



Pigeon (Animal)

Barbara Allen

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Our frequent urban companion, cooing in the eaves of train stations or scavenging underfoot for breadcrumbs and discarded scraps, the pigeon has many detractors – and even some fans. Written out of love for and fascination with this humble yet important bird, Barbara Allen's *Pigeon* explores its cultural significance, as well as comparing it to the dove. While the pigeon and the dove are essentially the same bird, from the family Columbidae, the dove is seen as a symbol of peace, love and goodwill, yet the pigeon is commonly perceived as a filthy, ill-mannered 'rat with wings'. Readers will find here an enticing exploration of the historical and contemporary bonds between humans and these unique birds. For polluting statues and architecture, the pigeon has earned a bad reputation, but pigeons have also been sources of food, messengers and aids to scientists such as Charles Darwin. *Pigeon* describes the literary love for and celebration of pigeons and doves in the work of such writers and poets as Shakespeare, Dickens, Beatrix Potter, Proust and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and shows how human exploitation of pigeons and their habitats has led to the extinction of several species, including the dodo and the passenger pigeon, and endangers many more.

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