

Notes based on Joe Morlan's Ornithology class lecture February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009.  
Joe Morlan is not responsible for these notes, any errors or omissions in them are mine.

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## **Zenaida Dove**

### **OCCURRENCE**

Caribbean species.

Very rare vagrant to the Florida Keys, JJ Audubon found it nesting at Key West. Joe is not aware of any recent records in Florida.

### **FIELD MARKS**

Similar to Mourning Dove, but browner, especially on the underparts.

Spots on the wing coverts.

White tips to the secondaries, form a little band of white on the folded wing.

Tail short with white corners.

## **Mourning Dove**

### **OCCURRENCE**

One of the most common and widespread species in all of NA. Pretty much confined to NA, gets down into Middle America a bit.

Mostly permanent resident but migratory in the northern part of its range.

Very well adapted to a whole variety of habitats. Common in residential and in agricultural areas.

Nests around human habitation, but often high up in the trees. Comes readily in to bird feeders.

In northwestern CA scarce in the wintertime, but here in the Bay Area abundant year round.

Hunttable, dove season exists in all the states that have Mourning Doves. More Mourning Doves are shot for hunting purposes than any other game species in NA, a million or so birds a year.

This has done nothing to cause any decline in Mourning Dove numbers.

In places like the Bay Area and much of CA Mourning Doves have multiple broods. They start nesting quite early, April or perhaps earlier and nests with young are not that unusual as late as November. Dove hunting season is in October and November.

Quite a few different subspecies that geographically vary in their plumage characters.

One particular subspecies was confined to the Socorro Islands off Mexico, called the Socorro Dove. Looks like a Mourning Dove, only it is a rich dark brown bird. Extinct in the wild, but are bred in captivity. There is some doubt about whether it is a separate species or a subspecies of the Mourning Dove.

The question remains whether or not the Mourning Dove will be displaced by the invading Eurasian Collared Dove.

One weird behavior Joe observed was that they hold up their wings in the rain and let the rain down under the wings as if taking a shower.

(Classroom trivia: there was a slide with a nest in the hand of a statue. That statue is in the inner court of 505 Van Ness Ave, you can walk in there.)

**FIELD MARKS**

Very sleek looking bird with a long, pointed tail.

Dark bill.

Powder blue eye ring.

Irregular series of black square patches on the wing coverts. The pattern of spots seems to be unique to each individual, but will probably change after molts.

Pointed wings, whitish underwings.

Males have more blue-gray on the crown compared to females and often have a more violet color on the chest, females tend to be duller and browner. Pinkish patches of color on the sides of the neck in males, females tend to be a little bit more green. This is an iridescent color though which may change quite a bit with the light.

**Juvenile**

Wing coverts tipped with whitish, which forms a scaly look.

This scaled look gives rise to some identification issues. There are a number of other dove species which are characterized by having this scaly look, in particular the Inca Dove has black scales all over the back and the underparts. Also the Common Ground-Dove has considerable scalyness on the breast and on the head. Again, those scales are formed by dark tips to the feathers, not white tips to the feathers. The Inca Dove is unknown in northern CA and the Common Ground Dove a mega-rarity. Some claims of these birds have been based on misidentified juvenal Mourning Doves. Make sure your scaled rarity has the right colored scales!

**Passenger Pigeon**

Used to be one of the most abundant NA birds and is no longer with us. According to legend its flocks darkened the sky. Mostly in the northern and Midwest areas and parts of the eastern US. The bird became extinct before anyone really had a chance to study it, we do not really know what made it extinct. There was enormous hunting pressure for market. Hunting pressure alone rarely brings a species, especially an abundant species, to actual extinction. What normally happens is they become hunted until numbers are too small to be worth hunting any more. One theory holds that they had a communal mating system which required a minimum number of birds in order for them to mate successfully. Another theory states that the birds fed mainly on the nuts of beech trees and that there seems to have been a collapse in the food supply. It may have been a combination of causes.

Looked like an oversized Mourning Dove.

**Spotted Dove**

Formerly called Chinese Spotted Dove.

There are quite a few different subspecies of the Spotted Dove.

