

Given the frequent proximity of nests of House Sparrows and feral pigeons on structures in urban areas, this opportunistic habit may be more widespread than the few reports suggest. A live pigeon incubating for many days on an open ledge provides a regular, concentrated and seemingly easy source of feathers for local sparrows which otherwise might have to search more widely for them.

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Recapture of 2-year-old Chatham Petrel at Natal colony

Rangatira (South East) Island in the Chatham group (44°21' S, 176° 10' W) is the only breeding location for the Chatham Petrel (*Pterodroma axillaris*). On 26 February 1993, I spotlighted a flying Chatham Petrel in the upper valley of Kokopu Creek about 100m from its natal burrow. The bird had been banded (D-67612) as a chick by G. Murman on 4 April 1991 in study burrow #11; one of only two successful burrows found that year.

Chatham Petrel chicks start hatching in early February and the peak is in late February (pers. obs.). This petrel was therefore approximately 2 years old although the recapture was 1 year 10 months and 22 days after banding. This is the youngest known Chatham Petrel back at the breeding colony. The bird had a downy brood patch indicating that it was unlikely to be breeding when recaptured.

A 3-year-old Galapagos Dark-rumped Petrel (*Pterodroma phaeopygia*), caught in a mist net, is the youngest published age for which *Pterodroma* petrels have been recorded returning to a natal colony (Podolsky and Kress 1992). Several other species of Procellariiformes are known to return to colonies at 2 years, eg. Manx Shearwater (*Puffinus puffinus*) (Brooke 1990), Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) (Serventy (1967) and Laysan Albatross (*Diomedea immutabilis*) (Fisher and Fisher 1969). Serventy (1967) showed that less than 2% of Short-tailed Shearwaters first return as 2-year-olds and these birds visit only in February (just after the hatching period in mid - to late January). Interestingly this young Chatham Petrel was caught at the same period in the breeding cycle. Common Diving Petrels (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*) appear to be the earliest returning species in the order; some visit breeding colonies as yearlings and begin breeding as 2-year-olds (Richdale 1965).

Mike Imber, Alan Tennyson and Hugh Robertson provided helpful comments on this short note.

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Rain-bathing by pigeons

According to Goodwin (1983), many pigeons, including species in the genera *Columba*, *Streptopelia*, *Zenaidra* and *Ducula*, adopt similar postures when rain-bathing. "These consist of leaning over to one side, lying partly on one wing and raising the other so that the rain can fall on its under surface and on the flanks". Writing of Australian species, Frith (1982) commented: "Most pigeons frequently bathe in the rain," and "in the totally arboreal species no other method is known"; he included an illustration of a brown pigeon (*Macropygia amboinensis*) rain-bathing in the typical posture. The only published records of New Zealand pigeons (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*) rain-bathing, that we know of, are those of Guthrie-Smith (1927) and Atkinson (1946). As this behaviour is recorded so seldom, we report our own observations and review others.

At 0730 hours (NZDT) on 9 March 1990, JAG saw a pigeon rain-bathing high in some tall eucalypts off Wairere Road on the Western Hutt hills. The morning was overcast with an air temperature of 17°C.; light rain was falling for the first time for several weeks. This bird was soon joined by five others, all of which at times rain-bathed together. They postured as Goodwin (1983) described, except that one bird sometimes raised both wings together and waved them around. As it is unusual to see more than two pigeons together here, the presence of six together suggests that rain-bathing may be infectious (see below). The rain and the bathing ceased after about 45 minutes, although there were still three pigeons there 4 hours later. Again, at 0800 hours on 15 November 1992, JAG saw two pigeons rain-bathing for about 30 minutes in the same trees, in steady rain after 2-3 weeks' dry weather. JECF also remembers a pigeon rain-bathing in the Orongorongo Valley several years ago: it was perched high in a tree and raised its wings alternately 45° beyond the vertical so that the rain ran down under its wings.

Other records of pigeons rain-bathing include those by Nelson (1968) for Galapagos Doves (*Streptopelia galapagensis*), Slater (1987) for the Australian Crested Pigeon (*Ocyphaps lophotes*), Lawson (1988) for the Woodpigeon and Anon. (1984) for the Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*), both