

Frequently Asked Questions

What time of year can I participate in PigeonWatch?

PigeonWatch is ongoing and year round. You can participate whenever it is convenient.

I don't live in a city--can I participate in PigeonWatch?

PigeonWatch can be conducted in any location (rural, suburban, and urban).

Who can participate?

Anyone! We have many individuals who participate, young professionals on their way to work, retirees, students of all ages, as well as families, grandparents with their grandchildren, home-schoolers, and informal and formal groups. The possibilities are endless.

Do I need a computer to participate?

No. We can send you the needed materials. Simply use the provided data sheet and send it back to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If you have access to a computer you can submit your data online: www.pigeonwatch.org and download all materials at:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pigeonwatch/GettingStarted/kit>

How can I obtain the PigeonWatch DVD?

View the instructions movie online at:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pigeonwatch/GettingStarted/pigeonwatch-instructions-video>

Or request a DVD at pigeonwatch@cornell.edu. Please send a \$5 donation to cover duplication and shipping costs.

Is there any cost involved in participating?

The project is free. If you wish to receive paper materials or a dvd through the mail instead of accessing the information through our website, we ask for a small donation to help us cover shipping and handling costs. Please send us a check at the address below or donate online at www.pigeonwatch.org.

How do I submit my data?

PigeonWatch has online data entry: www.pigeonwatch.org or you can send your data to:

PigeonWatch
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, NY 14850

When should I submit my data?

It is best if you send us your data as soon as you have completed your observations.

I am an experienced birder. Is PigeonWatch for me?

Yes, no prior birding experience is needed! We need your data, observations, and input. It is especially helpful to us (but not necessary) if you can submit data regularly.

Is PigeonWatch for kids?

PigeonWatch is meant for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

Can I participate in PigeonWatch if I don't have a lot of time to devote to the projects?

Yes. You can spend one hour PigeonWatching or you may decide that you want to devote a great deal of energy to the project by counting birds on a regular basis throughout the year. It's up to you!

I am working with children and our data are not as accurate as I'd like. Should I still submit it?
Please send in your data. We have many measures in place to help us use data that are not "perfect." Be sure to note any problems you may have had so that we can assess the data.

What if there are too many pigeons to count?

Don't give up. Instead, count a group of 5 or 10 birds. Visualize what this group looks like. Then, count the number of groups that look to have about the same number of birds. Add the number of groups together and multiply by the estimated number of pigeons in each group. Use your highest estimate as the final number you record.

How can I tell if pigeons are courting or fighting?

Some behaviors look like courtship displays when they are really acts of aggression. In an aggressive interaction, a pigeon (either a female or a male) might raise its wings or peck at the bird's head. But, sometimes males peck at their mates in courtship displays too! Watch carefully and do the best you can to distinguish courtship from aggression. If you cannot decide if a behavior is aggression or courtship, don't record the behavior.

What if my pigeons keep moving around or coming and going from the flock?

Pigeons don't stand still. Counting them can be tricky. Remember estimates are okay.

What if the sum of my Color Counts doesn't equal my Flock Count?

Don't worry. The exact number of pigeons is often very difficult to record. Your estimates of the flock size help us to determine if your flock is large, medium, or small compared to other flocks around the world. Your Color Count estimates tell us what color morphs are most common in your flock. If you think the difference between your Flock Count and your Color Count is too big, try again.

How long do pigeons usually live?

Pigeons can live about three to five years in the wild. They sometimes live for more than 15 years when raised by people. They are most vulnerable in the first year of life.

Why don't you ever see baby pigeons?

You may already have seen newly fledged young pigeons but didn't recognize them. They look much like adults, but younger nestling pigeons are more difficult to see. During their first week of life, baby pigeons are fed a high-fat, high-protein diet of crop milk produced by both parents. They grow very fast. They walk well at about 18 days of age and start exercising their wings about a week later. But because they have been regularly fed by the adults and haven't done much exercising, the birds are often bigger than their parents by the time they start to fly, which is on average 30 to 32 days after hatching. **Tips on telling the young from the adults:**

* **Look at their ceres.** The heart-shaped growth at the top of the pigeon's beak, the cere, is dull and grayish in young birds and white in adults.

* **Look at their eyes.** The eyes of a young bird are brown. The eyes of an adult bird are orange to orange-red in color.

How can you tell the males from the females?

You can't always do it. Pigeon males and females look almost exactly the same. In general, males are more colorful, with more iridescence. Some female pigeons may be duller in coloring or smaller than their mates.

If you have more questions email please visit: www.pigeonwatch.org or email pigeonwatch@cornell.edu