**OCCURRENCE**

Introduced bird. Found in Asia, introduced successfully in parts of southern CA. Used to be quite common in residential areas in parts of Los Angeles down into Orange County and out into the Riverside area 20-30 years ago. Their population has crashed for unknown reasons, they are now very local and very difficult to find. They had expanded their range northward into Bakersfield and there are still some places around Bakersfield where the birds can be found.

Also introduced to other places, e.g. very common in towns and villages in parts of Australia.

**FIELD MARKS**

A little bit larger than Mourning Dove.

Pretty long tail.

Black wing linings. Looks sort of like a Mourning Dove when it flies over, but larger with black or very dark wing linings.

Black patch with white spots on the side of the neck in adults, immatures don't have it.

No black spots on the wing coverts.

**Eurasian Collared Dove****OCCURRENCE**

Ranges over much of the US now, including southern CA. Compare the range map in Nat Geo to the one in Sibley some years earlier! Appears to be trying to take over the world.

In SF still only a few, south end of Lake Merced, Presidio.

Basically native to eastern Europe and Russia. Expanded during the 20<sup>th</sup> century into western Europe. Had reached the British Isles by 1950. Now one of the most abundant birds in western Europe. Became established in the Bahamas, it is claimed that they were escaped from captivity. From the Bahamas apparently established themselves in the Florida Keys. They then moved north into the Florida peninsula and established a very strong presence there. Then started to expand further along the gulf states. The species seems to have expanded by having small groups dispersed far away from the maiden core range, settling into a distant spot and then radiating out from that spot, expanding and filling in unoccupied areas. Sort of leapfrogging all over the place and then expanding out from established sites. Started to show up in southern CA probably about 15 years ago in tiny numbers. There also were known introduced populations in the Ventura area and in San Luis Obispo.

**FIELD MARKS**

Colors similar to Mourning Dove.

No black spots on the wing coverts.

Black collar on the back of the neck with a little white trim to it.

Underside of the tail: tip almost entirely white, contrasts strongly with the dark undertail coverts.

Outer web of the outer tail feathers white at the tip, black above.

Tail not as elongated as Mourning Dove's, more blunt square tipped.

Exhibits quite a lot of color variation. There are some very pale creamy birds, those are sometimes thought to be hybrids with Ringed Turtle Dove. But if they are the same size and have the same call they are probably pure Eurasian Collared Doves. Pay attention to the variation but do not assume that everything that looks like a Eurasian Collared Dove necessarily is one.

Joe has also seen one Ringed Turtle Dove that was very brown in color.

**VOCALIZATIONS**

A number of different calls. There is a wow kind of thing that sounds almost like a cat.

## **Ringed Turtle Dove**

Domesticated form of a dove native to Africa.

The Turtle Dove that is sold by cage bird dealers, abundant in captivity, frequently escape.

### **FIELD MARKS**

Extremely similar to the Eurasian Collared Dove.

Whole bird smaller.

Wing tips paler.

Undertail coverts largely white, little or no contrast between the white tip to the tail and the pale undertail coverts.

Outer web of outer tail feathers all white.

Black ring on the back of the neck has less of an obvious white highlight.

### **VOCALIZATIONS**

Voice different, peculiar series of soft, gentle vocalizations.

## **White-winged Dove**

### **OCCURRENCE**

Mexican species. Partially migratory at the northern limit of its range.

Strong tendency towards vagrancy. Shows up in northern CA irregularly but sometimes in surprising numbers. Joe has seen as many as five in one tree at Pt Reyes, but they are pretty rare in northern CA in any season. Mostly found in coastal areas or migrant traps with isolated groves of trees. Often perched high up in the trees, sometimes really hard to see even if they are right in front of your nose. Sometimes show up in flocks of Mourning Doves.

Most of the records from the late fall, usually don't linger to winter. Sometimes flybys are reported at odd seasons in northern CA, beware that a lot of Rock Pigeons have white patches in the wings!

Quite common in the southwestern deserts, Texas and southern CA.

In southern CA scarce in the wintertime, but quite common in the desert regions during the summer months, the Colorado desert in particular.

One of the most familiar birds in the desert areas of the southwest, wherever there are cactuses or mesquite is a kind of place where you can find them. Need a source of water however, oases are good places to find them.

