

Columbidology Part 1 with Rosemary Mosco

Ologies Podcast

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Oh hey, yes, yes, hello it is your internet dad, this is *Ologies*, I'm Alie Ward, and you and me, we are together here for the sake of pigeons. So, we've done episodes on ornithology and pelicans and chickens and penguins and condors and crow funerals but pigeons, you don't need binoculars or a farm to stare at them. But would you want to? Will this episode gross you out with pigeon facts or will you be googling pigeon adoptions? Either way, this episode is so mellow and so soothing and exactly the opposite of the feral chaos that you might expect, tonally, from a show about pigeons. So, stay tuned because we have a beloved studier of pigeons with us today who dedicated *years*, decades of her life to observing these creatures and years hitting the books and pouring through pigeon studies and even writing a guide about them.

So, we're going to get to that in a minute but first thing, thank you so much to all the folks at Patreon.com/Ologies for making this show possible. You can join for a dollar a month and I may read your questions to ologists. And thanks for making this show possible by supporting by wearing *Ologies* merch from the link in the show notes, or just by leaving a review which you can do for zero dollars. Boy howdy, let me tell you, I read 'em all and then I serve you up a just-left one such as this one from Kiibkey whose review said:

We found it y'all, the perfect podcast, everyone else go home.

Kiibkey, thank you, we did it. But I'm going to stay here for a minute because we got a pigeon episode. Okay, another listener, 123454567ü9io0oHow'dIDoThat? wrote a four-star review that said:

Why so long, girlie? Alie's great and all but... WHY ARE YOUR EPS SO LONG?

123454567ü9io0oHow'dIDoThat?, I'm hearing you out, I'm taking action this week because this bounty of pigeon stories was a real chunker so we split it into a compact, two-volume set and next week will be just wall-to-wall Patreon pigeon questions. So, instead of one two-hour episode, we're going to be reasonable about it. So, let's get into Part 1. Oh, I love these episodes so much! This was such a delight to work on, one of my favorites.

So, this guest is a science communicator who writes the comics *Bird and Moon* and has written several lauded and respected books such as *Birding is My Favorite Video Game: Cartoons About the Natural World* from *Bird and Moon*, and *Expedition Backyard*. And I've been aware of her recent book, *A Pocket Guide to Pigeon Watching: Getting to Know the World's Most Misunderstood Bird* since its 2021 release and *Birding* magazine calls her "A leader of the flock." She studied pigeons from every angle to bring them into our hearts. So, we logged on, we had a lovely video chat from my LA studio to her Boston home base. Many, many thoughts and feelings I've had about pigeons remain forever changed because of this.

So, prepare for facts about their origin story, how they make it home, pigeons that save lives, whistling pigeons, nest strategies, where baby pigeons are hiding, who called them rats with wings, whether or not they will give you a disease, pet pigeons, fashion pigeons, pink pigeons, doves versus pigeons, eating pigeons, extinct pigeons, spy pigeons, and more. So, peck at a stale pizza crust and let's coo over best-selling author, lifelong pigeon nerd, and wonderful person and columbidologist, Rosemary Mosco.

Rosemary: Okay, I'm Rosemary Mosco and my pronouns are she/her.

Alie: I don't want to freak you out, but we asked our patrons for questions for you ahead of time...

Rosemary: Yesss.

Alie: And we got 57 pages of questions.

Rosemary: Pages!

Alie: 57 pages of questions for you. *[laughs softly]*

Rosemary: Okay, okay. So, I have the next four days *[Alie laughs]* to look in the pigeon minds.

Alie: yes. This is how excited people are about pigeons, which is great.

Rosemary: Aww, that makes me happy.

Alie: And we had some people asking, "Is this the lady who does comics about pigeons and wrote a book about pigeons?" So yeah, there are also people who mentioned you by name, but I just think it's funny that you're the lady that does comics about pigeons. I hope that's an okay thing for the world to think of, you know?

Rosemary: Dude, if that's my legacy... That's incredible, I'll take it. I'll take it.

Alie: Do you know that you're a columbidologist?

Rosemary: Now I do.

Alie: You are!

Rosemary: I used to just say pigeon fan but columbidologist... Love that. That sounds official.

Alie: And I'm sure it rings a bell with the genus and things like that.

Rosemary: Absolutely. Yeah, the pigeon family, *Columbidae*, and then the genus of the city pigeon, *Columba*.

Alie: So, there you go, you're a columbidologist. Can you walk me through a little bit of when pigeons just cooed and clucked their way into your heart?

Rosemary: It's been a slow build. I grew up in a bunch of different cities in Canada and the US and my dad is from the Lower East Side in Manhattan and grew up with very few birds, pigeons being one of them. So, when you're kind of a naturey kid, but you're in the city, you can't help but notice the pigeons. Kids in the neighborhood would bring me sick pigeons and I was already kind of a little bit of a pigeon girl but then I started looking more into the human history of pigeons and it utterly blew my mind. So, just the more facts I pick up about them, the more obsessed I get.

Alie: And the human history of pigeons, I know that's a big can of city garbage to feast on. [*"What? I love garbage."*] But I feel like I know them as rock doves and so, they're kind of rock-colored, from what I understand. Is that where they come from? Do they just nest on cliffs in the wild? What's the deal?

Rosemary: Yeah, they do. They're called rock pigeons or rock doves or, you know, a million other names, some unkind because they naturally would nest in holes in cliffs. So, like, you know, I've seen them in majestic seaside settings where there will be a pair of them cuddling up in a little, like a cave, on the side of a cliff. So yeah, they're native to rocks.

Alie: And then at what point did they decide not to live on the side of a cliff near the seaside and just get a *pied à terre* in the city?

Rosemary: *[giggles]* That is a question that I really struggled with in my book *[Alie laughs]* because the problem is that our relationship with pigeons goes back to before people were writing things down

[*Alie exclaims*] that have been lasting. So, I spoke to an Egyptologist and an assyriologist and tried to find all of the archaeological evidence that there was.

So, we know that Neanderthals, which are our ancestors to a certain extent, were eating this type of wild pigeon 75,000 years ago. And then we know that people in the area where pigeons are domesticated, which is this area called the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East, were farming at around 12,000 years ago. And then at some point between then and about four to five thousand years ago, which is around when we start getting written records of these domesticated pigeons, people domesticated them and it probably happened many times and in many different places which, when I learned that, ruined my dream of it being like a moment [*Alie laughs*] where someone reaches out and a pigeon reaches out its wing and they shake hands and it's like a connection. That's not how it happened. It was much messier.

Alie: Did you hope that there was one pigeon ambassador who bridged the gap and then just like a lightning bolt of love and connection?

