Feral Pigeons

Feral pigeons are birds that have descended from rock doves. Their colours vary and they can be blue, red, mottled patterns and charcoal to almost pure white. They are normally blue grey with a white rump and black wing bars.

Where do they live?

Feral pigeons have adapted to urban life by learning to live on tall buildings and other structures that provide shelter. Balconies, flat roofs, ledges, loft spaces and empty buildings are often used by these birds if they have access.

What do they eat?

Many people enjoy feeding these birds and part of their appeal is that they become very tame and will take food from your hand. However, feral pigeons are capable of finding their own natural food, which is grain and green vegetable matter. They will scavenge other food such as dropped takeaway food.

Feeding feral pigeons attracts them to the area and exposes them to the risk of injury and predation by other animals. Overfeeding can also lead to an overcrowded population and a risk of disease and parasites in the flock.

Are they dangerous?

Feral pigeons carry germs that can lead to illnesses such as salmonella, tuberculosis and ornithosis, all of which are serious illnesses. Their droppings, nesting material and dead carcasses also carry mites and insects that can infest areas where people live and cause illness. They can also cause serious damage to buildings while their droppings can make paths slippery.

How do I get rid of feral pigeons?

Do not put bird feed down or drop litter; this will present pigeons with less opportunity to feed. Pigeon proof your building by sealing gaps under eaves and replacing missing roof tiles, remembering to remove pigeons prior to proofing works. Pigeons can be deterred from window ledges and roofs by fitting stainless steel wire at the correct height. You can also use barrier gel, spikes and bird repellent gel.

Feral pigeons are protected under law like other wild birds and cannot be killed except in accordance with a licence. As the law is complicated, you are strongly advised to speak to a specialist pest controller if you are considering culling, as you might break the law if you kill these birds without following the proper process.