

= Mourning dove =

The mourning dove (*Zenaida macroura*) is a member of the dove family , Columbidae . The bird is also known as the turtle dove , American mourning dove or the rain dove , and was once known as the Carolina pigeon or Carolina Turtledove . It is one of the most abundant and widespread of all North American birds . It is also a leading gamebird , with more than 20 million birds (up to 70 million in some years) shot annually in the U.S. , both for sport and for meat . Its ability to sustain its population under such pressure is due to its prolific breeding ; in warm areas , one pair may raise up to six broods of two young each in a single year . The wings make an unusual whistling sound upon take @-@ off and landing , a form of sonation . The bird is a strong flier , capable of speeds up to 88 km / h (55 mph) .

Mourning doves are light grey and brown and generally muted in color . Males and females are similar in appearance . The species is generally monogamous , with two squabs (young) per brood . Both parents incubate and care for the young . Mourning doves eat almost exclusively seeds , but the young are fed crop milk by their parents .

= = Taxonomy = =

The mourning dove is closely related to the eared dove (*Zenaida auriculata*) and the Socorro dove (*Zenaida graysoni*) . Some authorities describe them as forming a superspecies and these three birds are sometimes classified in the separate genus *Zenaidura* , but the current classification has them as separate species in the genus *Zenaida* . In addition , the Socorro dove has at times been considered conspecific with the mourning dove , although several differences in behavior , call , and appearance justify separation as two different species . While the three species do form a subgroup of *Zenaida* , using a separate genus would interfere with the monophyly of *Zenaida* by making it paraphyletic .

There are five subspecies of mourning dove :

Eastern *Z. m. carolinensis* (Linnaeus , 1766)

Clarion Island *Z. m. clarionensis* (C.H.Townsend , 1890)

West Indian *Z. m. macroura* (Linnaeus , 1758)

Western *Z. m. marginella* (Woodhouse , 1852)

Panama *Z. m. turturilla* Wetmore , 1956

The ranges of most of the subspecies overlap a little , with three in the United States or Canada . The West Indian subspecies is found throughout the Greater Antilles . It has recently invaded the Florida Keys . The eastern subspecies is found mainly in eastern North America , as well as Bermuda and the Bahamas . The western subspecies is found in western North America , including parts of Mexico . The Panamanian subspecies is located in Central America . The Clarion Island subspecies is found only on Clarion Island , just off the Pacific coast of Mexico .

The mourning dove is sometimes called the " American mourning dove " to distinguish it from the distantly related mourning collared dove (*Streptopelia decipiens*) of Africa . It was also formerly known as the " Carolina turtledove " and the " Carolina pigeon " . The genus name was bestowed in 1838 by French zoologist Charles L. Bonaparte in honor of his wife , Princess Zénaïde , and *macroura* is from Ancient Greek *makros* , " long " and *oura* , " tail " . The " mourning " part of its common name comes from its call .

The mourning dove was thought to be the passenger pigeon 's closest living relative , based on morphological grounds . The mourning dove was even suggested to belong to the same genus , *Ectopistes* , and was listed by some authors as *E. carolinensis* .

= = Distribution = =

The mourning dove has a large range of nearly 11 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 km² (4 @,@ 200 @,@ 000 sq mi) . The species is resident throughout the Greater Antilles , most of Mexico , the Continental United States , and southern Canada . Much of the Canadian prairie sees these birds in summer

only , and southern Central America sees them in winter only . The species is a vagrant in northern Canada , Alaska , and South America . It has been spotted as an accidental at least seven times in the Western Palearctic with records from the British Isles (5) , the Azores (1) and Iceland (1) . In 1963 , the mourning dove was introduced to Hawaii , and in 1998 there was still a small population in North Kona . The mourning dove also appeared on Socorro Island , off the western coast of Mexico , in 1988 , sixteen years after the Socorro dove was extirpated from that island .

= = Description = =

The mourning dove is a medium @-@ sized , slender dove approximately 31 cm (12 in) in length . Mourning doves weigh 112 ? 170 g (4 @. @ 0 ? 6 @. @ 0 oz) , usually closer to 128 g (4 @. @ 5 oz) . The elliptical wings are broad , and the head is rounded . Its tail is long and tapered (" macroura " comes from the Greek words for " large " and " tail ") . Mourning doves have perching feet , with three toes forward and one reversed . The legs are short and reddish colored . The beak is short and dark , usually a brown @-@ black hue .

