

**FIRST OCCURRENCE OF THE EURASIAN
COLLARED-DOVE (*STREPTOPELIA
DECAOCTO*) IN THE WEST KOOTENAY
REGION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

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The Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) is thought to range originally throughout India. This species expanded into Asia Minor and then into the Balkans in the 16th century. Its range was confined to Africa and Asia until the 19th century. In a mere 60 years this species expanded across Europe. Introduced to the Bahamas in the 1970s, the Eurasian Collared-Dove escaped from captivity in Nassau in 1974, migrated to Florida in 1982 and today is expanding quickly throughout the eastern and central United States and has reached the west coast in California (Romagosa and McEneaney 1999, Romagosa 2002). Range expansion continues to be documented throughout North America and predictions indicate this species will be found in most regions of North America in the near future (Smith 1987).

In Canada, the Eurasian Collared-Dove has currently been recorded in all provinces and territories. Sightings in Saskatchewan occurred as early as 2002 and there are now scattered sightings of Eurasian Collared-Dove in Nunavut and Alaska.

In British Columbia, the Eurasian Collared-Dove has been recorded through every month of the year. Occurrences are widespread, and include Bella Coola, Boundary Bay, Carmanah Point, Cawston, Delta, Fort St. James, Francois Lake, Hazelton, Kamloops, Keremeos, Ladner, Langford, McLeese Lake, Nanaimo, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Queen Charlotte Islands, Saanich, Sayward, Sechelt, Sooke, Sunshine Valley, Surrey, Swan Lake (Victoria), Tatla Lake, Tofino, Ucluelet, Vancouver, Vernon, and Victoria (source: Biodiversity Centre for Wildlife Studies databases).

The species is present year-round in the Cawston area where it breeds, and has recently been found breeding in the Lower Mainland region of the province.

While the range expansion of the Eurasian Collared-Dove is occurring rapidly throughout British Columbia, I want to document the bird's arrival in the West Kootenay region.

The first recorded sighting of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in the Creston area of southeastern British Columbia was on 8 May 2008 at 1745 hrs. Two adult birds flew in to feed on the ground below a bird feeder in our yard. The birds paid little attention to my wife and I as we observed them from a distance of 10 metres. They continued to feed for approximately five minutes before leaving, giving us plenty of time to record their distinguishing characteristics.

Although this was the first identified sighting, the birds were in the area eight to 10 days earlier when I saw two doves flying together at some distance and heard doves calling in the area – the calls were different from that of Mourning Dove (*Zenaidura macroura*). The call of the Eurasian Collared-Dove is a rapid three note call “koo-Koo-koooh” with the middle note being accented and slightly longer. The call is easily distinguished from that of the Mourning Dove.

From 8 May I observed the birds almost daily (Figure 1). Generally, when they were together one seemed to be calling more frequently than the other, I assumed that to be the male. Based on observations I believe the birds nested in the Creston area somewhere in the residential area between 16th Avenue South and 11th Avenue South and south of Erickson Road. I made this assumption because this is where I frequently saw them and it was typical to see both adults together until early July when I began seeing only one adult regularly and rarely two together. It wasn't until 8 August that I began seeing the birds together and on 11 and 12 August I saw three Eurasian Collared-Doves perched on the hydro wire along 11th Avenue South. I suspected the third bird to be a fledged young. The last time I saw the doves in the area was on 16 August and I assumed they left for the season but Jean Sacienks, who lives on 25th Avenue South, saw one Eurasian Collared-Dove later in the year on 24 and 25 October.

The area frequented by the collared-doves was large and is best described as suburban agricultural, with a mixture of acreages, large lots with the

northern portion of their territory, perhaps five percent, resembling a small urban setting. This region included 20th Avenue South on the east and Highway 21 on the west. The northern boundary appeared to be Ash Street and the Goat River was the southern extent of occupancy. It wasn't uncommon to see or hear one of the birds calling or to see them fly from one perch to another throughout this area. The calling was often continuous for up to 60 seconds, then repeated again from the same perch or continued from another in their territory.



Figure 1. Two adult Eurasian Collared-Doves eating below a bird feeder in Creston, BC., the first record for the valley. 24 June 2008 (Merv Syroteuk).

In Colorado, in areas where this species is well established, Beckett et al. (2007) estimated density to range between 0.00 and 2.58 individuals per hectare, increasing to 6.17 birds per hectare in August when fledged young and migrants are present.

Other observations of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia in 2008 include: a single adult calling from utility pole from 18 July to 8 August on 20th Avenue South in Creston (L.M. Van Damme pers. comm.), and a single bird at Johnson's Landing on four successive days from 3 to 6 June (Gail Spitler and Lynne Cannon pers. comm.) (Figure 2).

While it is exciting to have recorded this species in the West Kootenay region it may become a bitter-sweet experience. The Eurasian Collared-Dove has successfully colonized other parts of North America but its impact on native species is not fully



Figure 2. A single Eurasian Collared-Dove frequented this yard at Johnson's Landing in the company of Mourning Doves. 3 June 2008 (Gail Spitler).

understood. The species is very adaptable and like the introduced European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) may become a familiar sight. In the Creston valley, where the native Mourning Dove occurs year-round (Van Damme 2002), competition may become a concern.

Romagosa and Labisky (2000) suggest the Eurasian Collared-Dove may have behavioural dominance over, and dietary overlap with, Mourning Dove (Poling and Hayslette 2006). Beckett et al. (2007) mentioned the collared-dove is a reservoir for Newcastle disease which causes mortality in chickens. The Eurasian Collared-Dove is also known to carry a protozoan called *Trichomonas gaina* which appears to have an adverse affect on Mourning Doves.

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About the Author

Merv, an avid outdoorsman, is a graduate of the University of Saskatchewan with double honours in Biology and Geography. Professionally, he pursued his field of interest with the Canadian National Park Service as a naturalist in the area of nature interpretation throughout several areas of Canada. He retired as Superintendent of Waterton Lakes National Park in 1996.