Rosemary: Like music... I think about the movie *The Black Stallion* where they connect. They like, we stare into their beady little orange eyes and the music swells. [*dramatic music "The story of a legendary horse who could only be tamed by a young boy's love."*] No, it did not happen that way.

Alie: [*laughs*] Was there a point that you thought, "I have enough pigeon facts that this is my next book." I have to say, as someone who is in science communication, you are living every science communicator's dream. You're writing and illustrating comics and books for kids about niche science topics, beloved by all. [*Rosemary giggles*] I guess I should back up to your origin story. Was there a moment when, like, a librarian and you touched wings and then all the electricity of communication flowed through you? What happened?

Rosemary: Okay, there was actually a moment.

Alie: [*squeals*] Really?!

Rosemary: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It didn't happen like pigeon domestication. [*Alie laughs*] So, I grew up in the '80s when newspaper cartoons were a big thing, and I had every collection of *Calvin and Hobbes* and *The Far Side*, and I loved all that stuff and then I also like nature. I figured at some point, I'd put one of those two things aside, probably the comics because that seemed the less lucrative one, and then go on and have a very serious career.

And then I was at a nature camp, I'm trying to think of how old... I must have been about 8, at this nature camp that brought in a fellow from the local nature museum named [*phonetic*] Mike Levier, who I have since emailed with and he's delighted to hear that this meant so much to me. But he said, "Okay, I'm going to give us a talk about ancient life," and he put this huge pad of paper down on the ground and we all clustered around it and then started drawing the history of life from single cells until now, all in cartoon form, doing voices. Like, [*squeaky voice*] "Help! I'm *Anomalocaris*," or whatever. My eyes must have just popped out of my head, and I said, "This is something you can do? You can be funny but also talk about nature?"

Aside: Okay, side note, I can't let a word like '*Anomalocaris*' just drift by without knowing what that is, and I looked it up and it's a shrimp-like creature that was as long as a high school basketball player is tall, like 6 feet long, a ferocious predator and it live 500 million years ago. Its mouth was a cone-like wheel of teeth and the name *Anomalocaris* means 'weird shrimp.' Sometimes, I think Linnaean taxonomy was engineered just to deliver sick burns to dead things that can't object. Anyway, Rosemary learned from this camp counselor Mike that sci-comm can be fun.

Rosemary: Yeah, and it just blew my mind, and I was totally hooked.

Alie: Did you ever ask him for any kind of photo of what he draws? Do you think you remember it like, I'm sure pretty accurately if it made that much of an impression, right?

Rosemary: It was pages and pages. Every time he'd fill up one page, he'd say, "Okay, now we're going onto the Triassic," and he'd flip to another page. It was astonishing. I mean, even now that this is sort of what I do, the idea of doing that and drawing that many things, live, for kids is intimidating. So no, I've since wrote to him and said, "This was really incredible and you're amazing," and he was like, "Oh I'm especially happy that young women got excited about science through what I did," because there are so few of us.

Aside: And Rosemary, I tell ya, in the sci-comm community, has such a high level of cred and respect. When other science communicators congregate, whether online or in a real-life nerd brigade, people are like, "Rosemary Mosco, she's doing it right. She says pigeons are cool, pigeons have gotta be cool."

Alie: Was there a point where you felt like you collected enough pigeon facts where you're like, "This book must exist."

Rosemary: I knew the barebones of the story and I wanted to find out more and I had already been watching pigeons for years and years. So, I was pitching different ideas to my editor, my editor was saying, "Oh, that one's okay. I don't know about that one." This is Danny at Workman, he's an incredible editor, he's the best. But then, I thought, you know what I really want to do is a book called *A Pocket Guide to Pigeon Watching*, and I pitched it and I thought there is no way this is going to happen. [Alie laughs] And then I was out at a cafe with a couple of friends who are also science communicators, and I got an email saying, "Yes, we want this." [Alie gasps] And I just thought, "No you don't! [laughs] What are you talking about? [Alie laughs] You surely don't." It was a complete dream project; I was really thrilled.

But day one I was like, "Okay, time to go and squirrel myself away and read and read and read everything and talk to everyone." I put way more into this book than I think I expected. [Alie laughs]

Aside: So, let's dig into that work like a delicious, oil-stained bag of cold French fries, shall we? So, pigeons and humans have this long history, but are there pigeons in the wild? Are there forests that purr with pigeons? Are there cliff-dwelling birds that look like born and raised New Yorkers? Or are pigeons just our winged goldendoodles?

Alie: Is that brilliant rainbow ring something of our own manipulation like a dachshund or a big, weird poodle, you know?

Rosemary: We have done *plenty* of weird manipulations to pigeons, but the shiny neck ring is natural and when you see a pigeon that is sort of blue-gray and has pale, blue-gray wings and two dark bars on the wings and has that shiny neck ring, that's the natural look of a pigeon. ["*Stop it.*"] But whether there are any pure wild ones like that out there anywhere is an open question.

So, there was recently a study that came out with some researchers up in the Outer Hebrides in Scotland and they were looking at some of the most remote pigeons in the world. These are, you know, pigeons who are nesting on cliffs, there are all these seabirds all around them, everything looks very wild. And they tested these pigeons and they found that they were mostly not domestic pigeons, but there was still some domestic pigeon in there. So, humanity's reach into the pigeon cannot be overstated. [Alie laughs] We are everywhere where the pigeon is.

Alie: And you were saying that Neanderthals would enjoy them for a meal, which, I think people still eat pigeon, right?

Aside: Okay, side note. So, people have eaten pigeons for thousands and thousands of years, and yes, even near the caves of Gibraltar buried in sediments 40 to 60,000 years old are bones of the rock dove with human-like teeth marks, evidence that Neanderthals were climbing cliffs and making pigeon McNuggets.

Why are they delicious though? Well, okay. So, pigeons are good flyers, which means that their tissues have more myoglobin for carrying oxygen for all that activity. So, pigeon meat is juicy and kind of mineral-tasting. Who doesn't like pigeon? Well, farmers because these things just cruise through and raid their crops like airborne stoner roommates. Why don't more farmers just farm pigeons if they're so good and so tasty? Well, as we learned in the Chickenology episode, chickens come out of the egg fuzzy and able to peck at worms. Pigeons, not so much. So, pigeons are altricial and like human babies that can't go buy their own burritos; pigeon babies are naked, they're helpless and they're hungry for a while so that means they're harder to farm. Also, they have way fewer babies; one pair might have a dozen a year, whereas a chicken is just like a vending machine, it can pop out, like, 30 times that or an egg a day.