The plumage is generally light gray @-@ brown and lighter and pinkish below . The wings have black spotting , and the outer tail feathers are white , contrasting with the black inners . Below the eye is a distinctive crescent @-@ shaped area of dark feathers . The eyes are dark , with light skin surrounding them . The adult male has bright purple @-@ pink patches on the neck sides , with light pink coloring reaching the breast . The crown of the adult male is a distinctly bluish @-@ grey color . Females are similar in appearance , but with more brown coloring overall and a little smaller than the male . The iridescent feather patches on the neck above the shoulders are nearly absent , but can be quite vivid on males . Juvenile birds have a scaly appearance , and are generally darker .

All five subspecies of the mourning dove look similar and are not easily distinguishable . The nominate subspecies possesses shorter wings , and is darker and more buff @-@ colored than the " average " mourning dove . *Z. m. carolinensis* has longer wings and toes , a shorter beak , and is darker in color . The western subspecies has longer wings , a longer beak , shorter toes , and is more muted and lighter in color . The Panama mourning dove has shorter wings and legs , a longer beak , and is grayer in color . The Clarion Island subspecies possesses larger feet , a larger beak , and is darker brown in color .

= = Habitat = =

The mourning dove occupies a wide variety of open and semi @-@ open habitats , such as urban areas , farms , prairie , grassland , and lightly wooded areas . It avoids swamps and thick forest . The species has adapted well to areas altered by humans . They commonly nest in trees in cities or near farmsteads .

= = Migration = =

Most mourning doves migrate along flyways over land . On rare occasions , mourning doves have been seen flying over the Gulf of Mexico , but this is exceptional . Spring migration north runs from March to May . Fall migration south runs from September to November , with immatures moving first , followed by adult females and then by adult males . Migration is usually during the day , in flocks , and at low altitudes . However , not all individuals migrate . Even in Canada some mourning doves remain through winter , sustained by the presence of bird feeders .

= = Sounds = =

This species ' call is a distinctive , plaintive cooOOoo @-@ woo @-@ woo @-@ woooo , uttered by males to attract females , and may be mistaken for the call of an owl at first . (Close up , a grating or throat @-@ rattling sound may be heard preceding the first coo .) Other sounds include a nest call (cooOOoo) by paired males to attract their mates to the nest sites , a greeting call (a soft ork) by

males upon rejoining their mates , and an alarm call (a short roo @-@ oo) by either male or female when threatened . In flight , the wings make a fluttery whistling sound that is hard to hear . The wing whistle is much louder and more noticeable upon take @-@ off and landing .

= = Reproduction = =

Courtship begins with a noisy flight by the male , followed by a graceful , circular glide with outstretched wings and head down . After landing , the male will approach the female with a puffed @-@ out breast , bobbing head , and loud calls . Mated pairs will often preen each other 's feathers .

The male then leads the female to potential nest sites , and the female will choose one . The female dove builds the nest . The male will fly about , gather material , and bring it to her . The male will stand on the female 's back and give the material to the female , who then builds it into the nest . The nest is constructed of twigs , conifer needles , or grass blades , and is of flimsy construction . Mourning doves will sometimes requisition the unused nests of other mourning doves , other birds , or arboreal mammals such as squirrels .

Most nests are in trees , both deciduous and coniferous . Sometimes , they can be found in shrubs , vines , or on artificial constructs like buildings , or hanging flower pots . When there is no suitable elevated object , mourning doves will nest on the ground .

See link below for : courtship dance and mating .

The clutch size is almost always two eggs . Occasionally , however , a female will lay her eggs in the nest of another pair , leading to three or four eggs in the nest . The eggs are white , 6 @. @ 6 ml (0 @. @ 23 imp fl oz ; 0 @. @ 22 US fl oz) , 2 @. @ 57 ? 2 @. @ 96 cm (1 @. @ 01 ? 1 @. @ 17 in) long , 2 @. @ 06 ? 2 @. @ 30 cm (0 @. @ 81 ? 0 @. @ 91 in) wide , 6 ? 7 g (0 @. @ 21 ? 0 @. @ 25 oz) at laying (5 ? 6 % of female body mass) . Both sexes incubate , the male from morning to afternoon , and the female the rest of the day and at night . Mourning doves are devoted parents ; nests are very rarely left unattended by the adults . When flushed from the nest , an incubating parent may perform a nest @-@ distraction display , or a broken @-@ wing display , fluttering on the ground as if injured , then flying away when the predator approaches it .

