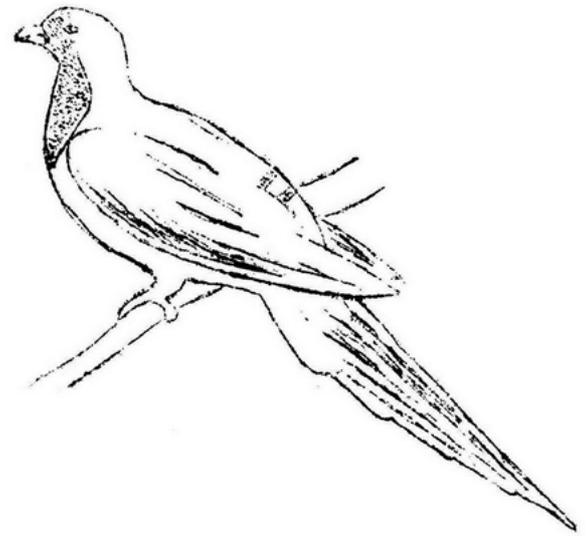


Rhodesian Ornithological Society

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Some hints on the identification of doves



Doves are so ubiquitous as to be taken for granted. But it is always of interest to see which species predominates in a given locality, and some of the less well-known doves are easily mistaken for commoner species. These notes may help to distinguish them.

The easiest of all to recognise is the Namaqua Dove, the only one with a long tail, and also the only one in which the sexes differ markedly. Apart from the tail it has two bars across the back, and the cock has a black face and throat, and orange bill.

Somewhat like a hen Namaqua Dove, but short-tailed, are the Tambourine, Blue-spotted, and Emerald-spotted Wood-doves. The Tambourine Dove is paler than the other two, and has a white face and breast. The others are best told apart by the colour of the bill – black in the Emerald-spotted, and red in the Blue-spotted Wood-dove.

All these doves show black in the tail when they fly, whereas the well-known Cape Turtle-dove and Laughing Doves show white, and also lack the bars on the back. The turtle-dove has a black collar on the nape, whereas the Laughing Dove has a speckled collar on the sides of the neck. The calls are distinctive – the Laughing Dove has a soft chuckle, while the Cape Turtle-dove's call is the well-known "Don't WORry, Don't WORry" with the accent on the middle syllable.

Like a large Cape Turtle-dove is the Red-eyed Turtle Dove. It has a pale head, some bare red skin round the eye, and shows no white in the tail in flight. To the late riser its call sounds like "GET UP, get – out – of – bed, GET UP, get – out – of – bed".

Finally there are the Cinnamon Dove [Lemon Dove], with a white face and cinnamon underparts, and the African Mourning Dove. The latter has some bare skin round the eye, but otherwise looks so like the Cape Turtle-dove that it must often be overlooked; but its call, again, gives it away – a curious guttural whistle, "Kgoo".

ORNITHOLOGISING IN THE "WILDS" OF NORTHERN RHODESIA

For the past few years I have been collecting a large amount of material for the Smithsonian Institution of Washington, as well as smaller amounts for other museums. As a surveyor, I spend most of my days deep in the bush and am able to combine work and collecting. My main interest lies with the parasites I find on the specimens.

An interesting find recently was the nest of a Barn Owl. It was found at an early stage, when it contained only two eggs. A third egg was laid the following day; then there was the usual break and three more were laid. A further four days' lull and two more were found, making a grand clutch of eight. As the ground around the nest was in danger of subsiding at any time, the nest was left for a few weeks. When visited again, five young were hatched and only two eggs remained (these hatched later). The eighth had vanished. After a while all the youngsters were wearing rings.

E.L. Haydock
Major.

A TRAGEDY

On the 9th April when pruning a peach tree I discovered a nest high up and was just wondering whether I should cut the branch or whether the nest was still in use when a Yellow-eye Canary [Yellow-fronted Canary] flew into the tree and settled down on the nest. She merely cocked an eye at me as I quietly withdrew. Later when she was off I examined the nest. There were three eggs.

For the next four days they continued to brood, but the bird on the nest hardly ever sat still. She would ruffle her feathers, stand up and appear to rearrange the eggs, settle down again; then peer over the edge and peck at the fluttering leaves; then turn round and face the other way, and so on fidget, fidget the whole time. We would watch them through the window and laugh at their antics.

On the 14th the parents were not sitting, and by stretching up I could just feel three chicks in the nest. On the 15th there was no sign of the old birds, and on the 21st I cut the branch down and found the newly hatched young dead, and the nest infested with small black ants! These must have been the cause of all the restlessness.

Esme Finlayson.

MORE NEST RECORD ANALYSES

Crowned Lapwing. 17 cards, 35 clutches. Breeding season from June to October, with August the most popular month for the commencement of egg-laying. Average clutch size three.

VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	c/4	c/3	c/2
1	—	21	7	6	1	23	11

D.C. Cumming junior, of Milton School, sent in five cards. He found two nests only 250 yards apart.

Wire-tailed Swallow. 16 cards, 18 clutches. This bird begins laying in August, and the latest date is in March. As yet there are no cards for the months between September and February, and this may indicate two distinct breeding seasons. Average clutch size 2 or 3.

VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	I	II	III	IV	c/4	c/3	c/2
6	2	—	—	—	—	5	2	1	1	8	7

Mrs. Collins has recorded incubation and fledging periods on her house swallows. Daily visits were recorded on a total of five cards.

Fiscal Shrike [Common Fiscal]. 16 cards, 27 clutches. August to December. Average clutch size 3 or 4.

VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	c/4	c/3	c/2
5	15	3	2	2	15	11	1

The cards show that it is rare for all four or even for three young to survive.

H.M. Miles.

The Hon. Treasurer wishes to thank all members who have sent in their subscriptions since the publication of the last bulletin. He would be glad to receive contributions from those whose subscriptions are still outstanding.

We wish our Hon. Secretary, Mr. H.M. Miles a pleasant holiday in the United Kingdom, where he is at present on three months' leave. During his absence, Mr. A.B. Fletcher, P.O. Box 124, Gatooma, has taken over the duties of Hon. Secretary, in addition to those of Hon. Treasurer.