

# Heaven of the Rock-Pigeons (*Columba livia*, Gmelin 1789) (Aves: Columbiformes)

Ashraful Kabir\*

Department of Biology, Cantonment Public College, Saidpur Cantonment—5311, Nilphamari, Bangladesh

## ABSTRACT

Based on the religion of Muslim community, Mecca-Medina of Saudi Arabia is well-known to everybody. To know the religious history with the wild rock-pigeons, this write-up could play a significant role. At the time of Umrah, regular interaction with thousands after thousands of rock-pigeons with their colors and patterns, enriched the thorough materials of this composition. In addition, local people are well-concern about these pigeons, so they shared their knowledge about these birds. Visitors or local people always provided them sufficient feed especially wheat and corn. Nine days observation on their plumage color resulted blue bar > blue checker > silver> spread black > ash-red > grizzle > white. These pigeons built their nests in the holes of the nearest houses and man-made towers. Apparently, most of the pigeons looked healthy (only 3 deaths were found in 3 years), sometimes few were killed by vehicles while crossing the road. Due to religious aspect, these are living well in these areas.

**Keywords:** Rock-Pigeon, Mecca, Medina, Saudi Arabia, Feed, Nesting, Diseases, Mortality

## INTRODUCTION

The rock-pigeons of Mecca-Medina are locally known as Makkah pigeons. These pigeons of Al-Hema were released by Noah during flood, and they come back with an olive branch to signify that the earth is ready to starting a life. Additionally, these pigeons in Al Haram Al Sharif built nest at its door to hide the Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) and his companion Abu Bakar during the migration to Medina. In fact, these pigeons are specially treated as freedom, peace, sanctity, and safety. The secretariate of Mecca built towers for these pigeons in the Al Hajun area [1]. In Mecca, pigeons are prohibited to kill or disturb [2,3]. In fact, people have fascination to love pigeons [4]. In a rock-pigeon group, there will be some feral pigeons too [5]. If anyone keeps pigeons in order to raise chicks, send messages, or get enjoy from them, this pigeon keeping is

**Vol No: 09, Issue: 04**

Received Date: March 27, 2025

Published Date: April 11, 2025

## \*Corresponding Author

**Ashraful Kabir**

Department of Biology, Cantonment Public School and College, Saidpur Cantonment—5311, Nilphamari, Bangladesh, Phone: +88-01712563750; E-mail: ashraful.mission@gmail.com

**Citation:** Kabir A. (2025). Heaven of the Rock-Pigeons (*Columba livia*, Gmelin 1789) (Aves: Columbiformes). Mathews J Vet Sci. 9(4):76.

**Copyright:** Kabir A. © (2025). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

accepted [6]. The objective of this write-up is to focus the overall management of rock-pigeons in Mecca-Medina areas with their colors and patterns.



**Figure 1.** Location of Mecca and Medina (for rock-pigeons) in Saudi Arabia [7].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

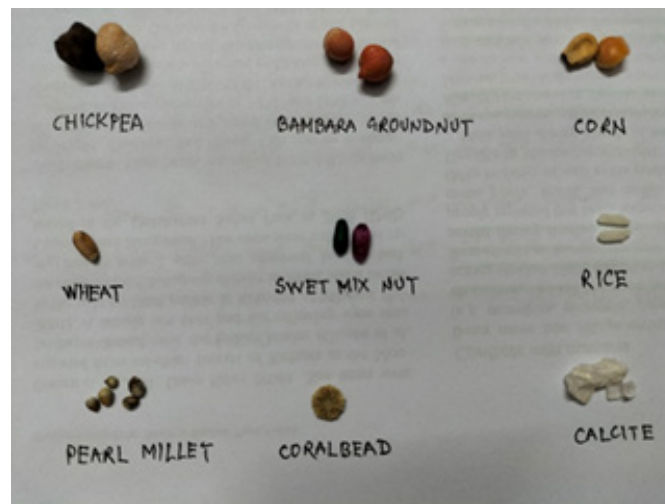
Rock-pigeons of Mecca-Medina were observed directly by Monjur Ali at the time of regular service from 5:00 A. M. to 6:00 P. M. (total 13 hours daily). An android mobile phone (Redmi 12) was perfect for taking occasional photographs of these pigeons. A pair of binoculars (vixen, joyful H6×18 mm, palm-sized compact binoculars) used to observe the plumage colors and their nests in holes. Additionally, a DSLR camera (Canon, EOS Rebel T3i) helped for necessary snaps. The coordinates were 21°25'21"N and 39°49'24"E for Mecca and 24°28'12"N and 39°36'36"E for Medina, and area measured 1200 km<sup>2</sup> and 589 km<sup>2</sup> respectively [8]. This study was conducted from 15 March 2025 to 23 March 2025.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

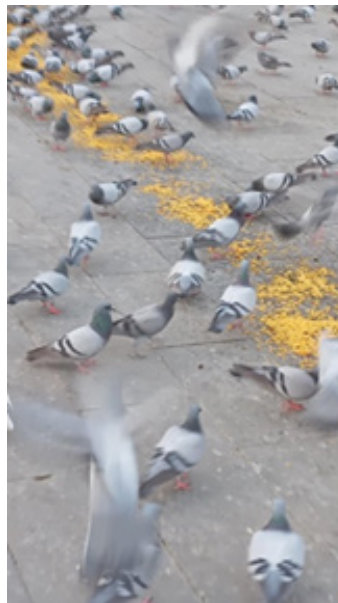
Plumages of rock-pigeons: Most of the pigeons were blue barred as this is their ancestral phenotype. In this group, second variation was blue checker, then gradually silver,

spread black, ash-red, grizzle, and white with bull eyes. Due to red sea and deserts/mountains, these pigeons were geographically isolated to mix with other domestic pigeons.