I found out that LA used to be home to the largest pigeon farm in the country, with like 100,000 of them in this giant coop condo right on the banks of the LA River, what's now near Frogtown. Tourists, they'd come and flock to see them. One writer described the thrum of their gentle chorus like "The ceaseless dashing of waves upon the beach a long distance away." Then okay, why is this riverbank location now a parking lot for broken train cars? Well, because in 1914, a flood on the then-unpaved LA River washed all these birds away, just splintering their coops and drowning them in the raging current and scattering the survivors into the wilds of the city. But yeah, pigeon farming sucks and it's hard to make money. So now, if you want to eat a pigeon, it's going to cost you 25 bucks a pound, more than double the price of a live lobster. So, we started just using pigeons for other stuff.

Alie: And then at what point did we decide that they were not only dinner but also like, a coworker?

Rosemary: It's hard to say. So, they were probably originally domesticated for food. And when we eat pigeons, mostly what we eat is squab. So, if you've ever seen squab on a menu, little alarm bells should be going off in your head because that's a fancy word for pigeon. What you're eating is a baby pigeon that is just about to fledge. So, it's still tender, but it hasn't worked up, you know, the tough flying muscles. [*Alie whimpers*] I know, I know. And so, that is what people most enjoy eating. So, they were domesticated for food and also then we were collecting the fertilizer and using that to fertilize fields too.

But I think that as with any animal that gets domesticated for one reason, humans pretty soon start going, "Ooh, that one's got a fun mutation. Ooh, I'm gonna make that one. That one sounds cool. That one flies cool, I'm gonna make more of those." It's sort of our natural instinct to mess with animals in funny ways.

Aside: And sometimes not so funny. I'm sorry animals.

Rosemary: So, I think it probably happened pretty early, it's hard to say exactly when but again, we're looking at ancient, ancient history but some of those breeds, those fancy pigeon breeds are quite old.

Alie: What kind of fancy pigeon breeds are there? What flavors of pigeon are there, visually, let's say? I'm familiar mostly with, there's kind of some brown speckled pigeons, brown and white, there are the white ones that they release at expensive events such as funerals and weddings, and then I'm familiar with the gray ones. What other kind of fancy pigeon breeds are there?

Rosemary: There are more fancy pigeon breeds than you could possibly imagine. [*Alie laughs*] So, basically when you're looking at a flock of pigeons, you should think about a pack of stray dogs or a colony

of stray cats. What you're looking at is the, kind of, mixed breeds, the ones that didn't have traits that made it a little too hard for them to survive in the wild and kind of interbred and became mutts. So, that's what's going on with a pigeon flock. That's why they're all different colors, is they're a mix of fancy breeds and fancy colors.

If you think of, like, a hairless dog, if a hairless dog gets out into Anchorage or something and is running around, it's going to be very cold, it's going to have trouble surviving. Similarly, there are pigeons that have feathers that block their vision or have feathers all over their feet that are incredibly long, so they essentially have sort of four wings and walk kind of awkwardly. There are pigeons that flop over backwards when they try to fly and do backflips and there are all these different types of pigeons. Some of those traits would not have survived as well in our feral populations. There are naked-neck pigeons, which are bred to have no feathers on the neck...

Alie: [*softly*] Why?

Rosemary: ... for some reason. There are pigeons that have sort of a Salvador Dali droopy face called Scandaroons, there are pigeons with tiny beaks called owls. Basically, anything you could do to mess with a pigeon has been done. My favorite breed is one called the Archangel which is as cool as it sounds. It looks like a medieval angel. They took the shininess of a pigeon's neck and spread it over its entire body.

Alie: WHAT?!

Rosemary: So, this entire bird is just shiny and glossy and spectacular. It's really incredible. We're all familiar with at least a few dog breeds. The only reason we don't know 200 pigeon breeds is because pigeon keeping is a little less popular now but there is no real difference in terms of elaborateness of these wild breeds.

Aside: Okay, so the rock pigeon was indigenous from Europe to North Africa and into Asia, but as we started to tinker and make them into our own craft projects, they spread out and we made them weirder. I found myself down a pigeonhole on this Dutch website with breed names and illustrations and yeah, the Archangel is this gorgeous purpley, copper, metallic along the body with black and gray wings.

There's also the Antwerpen Smerle which bears curly white chest hair feathers and a beak like a parrot, which I thought maybe was just a lack of skill on part of the artist but no, they really do look like that. The Brünner pigeon looks like if you stretched a gummy pigeon until its whole girth was gathered at your fist at its throat and chest, it doesn't look real. The English Pouter has wispy feather snowshoes. The Bernburger Drum Dove, it has all black feathers that are shaped like a vampire cape with the collar popped. Then there's this Bookworms pigeon, also all black, it is wearing this wide-brimmed beret of flattened feathers, it looks like a hat that a rich person would wear to a royal funeral. Pigeons, you go so hard.

The English long-face has a melon like a beluga whale. Now, there's this one pigeon who has a body of curly feathers like a chia pet, and this breed is simply called Haircut, like an ironic nickname for some cousin who has had winglets since birth. The French baguette pigeon, 100% looks like a flamingo, but inverted so all white with pink accents, like "Honey, I shrunk the flamingo and now it's a sexy pigeon."

And if you think Archangel and French Baguette and Haircut are weird names, I'd like you to listen to this list and decide which one is NOT a real pigeon breed, okay? There's one imposter. Here we go: Glorious, Hamburger Skull, Thurgauer Monk Pigeon, Wiggertaler Colortail, White-Winged Wiener, Monday, Magic Hatchet, Wig, Bone Scour, Bernese Mountain Dog, Bohemian Ice Creamer, Significant Damage and Romanian Nudist... Do you have your pick? Only one of those names is fake,

and if you guessed Romanian Nudist, then you're wrong. That's an actual pigeon name. Hamburger skull? Real pigeon name. Bernese Mountain Dog is a real pigeon name. The only one I made up was Magic Hatchet. So, White-Winged Weiner, 100% real.

I was researching this whole aside on a plane and for at least an hour, like over a whole state, I had been scrolling through so many illustrations of exotic pigeons and if you guessed that no one dared make small talk with me during this, you're correct. No one talked to me. I wanted them to. Jeopardy, make a pigeon category. Please let me read the clues.

Alie: Are these mostly kept as friends and pets? Like, you've got a couple of parakeets right, or parrots? Is it similar to that or with all of these different breeds is it like, this one's great at eating this kind of worm, this one's going to deliver an Amazon package to you? Do they have specific uses or are most of them just like, "This is a beautiful bird and I love it."

Rosemary: They absolutely have different uses. I was going to say again, it's like dogs and cats but I don't know that cats [*both laugh*] you know, we don't have messenger cats really or guard cats. But yeah, so there are all of those fancy ones that I described and those are kept for different purposes, often just for show. So, like a show dog, they'll be kept so that they compete at pigeon shows and show how good you are at breeding fancy pigeons. So, there are all these fancy ones that are really just supposed to look good, and some people keep them as pets. But then there are breeds that make particular sounds, there are trumpeters that make, like, a trumpeting sound [*warbling type of cooing sounds*] those are kept just because they sound cool. Then there are the ones that are sort of trick flyers. They have a mid-air neurological event and they kind of flip over backwards and tumble through the air and those ones are kept so that people can compete in terms of who can fly the most interesting birds.

