

PIGEONS & DOVES

Part 4 – The Collared Dove

By: Hein van Grouw



Latin:	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i>
English:	Collared dove or Eurasian Collared dove
French:	Tourterelle turque
German:	Türkentaube
Dutch:	Turkse tortel

The scientific name *decaocto* means eighteen (*Deca* is the Latin word for ten and *octo* is eight) and this name is given because of its voice. The name has a mythological character and is based upon an old Greek legend on a poor maiden. She was working for a heartless lady who paid her only 18 coins a year. In her prayers to the Gods she asked them to show the world how bad her mistress paid her. So the divined Zeus created this dove, which would let its loud and clear *deca-octo* be heard all over the world. Should Zeus already have foreseen the enormous distribution impulse of this species?

In the past as well as in the present the Collared Dove and the Barbary Dove get often mixed up. Although they are very much alike they are two different species. There are some important differences between them, as well as in appearance as in voice.

Right: Close-up of the head of a Collared dove.
Photo: Dirk de Jong.





Left:
When reared and fed by hand, Collared doves can become very tame and confiding. Photo: H.J. van Grouw

It is the difference in voice that should prevent bastardizing. However, this 'mechanism' did not always work properly with these two species; as we have seen in areas where they both live. The possible explanation for this malfunctioning is that originally the two species lived on different continents and were not likely to meet another. However, the tame variety of the Barbary Dove is spread all over the world. The Collared Dove reached Africa as an independent globe trotter and is now with human help even to be found in the USA.

Maybe in process of (a long) time a new species will develop from the bastards....? Or maybe both species will as yet develop a better mechanism to prevent bastardizing; evolution can go both ways!

Right: Collared dove, male.
Photo: H.J. van Grouw

But for now it is best that the fancier does not cross his Barbary Doves with the Collared Doves. For various reasons it is important to keep the species pure, that is why it is important to know the



differences between the two species.

Left: Head of a Collared Dove.
Photo: Dirk de Jong



Here follows a description of the Collared Dove referring to the differences with the Barbary Dove.



Left:
A pair of Collared Doves on the roof at Dirk de Jong's place. Photo: Dirk de Jong.

General appearance
 The Collared Dove is very much alike the wild coloured Barbary (Ringneck) Dove, but it is about 10 % larger and has a longer tail and back and wing shields are a

brownish-grey, with more accent on the grey. As opposed to the Barbary dove the tail markings of the Collared Dove are also different; the outer vanes of both outer tail feathers are coloured in stead of white. The dark grey colour at the base of the outer vanes even stretches out to the inner vanes (see photo). Finally the belly and under tail coverts at the Collared Dove are bluish grey, while those at the Barbary's are almost white. The rest of the colour description of the wild colour Barbary (Ringneck) Dove is the same as for the Collared Dove. It is remarkable that the colour of the Collared Dove in aviaries is somewhat darker than those who live in the wild. This is because the wild ones are more influenced by rain and sun, which will lighten their colour.

Right: Collared Dove at the roof of the pigeon loft. The plumage looks a bit 'loose'. It is sitting 'at ease'. Photo: Dirk de Jong.



Except from external differences, these two species also differ in coo-ing and alarm call.

The fawn mutation arose in the wild population in several countries and today this colour is also kept in captivity. The fawn colour inherits recessive and sex-linked.



Left: Collared Dove. Photo: Dirk de Jong.

A mutation 'brown' is also known at the Collared Dove. This is remarkable, because no brown mutation is known so far at the Barbary Dove. Pity that the concerning Dove, which was found in Belgium, never had any offspring. At the moment we don't know if any other birds of this mutation are around.

Right: a young collared dove.
Photo:
H.J. van Grouw



Occurrence

The occurrence of the Collared Dove is all over Europe, except the very northern parts of the Scandinavian countries and the south of Spain. Also in Asia, from the Middle East via India and China to Korea and Japan.

It is remarkable that round 1900 the Collared Dove was an almost unknown dove in Europe. Only after 1900 this dove began to enlarge its natural habitat and up to now is still proceeding to do so.

The native habitat of the Collared Dove is in Asia. Already before era it was known in South Asia and also before era it must have reached Front Asia. Mid 16th century they were present in Syria and Turkey. Then it stayed put until 1900; after that an enormous expansion took place; at first in south-eastern direction but later on also to the North and West. Sweden and Norway were reached in the mid-fifties and 1966 the Collared Dove arrived in Finland. Round 1970 the Faroe Islands and Iceland got to know this dove and four years later, in 1974, Spain and Portugal fell to the share. The expansion is still going on in several parts of Russia.

In Holland, the first specimen was seen in 1948 and in 1950 the first breeding couple was established in the village of Harderwijk.

Also Africa and Egypt were colonised by the Collared Dove. It was first seen in 1979 in Suez where the first breeding results were in 1980. In 1983 it reached Alexandria and it is also in Morocco for several years now.

It even began to conquer the USA, but here it did not arrive at own efforts; it is almost certain that the first Collared Doves were imported by a pet shop owner on the Bahamas. This took place in the beginning of the 70ties and the doves came from Holland. In 1974 some broke free and after that the rest was set free as well. As there were hardly any natural enemies the doves could reproduce very rapidly. It is sure that the first Collared Dove in south-east Florida was seen in springtime 1986. Maybe the species was already present earlier, but because of the populations of feral Barbary (Ringneck) Doves there, it was not noticed before. After that it spread quickly northwards. In May 1997 it was first seen in the State New York. In the meantime many States are populated with this beautiful Dove.

Caring

The Collared Dove is little demanding and easy to keep. The caring is about the same as for the Barbary (Ringneck) Dove. Although, the Collared Dove is not suitable to be kept in a cage, because of its somewhat more shy character. It will show to better advantage in an aviary, where the shyness will be a lot less. Only those birds that are reared and fed by hand can become very tame and

confiding and may be kept in a cage.

In a large aviary the Collared Dove can be kept together with other pigeon species, smaller ones as well as larger ones. Only other turtle dove species will cause problems, especially in the breeding time.

The Collared Doves are able to resist the winter climate in Holland, but a sheltered sleeping place is required.

A seed and grain mixture for small fancy pigeons can make up most of the Collared Dove's diet. Especially during the nesting season this must be completed with some protein pellets or a higher protein mix. They will like to eat some bread and green food as well.

Breeding

For nesting they are best provided with wooden nest boxes. These may be the same as for the Barbary Dove, but preferably an inch larger (7 x 7 inches and 2.5 to 3 inches high). Hang these boxes at a safe and sheltered place in the aviary, preferably as high as possible.

Tobacco stems and fine birchen twigs are perfect for nesting material.

The incubating time is the same as that of the Barbary (Ringneck) Dove.

Ring size: 6 mm.

IMPORTANT:

In The Netherlands, the Collared Dove is under protection of the 'Flora and Fauna' law. This means that the pigeons must be ringed with an approved leg ring, approved by the Minister of LNV. These rings can be ordered by the various Bird Associations. It is illegal to keep Collared Doves without approved rings.

**Right: Collared dove, female.
Notice the coloured vanes of
the outer tail feathers.**

Photo: H.J. van Grouw

For more information

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Photo background: Dirk de Jong

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