Sponsored by the Midlands National Flying Club and the Royal Pigeon Racing Association

Flying Back To Nature

AN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE USING HOMING PIGEONS

Based on the documentaries of Jim Janner

EXCITING NEW EDUCATION INITIATIVE GIVES KIDS A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF WW1 & WW2

Launching today, an interactive educational project, Secret Messages, will offer school children across the UK the opportunity to learn about the vital and dangerous work that carrier pigeons undertook during the World Wars. A collaboration between the Midlands National Flying Club and the Royal Pigeon Racing Association, the project will teach children how to write simple secret messages and demonstrate how pigeons carried important messages during the wars

During World II, over a quarter of a million pigeons were donated by British fanciers to help in the war effort. Once the war was over, pigeon racing was resumed, however their contribution to the war effort did not go unnoticed, with 32 of the 62 Dickin medals awarded to date going to carrier pigeons.

The very first pigeon to win the Dickin medal was Royal Blue who won the medal "for being the first pigeon in this war to deliver a message from a forced landed aircraft on the continent while serving with the RAF in October 1940". Royal Blue was donated by the King, illustrating the Royal families' strong connection with pigeon racing since the late 1890's. To this day, there is a loft at Sandringham and Her Majesty the Queen is now a patron of the Royal Pigeon Racing Association.

British history has seen many patrons who strove to make our country a better and safer place. However, many forget that the humble homing pigeon played an enormous role in emergencies during both the World Wars and still give great benefits to fanciers today.

Donna Beard, who delivers the lessons to the school children said: "We have had a really positive response to taking pigeons into schools in the past, which is why we feel that the Secret Messages project will be of great value to children and their teachers alike. Children enjoying handling the birds and learning to write their own secret messages will help to bring the importance of these birds' contribution. What a great tribute to all involved in WW1 and WW2."

Schools are able to apply to Flying Back to Nature for an experienced handler to visit with a small team of homing pigeons. The Secret Messages project is available to all children of all ages in the UK and is a free service.

-Ends-

For all media enquiries or school visit enquires please contact Peter Humphries from Flying Back to Nature

peter@humphries.com

secretmessages.org.uk or flyingbacktonature.com

Notes to editors:

< PigeonRacing UK & Ireland – www.pigeonracinguk.co.uk

< There are approximately 43,000 pigeon fanciers in the UK.

< The commercial impact of pigeon racing is significant to the UK and EIRE economies and is estimated to contribute over £125,000.000 per annum.

< Royal Pigeon Racing Association - http://www.rpra.org

July 2014

PIGEON RACING UK & IRELAND
RAPTOR ALLIANCE
PROTECT OUR PIGEONS AGAINST RAPTOR PERSECUTION

January 2015

PIGEON RACING UNDER THREAT IN CUMBRIA

Today, there are around 42,000 pigeon fanciers in the UK, with an estimated XXXX located in Cumbria. Pigeon racing continues to be a popular pastime around the country, however in recent years the future of pigeon racing has been threatened and numbers participating in the hobby has dropped dramatically. The number of raptor attacks on racing pigeons by Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons are increasing, posing a threat to this traditional pastime. As a result, the number of people involved with pigeon racing is declining rapidly and the pastime could be extinct by 2030.

Last year, Fletcher Crellin, a pigeon fancier from North West Cumbria, suffered a number of devastating losses to his flock, taking the shine off of his racing season. Fletcher began exercising his adult pigeons in March last year, after they had raised their broods, and by the end of the month had lost eight birds in Peregrine Falcon attacks, but unfortunately, there was worse still to come. When flying his birds on a 35 mile training exercise Fletcher suffered a horrendous loss of 29 birds in one day.

Fletcher commented: "Attacks by Peregrine Falcons in the area are becoming increasingly common and posing a serious threat to the sport as a whole. We need to be able to protect our birds. We have tried speaking with local MP's about the problem, raising awareness in the media and with petitions, but unless there is a fundamental change in the law there is little we can do to keep our birds safe. We care for our birds like you would any other pet and it is awful to see them injured or worse in an attack."

Racing pigeons form close bonds with their owners and the birds offer company, affection, comfort and, above all, fun. Pigeon fanciers treat their birds as pets, looking after them with great care. The birds are the only domestic animal to enjoy complete freedom on a daily basis and naturally compete and race every time they are released from their lofts. Consequently, attacks by predatory birds can greatly affect pigeon fanciers.

These humble birds have served Britain for generations, whether it's been for emergencies in the war, as a successful racing pigeon or as a pet, the homing pigeon should be seen as birds with many talents and treasured for the foreseeable future.