Provided feed items: Visitors and local people provided feed mostly wheat and corn. Sometimes, puffed rice, rice, and some parts of fruits were found with this feed. All the time, people provided feed inside or outside the mosque. For the visitors, 10 riyals per feed packet were sold to provide them. Nutritious feed in various stages is mandatory to keep pigeons fit [9]. From the ancient times, local people are used to care these pigeons [2]. Pigeons which live around the hill areas, take grass as their vegetable supplement. Due to a large amount of waste from pigeons, Mecca Municipality has intensified its efforts to keep these areas clean [3]. This municipality has jointed with King Abdulaziz University to do this work more prominently [3].



**Plate 1.** Feed items.



**Plate 2.** Pigeons are eating.

Nesting sites and shelter: The government of Saudi Arabia has established some towers for these pigeons as nests or common shelter. The reproduction rate is higher and their numbers are increasing day by day. Due to sufficient feed, and less natural calamities especially flood, pigeons are passing well. Local people do not kill them or take them as protein consumption due to religious aspect. In Bangladesh, railway

platforms are full of many wild rock-pigeons as well [4], and the subspecies were denoted as *Columba livia intermedia* [10]. Two pigeons nested at the Cave of Thawr during the migration of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Medina [2, 3]. There are an estimated six towers located around the Hajoan Bridge near Al-Mu'alla Cemetery for their nesting [2].



**Plate 3.** Nesting sites.

Diseases and mortality rate: Phenotypically, all pigeons looked healthy. Some were sick by appearance. Free-living pigeons of Saudi Arabia may not play an important role in the infections occurred in the community due to low incident of *E. coli* and *Salmonella* pathogens [11]. According to the local people, there are few mortalities rate was found in these pigeons (3 death record were found in 3 years). While crossing the road by walking or flying, sometimes, pigeons were killed by vehicles. This type of incident is available in Bangladesh too [12].

### CONCLUSIONS

Pigeons are passing well with sufficient feed with other facilities by the locals, visitors as well as the government from the very beginning. This is a sacred bird and through this write-up everybody would come forward more to protect these significant wild rock-pigeons. Mecca-Medina and its adjacent areas are strictly prohibited to catch, kill, slaughter for meat, or rear pigeons due to religious aspect.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Author is giving thanks to Monjur Ali, General Manager of Dutch-Bangla Agent Banking, Saidpur Branch, Bangladesh, for his suggestion to write this paper. Actually, he is a homer pigeon breeder in Saidpur Upazila of Bangladesh. He has enough knowledge to keep pigeons. He was so much cordial to deliver his constructive knowledge to complete this interesting article. At the time of his Umrah in Mecca-Medina of Saudi Arabia, he was directly associated with such rock-pigeons. Additionally, he took lots of informative snaps of these pigeons and allowed me to attach those in this

paper. Finally, author is impressed to him for reviewing this manuscript for publication.

### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None declared.

### REFERENCES

1. Shaza. (2019). The pigeons of Al Haram Al Sharif: ambassadors of peace. Available at: <https://www.shazahotels.com/en/our-hotels/shaza-makkah/blog/the-pigeons-of-al-haram-al-sharif-ambassadors-of-peace/>
2. Saudipedia. (2025). Available at: <https://saudipedia.com/en/article/1718/religion/the-grand-mosque/pigeons-of-the-grand-mosque>
3. Saudi Gazette Report. (2025). Available at: <https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/91744>
4. Kabir MA. (2016). Rock-pigeons in some parts of Bangladesh. *J Middle East North Afr Sci.* 2(3):45-49.
5. Kabir MA. (2024). Available feral pigeons in rock-pigeons in some parts of Bangladesh. *Mathews J Vet Sci.* 8(5):1-5.
6. Islam Q, Amp A. (2008). Is the testimony of a person who raises pigeons acceptable? Available at: <https://islamqa.info/en/answers/111951/is-the-testimony-of-a-person-who-raises-pigeons-acceptable>
7. Map of Mecca and Medina. (2025). Available at: <https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-saudi-arabia-road-map-120930780.html?imageid=9A955D35-6ED9-4153-A867-7D60081F8C0F&p=294872&pn=1&searchId=e5d8009df53b2dc0a7f6b9d3f64ffcb3&searchtype=0>

8. Wikipedia. (2025). Medina. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medina>.
9. Wikipedia. (2025). Mecca. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mecca>.
10. Kabir MA. (2018). Pigeons' feed at their various stages. *International Journal of Research Studies in Zoology*. 4(2):21-24.
11. Kabir MA. (2023). Colours and patterns in the subspecies of rock-pigeons (*Columba livia* spp) (Columbiformes: Columbidae). *The Pigeon Genetics Newsletter, News, Views & Comments*, June 2023.
12. Abulreesh HH. (2011). Free living rock pigeon (*Columba livia*) as an environmental reservoir of enteric bacterial pathogens resistant to antimicrobial drugs in Saudi Arabia. *Current Research in Bacteriology*. 4(1):28-33.
13. Kabir MA. (2018). Fate of animals on road in Bangladesh. *J Dairy Vet Anim Res*. 7(4):167-169.