

COLUMBA LIVIA

B.Sc PART II PAPER III A

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Columba belongs to

Phylum chordata,

Group vertebrata,

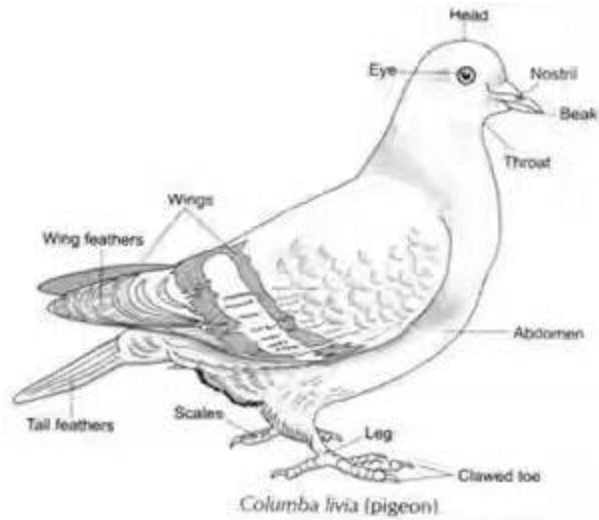
Subphylum Gnathostomata,

Class Aves

Order Columbiformis

Genus Columba

Columba livia is native to Europe and has been introduced worldwide as a food source, or for game. These pigeons prefer to live near human habitation, such as farmland and buildings. They cause considerable damage to buildings and monuments because of their corrosive droppings. They also pose a health hazard, since they are capable of transmitting a variety of diseases to humans and to domestic poultry and wildlife.



Habitat

Rock pigeons prefer human habitations and are commonly found around farm yards, grain elevators, feed mills, parks, city buildings, bridges, and other structures. In some settings, rock pigeons will roost and nest in natural areas and make daily foraging flights of several kilometers. Wild rock doves nest in crevices along rocky seaside cliffs, close to agriculture or open shrub vegetation. Feral pigeons live in old farm buildings in rural areas. In cities, the skyscrapers tend to take the place of their natural cliff surroundings.

External Features

The spindle shaped or fusiform body of blue black pigeon is about 33cm in length & is well adapted for rapid movement through the air. The rock dove has a dark bluish-gray head, neck, and chest with glossy yellowish, greenish, and reddish-purple iridescence along its neck and wing feathers. Females tend to show less iridescence than the males. The bill is dark grayish-pink. Two dark bands across the wings are seen in most

pigeons, and one bluish-gray band across the tail. Rock doves and feral pigeons can be divided into a large number of different phenotypes, or groups based on outward characteristics. Some of these classifications are the blue-bar, blue checker, dark checker, spread, and red phenotypes.

Nutrition

Rock pigeons are primarily granivorous, but will consume insects and other food items. In rural areas, rock pigeons forage primarily in fields for grains, such as corn, wheat, barley, and oats. In winter when the ground is snow-covered, spilled grain at storage sites (e.g., silos and grain elevators) is an important food source. When available, high protein food items, such as peas, are preferred by rock pigeons. They mostly rely on free-standing water but can also use snow to obtain water.

Reproduction

Pairs may be formed at any point during the year. These pairs are formed for life. Each bird works cooperatively on most aspects of reproduction and young-rearing. The male builds the nest, and the eggs are laid shortly after the nest is finished. Both males and females incubate the eggs. Eggs hatch approximately 19 days after being laid.

Rock pigeons are monogamous. The male provides nesting material and guards the female and the nest. The young are fed pigeon milk, a liquid solid substance secreted in the crop of the adult (both male and female) that is regurgitated. Breeding may occur at all seasons, but peak

reproduction occurs in the spring and fall. A population of rock pigeons usually consists of equal numbers of males and females.

Lifecycle stages

Eggs are laid 8 to 12 days after mating, with a normal clutch size of 1 to 2 eggs, but up to 4. The eggs hatch after 16 to 21 days incubation and the young fledge at 4 to 6 weeks of age. More eggs are laid before the first clutch leaves the nest. Sexual maturity occurs after 6 months of age. In captivity, rock pigeons commonly live up to 15 years. In urban populations, however, rock pigeons seldom live more than 3 or 4 years.