Lee Fribbins, representative of Pigeon Racing UK and Ireland, commented: "It is important that the tradition of pigeon racing is kept alive in Cumbria. Pigeon fancying is a significant part of the history of the UK and the birds played a pivotal role in both World Wars. We want to encourage more people to take up the hobby, whilst lobbying for the protection of our birds to safeguard the tradition for future generations."

- Ends –

For all media enquiries or to arrange an interview or photograph Fletcher, please contact Jessica Burrows at Voice Communications
01206 332 110/ jessica@voicecommunications.co.uk

To contact Pigeon Racing UK and Ireland directly, please contact:
raptoralliance@btconnect.com

Notes to editors:

< Pigeon Racing UK & Ireland – www.pigeonracinguk.co.uk

< Find Pigeon Racing UK and Ireland on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/pages/Pigeon-Racing-UK-Ireland/622965634426077?ref=ts&fref=ts

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C105- 107

PIGEON RACING UK & IRELAND
RAPTOR ALLIANCE
PROTECT OUR PIGEONS AGAINST RAPTOR PERSECUTION

April 2015

ARE UK'S CATHEDRALS INVOLVED IN PIGEON CONSPIRCY?

Today, there are around 42,000 pigeon fanciers in the UK. Pigeon racing continues to be a popular pastime around the country, however in recent years the future of pigeon racing has been threatened and numbers participating in the hobby has dropped dramatically. The number of raptor attacks on racing pigeons by Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons are increasing, posing a threat to this traditional pastime. As a result, the number of people involved with pigeon racing is declining rapidly and the pastime could be extinct by 2030.

Steve Wright and his wife are professional racing pigeon breeders in Bodmin Moor, Cornwall, where they sell pigeons to fanciers across the country. Steve has been racing pigeons for half a century but recently decided to give up racing after two Peregrine Falcons attacked his team of 50 training baby pigeons. The baby pigeons were forced to fly into a telephone wire by the Peregrines, leaving five dead, three injured and one taken by the Peregrines. He hasn't trained any pigeons since.

Over the past few weeks, Steve has been trying to contact cathedrals across the country, asking them to make a log of any pigeon rings that have been found in manmade Peregrine boxes. Steve feels strongly that the pigeon fanciers of the deceased pigeons should be contacted, which is one the purposes of ringing these racing birds. After trying to make contact with Chichester Cathedral asking if he could be given any rings found in the nest, he received no reply and after his third attempt they blocked him from their website.

However, Steve has had some success with other cathedrals. After liaising with Derby Cathedral, they have cooperated with Steve and have posted him the rings which have been found in the nests. Steve is desperately trying to make contact with as many cathedrals around the country as possible. He is passionate about helping his fellow pigeon fanciers to discover what has happened to their missing racing pigeons.

Racing pigeons form close bonds with their owners and the birds offer company, affection, comfort and, above all, fun. Pigeon fanciers treat their birds as pets, looking after them with great care. The birds are the only domestic animal to enjoy complete freedom on a daily basis and naturally compete and race every time they are released from their lofts. Consequently, attacks by predatory birds can greatly affect pigeon fanciers.

These humble birds have served Britain for generations, whether it's been for emergencies in the war, as a successful racing pigeon or as a pet, the homing pigeon should be seen as birds with many talents and treasured for the foreseeable future.

Lee Fribbins, representative of Pigeon Racing UK and Ireland, commented: "It is important that the tradition of pigeon racing is kept alive in the UK. This is why it is so important to have the cooperation of other people, helping us to track any pigeons which may have gone missing or are deceased. We want to encourage more people to take up the hobby, whilst lobbying for the protection of our birds to safeguard the tradition for future generations."

Sign the petition here:

https://www.change.org/p/pigeon-fanciers-we-need-you-to-help-change-the-law-to-protect-our-pigeons

- Ends –

For all media enquiries or to organise an interview with Steve, please contact Jade Bolton or Megan House

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01206 332 110 / jade@voicecommunications.co.uk or

megan@voicecommunications.co.uk

Notes to editors:

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C108 - 110

April 2015

PIGEON FANCIERS CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT THEIR BIRDS FROM DEADLY ATTACKS

With over 42,000 pigeon fanciers in the UK alone, pigeon racing is an important and remarkable part of the country's heritage. Not only do these birds compete in extraordinary races across land and sea, they also played a pivotal role in both World Wars. However, this important historical past time is now facing a serious threat from predatory birds known as 'raptors'.

Attacks on racing pigeons from raptors such as the Peregrine Falcon and Sparrowhawk can be devastating and they often result in a number of birds being injured or fatally wounded. This is extremely distressing for pigeon fanciers who treat their pigeons as pets. These attacks are becoming increasingly common across the UK as a result of the protected status of many raptors, yet pigeon fanciers are currently unable to protect their lofts from predatory raptors.

