

# Pigeon

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Pigeons and doves constitute the family Columbidae within the order Columbiformes, which include some 300 species of near passerine birds. In general parlance the terms "dove" and "pigeon" are used somewhat interchangeably. In ornithological practice, there is a tendency for "dove" to be used for smaller species and "pigeon" for larger ones, but this is in no way consistently applied, and historically the common names for these birds involve a great deal of variation between the term "dove" and "pigeon." Pigeons and doves are stout-bodied birds with short necks and short slender bills with a fleshy cere. The species commonly referred to just as the "pigeon" is the feral Rock Pigeon, common in many cities.

Doves and pigeons build relatively flimsy nests from sticks and other debris, which may be placed in trees, on ledges, or on the ground, depending on species. They lay one or two eggs, and both parents care for the young, which leave the nest after 7 to 28 days. Doves feed on seeds, fruit and plants. Unlike most other birds (but see flamingo), the doves and pigeons produce "crop milk," which is secreted by a sloughing of fluid-filled cells from the lining of the crop. Both sexes produce this highly nutritious substance to feed to the young.



The pigeon or rock dove is the number one bird pest in the United States. These nuisance birds were introduced to the United States as pets but quickly adapted to our environment and have continued to flourish in numbers, becoming a pest of business, airports, historical landmarks, schools, and stadiums -- any place where adequate food and shelter is available. Pigeons primarily feed on grains with some occasional fruit in their diet. This basic diet has changed as the birds learned to live in our neighborhoods and cities. It is not uncommon to see flocks of pigeons walking through the parking lots of shopping centers and fast-food restaurants, looking for handouts or scraps of food dropped by humans.

Pigeons are birds that live in communal flocks. These flocks generally feed, loaf and roost together, enjoying the company of their companions. These birds usually mate for life. Pigeons have a life span of up to 10 or 15 years in the wild but in urban areas they may only live for about 5 years.

