

## Pigeons Make Headlines at Wimbledon, Brazilian Prison

### **Birds shot, used for smuggling in separate incidents**

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Posted: July 11, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Pigeons might be ubiquitous in urban areas, but they remain largely absent from mentions in news stories. Recent events at the Wimbledon tennis tournament and a Brazilian prison, however, prove pigeons can make the headlines.

#### Wimbledon pigeon shooting draws ire from animal activists

Animal rights activists were up in arms last month after marksmen shot pigeons that were distracting players on Centre Court at Wimbledon.

According to an article published June 24, 2008 by Reuters news service, the All England Club hired two hawks to frighten away dive-bombing pigeons during the tennis tournament. Wimbledon called in marksmen after the hawks couldn't deter the pigeons from the open-air media restaurant and players' lawn.

Nick Kester, press secretary for the Hawk Board, a body representing all falconers in the United Kingdom, said the hawks might not have been able to scare the pigeons away because pigeons get used to bird-scaring devices, such as falcons and regular explosions.

"As the hawk cannot be flown whilst the tennis match is in progress, then there is no deterrent," Kester said. "Thus, the more persistent pigeons will return."

The reaction from Wimbledon came after bird droppings on restaurant tables were thought to pose a health risk, the article said.

Anna Dove, who writes the blog "People for Pigeons," said she has received many comments pertaining to the Wimbledon incident. She said not one comment supported shooting the pigeons.

"When is any sport more important than a bird?" Dove questioned. "The birds aren't dangerous ... (Wimbledon) should have allowed the birds to stay there."

#### Prison Pigeons Found Smuggling Drugs, Phones

A recent incident at a Brazilian prison gives new meaning to the term "pack rat."

Pigeons, which often receive the unfortunate label of "rats with wings," were found smuggling drugs and cell phones into the prison in Marilia, Sao Paulo state, according to a June 25 article published by Reuters news service.

Officials uncovered the reason behind the prison's steep increase in the two contraband items when guards noticed some pigeons struggling to stay in the air. Inmates had been training the pigeons to bring in drugs and phones using pouches on the birds' backs, the article said.

Prison officials said the pigeons lived on the jail's roof, also the location where the pigeons delivered the goods. According to the article, the prisoners would take the items delivered onto the roof, then use friends and family to smuggle the pigeons out again.