Incubation takes two weeks . The hatched young , called squabs , are strongly altricial , being helpless at hatching and covered with down . Both parents feed the squabs pigeon 's milk (dove 's milk) for the first 3 ? 4 days of life . Thereafter , the crop milk is gradually augmented by seeds . Fledging takes place in about 11 ? 15 days , before the squabs are fully grown but after they are capable of digesting adult food . They stay nearby to be fed by their father for up to two weeks after fledging .

Mourning doves are prolific breeders . In warmer areas , these birds may raise up to six broods in a season . This fast breeding is essential because mortality is high . Each year , mortality can reach 58 % a year for adults and 69 % for the young .

The mourning dove is monogamous and forms strong pair bonds . Pairs typically reconvene in the same area the following breeding season , and sometimes may remain together throughout the winter . However , lone doves will find new partners if necessary .

= = Ecology = =

Mourning doves eat almost exclusively seeds , which make up more than 99 % of their diet . Rarely , they will eat snails or insects . Mourning doves generally eat enough to fill their crops and then fly away to digest while resting . They often swallow grit such as fine gravel or sand to assist with digestion . The species usually forages on the ground , walking but not hopping . At bird feeders , mourning doves are attracted to one of the largest ranges of seed types of any North American bird , with a preference for canola , corn , millet , safflower , and sunflower seeds . Mourning doves do not dig or scratch for seeds , though they will push aside ground litter ; instead they eat what is readily visible . They will sometimes perch on plants and eat from there .

Mourning doves show a preference for the seeds of certain species of plant over others . Foods

taken in preference to others include pine nuts , sweetgum seeds , and the seeds of pokeberry , amaranth , canary grass , corn , sesame , and wheat . When their favorite foods are absent , mourning doves will eat the seeds of other plants , including buckwheat , rye , goosegrass and smartweed .

Mourning doves can be afflicted with several different parasites and diseases , including tapeworms , nematodes , mites , and lice . The mouth @-@ dwelling parasite *Trichomonas gallinae* is particularly severe . While a mourning dove will sometimes host it without symptoms , it will often cause yellowish growth in the mouth and esophagus that will eventually starve the host to death . Avian pox is a common , insect @-@ vectored disease .

The primary predators of this species are diurnal birds of prey , such as falcons and hawks . During nesting , corvids , grackles , housecats , or rat snakes will prey on their eggs . Cowbirds rarely parasitize mourning dove nests . Mourning doves reject slightly under a third of cowbird eggs in such nests , and the mourning dove 's vegetarian diet is unsuitable for cowbirds .

= = Behavior = =

Like other columbids , the mourning dove drinks by suction , without lifting or tilting its head . It often gathers at drinking spots around dawn and dusk .

Mourning doves sunbathe or rainbathe by lying on the ground or on a flat tree limb , leaning over , stretching one wing , and keeping this posture for up to twenty minutes . These birds can also waterbathe in shallow pools or bird baths . Dustbathing is common as well .

Outside the breeding season , mourning doves roost communally in dense deciduous trees or in conifers . During sleep , the head rests between the shoulders , close to the body ; it is not tucked under the shoulder feathers as in many other species . During the winter in Canada , roosting flights to the roosts in the evening , and out of the roosts in the morning , are delayed on colder days .

= = Conservation status = =

The number of individual mourning doves is estimated to be approximately 475 million . The large population and its vast range explain why the mourning dove is considered to be of least concern , meaning that the species is not at immediate risk . As a gamebird , the mourning dove is well @-@ managed , with more than 20 million (and up to 40 ? 70 million) shot by hunters each year .

= = As a symbol and in the arts = =

The eastern mourning dove (*Z. m. carolinensis*) is Wisconsin 's official symbol of peace . The bird is also Michigan 's state bird of peace .

The mourning dove appears as the Carolina turtle @-@ dove on plate 286 of Audubon 's *Birds of America* .

References to mourning doves appear frequently in Native American literature . Mourning dove imagery also turns up in contemporary American and Canadian poetry in the work of poets as diverse as Robert Bly , Jared Carter , Lorine Niedecker , and Charles Wright .

= = Closest related species = =

The mourning dove is a related species to the passenger pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) , which was hunted to extinction in the early 1900s . For this reason , the possibility of using mourning doves for cloning the passenger pigeon has been discussed .