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## The Status of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in Oklahoma

By MARY BOMBERGER BROWN AND JOHN S. TOMER

The Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) was first reported in Oklahoma from a backyard in a residential area of Muskogee, Muskogee County. A single adult bird was found by Vera Jennings on 16 September 1995 (Grzybowski 1996). It was seen in the area by many observers until at least 18 February 1996, and it was reported in the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix* newspaper on 26 December 1995 (Fig. 1). The bird was photographed on 16 December 1995 by Jeri McMahon (see Grzybowski 1996:76) and on 19 December 1995 by Jerry Willis (Fig. 1). The documentation of this record was accepted by the Oklahoma Bird Records Committee on 21 September 1996, and the Eurasian Collared-Dove was added to the Oklahoma list.

The first Eurasian Collared-Dove reports from Tulsa County provide apparently the first breeding record for the state. One adult dove was found on 10 June 1996 in LaFortune Park in Tulsa and subsequently seen by many observers and photographed. On 23 June 1996, an adult Eurasian Collared-Dove was seen feeding a juvenile in LaFortune Park. Although local observers felt that the LaFortune Park birds were in fact Eurasian Collared-Doves, photographs could not completely rule out the Ringed Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia risoria*; P. W. Smith, pers. comm.). This illustrates the difficulty in identifying *Streptopelia* doves (see below) and presents a challenge in determining these birds' status in Oklahoma and elsewhere.

From reports in American Birds, National Audubon Society Field Notes, Oklahoma Bird Records Committee records, Christmas Bird Count records,



Fig. 1. Eurasian Collared-Dove in Muskogee County, Oklahoma, 19 December 1995. This bird was the first record for Oklahoma. Photo courtesy of Jerry Willis and the *Muskogee Daily Phoenix*.

and correspondence with observers across the state, we found a total of 1, 1, 4, 3, 3, 17, and 24 separate reports of Eurasian Collared-Doves in Oklahoma in 1995 through 2001, respectively. Clearly, reports began to increase markedly beginning in about 2000. They have so far been found in the following counties: Alfalfa, Blaine, Bryan, Canadian, Cimarron, Cleveland, Ellis, Garvin, Grady, Greer, Jackson, Marshall, McClain, McCurtain, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Texas, Tillman, and Wagoner and in the following cities or towns: Boise City, Braggs, Cherokee, Cheyenne, Chickasha, Colbert, Duke, El Dorado, El Reno, Enos, Frederick, Geary, Granite, Guyman, Hitchcock, Hydro, Idabel, Kenton, Keyes, Muskogee, Norman, Oklahoma City, Pauls Valley, Shattuck, Wagoner, Washington, and Watonga. These observations are of from 1-100 individuals, but most reports are of less than 10 birds. Several reports include both adults and juveniles. Some observers have found large numbers of birds at feeders. These observations may reflect an increasing awareness of Eurasian Collared-Doves by birders as the species expands across the continent. More likely, however, this recent increase in observations indicates a true expansion of Eurasian Collared-Doves across Oklahoma and adjacent states.

Eurasian Collared-Doves have been seen in Oklahoma throughout the year, and the reports of juveniles suggest that the birds are breeding in the state. However, to our knowledge, no active nest has definitely been found. These doves have been reported from across the state, with most of the reports coming from cities, towns, and parks. This is not surprising, both because observers tend to be concentrated around cities and because doves in general are most often found in suburban, urban, and agricultural areas (Smith 1987; Romagosa 2002). A granivorous species, the Eurasian Collared-Dove commonly feeds on grain spilled from backyard bird feeders, grain storage bins, and animal feed containers, which are most common in cities, towns, and parks. *Streptopelia* doves tend to avoid heavily forested areas and cultivated fields (Smith 1987; Romagosa 2002). They are thought to breed in all months of the year except January.

Many of the records tabulated here might more accurately be classified only as *Streptopelia* doves, as observers in many cases have not clearly ruled out the Ringed Turtle-Dove. However, we believe that most of the Oklahoma records, especially the flurry of recent ones, do indeed refer to Eurasian Collared-Doves, as these are consistent with the bird's continent-wide expansion in recent years.

There are small, feral populations of Ringed Turtle-Doves in the United States, particularly in the south (i.e., Arizona, California, and Florida) that are probably the result of releases or escapes; however, these populations are dependent on human support through year-round feeding (DeBenedictis 1994; Smith 1987). Without human support Ringed Turtle-Doves do not do well in the wild and are not self-sustaining (Goodwin 1983; Smith 1987; DeBenedictis 1994; AOU 1998; National Geographic Guide 1999; Sibley 2002). Goodwin (1983) even suggests that Ringed Turtle-Doves have lost their ability to thrive and disperse in the wild. Their inability to establish a self-sustaining population led to their removal from the ABA list in 1992 (DeBenedictis 1994). Despite this, it is still possible to encounter Ringed Turtle-Doves, and thus it is important to be able to discriminate between Eurasian Collared-Doves and Ringed Turtle-Doves in the field.