The Raptor Alliance is lobbying for a change in the law that will allow pigeon fanciers in the UK to protect their racing birds from attacks. In a revision of the 1981 Wildlife Act, The Law Commission has recommended changes to the law that will enable individual pigeon fanciers to make license applications to relocate problem raptors. The Law Commission has taken note of the issue and their revision of the act includes all of the Raptor Alliance's recommendations.

Stewart Wardrop, representative of the Raptor Alliance, commented, "We are delighted that The Law Commission has listened to our recommendations for the protection of racing pigeons, but there is still a very long way to go. Together The Raptor Alliance and its members have begun lobbying MP's and prospective parliamentary candidates to raise awareness of the threat facing the sport of pigeon racing on a national level."

The Raptor Alliance has launched an online petition – to sign this, please visit:
www.change.org/p/pigeon-fanciers-we-need-you-to-help-change-the-law-to-protect-our-pigeons

- Ends –

For all media enquiries or to arrange an interview with Stewart Wardop, please contact Jade Bolton or Meg House at Voice Communications
01206 332 110
jade@voicecommunications.co.uk / megan@voicecommunications.co.uk

To contact Pigeon Racing UK and Ireland directly, please contact:
raptoralliance@btconnect.com

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PIGEON RACING UK & IRELAND
RAPTOR ALLIANCE
PROTECT OUR PIGEONS AGAINST RAPTOR PERSECUTION

May 2015

HOW CAN YOU REPRESENT THE SPORT OF PIGEON RACING

As the new racing season is under way, Pigeon Racing UK & Ireland and the Raptor Alliance have just issued a statement regarding how pigeon fanciers should handle questions from activist organisations and the media.

With increased media coverage of the Raptor Alliance's lobbying campaign, it is possible that you may receive negative attention and/or be asked questions about the raptor problems pigeon fanciers are facing. It is important that you always remember that you are representing the sport of pigeon racing. If you have any concerns regarding activity that you may suspect is not what it purports to be, please refer it to your Union's Press Officer or Secretary, or to Voice Communications (PR agency for the Raptor Alliance).

Please find below some information issued by Pigeon Racing UK & Ireland and the Raptor Alliance. If you do receive an enquiry of this nature, please remember the following:

- Do not be tempted to engage in conversation – instead explain that their enquiry is better handled by the Press Office for your respective Union or Pigeon Racing UK & Ireland
- Ask politely for their name in full
- Ask politely what it is they want to know
- If it is a journalist, ask the name of the publication or media title they are working for. In addition, ask if they have a deadline by which they need a response
- Obtain an email address and direct contact number
- Tell them that you will pass on this information straight away and they can expect to be contacted by the Press Officer for your Union shortly

Important:

As a representative of pigeon racing, you need to be seen as being proactive and helpful in any instances of genuine public or media enquiry. There are many such enquiries at the moment, covering the story of lobbying in support of the Law Commission's proposal to change the law.

Taking an emotional, defensive or rude stance will escalate the problem.

Contact details:

Contact details for all the Racing Pigeon Unions can be found at –

www.pigeonracinguk.co.uk

If you have contact with any media outlet, please contact Jade or Jess at Voice Communications:

Tel : 01206 332110

Email: jade@voicecommunications.co.uk / jessica@voicecommunications.co.uk

C113-115

PIGEON RACING UK & IRELAND
RAPTOR ALLIANCE
PROTECT OUR PIGEONS AGAINST RAPTOR PERSECUTION

May 2015

PIGEON FANCIERS FACE CONSTANT ATTACKS FROM HAWKS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

Today, there are around 42,000 pigeon fanciers in the UK. Pigeon racing continues to be a popular pastime around the country, however in recent years the future of pigeon racing has been threatened and numbers participating in the hobby has dropped dramatically. The number of raptor attacks on racing pigeons by Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons are increasing, posing a threat to this traditional pastime. As a result, the number of people involved with pigeon racing is declining rapidly and the pastime could be extinct by 2030.

Joseph Milland has been racing pigeons in the West Midlands since 1967 and over the past 10 years he has seen an increase in Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons. Joseph has issues with predatory birds every time he races and trains his pigeons, from injuries, to his pigeons being eaten alive by the hawks. He currently has three resident Peregrines living near his house which has led to 14 of his young pigeons going missing within a two week period. Some of his other birds which manage to get back after an attack have suffered injuries, leaving one with a broken wing.

Joseph has made many changes to his training, including the times he takes out his birds and the size of groups which he trains. However this hasn't decreased attacks, and Joseph even sometimes sees Sparrowhawks try and take the young from the pen in his garden.

