

Bird Brains at Work

by Anita N. Amin



Spy

Next time you see a pigeon flying across the sky, look at it carefully! Is it holding a can? Or a camera? Or wearing a backpack? If it's a carrier pigeon, it just might be a working bird.

You've probably heard of working dogs that help police officers, or horses that help farmers. Did you know that carrier pigeons can be trained to help people too? What kind of jobs do these birds perform?

Many years ago, carrier pigeons were used to help our country in during wars. "Spy pigeons" had small cameras were tied to their feet. As a pigeon flew over enemy land, the camera snapped photos of the land below. This would allow our military see where the enemies were and what they were doing.

Mailman

The pigeons have probably saved many soldiers' lives.

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More than 800 years ago, Genghis Khan, an Asian ruler set up pigeon post offices across his lands! As recently as 2010, Cuba used pigeons to send election results to its mountain people.

Lifeguard

From high up in the sky, specially trained pigeons can spot orange life jackets in the ocean. Sometimes it is difficult for humans to spot people lost at sea, especially when the weather is bad. However, pigeons can fly quickly over a large area of water in search of people.

Scientist's Helper

In 2006, a group of scientists used pigeons to study air pollution in California. Special backpacks with miniature cellphones were strapped onto pigeons. As the pigeons flew, machines in the backpacks tested to see what gases were in the air. The cell phones sent information about the air to the scientists.

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So next time you see a pigeon, stop and watch it closely. What might look like an ordinary bird to most people, might actually be a hard-working mail carrier, a scientist, a lifeguard, or even a spy!

Name: _____

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1. What did Genghis Kahn use pigeons for 800 yeas ago?

- a. He used pigeons to deliver election results.
- b. He used pigeons to find people lost at sea.
- c. He used pigeons to carry messages.
- d. He kept pigeons as pets.

2. What was the author's purpose for writing this article?

- a. to share fictional stories about pigeons helping people
- b. to teach readers about the lives of wild pigeons

3.



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4. Do you think our country's military still uses carrier pigeons during wartime? Why or why not?

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Match each vocabulary word on the left with its definition on the right.

_____ 1. life jacket

a. person who rescues people who are in danger of drowning

_____ 2. military

b. wearable device that helps a



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_____ 4. poisonous

d. process in which citizens vote for a government official

_____ 5. lifeguard

e. armed forces

_____ 6. medals

f. machine to taking photos

_____ 7. camera

g. something that causes illness or death

ANSWER KEY

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1. What did Genghis Kahn use pigeons for 800 yeas ago? **c**

- a. He used pigeons to deliver election results.
- b. He used pigeons to find people lost at sea.
- c. **He used pigeons to carry messages.**
- d. He kept pigeons as pets.

2. What was the author's purpose for writing this article? **d**

- a. to share fictional stories about pigeons helping people
- b. to teach readers about the lives of wild pigeons
- c. to persuade readers into liking pigeons more

3.



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4. Do you think our country's military still uses carrier pigeons during wartime? Why or why not?

No, they probably do not use pigeons today because we have satellite technology and unmanned drone spy planes.

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