Smith (1987) provides a clear description of how to identify *Streptopelia* doves (see also [www.birdsource.com/features/eucdov/index.html](http://www.birdsource.com/features/eucdov/index.html)). Their vocalizations are perhaps the best way to identify them to species. Eurasian Collared-Doves give a three-syllable call whereas Ringed Turtle-Doves give a two-syllable call. Smith (1987) describes the Eurasian Collared-Dove call as "kuk-kooooooó-kook" and the Ringed Turtle-Dove call as "kooeek-krrrrrooo(aw)". He also describes the call note of the Eurasian Collared-Dove as a "harsh scream-

ing mew” and that of the Ringed Turtle-Dove as a “soft jeering laugh.”

The plumages of the Eurasian Collared-Dove and the Ringed Turtle-Dove are variable, and thus using plumage characteristics alone makes identification less reliable. Eurasian Collared-Doves generally are larger in size and more robust in stature than Ringed Turtle-Doves (Smith 1987; National Geographic Guide 1999; Sibley 2002). Also, the undertail coverts in Eurasian Collared-Doves are usually gray whereas they are usually white in Ringed Turtle-Doves (Smith 1987; Sibley 2002). The primaries of Eurasian Collared-Doves are usually darker than those of Ringed-Turtle Doves. Finally, when viewed from below, the outer web of the outer tail feathers of Eurasian Collared-Doves are dark while they are white in Ringed Turtle-Doves (Smith 1987). The Eurasian Collared-Dove is easily told from the native Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) by its larger size, robust build, and square tail (Sibley 2002).

Eurasian Collared-Doves were first brought to the New World in the mid-1970's, when a local pet dealer imported some to New Providence, in the Bahamas. After a burglary at the pet shop, the dealer released approximately 50 individuals into the wild. Other birds were released on Guadeloupe in 1976 (Romagosa 2002). Eurasian Collared-Dove populations expanded so quickly in the New Providence area that by the 1980's dove hunts were being held, and the birds dispersed to other islands in the Bahamas (Smith 1987). *Streptopelia* doves were seen in south Florida in the late 1970's; however, it was not until 1986 that these birds were documented to be Eurasian Collared-Doves (Smith and Kale 1986). By 1982, Eurasian Collared-Doves were nesting in south Florida, presumably having dispersed from the Bahamas. The birds have rapidly continued their northward and westward expansion ever since, and have now been reported as far west as Washington, Oregon, and California, and as far north as Saskatchewan (Romagosa 2002). Eurasian Collared-Doves were first reported in Arkansas in 1989, in Texas in 1995, and in Kansas and Nebraska in 1997. There are now well-established populations across the continent. Additional releases of birds (e.g., in Texas, California, and Missouri) have probably contributed to the expansion of the Eurasian Collared-Dove (Romagosa 2002). The Eurasian Collared-Dove was added to the North American list by the American Ornithologists' Union in 1989 (AOU 1989).

Eurasian Collared-Doves originally were native to southern Asia (India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar; AOU 1998; del Hoyo et al 1997). In the 1600's they expanded their range as far north and west as Turkey and the Balkans (Romagosa 2002). By the early 1900's Eurasian Collared-Doves had reached Europe, arriving in Great Britain by 1955. They were introduced to Korea, China, and Japan from India in the 1700-1800's.

This species is likely to continue to increase in Oklahoma. We have a rare opportunity to document the spread of an invasive species and how it affects native birds. We should watch especially for interactions between the Eurasian Collared-Dove and its most ecologically similar relative, the Mourning Dove. To date there is no evidence of Eurasian Collared-Doves impacting Mourning Doves, but no one has studied their potential interactions.

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## Index of Bird Names

### Vol. 35, 2002

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Collared-Dove, Eurasian: 5-8	<i>Larus canus</i> : 1
Dove, Mourning: 7	<i>delawarensis</i> : 1
Gallinule, Purple: 2-4	<i>philadelphia</i> : 1
Gull, Bonaparte's: 1	<i>Porphyryla martinica</i> : 2
California: 1	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> : 5
Mew: 1-2	<i>risoria</i> : 5
Ring-billed: 1, 2	Turtle-Dove, Ringed: 5-7
	<i>Zenaida macroura</i> : 7

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