Aside: So yeah, lots of pigeons have full ass feathers on their feet, like Hobbits look foot-bald by comparison. Oh, and those roller and tumbling pigeons who do the fighter jet rollbacks mid-air? I've got horrible news. Some research suggests that it's from a genetic neurological problem that can endanger the birds, and not just because they're trying to impress you like doing kickflips in a parking lot.

Rosemary: And then there definitely are homing pigeons which were bred, at one point to pass messages, now mostly to race so people race them. So, that's sort of a more utilitarian purpose. And then there are utility breeds which are bred to be big and meaty. So, there are so many different reasons why you would breed all of these different pigeons. It gets, pigeon breeding gets incredibly complicated. There are people whose entire lives and family histories are in breeding these pigeons.

Alie: I know that in cities, rooftops would sometimes have pens for pigeons and people would go up and keep them. Is there something about pigeons, their size or their ability to home, that lends itself to domestication? Do they like coming back into the pen at night like chickens like going into a little barn? Are they easier than, say, if you had an African grey parrot or a parakeet that's just like, "Bye, fuck off. I'm out." [*Rosemary laughs*] Do they like coming home?

Rosemary: That was a direct quote from a parrot. That was really, really accurate, for their personalities. [*laughs*]

Alie: [*laughs*] You know what? One of them out there can probably say it. [*parrot says, "Fuck off."*]

Rosemary: Yeah, that is an extremely good question because there are so many animals out there where you look at them and you think, "Hey! That would be a useful animal, right? Like, I want a pet giraffe, it can, you know, reach my kite when it flies up to the top of the tree," or whatever.

But the animals that we domesticate, we domesticate for a complicated series of reasons. And one of the reasons pigeons were domesticated is they were kind of, like, primed for domestication. So, they're pretty chill, they're not violent. You won't get mauled by a pigeon unless you're a seed. They sound kind of nice and quiet, [*soft cooing*] they don't migrate. So, the passenger pigeon, which is native to North America, was used by many Indigenous peoples as a food source but it moved all over the place so you couldn't domesticate it and have it sit. But the *Columba livia*, city pigeons, they will come back to the pen at night, they're very loyal to their mates so they'll always come back to their nest, and they will stick around and they'll kind of hang out. So, there are reasons why we domesticate the animals we do and with pigeons, it was because they were prolific and also pretty chill. And then I guess people also thought they tasted delicious.

Alie: Delicious little guys!

Rosemary: Yeah.

Alie: I've read in the past and I'm absolutely probably misinformed, that part of their navigation is due to a magnetic substance in their beak? I'm sure that's outdated but how are they finding their way back? What's their little GPS?

Rosemary: I thought this would be an easy question to answer. [*Alie laughs*] I thought, I'm sure you've had this experience, but I thought, "Oh, you know, I'm not really clear on how they navigate home. I'm gonna ask a couple scientists, they'll all agree." I know, I was a fool. "And then they'll explain and then I'll just write it down." It turns out we don't really know, which I think is *really* fun because there's so much about pigeons that is awaiting future scientists and explorers. We have hints about what they probably do. So, we know that they use probably like, the position of the Sun, and they probably have memorized a few different locations and they may have a magnetic sense and maybe they can smell a bit on the wind or something. There's probably various different cues they use. Probably they use different cues when they're closer to somewhere than farther away. And homing pigeons tend to be trained a little bit to find their way home from farther and farther places.

Aside: So yeah, okay, pigeons can fly up to 90n miles per hour. They average like, 50 or 60, but they can go up to 90 if they have to haul ass. Homing pigeons can navigate back to the coop over 1,000 miles away – That's way farther than the length of Italy or California from top to bottom. Navigating home, halfway across Australia, with nothing but a pigeon brain? I guess– Oh, and their ears.

So, this is still a mystery though some recent research, like the 2019 paper "A Putative Mechanism for Magnetoreception by Electromagnetic Induction in the Pigeon Inner Ear" found that, electroreceptive molecules in pigeon ear hair cells may help detect magnetic fields. There's this one prominent columbidologist at the University of Utah who thinks that these magnetic molecules in the inner ear help detect the direction, intensity, and polarity of the Earth's magnetic field. But also... shrug.

Rosemary: But the bottom line is that we don't really know what they're doing. They're doing many things at once; they probably have their own preferences from pigeon to pigeon in terms of how they migrate. [*"Don't take the Beltway because at this time of day, there's going to be a- Go any way you want."*] But no, there are no easy answers. I was really hoping for one [*Alie laughs*] but we can't make an automated pigeon GPS quite yet.

Alie: That's actually more exciting than if we did know. I think that's cool that pigeons have mysteries.

Rosemary: Yeah! I mean, that makes me so happy because not only are they way less boring than people think [*Alie laughs*] but you know, I was watching some pigeons today out in the city and just looking at them and thinking, there are things in there that we don't know! Tell me your mysteries!

Alie: If you're sending messages back and forth with a pigeon, did you come across anything about how they know where to go? Is it just between a point A and a point B and they just have two houses, or two pens and they just go back and forth?

Rosemary: Yeah, sort of. It's a lot less fancy than we think. So, the use of pigeons to carry messages has been going on for thousands of years. They carried the results of the first Olympic Games, for example, and Genghis Khan had a whole pigeon messenger relay. They were being used all the way up through World War I and World War II and carrying messages that were so important that they won various medals for it. There are so many medal-winning pigeons that I couldn't put them all in my book, which makes it sound like they're forging out on this brave adventure and picking their way along. The secret is that pigeons are just very loyal to their homes.

So, what happened was the pigeons would be carried very far away from their home and they're sitting in this little cage going, "Okay, I'm ready to go home. I'm ready to go home. Anytime... anytime..." [*Alie laughs*] [*sad music "There's no place like home... There's no place like home."*] And then you release a pigeon with a little note and the pigeon goes, "Okay, I'm going to make my way home incredibly quickly and I'm just going to get there." So, it's a one-way thing. So, you kind of have to have pigeons on both sides, relaying messages.

Alie: Aha!

Rosemary: But once you've got that, it's incredibly fast, incredibly accurate. So, the fellow who started the Reuters news agency, Reuter, he started with a pigeon relay system between Aachen in Germany and Brussels in Belgium, and he used pigeons to fill this gap in the telegraph line. So, he had pigeons on either side passing news information back and forth and they really, really, really are very good at it.

