



HOMING PIGEONS

There is so much to learn about our beautiful, smart Pigeons so here we go again, with Article Two!

Pigeons are now city birds and they stay all year. A "Thank You" to Kalpesh Patel for the lovely photo for the first article last November, showing the pink feet and ankles; the typical 2 black wing bars; small round head; dark, straight bill; rather plump; long wings.

These wings are interesting: when the Pigeon takes off, the wing tips collide. They are held at an angle when gliding. They use their

wings also for communicating by clapping them together above their backs.

These birds' eyes are located on the side so each eye sees a different view, allowing them to see 300 degrees of viewing area. It is very important to keep an eye out for predators. They eat mainly grain and weed seeds which they store in their huge crops in their throats. Their young stick their beaks into the parent's mouth and suck up this nourishing "Pigeon Milk" which the parent is pumping from his/her crop for them. Pigeons drink by putting their whole bill into water and sucking it up.

In World War One, 5,000 Pigeons delivered messages and World War Two, 36,000 delivered messages, to where traveling was very dangerous or impossible. How could they do this? It is because Pigeons have a homing instinct. They would be taken from their home to a headquarters where messages were attached to them.

Using the sun when it was out and magnetic fields when it was not out, they were able to make their way back home to where they came from! They are swift and strong flyers - up to 153 kilometers an hour.

Pigeons were introduced to Canada in 1606 and are now world-wide. Greek and Romans used them as far back as 4,500 B.C. They love a rain storm, using it as we do a shower. They seek a bath every day if there is open water. Their feathers are covered with a fine water-proof powder to keep them dry but accumulated dirt is washed off. Next time that you see Pigeons, take some time to observe how smart they are. You may be as surprised as I was!

Photo: June Hitchcox as a

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This is not intended to solicit properties already listed for sale.

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teenager in North Bay. She was always feeding the pigeons which led them to be so tame that they would perch on her head! Thanks to Stephen Hitchcox for his help with this.

