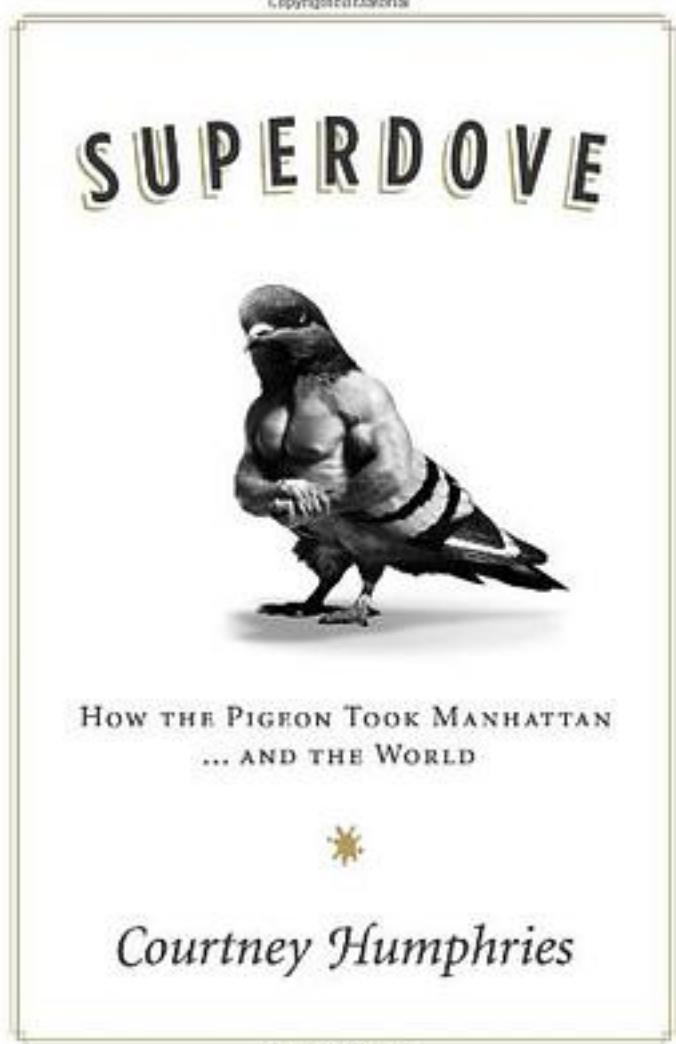


Superdove



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Why do we see pigeons as lowly urban pests and how did they become such common city dwellers? Courtney Humphries traces the natural history of the pigeon, recounting how these shy birds that once made their homes on the sparse cliffs of sea coasts came to dominate our urban public spaces. While detailing this evolution, Humphries introduces us to synanthropy: The concept that animals can become dependent on humans without ceasing to be wild; they can adapt to the cityscape as if it were a field or a forest. *Superdove* simultaneously explores the pigeon's cultural transformation, from its life in the dovecotes of ancient Egypt to its service in the trenches of World War I, to its feats within the pigeon-racing societies of today. While the dove is traditionally recognized as a symbol of peace, the pigeon has long inspired a different sort of fetishistic devotion from breeders, eaters, and artists—and from those who recognized and exploited the pigeon's astounding abilities. Because of their fecundity, pigeons were symbols of fertility associated with Aphrodite, while their keen ability to find their way home made them ideal messengers and even pilots. Their usefulness largely forgotten, today's pigeons have become as ubiquitous and reviled as rats. But *Superdove* reveals something more surprising: By using pigeons for our own purposes, we humans have changed their evolution. And in doing so, we have helped make pigeons the ideal city dwellers they are today. In the tradition of *Rats*, the book that made its namesake rodents famous, *Superdove* is the fascinating story of the pigeon's journey from the wild to the city—the home they'll never leave.

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