Aside: So, they are one-way fliers, just let loose to find their way back. Recently, this one pigeon was found trying to look inconspicuous around a shipping port in Mumbai, when onlookers noticed writing on its wings and a microchip on its leg. So, it was captured and held for eight months on the suspicion of espionage before being cleared and pardoned because it was just a lost racing bird from Taiwan. So now, it just lives in Mumbai, they just released it, like a pro athlete who had to trade in fame and pressure for a life of just quiet normalcy.

Also, in World War II, the US employed over 50,000 war pigeons who carried messages to and fro with a success rate of 90%. One of these pigeons saved the lives of 100 men, as the story goes, for delivering a message about an imminent bombing, like, right in the nick of time. They named this bird GI Joe, which I'm sorry, is horrifying because even pigeon breeds have names like Hamburger Skull and Significant Damage and this creature hustles for the cause in a war zone to save 99 of your friends from getting killed by Nazis and you call this bird, GI Joe. Embarrassing, you can do better. Oh, and the thimble-sized message tube that they attached to their legs was called a PG67, and if you look that up, you can still buy them from vintage military equipment sites in case you are a big pigeon nerd or you have bad cell service.

Alie: What about when you are seeing them in the city, I've always wondered what are they eating? You mentioned something about how they probably won't attack you unless you're a seed. So, where are they finding seeds? Do they see an everything bagel and that just tides them over for, like, a month? What are they eating?

Rosemary: Yeah, pigeons definitely have their preferences. So, they don't really want to be eating all of our trash, but the thing is that pigeons naturally eat a lot of grains and legumes and what do we throw on the ground a lot? It's grains. You know, we'll drop a hotdog bun, or we'll drop an ice cream cone or an everything bagel. So, a lot of human food is grains and legumes and that's what we drop on the ground and that's what they like to eat. So, they will eat any trash that has that stuff in it. Which isn't to say that that's the healthiest meal for a pigeon, but so long as there's a steady supply of that stuff, there will be city pigeons.

Alie: I've sometimes seen people throwing out breadcrumbs to pigeons in parks or the parking lot of the Hollywood post office. Every time I'd go to check my mail, there would always be a pile of breadcrumbs and 30,000 pigeons and I was like, this is someone's daily habit and joy and that's cool with me. But it is kind of like they say with ducks? You shouldn't feed ducks bread? Is that because they have a completely different diet? Like ducks like algae and pigeons like grains?

Rosemary: Ohhh, okay. I have a section in my book about whether you should feed pigeons and what you should feed them, and it was the hardest thing I've ever... It's about two pages, three pages and I, you know, was stressing myself to the extreme trying to get the wording right on this because feeding pigeons is such a minefield.

So, the more you feed pigeons the more pigeons there will be. Basically, when there's a lot of food, the pigeons say, "Hey, it's time to have a load of babies," and they can have many, many, many, many babies, like a dozen or more babies in a year. So, the pigeons are saying, "Okay, this is great, there's food. Time to reproduce." Which is a problem because then there's more hungry pigeons. [*Lots and lots of babies.*]

At the same time, the thing about pigeons that is different from ducks is that pigeons are a creature that has been so manipulated by humans that we are arguably responsible for them and now they're lost and alone and hated in the cities and hungry. And I think that's one reason people feed them, but they also feed them because it's a nice nature connection and sometimes they'll bond with other people over feeding the pigeons. So, I was really stressing over whether you should feed them. One thing we know is that telling people "Don't feed the pigeons," doesn't really work. People will go at night, and they will sneakily feed the pigeons. People *love* to feed pigeons. There are battlegrounds over pigeon feeding all over the place.

I think where I came out with it was that if you're going to feed pigeons, we are responsible for this creature, but you need to feed them responsibly so if you're going to feed them you need to make sure that you're feeding them healthy grains and legumes. And then you should also maybe think about all the poop that's being produced as a result of your feeding. So, I think the bottom line is the best thing you can do for pigeons is to make sure their environment is safe and to adopt any pigeons that could potentially be pets and are lost and alone and injured and can't survive out in what we call the wilds. So, there are other better ways to feed pigeons.

Aside: Like one-on-one, in a committed relationship, maybe with cohabitation with the pigeon. Also, don't harass pigeons, because it makes you a dick, and also, it's against a lot of regulations of the Fish and Game codes.

Now, is feeding them stale bread a form of harassment? It really depends on each individual pigeon's preference for croutons, I'm sure some don't like it. But in some places, like Las Vegas, London's Trafalgar Square, Venice, Italy, and Phoenix, and Paris, and Toronto, and Singapore, it's not legal to feed them anything, even the finest delicate pastries. But what if you love them, and you want them to experience the rest of your nachos? WWACD? What would a columbidologist do?

Rosemary: But I also feel complicated about just blanket telling people “Don’t do this thing.” I think it’s just something we all need to think a lot about. I don’t feed them. I instead am that person who runs around with a cardboard box in her car, scooping up the injured pigeons and taking them to rehabilitators. That’s how I choose to contribute.

Alie: And there are rehabilitators that are just like, “Bring ‘em in.” Do they nurse them back to health and re-release them? Or do they rehome them to people who are excited about having them?

Rosemary: It depends. If they're feral pigeons, usually they'll release them out in the wild, unless they're so injured that they wouldn't be able to survive. But one thing that happens is that people will dump their unwanted pet pigeons out or their food pigeons. So, you'll see big meaty, they're called king pigeons, these white birds, that will often get dumped and people think they're saving them from being eaten. But really then what they're doing is putting a bird with a giant “Eat me” sign, sitting out, you know, on the street. And then racing pigeons also often get lost. I just rescued one a couple of months ago. The young racing pigeons will get lost and then none of those birds can survive in the wild the way a feral pigeon can. So, those ones need to be adopted.

Alie: And what does a racing pigeon look like compared to a city pigeon?

Rosemary: It looks really similar. They kind of look... This is definitely anthropomorphizing but to me, they look beefier. So, they sort of look like if your friend is like a gym bro, [*Alie laughs*] there's a bit of gym bro look to them, so they look really sleek and they kind of have like a deep chest for their flying muscles and they look very smooth and very fancy, sometimes they have fancy colors. But the best way to tell is they will have a couple ankle bands. [*“Ohhh fancy, fancy.”*] It depends from place to place but one of them will say, this is where this bird is from, and then one of them will be like an RFID kind of tag that will make it so that when the bird flies home and gets to its roost, it gets scanned and then the race managers can tell how fast and far that pigeon went. It's wild.

Alie: We're living in the future.

Aside: So, these look like little plastic anklets and it's just bonkers to me to have a scannable microchip on a bird and then I realized how many of us have Fitbits and Apple watches just so that we can do this to ourselves like, “Okay, you closed the rings. Good job! Get back in the cage!”

