

Clockwork Pigeons

'Clockwork' is not exactly the right term for these xenological lifeforms; they're essentially independent collections of mosses that band together to produce more complicated 'organisms.' On the other hand, 'clockwork' **does** describe how the various collections interact with each other inside the Pigeon itself. Typically, said organisms look more or less like Terran birds, done up in various shades of brown, tan, and copper. Clockwork Pigeons pretty much can survive anywhere that has Earthlike conditions, and they're incredibly difficult to eradicate once they establish themselves in an ecosystem.

Fortunately, they don't over-breed their environment and most creatures from Earthlike worlds both can, and will, eat them. Clockwork Pigeons even make for reasonably interesting pets, particularly on spaceships: like most mosses they inhale carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen, which helps with life support. If a human can catch a disease from a Clockwork Pigeon, or vice versa, it's never been recorded. They're also not particularly aggressive; they eat mostly through absorption and photosynthesis, needing regular visits to muddy water.

The intelligence, lifespan, and reproductive cycle of a Clockwork Pigeon are practically impossible to define, given how individual components can be swapped in and out (and thus keeping the organism 'alive' indefinitely). There does seem to be some sort of collective internal communication between the individual components, and a Clockwork Pigeon seems to *act* about as smart as a Terran bird; but the debate about whether they're as self-aware as a parrot remains a topic for discussion. Certainly Clockwork Pigeons don't seem to be hostile to humans. Which is good, because by now they're found throughout human space.

Rumors that various governments are trying to weaponize Clockwork Pigeons are merely that: rumors.

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