

Student investigates pigeon plumage trends

January 22 2013



Student Adam Rogers has issued a plea for pigeon spotters via BBC Winterwatch.

(Phys.org)—Many people view pigeons as pests, or even 'rats with wings' - but according to one student, they are 'super doves'.

Zoology student Adam Rogers is inviting members of the public to get involved in his project to record the national pigeon population.

Adam, who studies at the University of Exeter's Cornwall Campus, has appeared on [BBC Winterwatch](#) leading a project to investigate plumage trends found in the once-domesticated birds. When [domestic animals](#) return to the wild and breed, [future generations](#) usually take on their natural dull colour, yet urban [pigeons](#) have retained their brightness and

variety of plumage.

Now the 29-year-old undergraduate wants as many people as possible to spend a few minutes counting the number of pigeons with different plumage patterns in their local high street. Participants can then report their sightings on the [Feral Pigeon Project website](#), which also contains a handy guide to pigeon colours.

"Pigeons can easily be overlooked as we go about our daily lives," said Adam. "Yet these seemingly familiar birds have many secrets still to reveal. The fact that they have been successful is clear, yet the means behind their success is less understood.

"No other creature causes such contention as the wild pigeon – some people call pigeons 'rats with wings', others are simply indifferent, but I call them the Super Dove. They may not be as glamorous as many of the [exotic animals](#) a person could choose to study but take the time to look beneath the [feathers](#) and they're just as superbly adapted as any of the African big five.

"You don't need to be a pigeon expert to get involved, as the various types are easy to tell apart," he added.

Adam is hoping that his research will reveal how pigeons are adapting to human influences. He will examine aspects such as whether breeding habits are changing in towns where feeding bans have been imposed.

He also wants the project to spark people's interest in wildlife and nature. "Just as important as the potential results of this research is the engagement in our natural world which such a project can encourage," he said. "Feral pigeons are so easily accessible that anyone with a bit of spare time can see fascinating animal behaviour close at hand without the need for special equipment."

The Feral Pigeon Project appeared on BBC Two's Winterwatch on Thursday with a focus on the pigeons' ability to breed in the middle of winter. Adam described working with the BBC production team as "eye-opening".

"Filming with Chris Packham was a fantastic experience, he's clearly a very knowledgeable naturalist and is truly passionate about opening people's eyes to the wildlife around them," he said.

"I hope that people will be enlightened at hearing about the Feral Pigeon Project and will be less inclined to feel our towns and cities should be sanitised, and will appreciate the wildlife that lives on our doorstep."

More information: For more information, and to join in the pigeon count, go to feralpigeonproject.com/. The Winterwatch episode is available on YouTube, via this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVmSjdpWDug

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Student investigates pigeon plumage trends (2013, January 22) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-01-student-pigeon-plumage-trends.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--