It also has a population established in southern Florida where it may have been introduced, the situation there is not entirely clear to Joe.

Huntable.

### **FIELD MARKS**

About the same size and shape as the Eurasian Collared Dove.

White corners to the relatively square, dark tail.

Pattern on the underside of the tail white-black-white.

No black spots on the wing coverts.

White wing patch shows up fairly prominently in flight, on the folded wing it looks like a white strip along the leading edge of the wing.

Blue skin around the red eye.

Dark mark on the side of the neck.

Bill quite long.

#### **VOCALIZATIONS**

Call a lot. "Who cooks for you?", similar to Barred Owl.

### **Oriental Turtle Dove**

Has been in CA at least twice, one bird at Furnace Creek Ranch and one bird wintered in Bolinas on private property, which was kept secret at the time.

#### **FIELD MARKS**

Scaling to the wing coverts, rufous near the back, gray further out on the wing  
Zebra stripe markings on the sides of the neck.

### ***Columbina* doves**

Three species.

All basically brown.

Half the size of a Mourning Dove.

### **Common Ground-Dove**

#### **OCCURRENCE**

Three disjunct ranges: southeastern US around Florida, Texas, the far southwest.

Has been declining, now very scarce in most of the areas where it used to occur regularly.

Believed to be nonmigratory but has records over much of the US, as far north as New England.

Has shown up in northern CA on extremely rare occasions, mostly in the late fall or winter.

Nests in trees and bushes, forages on the ground for the most part.

#### **FIELD MARKS**

Dark spots on the wing coverts but not on the scapulars (on Ruddy Ground-Dove they extend up onto the scapulars).

Red or pink bill diagnostic (the rare Ruddy Ground-Dove never has any red on the bill), but be cautious, often not visible in the field, presence of pink confirms Common Ground-Dove, absence does not mean anything.

Scaling around the head, neck and chest that can be faint.

Whitish eye ring.

Tail fairly short.

A lot of red in the wing when they fly, the bases of the primaries and secondaries are red.

Underwings red without much black.

The eastern birds are brighter than the western birds.

## Ruddy Ground-Dove

### OCCURRENCE

One of the most widespread and ubiquitous of the tropical American species.

Numerous subspecies range all the way down into South America.

Found in open country, they are getting into villages, very widespread and adaptable.

Not a migratory bird, appears unlikely to show up in CA or elsewhere.

In the US they were considered to be accidental visitors, there were records from extreme southern Texas.

Then they started to get observed in Arizona but people assumed that they were escaped cage birds because they are available for sale across the border in Mexico. The records were suppressed by the observers themselves.

Finally some additional Ruddy Ground-Doves started to show up in southern CA.

Someone started to study the Arizona records and they showed a pretty clear pattern that Ruddy Ground-Doves were moving into southern Arizona

While we were losing Common Ground-Doves in the southern tier of the US we were gaining Ruddy Ground Doves. They put in quite a push into southern CA, seemed to be resident at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley, at least for a while. But those birds have disappeared and there have been very few if any reports from southern CA. There was this pulse of birds moving in but for unknown reasons we are not having them any more.

Will sit up in the tamarisks all day long and come out in the evening, it's hot there at Furnace Creek Ranch. It is very easy to not see the birds even if they are there.

No records yet for northern CA.

### FIELD MARKS

Size and shape very similar to Common Ground-Dove.

Tail a bit longer than on Common Ground-Dove, sometimes they appear to be slightly longer necked with tiny little heads.

Show more sexual dimorphism than Common Ground-Dove. Male more different from Common Ground-Dove and easier to identify.

Some of the earliest CA records were in fact females of the western subspecies *eluta*.

Brighter red eastern Mexican *rufipennis* have occurred as vagrants to the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Males rosy to some extent, can be quite pinkish on the underparts and reddish brown on the back, some bluish gray on the crown. Male too bright in Sibley.

Female about the same color as female Common Ground-Dove.

Adults never have any scaling on the head or neck.

Juveniles may show some pale scaling, different from the dark scaling of the Common Ground-Dove.

Bill always all dark.

Dark narrow marks on the wing coverts which typically extend upwards to the scapulars.

Underwings red with a considerable amount of black.