

# Urbanized Wildlife

## "The Pigeon"



The existence of wildlife in urban areas enriches our environment, bringing a little bit of nature to the bustle of a busy city. Abundance of food and shelter, in addition to a lack of natural predators have allowed many wild animals and birds to adapt well to urban life.

Although human vs. wildlife conflicts may (and do) occur, understanding the characteristics and needs of animals and birds can help us take a humane approach leading to a peaceful coexistence. The Humane treatment of animals and birds involves compassion and excludes cruelty, pain, suffering and injury.

Many people do not like pigeons, mainly because their droppings can cover everything in your yard, including your house. But there are better, more humane methods to discourage these lovely creatures from invading your yard besides using pellet guns (as we have unfortunately seen so many times.)

Perhaps a little history and facts about these amazing birds to help you see them as we do: Real, interesting and valuable Wildlife - right in our back yards!

# P

## IGEON PIONEERS

- The first pigeons, or rock doves, were brought to north America by European settlers and are now found throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. Pigeons have long been used to deliver messages, particularly during world war 1 and 2. Scientists are baffled by their uncanny ability to find their way home over hundreds of miles!



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## IGEON POINTS

- Pigeons have become proficient city dwellers; however, this often brings them into conflict with homeowners, building owners and city officials as the birds seek food and shelter.
- Pigeons are usually grey, but can have several colour phases including reddish-brown, tan, mottled and white, which makes them a very attractive specimen in your yard! They generally have two black bands on the wing, a broad black band on the tail, a whitish rump and red feet.



- Their average weight is 370 grams and average length is 28 cm.
  - When pigeons take off, their wing tips touch, making a characteristic clicking sound.
- They feed not only on grains but also on treats that humans provide such as bread, popcorn, peanuts, cake, etc.
  - Pigeons are non-migratory, flourishing in urban areas and in large cities throughout the world.
  - Pigeons are very social birds and although they tend to breed and roost in groups, they are usually monogamous and pair for life unless one partner dies.
  - Most breeding occurs in the spring and summer months, but pigeons can and will breed in any season of the year.
  - Both male and female birds guard the nest, which is a flimsy collection of sticks and twigs.
  - One or two white eggs are laid per year, using the same nest site. Incubation lasts about three weeks and the nestlings are helpless, blind and down covered when they hatch.
  - Surprisingly enough, they are fed with milk found in special glands in the back of the parents' throat.

- They are brooded for at least a week and leave the nest approximately four weeks after hatching.
- These wonderfully beautiful birds often display uncanny “human like” behaviours, yet many people continue to be extremely cruel to them!
- We even use them as a symbol of love and often have them released at weddings for their great beauty.

## PIGEON PROBLEMS and PREVENTION

Since pigeons are flock birds, they can become a problem to residents, building owners and municipalities. Their droppings can deface and accelerate deterioration on buildings cars and statues. In addition, there are concerns about disease transmission from excrement.



As with all wildlife conflicts, the best solution is prevention. Pigeons are seeking food, nesting and/or roosting sites. If these needs are not met, the pigeons will be forced to move somewhere else. Here are a few hints to keep pigeons from encroaching on your home and yard (if that's what you want to do!):

- Block access to interior roosting and nesting sites (\*\*only after nesting is done if it has already occurred!)
- To keep birds off cables, narrow ledges and other similar areas, install two or three tightly stretched parallel strands of 16 to 18 gauge steel wire at varying heights just above the surface
- Residents can deter birds from using their balconies by hanging frightening devices such as cd's, pinwheels, aluminum pie plates and other life size reproductions of wild predators such as owls and falcons

# The **P**ROBLEM WITH POISONING...

Poisoning of these birds is **illegal** under the criminal code. Poisons generally cause a lingering, inhumane death with great suffering and, therefore, should not be used **at all**. Effects in pigeons include general disorientation, trembling, vomiting, severe convulsions, internal hemorrhaging, acute respiratory distress and inability to fly, walk or stand.

Since pigeons are a part of the natural food chain, poisoning of pigeons (on the low end of the food chain) results in poisoning of prey species (many of which are endangered) such as cats, foxes, owls, hawks, and Peregrine falcons.



Another serious concern is that poisons are hazardous to the environment.

Killing pigeons by other means such as shooting is not a solution, since this just creates a void for other birds to fill. Pest control companies should be avoided as they frequently recommend poisons, sticky glue and other short-term, inhumane methods of "extermination". These industries are largely unregulated and competitive so some checking up on the past work history should be done if you feel the need to go this way. Another extremely inhumane method of pigeon control is the use of adhesive strips or substances on ledges where pigeons like to roost.

As with glue boards used for mice and rats, these devices cause tremendous suffering when the pigeon (or other birds) land on the strips and become more and more coated with glue as they struggle to free themselves. They peck at the glue so their beaks will also become stuck and they will suffer a lingering death.

Like everything else nature has its own system for regulating populations, usually much more efficiently than humans can destroy them.

Spirit of the Wind certainly hope this can help find other solutions to discourage pigeons from coming to your property instead of the means that we have seen. Our position is that the best way to deter a pigeon from roosting on your house is to get a life sized replica of a bird of prey and perch it in the open where they can see it.



Please feel free to contact "Spirit Of The Wind" if you have any questions or other suggestions.