

WAR PIGEONS

One can always observe pigeons on pictures with Kamadeva, one of the oldest Hindu love gods. Christian religion tells the story Noah who sent a pigeon 3 times to look for a dry piece of land.

Little pigeon statues were found made 5000 years before our era. The statues have a striking resemblance to modern race pigeons.

Greek and Roman history writers quote pigeons. Pigeons informed the home front on victories and defeats of kings and generals. Pigeons were the newsmen between Iraq and at the time Syria in the 12th century. Sultans built pigeon houses. Belgian and Dutch newspapers depended for a great deal on pigeons for their information. Napoleon's defeat in the battle of "Waterloo" was reported to England by Nathan Rothschild's pigeons.

However, none of the various types of pigeons used as the early message carriers were capable of flights much farther than about 40 miles. Nevertheless, by the middle of the 12th century A.D., a well-organized pigeon post, with post office and postmasters, was being maintained. By 1819, however, the homing pigeon was developed sufficiently to fly 200 miles in a day, and at that time when the principle mode of travel was either by foot or horse, 200 miles was a great distance. For centuries, because Homers were the fastest and most reliable means of communication, leading newspapers of many countries used them to carry news of importance. And, in the early 19th century, Homing Pigeons were used in many Belgium cities to bring news of stock exchange quotations from London across the English Channel.

Homing Pigeons were use to antiquity to bring back results of the battles, and in World War I and II to carry vital messages. Many books have been written about their heroic feats, in which they were often injured by shell, gun or birds of prey delivering vital messaged. These messages saved the lives of many thousands of combatants and civilians. When total radio silence is necessary or where radio communications have been cut-off, they may be the only means of communication. They have provided the balance between victory and defeat in many crucial engagements, unerringly delivering their vital messages even over large bodies of open water, through rain, and fog over the high mountains and against treacherous winds and prey.

By World War II entire "Pigeon Corps" had been established, serving both the Army and Air Force of several countries including England, Germany, France and the United States. Pigeon fanciers were consulted and encouraged to donate special breeds, and to provide expertise in pigeon handling and training to the military. Collaborations between pigeon fanciers and military personnel started to occur more frequently. In fact, the human pigeon handlers dedicated to the war messaging service became fondly known as the "Pigeoneers" by American forces.

"The Pigeoneers", A feature documentary film written, directed and produced by Al Croseri. Starring Colonel Clifford A Poutre, Chief Pigeoneer, U.S. Army Signal Corps Pigeon Service. Filmed on location in Greensboro, North Carolina; 122 minutes in duration.
<http://store.pigeonsincombat.com/>

When WWII broke out in the early 40's the homing pigeon was brought back into service on both sides of the war. The Germans had 50,000 birds ready for use when the war broke out. Unfortunately for America, the US Army Signal Corp did not maintain its pigeon program and had to rebuild it from scratch. The homing pigeon was also found to be capable airborne means flying a camera over enemy locations to learn more about troop strength and location. A camera was mounted underneath the pigeon behind enemy lines and allowed to fly home where the camera was examined. These photos might show actual troops and equipment or if flying over a German town might show certain type factories or other military targets for bombing.

WWII came to an end and in 1956 the US Army shut down the Pigeon Corp. The service of the homing pigeon went dormant until the 1970's when the US Coast Guard started using them again but in a different way. During the 1940's pigeons in a Tufts University lab had proven the exceptional ability to pick out certain shapes and colors in exchange for food. The US Coast Guard decided the same abilities could be useful while searching for men and equipment in open waters so they set up some testing using a small observation bubble on the bottom of some of their helicopters stationed near San Francisco. This project called Project Sea Hunt used three pigeons that faced 120 degrees from each other so that they covered the entire 360 degrees under the helicopter. The pigeons were 92 percent reliable in finding the test subjects or objects where humans were found to be in the 30-40 Percent range. The project never got out of the testing phase

and was ended in 1983 due to federal budget cuts so the birds did not get a chance to actually save any li

War Pigeons were transported by using portable loft (that looked like wicker baskets or made out of wood) by transport vehicles called Combat Lofts. Each Combat Loft carried 100 birds and would be right up the fronts in actual Combat fighting and moved each time the Army advances.



HOMING PIGEONS CONTINUE TO SERVE DURING WARTIME

As in the past, Homing Pigeons have provided a successful way to deliver messages when satellite communications go down, computer links are broken, the enemy intercepts radio communications.

Austrian Army Colonel Walter Buchmayer noted that "Pigeons never stop working when there's a power cut, can't be bugged or tapped, and are not dependent on complicated software."

Though several European armies are said to be considering reintroduction of the use of Homing Pigeons as message carriers, Austria has become the first to begin the buildup of highly-trained birds. Army personnel will receive training on the skills of handling the pigeons.

In March 2003, U.S. media reported that Marines stationed in Kuwait received an avian force – a com

of pigeons. Meant to be the equivalent of a canary in a coalmine, the pigeons rode with their caretakers to detect chemical attack.

