

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT PEST OF THE MONTH PROGRAM NO. 6

PIGEONS

INTRODUCTION

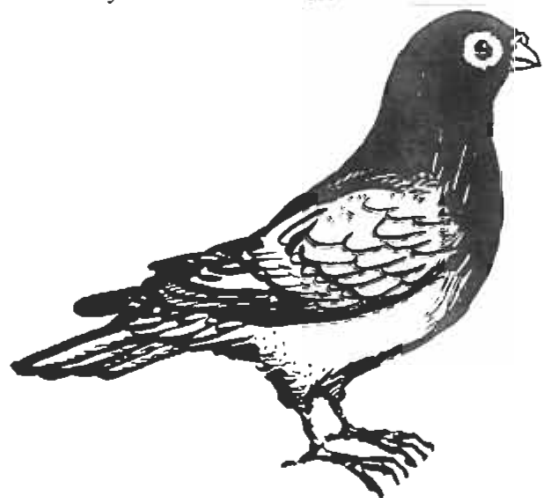
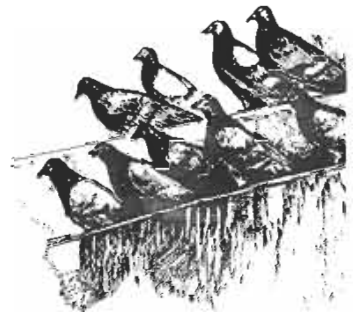
Pigeons have often been referred to as flying rats and in many ways they are.

- Pigeons are the main pest bird problem at LAUSD schools.
- Their nesting, roosting, amorous cooing, and loafing activities create nuisance problems.
- They are known to transmit a number of human and avian diseases.
- Pigeons and their nests harbor ectoparasites that attack humans.
- Acidic pigeon droppings deface structures and hasten deterioration.
- Pigeon feces foul areas where people walk, sit, play, consume food, etc.
- Accumulated pigeon droppings will create odor problems and produce flies.
- Droppings that accumulate on stairs, fire escapes, or other walking surfaces make these areas slippery and dangerous.
- Debris from pigeons and their nests can clog gutters, downspouts, and drains.
- Pigeons are known to carry and transmit diseases to humans through their droppings, especially when the feces dry and particles become airborne.
- The potential for transmission of diseases is real and should be taken seriously when pigeons live in close association with humans.
- Diseases spread by pigeons include aspergillosis, candidiasis, cryptococcosis, encephalitis, histoplasmosis, Newcastle disease, ornithosis, salmonellosis, and toxoplasmosis.
- When pigeons nest in, on, or under HVAC units, objectionable odors, ectoparasites, and particulate materials can be drawn into structures.

WHY PIGEONS PREFER TO BE AT SCHOOLS.

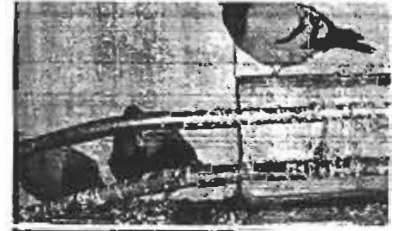
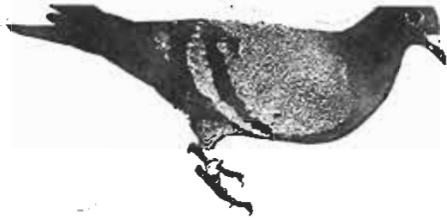
Schools provide pigeons with all of the basic requirements that they need for survival. These requirements are:-

- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Nesting, roosting, and loafing sites.



6A • WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1995 • USA TODAY

10 . . . PIGEONS IN ST. MARK'S Square in Venice are a health hazard and must be captured and killed. Mayor Massimo Cacciari said veterinary tests showed that about 30% of the 5,000 or so pigeons that flock to the famous landmark are infected with a form of salmonella that could be transmitted to humans. . . .



WHAT CAN BE DONE TO DISCOURAGE PIGEONS AT SCHOOLS.

