PEST BIRD FACT SHEET


[1]

SPECIES PROFILE - FERAL PIGEON

Common Name: Feral Pigeon, Rock Dove

Scientific Name: *Columba livia*

Distribution & habitat:

- The Feral Pigeon is native to Europe, Africa and Asia. In Australia, it is found in large numbers in capital cities and larger towns.

Feeding

- Although it is mainly a seed-eater, the Feral Pigeon will scavenge most scraps.

Breeding

- The main breeding season extends from July to February, although they can breed at any time.
- Pigeons can lay up to 2-3 broods per year.
- The female lays one or two white eggs in a crude nest of sticks, grass, and twigs.
- Nesting sites are situated along coastal cliff faces, as well as the artificial cliff faces created by apartment buildings with accessible ledges or roof spaces.
- Pigeons nest in large colonies which quickly deface buildings with their droppings.
- Pigeon flocks are mobile, having different nesting, roosting and feeding sites.
- Pigeons can live for up to 15 years, although the average life span is three to four years.

Living with humans:

- Communal roosting and nesting habits create aesthetic and human health concerns.
- They are generally regarded as a potential health hazard to humans in urban environments, carrying such diseases as *Ornithosis* (sometimes called psittacosis or parrot fever), *Salmonellosis* (salmonella) and the fungal infection, *Cryptococcosis*, which may lead to meningitis. They also play some part in the transmission of such diseases as encephalitis and histoplasmosis. Sometimes dermatitis, caused by pigeon mites that migrate from nests and bite people, is a problem. They do pose sporadic health risks to humans, however the risk is generally very low.
- There are also economic costs associated with pigeons damaging public and private property through fouling these areas.

Control options:

- **Scaring Devices**: Audio & Visual
- **Lethal**: Shooting, Trapping, Poison, Egg Oil
- **Habitat Management**: Reduce habitat quality, Nest destruction, limit availability of food, Plant native vegetation, Exclusion

For further information see *'Control Options'* fact sheet

Pigeon nest


[2]

Pigeon nest and droppings on roof


[3]

Pigeons roosting


[4]

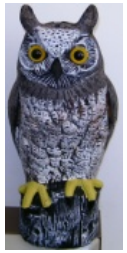
[1] http://expatlarissa.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/pigeon1.jpg;

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Columba_livia_nest_2_eggs.jpg.

[3] http://pigeoncontrolbrisbane.com.au

[4] http://static.lifeislocal.com.au/multimedia/images/full/1826217.jpg

FERAL PIGEONS - POTENTIAL CONTROL OPTIONS

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Scaring Devices			
Audio Examples: Gas cannon, Birdfrite®, Sirens, Alarm calls.  5	Products that generate species-specific alarm and distress calls, predator attack and hunting calls, and other frightening noises such as thunderclaps and shotgun blasts to frighten birds from an area. Audio bird control products need to utilise a combination of different sounds at differing lengths and time intervals to be effective. It is recommended that audio and visual deterrents are used together. If used together, these audio, visual bird deterrents may convince pest birds to leave the problem area, but often it is for a short time and then the pest birds will return.	High public acceptability, non-lethal, low level of skill required	The use of some is limited to situations away from residential or inner city areas due to high noise levels, often only temporarily effective, variable success, shifts the problem, can be expensive
Visual Examples: Scarecrows, predator models, lights, balloons, reflective mirrors or tape.  6	Effectiveness is increased if a number of these techniques are used in combination.	High public acceptability, non-lethal, low level of skill required	The use of some (eg. flashing lights) may be limited to situations away from residential or inner city areas, often only temporarily effective, variable success, shifts the problem.
Lethal			
Shooting  7	Shooting is used to directly reduce numbers of pest birds. Shooting as a lethal method can be effective in reducing localised populations of birds when low numbers are involved. Shooting should only be used in a strategic manner as part of a co-ordinated program designed to achieve sustained effective control. Shooting should be considered as just one activity in a broader integrated bird-control program. It is a training technique to educate birds to associate the sharp, sudden noise with real danger, and real danger with humans and human activities. It should therefore be started before	Quick response to problem animals, potential uses in rural residential areas, high target specificity. It is also humane if properly carried out.	Labour intensive, costly, opportunistic, rarely effective in achieving long-term reductions in bird numbers or associated damage and may have limited value in bird control. It is also unsafe if used by an unskilled operator, and is unsuitable under most circumstances in densely populated areas. Other birds will

5 http://dailygunpictures.blogspot.com.au/2008/03/12-gauge-birdfrite-shotgun-cartridge.html

6 http://cgi.ebay.com.au/ws/eBayISAPI.dll?VISuperSize&item=260758343752

7 http://c.shld.net/rpx/i/s/pi/mp/1429/5855262301p?src=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pyramydair.com%2Fimages%2FStoeger-Arms-X5-STGR-30006-Air-Gun-Rifle-combo.jpg&d=069d550a502d9d7b6e8e69d18eecdc9782a346a1

