

## Special facts: Homing pigeons

Pigeons generally return to their own nests. Some domestic pigeons can find their way home also over long distances. These pigeons were selected and bred to become homing pigeons. Homing pigeons return to the place they see as their home, which means they go back to where they are kept and fed. This is why these pigeons can be used to transport messages. To do this, the pigeon is taken away from its home and brought to the place from where a sender wants to send a message. It stays there until it has to bring a message home. The sender writes the message on a small piece of paper, folds it and puts it into a small container. The container is attached to the pigeon's leg. Then the sender sets the pigeon free and it will fly back home with the message.

Special pigeons, called carrier pigeons, were used to carry messages during the World Wars when it wasn't possible to communicate by telephone or by radio. It is still not quite clear how carrier pigeons manage to find their way home. Some researchers think that they orientate by using the position of the sun or the stars, visual clues and magnetic fields of the earth.

Pigeons are a symbol of love. This is why white homing pigeons are an attraction at weddings. They are released in view of the bride and the groom to fly home to where they are kept and fed.