PROHIBITING BIRD FEEDING

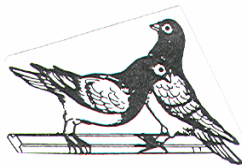
No one should be allowed to feed pigeons on school grounds, and if possible, nearby. Control methods will not be effective if people are providing birds with food. Pigeons are creatures of habit. They will quickly learn to frequent places where they are fed. Inner city school children often regard pigeons as pets and sometimes these birds are their only exposure to wildlife. It is important that the health hazards associated with pigeons be pointed out to school children so that they do not engage in activities that encourage these birds. For example, rats often feed on dead pigeons and on food left for pigeons. When school children are fed outdoors, it is very important that all spilled food be removed promptly after breakfast, snack, and lunch. Empty outdoor trash containers frequently. Do what you can to deny pigeon easy access to food on school premises. If they can't find food at the schools they will go somewhere else.

ELIMINATING WATER SOURCES

Observe where pigeons are drinking water on school grounds and deny them these sources. Repair outside water leaks, eliminate excessive irrigation that leads to puddling, fix clogged gutters, and exclude pigeons from HVAC units that provide them with water. Water sources that cannot be eliminated can be treated with detergent or food grade oil to make them unpalatable to pigeons. If pigeons cannot find water at a school, they will leave.

DENYING THEM HIGH PROFILE NESTING, ROOSTING AND LOAFING AREAS.

Pigeons can be denied access to high profile areas from where they can contaminate and defecate on walkways, entryways, and people. This can be done by the installation of bird netting, bird spikes, bird wires, bird coils, bird spiders, etc. on favorite resting, loafing, and nesting areas. Installation of bird deterrent devices is costly, time consuming, and labor intensive. It is not economically feasible to exclude pigeons from an entire school. It must be made clear to all concerned that these devices **DO NOT** reduce a pigeon population at a school. All they do is prevent pigeons from using certain high profile areas. The bird's response to these devices is to simply use other areas that are not denied to them. In simple terms, if there were 200 pigeons at a school before bird deterrent devices were installed, there will be 200 pigeons there after the devices were installed. They will just be sitting at other places. Exclusion cannot be relied on by itself to mitigate pigeon problems at schools. It must be used in conjunction with other control techniques.



TRAPPING

In the City of Los Angeles, the Department of Animal Regulation is currently not issuing permits to trap and transport pigeons within their jurisdiction. This is because of the current situation with regards to Newcastle disease in California. At this time, we cannot trap pigeons at our schools.

NEST REMOVAL

Persistent removal of pigeon nests every two weeks and screening off the nest areas to deny them future access will help to reduce pigeon populations at schools. This must be done on a regular basis to be effective.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROLS

Birds of prey such as falcons and hawks occasionally take pigeons at school facilities particularly at those schools that have a good number of tall trees. However, these birds are not comfortable around large numbers of noisy children and they do not provide appreciable pigeon control at LAUSD schools



CHEMICAL CONTROL

There is one chemical still available for pigeon control. This material has sometimes been referred to as a psychochemical flock frightening agent. Birds consuming enough of this material react in an abnormal manner producing distress calls, etc. which causes other birds to leave the area. It is known that those birds that consume enough of this material to react may die. Pigeons affected by this chemical often react in a violent fashion, which to the uninformed and various other animal lovers, may appear to be cruelty to animals. Pigeons have also died off site when this material was used at schools in the past. Because of the reaction this material can cause in pigeons and the potential negative response of the public, LAUSD has been reluctant to use this material for pigeon control at schools. School children could be traumatically affected by observing convulsing pigeons induced by a chemical deliberately put out by District employees for bird control.

DENYING PIGEONS ACCESS TO FOOD, WATER, AND NESTING SITES IS THE PREFERRED METHOD OF PIGEON CONTROL AT SCHOOLS. PLEASE DO YOUR PART TO KEEP THESE FLYING RATS AWAY FROM THE CHILDREN AT OUR SCHOOLS.

Prepared by Dr. Hanif Gulmahamad, LAUSD IPM Coordinator
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Pigeons

The domestic pigeon (*Columba livia*) was introduced into the United States in the early 17th century, primarily to be used as food (squab).