

# COLUMBIFORMES

(Pigeons, Doves)

## Pigeons



## Doves



# Family COLUMBIDAE (Pigeons, Doves)

## Rock Dove (*Columba livia*)

### Measurements:

Length: 13"    Wing Span: 28"

Average Weight: .6 lbs

### Distinguishing field characteristics:

wild plumage blue-gray with 2 black wingbars, iridescent neck feathers, variable in domestic and feral (gray, white, brown; plain, spotted; etc.); red, orange, or yellow iris with darker outer ring; pink to purple feet; white operculum on beak; bobs head when walking; little sexual dimorphism\*

### Notes:

very common (cosmopolitan); introduced from Europe, usually congregates in flocks mainly in urban areas (wild pigeons roost on cliffs, ledges, etc.) foraging on the ground for seeds, nuts, grains, berries, occasionally worms and larva, and handouts; aka **Common Pigeon**; 12 subspecies; famous for its navigational abilities; fast, falcon-like flight; originally domesticated by ancient Egyptians; average lifespan for wild birds is about 3 years; monogamous; genders similar (\*less intense iridescence on female); all doves, are the only birds of NA that can drink by suctioning water

**Mojave presence:** year-round

### Comments:

Introduced from Europe, "pigeons" escaped from domestication to become one of the most common and recognizable of all birds throughout the Americas. I would venture to say that everyone knows this bird--despite the many plumage variations and colors--but relatively few know that it is actually a dove.



Lorenzi Park; Las Vegas, NV



Angel Park GC; Las Vegas, NV



Las Vegas, Nevada



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



Angel Park GC; Las Vegas,



Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV



# Family COLUMBIDAE

(Pigeons, Doves)

## Mourning Dove

(*Zenaida macroura*)

### Measurements:

Length: 12"    Wing Span: 18"

Average Weight: .25 lbs

### Distinguishing field characteristics:

brownish-gray plumage with **large black spots** on wing coverts; black crescent on cheek; **long, pointed tail** (fan-shaped in flight); dark eyes, **pale bluish eyering**; thin, black bill curved near tip; little sexual dimorphism (males show pink iridescence on neck)

### Notes:

common (among the most abundant bird species in NA); gregarious; found in various habitats (urban settings, farms, prairies, etc.) throughout NA, usually in large flocks; forages on ground for seeds, rarely insects; aka **Rain dove**, **Turtle Dove**, et al; 5 subspecies; fast flight (to 55 mph); genders similar except for pink iridescence on male's neck

**Mojave presence:** year-round

### Comments:

Whereas the **European Collared Dove** is common in urban centers, the Mourning Dove dominates in rural settings, such as the **Lake Mead National Recreation Area**, the **Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve**, and the **Desert National Wildlife Refuge** (left).

Doves are not only elegant fliers, as portrayed by the alighting damsel at Corn Creek in the **Desert National Wildlife Refuge** (left), but can also conjure considerable speed when the need arises, as demonstrated by one that was apparently late for an important engagement at **Floyd Lamb State Park** in Vegas (right).



**ground forager**

Lake Mead NRA; Nevada



**male**

**pink iridescent neck**

Lake Mead NRA; Nevada



**black spots**

HBVP; Henderson, NV

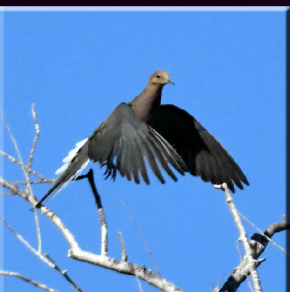


**female**

**pale blue eyering**

**no neck iridescent**

Las Vegas, Nevada





# Family COLUMBIDAE

(Pigeons, Doves)

## White-Winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*)

### Measurements:

Length: 11"    Wing Span: 19"

Average Weight: .32 lbs

### Distinguishing field characteristics:

plump, medium size; plain brownish plumage; **folded wings edged with white** (in flight, the white separates dark primaries from paler body); short, square tail rimmed with white; red irises, **blue eyering**; black patch on cheeks; black bill downcurved at tip; red legs; little sexual dimorphism\*

### Notes:

common; gregarious; thrives in urban areas, brushlands, riparian woodlands, chaparral, etc., summering in southern-tier US states from FL west to se CA, then migrating south in winter through MEX into Central America, and year-round in the Caribbean and FL; subsists mainly on seeds, but also grains, fruit, and nectar; 3 subspecies; important pollinator of the **Giant Saguaro Cactus**; \*genders similar (males slightly larger on average, more iridescent purple on neck); can live to 20 years in the wild, 25 in captivity

**Mojave presence:** migratory/summer range

### Comments:

Very similar to its cousin, the **Mourning Dove**, but is slightly larger, lacks black wing spots, and has a distinctive and conspicuous white edge on its folded wings.

The wings and underbody are mundane grayish (left), whereas the dorsal side of the wings are much more decorative, as displayed by these two specimens at the **Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge** near Socorro, NM, in May of 2021. The outermost part of the wings are dark, in contrast to the light brown base; the two shades are separated by white bars (right) that become the namesake white edges when the wings are folded.



Laughlin, NV



Laughlin, NV



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM



Bosque del Apache NWR; NM



Laughlin, NV



Laughlin, NV





# Family COLUMBIDAE (Pigeons, Doves)

## Eurasian Collard Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*)

### Measurements:

Length: 12"    Wing Span: 22"

Average Weight: .5 lbs

### Distinguishing field characteristics:

plain, brownish gray plumage, dark wingtips; **black crescent band** around back of neck; square-ended tail (in flight, white tail feathers with dark base); dark red eyes with white eyering; thin, straight, black bill; no sexual dimorphism

### Notes:

common; gregarious, in small groups; introduced from Europe, decedents from a handful of escapees from the Bahamas now spread throughout the US (except the northeast), north to CAN, south to MEX and the Caribbean; seveal subspecies; granivorous, feeding mainly on grains and seeds

**Mojave presence:** naturalized

### Comments:

Once considered rare in the Mojave Desert, these doves are actually becoming far more common than appreciated. Note that one of the photos above was taken in Death Valley, amongst the least hospitable localities for new immigrants!

The two adjacent photos were taken in a Las Vegas neighborhood. Obviously, they seem quite content in the desert environment.



**black collar**

Lorenzi Park; LV, NV



**November**

**plain plumage**

Death Valley NP; CA



**brown-gray above**

Corn Creek; DNWR; Nevada



**pale undersides**

Floyd Lamb SP; LV, NV