Rosemary: Yeah. We're living in a world in which we make pigeons race for us and then we scan them. Like, it's mind-blowing. And pigeon racing is so interesting because even though it's sort of less popular in some places like North America than maybe it used to be, in places like China, you can sell a pigeon for more than a million dollars.

Alie: Nooooo!

Rosemary: Yeah. When I was working on my book, there were pigeons... I wanted to put, you know, the most expensive pigeon anyone has ever purchased, and it kept getting replaced by more expensive pigeons. [*Alie laughs*] I think finally, there was one that sold for like \$1.2 million. I'm sure that's been surpassed. But these things are big business, people bet on these pigeon races.

Aside: So, you may know 2020 as the year you first realized everything could go to shit overnight, but it was also the year that a pigeon named New Kim sold for \$1.9 million after a bidding war between two Chinese buyers who went by the pseudonyms Super Duper and Hitman. Now, for more of this kind of gossip, you can see the 2022 documentary, *Million Dollar Pigeon*, about a pigeon race offering \$1.3 million in US, of prize money, with the top bird waddling away with \$200K, which I guess kind of answers my next question.

Alie: Can you make good money if you race pigeons?

Rosemary: I don't know! I mean, I think it depends on the pigeon-racing culture near you. I think probably but I think the money is a lot of it's on betting the pigeons and then, I don't know, maybe selling the top... I'm not really sure where you make all the money from with those pigeons, but I think it's similar to horse racing and...

Alie: We know that you've got a whole weird gambling ring.

Rosemary: [laughs] How did you know? Was it the cooing?

Alie: Yeah, it was the cooing. [laughs]

Rosemary: Shh, quiet, quiet. And also, the fact that I'm actually three inches tall so I'm like a tiny jockey that rides on the pigeons. [Alie laughs] Yeah, that's true. That did give it away.

Alie: A little obvious. What about, okay, when it comes to their poop, you mentioned their poop and... good for fertilizer, bad for cars, bad for hairdos. Is it a toxic kind of poop or is it just garden-variety bird poop?

Rosemary: It depends on how much of it you're getting exposed to. One thing I was really interested in finding out was, can the local pigeons get you sick? And of course, poop is one of the main reasons that people fear pigeons. A lot of the reasons why we have this idea that pigeons will get us sick stems all the way back to New York City in the 1960s when there was a fungal meningitis outbreak and health officials blamed it on the pigeons. The pigeons did not cause it, but unfortunately, there was a lot of fear that was fostered. And it was also a time when pigeons had fallen out of favor and no one was using them for the purposes that we had previously been using them for; we weren't eating them, for example, or giving them medals. [Alie giggles] So, there was sort of this period of time, which is relatively new in the history, you know, the thousands of years history of pigeons, where people started to think, "Okay, these things are really gross and they're going to harm us."

Aside: All right, so I know this whole time you've been cradling a cup of tea, staring out a window wondering "Per annum, how many pounds of poop does one pigeon make?" And that number is 25... 25 pounds per pigeon or around 12 kilograms. What's in all that poop? Tiny killers? Well, yeah, sure. Feral pigeons, they can have up to 70 pathogenic organisms on their body and in their poop but according to the January 2006 paper "Human diseases caused by feral pigeons," only seven of those pathogens have in fact been demonstrated to be transmitted to humans.

And yeah, as for that meningitis smear campaign, it's been six decades since they've been acquitted, and there was this 1964 *New York Times* headline boldly declaring "Pigeons Exonerated In Meningitis Cases By Italian Specialist." So, the backstory here is that one New York-based doctor said that the *Cryptococcus neoformans*, which can cause meningitis, was found in Manhattan's pigeon droppings. But then this Italian scientist wrote a paper clarifying that that same microorganism is found everywhere, from fruit to air, and soil, and cows, and horses, and dogs, and cats, pigs, and chickens. The *New York Times* quoted him as saying [mild Italian accent] "Why then you gotta pick on the pigeons?" Everyone looks down on these bobbling, nude, city birds, just recoiling from suspected bird plagues.

Rosemary: And that's not really true. There are a number of scientists who have looked at the diseases that pigeons and their poop carry and there are definitely ways to get sick from pigeons. But so long as you're not digging your hands into their poop or breathing it in a lot or really interacting with it, or so long as you're not immunocompromised in some way (you should always be careful if you're immunocompromised) you're pretty safe, you just have to wash up.

I have this memory seared into my head of going out for brunch with a cartoonist friend of mine. And we were both biking there, and we pulled up to the brunch place and I said, "Hey." And he said,

“Hey.” And then a pigeon that had been kind of holding in its poop because it was probably sitting on eggs, jumped out from an air conditioner, you know, nest above us and pooped the most poop... [Alie laughs] I don’t know where it kept this much poop, but I was covered in poop, my bike was covered in poop, just *covered* and then there was this moment and then I said, “Well, see ya!” And my friend said, “See ya!” [both laugh] It was this unbelievably stinky amount of poop, but I survived. So, I think really, try not to get exposed to huge amounts of it. Try to be cautious but you know, a little bit of pigeon poop around you is going to be okay, for the most part.

Alie: They pooped on the right person because who would be more forgiving than you?

Rosemary: You know, that pushed my forgiveness. [Alie laughs] I’m Canadian, I’m very polite, I’m very nice, but I really wanted those mimosas and instead, I got a head full of pigeon poop.

Aside: So, Rosemary has stories about pigeons for days and obviously they have a spot really deep in her heart and the very opening of her pigeon guide bears the dedication:

To my dad Vincent Mosco, who grew up in a Manhattan tenement and only knew three kinds of birds: the gray ones, the little brown ones, and the seagulls. Dad, thanks for helping me see the connections that make the world work. Here are some more connections for you.

So, this was published in 2021 but she recently created and posted a really beautiful comic about grief that really stuck with me, especially if you’ve been up to date on the last few years of my life.

Alie: You know, I didn’t want to ask this too early in the interview, but I know the book is dedicated to your dad, who you lost about a month ago, right?

Rosemary: Yeah, about a month ago.

Alie: I’m so sorry. As a member of that club, it’s really hard.

Rosemary: Oh, I’m sorry, it is the worst club. Every time someone says that to me, I think, “Oh, but I don’t want you to also be in this terrible club.” But yeah, my dad, he grew up on the Lower East Side in Manhattan and he actually grew up on a street that is now known as Mosco Street after my grandpa, his dad, who was a community activist. My dad spent his whole life fighting for justice and equality and labor rights, and you know, traveling all over and really trying to get people to care about the downtrodden. His connection with pigeons, I think, really fostered my interest in them. And that’s partly why I wanted to make this book was because I wanted to talk about the neglected, unloved people and pigeons, and why we should care about them. So yeah, every time I see a pigeon, I think about him.

