

# Pigeons

- There are two pigeon species in BC: **rock pigeons** (*Columba livia*), and **band-tailed pigeons** (*Patagioenas fasciata*)
- Rock pigeons are Schedule C (non-protected) birds under the *BC Wildlife Act*, and band-tailed pigeons are protected Migratory Birds



Rock pigeon

## Understanding Pigeons

Rock pigeons are urban specialists abundant in open and semi-open areas. Empty nests and nests with eggs can legally be destroyed. Band-tailed pigeons are a forest dwelling species who rarely cause conflict, and permits are required to interfere with nests or eggs.

## Pigeons...

- lay 1-2 eggs several times a year, and can nest all year round
- babies rely on parents to feed them (“altricial”) until they learn to fly at 25-32 days old (longer in winter)

## Humane Choices

*The BC SPCA does not support killing pigeons for nuisance reasons.*

Killing is rarely necessary and control methods should be selected to cause the least harm to the animal’s welfare. If attractants have not been removed, more pigeons may arrive, so follow-up monitoring is needed.

The BC SPCA strongly encourages non-lethal, non-contact methods. Prevention and exclusion comes first, followed by deterrence, and if necessary, eviction. Eviction should be done carefully to avoid potentially orphaning young.



Band-tailed pigeon

## Did you know?

Pigeons are gentle and gregarious birds. They eat seeds, grains, and also clean up discarded waste and grain.

## Conflict Resolution

**Intentional feeding is highly discouraged.** Pigeons may be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment and release if needed. If bird is in critical distress, a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator may euthanize. Nests with young may be moved from the site, or a false replacement nest provided. For more information on addressing pigeon conflicts, *flip page over*.

## Common Conflicts

Rock pigeons are generally found in urban areas and come into conflict because of their droppings, and when they nest in urban structures. They are abundant in areas where they are fed intentionally or accidentally (food scraps, crumbs, garbage), and these large groups of birds can be noisy.

Baby pigeons are often described as looking like “baby dinosaurs”. It’s easy to see here that birds are dinosaurs’ closest relatives!



## Recommended Actions & Methods

<b>Prevention &amp; Exclusion</b> Before any conflict, and to prevent future issues	<b>Remove potential food sources</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Secure garbage bins and compost</li><li>✓ Bird feeders filled only in winter (if at all)</li><li>✓ Water sources removed, including leaky faucets</li></ul> <b>Maintain urban and residential structures</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Block access to ledges, window sills, and rafters</li><li>✓ Use door curtains to prevent birds flying into buildings</li><li>✓ Use netting to prevent access to specific areas</li></ul>
<b>Deterrence</b> If babies can fly (25-32 days old), or no babies present	<b>Use mild humane harassment techniques</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➔ Damage Permits are required to scare or kill migratory birds</li><li>✓ Use devices like bird wires, bird spikes, predator decoys (e.g. owls, hawks), reflective strings, sound deterrents, or wires that deliver a small electric shock</li><li>✓ Hazing with specially-trained raptors may also be used</li></ul>
<b>Eviction</b>	<b>Evict the animal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Use a one-way door or funnel cone so birds can leave the structure or net barrier, but not re-enter</li><li>✓ Do not install these devices when birds are nesting</li><li>✓ Permanently seal any openings once nest or structure is undisturbed for several nights</li><li>✓ Follow all prevention and exclusion steps above</li></ul>

These are legal, regulated methods - but they are **not recommended\*** as they can cause animal suffering, may be high risk to non-targets, and/or are difficult to administer; legality must also be confirmed according to local bylaws and/or regulations

- Live traps with food, water, bedding, checked at least every 24-48 hours
- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide - using pure gas cylinder into sealed chamber with regulator
- Shot to brain of trapped or free-ranging bird
- Repellent gels or sticky substances
- Manually applied blunt trauma that induces immediate unconsciousness
- Penetrating captive bolt
- Cervical dislocation
- Immobilization with alpha-chloralose followed by hand capture
- Avicides, permit required

\*email [wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca](mailto:wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca) for information on these methods

It is **illegal** to use...

- Bait poisons or chloroform
- Maceration
- Thoracic compression
- Drowning or suffocation
- Carbon monoxide by vehicle exhaust
- Glue traps
- Freezing (including dry ice)