



Poppy the Pigeon

Session for 6 to 11 year olds
Lasts for approximately one hour

Key focus for the session

To learn about feral (city) pigeons, to find out about their adaptability and understand the difficulties they experience.

Links to The National Curriculum in science and English Key Stages 1 and 2.

Preparation and Resources

Print off Poppy the Pigeon Activity Sheet (page 2). If you don't have a printer, roughly copy the layout.

Pigeon True or False sheet (page 3)

Pieces of paper with 'True' and 'False' on them.

Pencils and crayons or pens

Optional – objects that harm pigeons such as plastic beer holders, elastic bands, fishing twine and netting.

Optional - Food for pigeons eg sunflower seeds, seeds from garden plants

Introduction

Ask the children whether they've seen pigeons in the street and show them a picture online. Tell them these facts:

- The parent birds both feed their babies on pigeon 'milk', which is produced in their crops (a pouch near the throat) of male and female birds.
- Pigeons can find their way over long distances and have been used to carry messages in wartime.
- Their feathers are beautiful colours – they are iridescent (changing colour when the pigeons move).
- They originally lived on cliffs at the seaside (as rock doves) but now live in the city streets, nesting on ledges of buildings.

They are clever but they can easily be harmed. Imagine the difficulties of living on the street. Explain that dropping litter can be a problem for them – talk about the danger and possible injuries to their feet. Show the children things that can harm pigeons. Ask the children 'What might frighten Poppy?' and 'What kind of food does she look for in the street?'

Poppy the Pigeon Activity Sheet

The children complete **Poppy the Pigeon Activity Sheet** using words and/or pictures. They colour her in – don't forget the beautiful colours on her neck!

Pigeon True or False Game

Stick up the piece of paper with **True** at one end of the room or garden and **False** at the other.

The children stand in the middle.

Read out a statement from the **Pigeon True or False Sheet** (choosing easier ones for young children). Get the children to decide whether they think the statement is true or false and to run to the appropriate sign. Read out the answer. Move on to the next statement. Continue until they get tired!

Short story

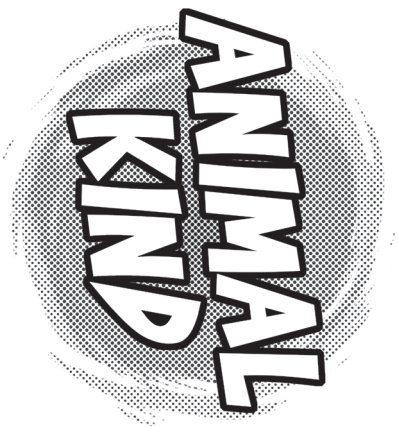
Encourage the children to imagine they are Poppy the Pigeon living on the street and ask them to write a short story or a sentence (depending on ability) from her point of view. What would it be like to be a small bird with humans looming over her? Perhaps she gets into a dangerous situation and survives.



We've set up a Facebook page to support the Animal Kind project. Why not post your child's story to our page? We'd love to see it and you may enjoy seeing stories from other children. We'll be sure to comment.

