Pigeons with much better red color and I hope that from these mating some of the good color will come. The bluish tinge perhaps indicates that these are Reds (dominate) that carry Blue. But I have found that even the good colored Reds can carry Blue. Several times I have raised beautiful Blue Checks from great colored Red Checks.

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