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
	other scaring tactics which can be introduced later to reinforce its scaring effects. If, for example, shooting is only initiated after birds have become used to a gas gun, they will not associate the loud bang with a real threat and the shooting will have much less of a scaring effect. Not recommended as a stand alone method.		often move into an area to take the place of those that are killed. Also, some species of bird learn to avoid shooters.
Trapping Examples: Walk-in cage traps, clap and sprung traps, roost traps and nest traps  [8]	Various live-capture traps can be used. Trap sites should be used in rotation to reduce trap shyness. During the breeding season most birds are territorial and so trapping may be less effective. Also, for bird species with high rates of fecundity (e.g. starlings and mynas) removing birds during or just prior to the breeding season may cause greater reductions in density in the long term. Trapped pest birds should be euthanased humanely after capture. The traps used should be specific for the target species. Details of trap specifications and construction can be obtained from relevant State or private pest control officers. Bait material suitable to the species being trapped should be used. Everyone who participates in trapping must adopt the animal welfare protocol. Euthanasia is the responsibility of the trap operator and must be carried out in accordance with the standard operating procedures produced by the Industry and Investment NSW.	May be effective in reducing high populations when coupled with other control options such as nest destruction.	Slow and labour-intensive. Confinement in a trap causes fear and distress; therefore traps need to be carefully managed. In many incidences trapping does not have a long term effect on the population. The number of birds caught and killed during trapping operations can be replaced as quickly as the birds are removed. It is important that the source of food is removed otherwise the trapping exercise may be pointless.
Poison Examples: 1080, nicotine, strychnine, brodifacoum, Alpha-chloralose, Fenthion methyl, carbon monoxide	Poisons specifically used for bird species are known as avicides. The use of some is heavily regulated (ie. a chemical product used for the purpose of bird control that contains 4-aminopyridine or alphachloralose or fenthion has been declared to be a "restricted chemical product" as set out in Regulation 45 of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Regulations 1995).	Effective. Can be used in combination with trapping.	Community resistance to their use; their impacts on non-target species; animal welfare concerns; and (depending on the poison used) their residual or secondary effects in the food chain.

[8] http://www.elitebird.com.au/uploads/_large_pigeon_trap_1.png

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Egg oil  [9]	Vegetable and mineral oils can be used to prevent hatching when the oils are applied directly to eggs in the nest. An advantage of applying oils, rather than destroying eggs or nests, is that birds may continue incubating, in some cases beyond the normal time for hatching.	May be effective for reducing small urban populations of pest birds with extended breeding seasons.	Labour intensive due to the inaccessibility of many bird nests. Therefore it may only be useful for small or isolated pest populations
Habitat Management			
Reduce habitat quality  [10]	Habitat quality can be reduced so that fewer resources are available for a pest species and their numbers decline. Alternatively, pest birds can be lured away from an area by providing more attractive habitats or food elsewhere. It may be possible, however, to modify or remove isolated trees or shrubs that are used for roosting.	Long-term	Not practicable for reducing populations of pest birds over large areas. May conflict with vegetation management legislation
Nest destruction and limit availability of food  [11]	Pigeon nests are very simple and often consist of a few twigs. Pigeons are very persistent and destruction of the nest at regular intervals will need to be implemented along with other control methods. Remove sources of food and water- (eg. don't feed birds and prevent access to bins.)	Limits resource availability (e.g. breeding sites), high acceptance, may be particularly effective in combination with other measures, it is a passive method.	Potential poorly realised for most species, can shift problem from one place to another, May be ongoing activity,
Native vegetation  [12]	Native flowering plants can be planted to increase plant diversity and the extent of native vegetation thereby increasing the diversity of birds, particularly native species. A balance of native shrubs and trees of varying heights is recommended for conservation and may reduce the numbers of pest birds.	Long-term	Colonisation by aggressive edge-specialist honeyeaters (eg. noisy miner)

9 http://vanessaruns.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/canola-oil.jpg

10 http://www.hcr.cma.nsw.gov.au/uploads/large/africanolive_maitlandvale.jpg

11 http://selector.com/au/suppliers/street-furniture-australia/products/monsoon-bin-enclosure

12 http://www.duckpond-design.com.au/theduckpond/13july2003.htm

Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Exclusion Examples: Netting, bird spikes, gutter guard, BirdSlide, screening, building alteration, wires, polybutene, high pressure hose. [13]  	Exclusion and habitat alteration are used extensively to minimise the impact of pest birds in many areas. The purpose is to deny them access to enter or use any structure as a nesting or roosting site. It is important to prevent pest birds from gaining access to roosting and nesting sites by sealing doorways, windows, open eaves etc. This may require extensive renovations or may be as simple as sealing a crack or crevice using materials such as mesh or wooden panels. Products such as netting (bird wire or mesh), wire coils or 'bird spikes' prevent pigeons from landing or roosting on building surfaces.	Flexible use, High level of public acceptability, humane, expertise for its installation and maintenance is readily available.	High initial capital cost if large areas are to be covered. Poorly designed or maintained bird proofing can lead to birds becoming fatally trapped or be ineffective. Bird spikes are useful only in inaccessible situations due to risk of human injury.

[13] http://www.homeimprovementpages.com.au/creative/galleries/260001_265000/260340/557x418/175392.jpg?v=1310032421; http://www.removepigeons.com.au/images/Bird%20ne tting%20at%20Coor%20web%20ready.JPG; http://absolutebirdcontrol.info/products/bird-spikes