

classification" might be followed which would present fewer difficulties than a "natural classification;" but then it would interrupt many plain affinities. Extreme forms can readily be defined; but intermediate and troublesome forms often destroy our definitions. Forms which may be called "aberrant" must sometimes be included within groups to which they do not accurately belong. Characters of all kinds must be used; but as with birds in a state of nature, those afforded by the beak are the best and most readily appreciated. It is not possible to weigh the importance of all the characters which have to be used so as to make the groups and sub-groups of equal value. Lastly, a group may contain only one race, and another and less distinctly defined group may contain several races and sub-races, and in this case it is difficult, as in the classification of natural species, to avoid placing too high a value on the number of forms which a group may contain.

In my measurements I have never trusted to the eye; and when speaking of a part being large or small, I always refer to the wild rock-pigeon (*Columba livia*) as the standard of comparison. The measurements are given in decimals of an inch.⁵

I will now give a brief description of all the principal breeds. The diagram on the following page may aid the reader in learning their names and seeing their affinities. The rock-pigeon, or *Columba livia* (including under this name

⁵ As I so often refer to the size of the *C. livia*, or rock-pigeon, it may be convenient to give the mean between the measurements of two wild birds, kindly sent me by Dr. Edmondstone from the Shetland Islands.

	Inches.
Length from feathered base of beak to end of tail	14.25
" " " " " to oil-gland	9.5
" from tip of beak to end of tail	15.02
" of tail-feathers	4.62
" from tip to tip of wing	26.75
" of folded wing	9.25
Beak.—Length from tip of beak to feathered base77
" Thickness, measured vertically at distal end of nostrils23
" Breadth, measured at same place16
Feet — Length from end of middle toe (without claw) to distal end of tibia	2.77
" Length from end of middle toe to end of hind toe (without claws)	2.02
Weight 14½ ounces.	