Alie: What did he think of the book?

Rosemary: He thought it was great! He was one of those dads where everything I did, everything, no matter how small, he would post about it on Facebook, he would tell everybody, he would say, “I can’t believe this, look at this! Rosemary did this! My daughter is so amazing.” So yeah, he was just a cheerleader and it’s hard to not have that cheerleader now. So, yeah.

Alie: I’m so sorry.

Rosemary: Thank you.

Alie: I love that the book is dedicated to him.

Rosemary: Yeah, there was no way it couldn’t be and it’s... [chuckles] He was a sociologist and I always said, “That’s not my kind of thing, I’m going to do animals.” And then I think it’s really funny that I made this book that is really about sociology and history and then has a little bit of bird facts in there, snuck in.

Alie: *[laughs]* And we donate to a cause of your choosing too. If you want to split the donation, we can do one in his memory to a certain cause or pigeon charity, we can do more than one. So, if there are any that are off the top of your head, let me know, and if not, you can think about it and email us.

Rosemary: No, I know two right off the top of my head. Great Lakes Pigeon Rescue and Palomacy which is a portmanteau of 'pigeon' and 'diplomacy' are two incredible pigeon rescues who have done amazing work. In fact, Great Lakes Pigeon Rescue at one point came to the rescue of some pigeons that I found out about because I did a TV interview in Chicago and it was one of those goofy, like "This wild lady made a pigeon book. That's so weird." *[Alie laughs]* And this guy emailed me right after and said, "My father just passed away and he left me this loft of like 40 pigeons and I was going to just slaughter them and now I have all these pigeons. But you mentioned people will rescue them, what do I do?" And I reached out to Great Lakes Pigeon Rescue and then a couple weeks later, you know, they were like, "Okay, huge influx of pigeons. Please adopt them!" And so, they helped us out. So, these people who rescue pigeons, is there anything more thankless? They're just the sweetest people.

Aside: So, we'll donate to that charity in memory of her forever cheerleader and fellow birdwatcher, and pigeon appreciator, her father, Vincent Mosco. The wonder he fostered in Rosemary goes on to inspire all of us. I'm so inspired by her. So, when you next see a pigeon, think of Vincent Mosco, send a good thought Rosemary's way.

That donation, again, went to the Great Lakes Pigeon Rescue, which is a foster and adoption network for non-releasable rescue pigeons and doves, because they're the same thing, in the Great Lakes region. They're pigeon owners, adopters, enthusiasts, rehabilitators, and admirers, and they'd love for you to be a part of it. You can find out more at GreatLakesPigeonRescue.org, which we will link in the show notes of course. And that donation was made possible by sponsors of the show.

[Ad Break]

Okay, as a reminder, this necessitated a two-part episode because there were that many great not-not-smart questions about pigeons and we have a lot of pigeon influencing to do just yet. But let's continue with a line of questioning that honestly, pigeons don't want me to bring up. This is the question that Barbara Walters would ask with one eyebrow raised, despite the pigeon's publicist just sweating in the corner.

Alie: Well, you mentioned their nests and I lived in an apartment building once where I came home, and at the end of my hallway were a few sticks with one lonely egg on it. It was obviously a nest of some sort, and we had open windows in the building, and it was the laziest nest I've seen in my life. It was like a whisper of a nest; it was a gesture toward a nest.

Rosemary: *A soupçon of a nest. ["Oui, oui."]*

Alie: It really was just like, it was the most abstract painting of a nest you can imagine. It was four twigs, one of them might have been a pretzel, I don't know, just a lonely egg. And it was a pigeon nest and there's that thing going around, it's like, "Why don't you ever see baby pigeons? Obviously, they're all robots." Baby pigeons, two questions. Number one, can you get bird mites if you have a pigeon nest at the end of your hallway? Luckily, I didn't, and the landlords gently rehomed it to the fire escape and closed the window. But also, baby pigeon's nests, why are they so carefree in terms of their parenting? *[little jingling sound]*

Aside: That was my dog Gremmie, speaking of bad parenting.

Rosemary: I mean, you don't want them nesting on any inside spaces that you have, but I don't know how common that is. I do have lots of advice in my book for discouraging them from making nests on surfaces and how to do that. But they really are very bad at making nests, right? [*Alie laughs*] Sort of sketch-a-nest.

Okay, so I also laugh at those posts. There's a whole Twitter account called like Bad Nest Pigeons or something like that, [*Alie laughs*] I forget what it's called, but there's whole accounts dedicated to mocking pigeon nests. And while I think it is really funny, especially when you consider, you know, weaver birds and all kinds of birds that make these elaborate, complicated nests, the thing you need to remember about pigeons is that they would nest sort of on flat surfaces in these little holes in cliffs. So, they don't need to make a fancy cup that's going to keep their egg from falling out of a tree, they just need to put maybe one or two guard sticks to kind of keep those eggs from rolling out.

Also, because humans shaped them for thousands of years, we weren't breeding them to be good at this. We were breeding them to have lots of babies and be delicious and, you know, fly real fast and make fancy coos. So, there's no evidence to support this, but there's probably something about, you know, the fact that they were kind of altered to live in our structures, which is what they do. They live on our balconies, and they live above our air conditioners and that kind of stuff. So, they're doing their best. They're just throwing down a couple of sticks to keep the eggs from rolling away. That said, they will reuse spots, they will poop, and they won't clean out the poop. Those nests can get pretty gnarly. So, it's understandable if you don't want one, you know, right outside your house. [*Alie laughs*]

Aside: Listen, can you get gamasoidosis, an infestation of avian mite from a pigeon or sparrow or starling nesting on your eyes? Sure. Has a friend of mine who got that said it was worse than being haunted by poltergeists and frankly harder to get rid of? Yes. Yeah. And according to the 2020 paper, "Occasional human infestations by feral pigeons' ectoparasites: Two case reports," should you see a doctor if you have several pigeons on your terrace and present with "continuous intensified itching for six months?" Yeah, you should. So, if two pigeon lovers have decided that your bedroom window box is the best place to raise their growing family on top of four poorly placed sticks, don't burn the house down. But maybe you could relocate it to an area less close to your sleeping face.

Speaking of rearing more of these beautiful, beautiful weirdos... Is it true that there are no baby pigeons? No one ever seems to see them, so are they even real? Are pigeons even real or are they just very convincing feathered spy cameras?

Alie: But the baby pigeons are out there, right? What do they... What do they look like?

