

I'm right about this relationship thing, the same can be said about our relationship with nature. Ironically, just when our concern for the role humans play in the environment is supposed to be at an all-time high, we are beginning to abandon our relationship to nature. To remedy the problems we have created, we remove ourselves more and more from our home. We create preserves and protected areas from which humans are excluded. We cast nature as a combination art exhibit, zoo, cathedral, and adventure park, in which we are sightseers, worshippers, caretakers, and joy-riders, but not residents, partners, or co-creators.

As such, if we were to become functionally extinct—if we were to completely abandon the roles we have evolved to play—most likely the results would be more disastrous than if red-legged frogs, or California condors, or even gray wolves became extinct. I am not advocating that we dress in skins, take up spears, and begin chasing animals around the landscape. Instead, I am advocating that we do what needs to be done when any relationship goes bad—that we start asking, “What were we doing when all this was working?”

Breaking up might be possible in a personal relationship, but we can't break up with nature. There's no place else to go.

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A Dove by Any Other Name...

BY COURTNEY HUMPHRIES

Last October, the bimonthly newsletter of the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) carried among its regular updates to the *Checklist of North American Birds* a note that the common name of *Columba livia* had been changed from rock dove to rock



pigeon. And it's true; rock dove has always seemed an oddly romantic title for the ubiquitous street pigeon, which has taken up residence in every continent except Antarctica.

The bird's name change received little notice beyond a comment or two in ornithology newsletters and listserves. The family Columbidae includes both doves and pigeons, and the terms have been used interchangeably. But in most people's minds, a dove and a pigeon have very different connotations. After all, a dove, not a pigeon, brought Noah an olive leaf. We never talk of pigeons of peace or dove droppings on statues. A bar of Dove soap connotes purity and cleanliness, while a product called Pigeon would only bring to mind the grime of the streets. It's the difference between heaven and Earth: Doves are the ideal, pigeons the rough reality.

While city pigeons still garner a bit of attention from children, suburban tourists, and a few dedicated fans, many more people regard the birds as urban exotics or even pests. Yet domesticated pigeons have at times been raised for food, coddled as pets, revered as war heroes, bred as showpieces, raced for prize money, and studied for insights into physiology and behavior. As these

domestic birds escaped confinement they settled in cities and towns, living alongside people but no longer serving them. Since then, the relationship between pigeons and people has devolved into an uneasy coexistence. And the sheer abundance of the birds only devalues them further. It's simply a matter of supply and demand—we prefer our wildlife rare.

Dick Banks, chairman of the Committee on Classification and Nomenclature at the AOU, explained that the organization decided to follow the lead of the British Ornithologists Union, since the birds lived in Britain first. “I don't know why the Brits decided to do that after all these years,” Banks said. But he believes the change is a good one. “Rock dove was incongruous from the beginning.”

At one time, perhaps the sight of the birds in flight in their native setting inspired someone to call them rock doves. The first known mention of the term is when Thomas Moffet wrote, “Rock-doves breed upon Rocks by the Sea-side” in a seventeenth century book of chatty maxims on diet. But now, long after its claim to the title of dove had grown tenuous, *Columba livia* is officially just a pigeon.

The Wild Life

BY HAL CLIFFORD

The city, it has been said, is a jungle. In the landscape of southern California, that is truer than ever. Here camouflage, illusion, and disguise have always been valued. Honestly, where else would you situate Hollywood—a world-dominating industry that built itself out of fictions—than the make-believe land of fake breasts and brighter, whiter teeth, where image, and imagination, are everything?

So it is only natural, then, that California has spawned the fake gated community. In Newport Beach and Simi Valley you can drive by places that look well-defended—wall, guardhouse, iron