Joseph comments; "There used to be nine pigeon fanciers on this estate and now there is only myself and one other pigeon fancier. Everyone else has been

disheartened by the increase of attacks and they have since given up the sport. It's heart breaking spending all your time on raising your pigeons for them to be constantly attacked and stalked by resident hawks."

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These humble birds have served Britain for generations, whether it's been for emergencies in the war, as a successful racing pigeon or as a pet, the homing pigeon should be seen as birds with many talents and treasured for the foreseeable future.

Lee Fribbins, representative of Pigeon Racing UK and Ireland, commented: "It is important that the tradition of pigeon racing is kept alive in the UK. This is why it is so important to have the cooperation of other people, helping us to track any pigeons which may have gone missing or are deceased. We want to encourage more people to take up the hobby, whilst lobbying for the protection of our birds to safeguard the tradition for future generations."

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- Ends -

For all media enquiries or to organise an interview with Joseph, please contact Jade Bolton or Megan House

at Voice Communications
01206 332 110 / jade@voicecommunications.co.uk or
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C116 - 118

PIGEON RACING UK & IRELAND
RAPTOR ALLIANCE
PROTECT OUR PIGEONS AGAINST RAPTOR PERSECUTION

May 2015

FREQUENT PROBLEMS WITH HAWKS ATTACKING RACING PIGEONS IN SOMERSET

Today, there are around 42,000 pigeon fanciers in the UK. Pigeon racing continues to be a popular pastime around the country, however in recent years the future of pigeon racing has been threatened and numbers participating in the hobby has dropped dramatically. The number of raptor attacks on racing pigeons by Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons are increasing, posing a threat to this traditional pastime. As a result, the number of people involved with pigeon racing is declining rapidly and the pastime could be extinct by 2030.

Tom Sherwood has been racing pigeons for 40 years and over the past decade has found the increase in Sparrowhawks and Peregrine Falcons disheartening. Sparrowhawks start to appear around mid March and this increase in hawks results in attacks in one in every three tosses. His pigeons are either badly injured or killed. Tom has now begun to train his pigeons differently to prevent attacks and only trains them in small groups. He's even changed training routes, but the attacks still affect him.

Since moving to Somerset 11 years ago Tom has also seen a decline in song birds in and around his garden and he believes the Sparrowhawks are the reason for this. Tom has noticed that the resident Sparrowhawks, which nest in the woodland behind his house are constantly flying in and out of their nests, feeding their young various species of birds. Before he moved to Somerset, Tom lived in Buckinghamshire where he had very few problems with hawks.

Tom comments; "Last year I seriously began to think about leaving the sport as I became disheartened after having my pigeons constantly attacked. When pigeons fly back to you injured it can sometimes be worse than them dying. Recently I had a champion pigeon injured and when he finally found his way back there were only two feathers left in his tail. It's heart breaking seeing your animals in this state on a regular basis."

Racing pigeons form close bonds with their owners and the birds offer company, affection, comfort and, above all, fun. Pigeon fanciers treat their birds as pets, looking after them with great care. The birds are the only domestic animal to enjoy complete freedom on a daily basis and naturally compete and race every time they are released from their lofts. Consequently, attacks by predatory birds can greatly affect pigeon fanciers.

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- Ends -

For all media enquiries or to organise an interview with Tom, please contact Jade Bolton or Megan House

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C119- C121

PIGEON RACING UK & IRELAND
RAPTOR ALLIANCE
PROTECT OUR PIGEONS AGAINST RAPTOR PERSECUTION

June 2015

SHROPSHIRE PIGEON FANCIERS DEVISTATED BY CONSTANT HAWK ATTACKS

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Darren Williams from Cleobury Mortimer, has been racing pigeons in South Shropshire for 40 years and over the past decade has seen a dramatic increase in Peregrine Falcons. Darren's son also helps train and race their pigeons and recently on a 20 mile training session two of their best birds were killed, one of which was his 15 year old sons favourite bird - this pigeon had won two races and was top of the federation. Darren's son has been saddened and disheartened by this attack and due to the high level of raptor attacks while training and racing their pigeons.

There are three quarries in the area where Darren and his son live, they face constant attacks from Peregrine Falcons almost every time they train. At the beginning of the year Darren and his son started racing 24 birds and they now only have nine left, most of them were lost during training. This has devastated both Darren and his son, as they witness their birds being eaten alive frequently.

Darren comments; "I know many people from across the country who have left the sport due to the high level of attacks. It is soul destroying to see your birds being constantly attacked and injured, I think if this continues to happen we will see the sport coming to an end."

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- Ends -

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