Rosemary: Oh, tiny robots that make kind of like a servo noise. [*servo motor sounds*] No, I'm kidding. [*both chuckle*] They are out there! They're out there and you can find them. So, I did an interview with a local reporter at one point where he said, "Where are the baby pigeons? There are no baby pigeons." [*Alie laughs*] And I met up with him and within five minutes I had found him a baby pigeon and he was like, "You've got to be kidding me!" [*Alie laughs*]

So, the secret with pigeons is that again, nesting in these little holes in cliffs, they tuck their babies away, so they keep their babies kind of hidden in these niches until the babies are ready to fledge. So, you can find baby pigeons often by sound. [*high-pitched squeaky chirps*] So, people call the squeakers, they make this very high-pitched weird kind of whistling sound and when you hear that, you know there's baby pigeons tucked away somewhere. They look really funny. They look like a lumpy potato. I think they're cute, I understand if other people do not think they're cute.

And then by the time they fledge, you can still tell the babies from the adults by looking at a few subtle signs like the lumpy thing over their beak called the cere is not so lumpy in the baby ones, for example. But usually, by the time they fledge, they leave the nest, they're ready to fly, they're ready to do a lot of pigeony things even though they're a bit awkward about it and people don't tend to notice that those are in fact baby pigeons.

Alie: They're just kind of undercover because they're so mature?

Rosemary: Yeah, I mean they sort of remind me of me in middle school or something where I'm like, "Yeah, I'm doing a great job at this. I'm totally an adult."

Alie: Their eye shadow game isn't quite on it, like mine in middle school. [*chuckles*]

Rosemary: And they're on TikTok all the time. [*laughs*]

Alie: Carrying a clarinet case to school. [*both laugh*] Looking at their feet a lot.

We have one million questions from listeners, and we are not going to answer all of them but we're just going to do our best... Is that cool?

Rosemary: Yes.

Alie: Sweet.

Rosemary: Oh, I'm so excited, I'm so excited.

So, next week we'll ask your brilliant questions to our birdly expert, and meanwhile, feel free to find Rosemary's book, *A Pocket Guide to Pigeon Watching: Getting to Know the World's Most Misunderstood Bird*. You can also find her online handles at her name, or linked in the show notes, and check out her comics, *Bird and Moon*, also linked! We'll be back with more feral facts with her next week!

And, side note, if you need classroom-safe episodes for kiddos of all ages, we have *Smologies* which are shorter digests of classic episodes, and stay tuned because we have kind of an exciting announcement in the next few weeks about that. But those are all up at Alieward.com/Smologies. To become a Patron of the show and submit questions, join us at Patreon.com/Ologies for a buck or more a month. You can find *Ologies* merch at OlogiesMerch.com. Erin Talbert admins the *Ologies* Podcast Facebook group, Aveline Malek and The Wordary make our professional transcripts, Kelly R Dwyer makes the website, Noel Dilworth is our scheduling producer, Susan Hale is our managing everything director and does extra research also, Jake Chaffee is our assistant editor, and our Magic Hatchet is lead editor Mercedes Maitland of Maitland Audio. Nick Thorburn did the theme music.

And if you stick around until the end of the episode, I tell you a secret and this week's it's that I am currently recording this at 12:56 AM in a guest room on a Hawaiian island but I'm in a closet underneath a blazer because the invasive coquí frog on the island. They're so loud. I looked it up, they're up to 100 decibels which is as loud as a lawnmower or a subway train. So, I'm hiding in the closet, meanwhile, Jarrett is snoring on the other side of it. I'm here visiting Jarrett's family, I'm also doing a couple of Field Trips, including this visit to a farm co-op that's growing these traditional Hawaiian plants for food security, and I was invited there over a year ago by a Native scientist who's really passionate about it. I'm really excited to make that Field Trip episode so stay tuned for that.

Also, I feel like I've got to record these frogs for you. Do you want to hear the frogs? Okay. I'm going to try and get you some of this frog audio. [*whispers*] That's me leaving the closet. [*door slides, croaking sounds become audible*] Okay, so these are these invasive coquí frogs. They're native to

Puerto Rico but they're called coqui frogs from what I remember because they go "Co-qui, co-qui." And I'm on the big island. I'm near Hilo right now and apparently, some coqui frogs came over in some potted plants in the '80s and now they're everywhere at this part of the island. And yeah, some people are obviously very upset by them because they're as loud as a lawnmower. Others love the sound of them but they're horrible ecologically so there are ways people try to get rid of them but at this point it's just like, they own Hawaii. Anyway, these are coqui frogs... [*croaking continues*] It's also raining, and it sounds like one of those meditation apps where you can just dial in different sounds... All right. Okay. Next week, more pigeons. Berbye!

Transcribed by Aveline Malek at TheWordary.com

Links to things we discussed:

[Human activities and landscape features interact to closely define the distribution and dispersal of an urban commensal](#)

[Cunning Neanderthals hunted and ate wild pigeons](#)

[Pigeons, a Darwin Favorite, Carry New Clues to Evolution](#)

[The Far Side Comic Strip by Gary Larson](#)

[Where Did Pigeons Come From?](#)

[Pigeon Iridescence: Physical and Functional Properties](#)

[Rare wild ancestors of feral pigeons found living on British and Irish islands](#)

[Limited domestic introgression in a final refuge of the wild pigeon](#)

[Americans used to eat pigeon all the time—and it could be making a comeback](#)

[Squab Producers of America](#)

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[Pigeon Breed Gallery](#)

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[Trumpeter \(pigeon\) - Pigeon Wiki - Fandom](#)

[Cropper Tumbler Pigeon \(video\)](#)

[Pigeon Breeding: Genetics at Work](#)

[Following the sun: a mathematical analysis of the tracks of clock-shifted homing pigeons](#)

[Magnetic compass helps pigeons find their way](#)

[Dr. Elizabeth Carlin's pigeon research](#)

[Urbanization predicts flight initiation distance in feral pigeons \(*Columba livia*\) across New York City](#)

[Widespread genetic connectivity of feral pigeons across the Northeastern megacity](#)

[The pigeon strut in slow-mo](#)

[Urban pigeons losing toes due to human activities](#)

[L.A. Was Once Home to the World's Largest Flock of Pigeons](#)

[Magnetoreception in birds](#)

[Magnetoreception: A Dynamo in the Inner Ear of Pigeons](#)

[A Putative Mechanism for Magnetoreception by Electromagnetic Induction in the Pigeon Inner Ear](#)

[German city issues coronavirus pigeon-feeding permits](#)

[A park where people have been going to feed friendly pigeons since the 18th century - Parque De Las Palomas in San Juan, Puerto Rico](#)

[NYC: It is not illegal to keep or feed pigeons, but a violation may be issued for failing to clean up unsanitary conditions that result from this activity.](#)

[Occasional human infestations by feral pigeons' ectoparasites: Two case reports](#)

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[Pigeons Exonerated In Meningitis Cases By Italian Specialist](#)

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