The U.S. military believed that pigeons meant the difference between life and death. Though the \$12,000 sensors provide advanced technology, anything mechanical can fail or give wrong readings. Therefore the military placed just as much trust in the bird as the sensor.

The First Marine Regiment was given 40 birds to be fed and cared for by their Marine handlers.

COOL FACTS

- 1) Martha was the last known passenger Pigeon died at the Cincinnati Zoological Garden at 1 pm on September 1, 1914 at the age of 29. Passenger pigeons are believed to become extinct in 1929. Their extinction is primarily due to over hunting. In March of 1900, a 14 year-old boy in Ohio shot what was believed to be the last wild passenger pigeon.
- 2) Racing of Homing Pigeons is made possible by its uncanny ability to find home and by its desire to return to its home as quickly as possible over unfamiliar territory hundreds of miles away. This fantastic ability to “home” in all types of weather conditions is the subject of considerable research. In an age, however, when we have the technological and scientific capability to put men on the moon, we still have been unable to totally unlock the mystery of the homing mechanism. The hearty Racing Homer is an athlete of great strength and endurance.
- 3) “The Dicken Medal” awarded by the British has been awarded to 31 pigeons and only 9 dogs.
- 4) British and American museums are full of memories of our flying heroes. Pigeons were decorated and buried with military honor. They were brave soldiers hold the rank of captain. There were more than 3000 soldiers and 150 officers of the United States Pigeon Service to take care of 54,000 military pigeons.
- 5) One of the most well known military pigeons was GI Joe. He accomplished his missions in Italy. GI Joe was honored in London by Lord Mayor with the “Dickin Medal of Gallantry.”
- 6) Snow White had a successful flight in Berlin during heavy bombardments. She flew from Hamburg to different lofts. Later on. She flew missions in Italy. Snow White was honored with the “Military Cross”.
- 7) Scotch Lass was dropped with a secret agent in the Netherlands on the early morning of September 12,

1944. He reached England with 38 micro photos although he was wounded.

- 8) One of the most famous English military pigeons was Mary, she was 22 times wounded. She flew during 5 years for the Allied Powers and was killed in action. Later her body was found, covered with wounds.
- 9) Some of the pigeons were trained to fly at night, they went together with the filed – post paratroopers and submarines and made pictures of the enemy’s fleet, troops and targets for air attacks.

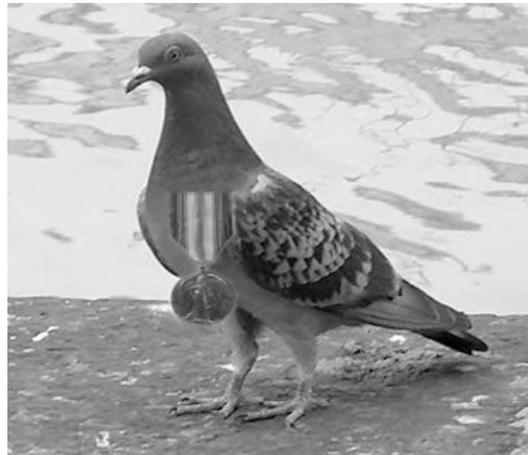
www.wingswest.net/pigeons/Warpigeons/warpigeons.html

www.pigeoncenter.org/militarypigeons.html

www.americainwwii.com/stories/pigeons

In any State, you can call your local Game & Inland Fisheries, local Veterinarian, or animal shelter and they might have some phone numbers for local Wildlife Rehabilitators.

If you have any questions you may call Pearl Beamer, State & Federally licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator within the state of Virginia, about wildlife. Pearl specializes in Raptors. 757-855-2922 (7am-7pm)



Irish homing pigeon Paddy proudly displays his Dickin medal. He earned the award for British gallantry - the animal version of a Victoria Cross - by bringing word back to the British about the D-Day invasion. Paddy made the 230-mile trip in just under five hours.

WAR PIGEONS



Pigeons are considered to be [one of the most intelligent birds on the planet](#) with pigeons being able to undertake tasks previously thought to be the sole preserve of humans and primates. The pigeon has also been found to pass the ‘mirror test’ (being able to recognize its reflection in a mirror) and is one of only 6 species, and the only non-mammal, that has this ability. The pigeon also recognizes all 26 letters of the English language as well as being able to conceptualize. In scientific tests pigeons have been found to be able to differentiate between photographs and even differentiate between two different human beings in a photograph when rewarded with food for doing so.

It seems that the military pigeons of those days were stronger and had a greater tenacity than modern race pigeons. The military had to accomplish their duty in the most difficult circumstances; bad weather, flying at night, different home lofts, shower of bullets, birds of prey ...! **ALL PIGEONS USED DURING THE WARS ARE HEROES!!** Pigeons are more trustworthy than modern technology. We can find them everywhere we go; they will always accomplish their duty.

ANIMALS NEVER BETRAY!!!