www.facebook.com/animalkindeducation





Poppy the Pigeon

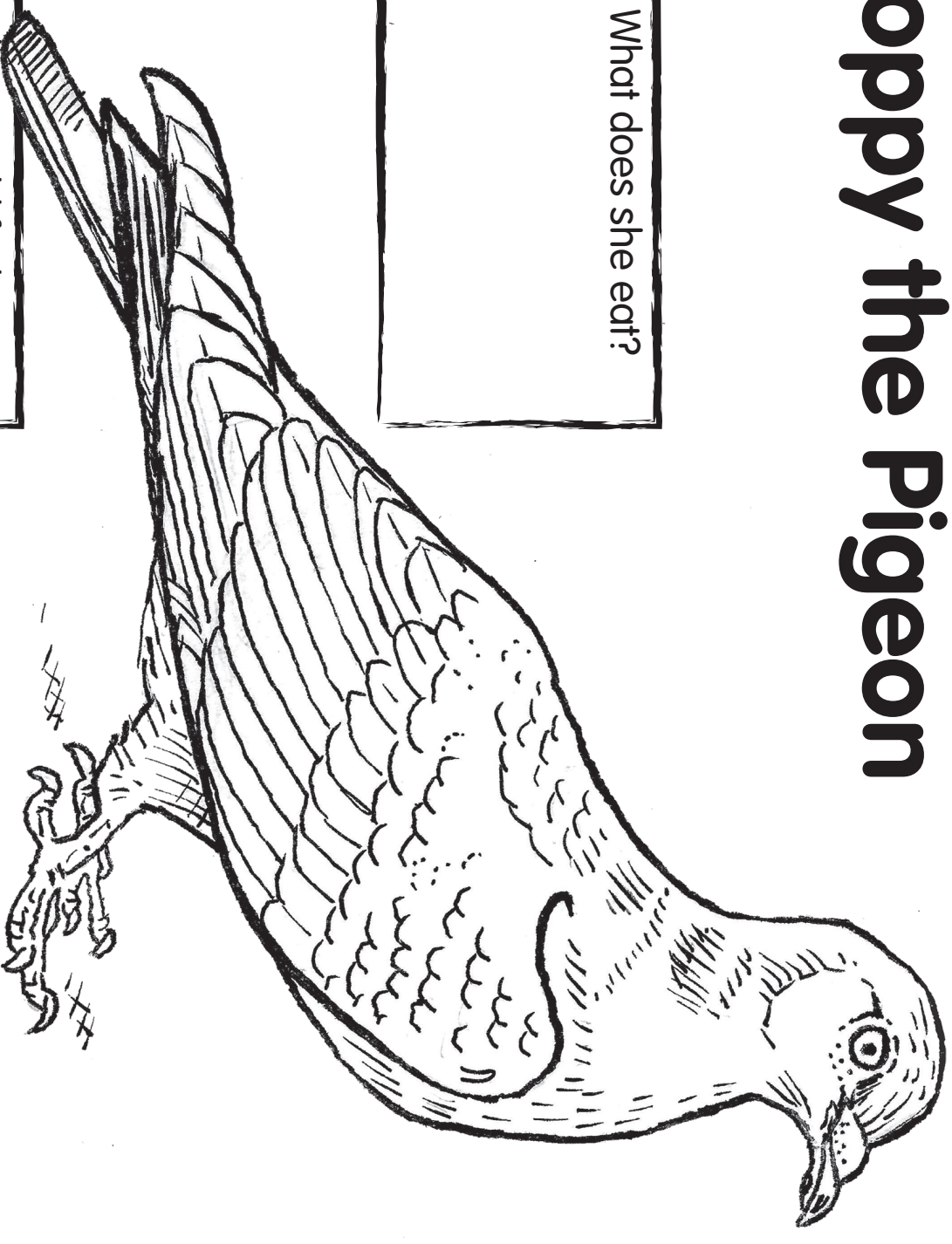
What might hurt Poppy?

What clever thing can Poppy do?

Where does Poppy live?

What does she eat?

What would frighten Poppy?



My name is

.....

I am Animal Kind





True or False Pigeons

Pigeons bob their heads when they walk (True - it helps them to see all around)

Pigeons are the only birds who can suck up drinking water (True - all other birds need to tilt their heads back to swallow)

Pigeons have to hop – they can't walk like we do (False - they can walk like us)

Male and female pigeons feed their young on pigeon 'milk' (True - they make it in their crop near their throat)

Owls are the only other birds who feed their babies on 'milk' like pigeons do (False - the only other birds that produce a similar 'milk' are flamingos and emperor penguins)

Pigeons cannot see in colour (False - they can see the same colours as us but also colours we can't see - ultraviolet light)

Pigeons have saved many lives during wartime (True - by carrying urgent messages)

Once pigeons have chosen partners, they stay together for life (True)

The top speed of a pigeon is 20 mph (False - it's normally 50mph but they have been known to fly at 90 mph for short distances)

Pigeons can recognise themselves in a mirror (True - they have higher levels of recognition than a 2 year old child)

Pigeons can only fly 70 miles in a day (False - they can fly between 600 and 700 miles in one day)

Pigeons usually lay 2 eggs at a time (True - and both parents share in keeping the eggs warm in the nest)

Baby pigeons in the nest are called pups (False - squabs)

Pigeons normally live for 3 years (false - they live for about 8 years in the wild but the record is 24 years old)

