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Eurasian Collared-Dove

Streptopelia decaocto

The Eurasian Collared-Dove is an example of a species like the Cattle Egret, which apparently undergoes some sort of genetic change allowing its numbers and range to expand almost uncontrollably (Nowak 1971). During the past 60 years, from its Levantine roots, the species has almost completely occupied western Europe (Cramp and Simmons 1985). It colonizes in part by "jump-and-backfill," rather than "step-by-step." An outpost may appear hundreds of miles from any known population, with the intervening area filled in over time.

Habitat. It is typically a bird of suburbia and small towns, rather than of the city or of extensive tracts of forest, marsh, or prairie. Like several species of American blackbirds, the Eurasian Collared-Dove is highly adept at living on the fringes of human activity, feeding on unharvested grain and food litter and foraging at feed pens or bird feeders. Unlike its meek, domesticated cousin, the Ringed Turtle-Dove, the Eurasian Collared-Dove is a sly and very aggressive competitor. Thus far, its breeding biology has not been studied in Florida. Its frail stick nests are a challenge to find and are usually constructed above human reach in ornamental trees, near buildings, or close to food sources. In temperate Europe, 1 pair may raise up to 6 broods per year, usually of 2 squabs each. In subtropical Florida, given the Collared-Dove's success to date, it is not difficult to imagine that such a remarkable reproductive pace is being matched or even exceeded.



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Seasonal Occurrence. Nests have been located almost throughout the year, primarily from late winter through early autumn.

Status. No map in this Atlas may be more immediately obsolete than that of the burgeoning population of the Eurasian Collared-Dove. Accidentally introduced into the Bahamas around 1974 as only a few dozen pairs, the Collared-Dove first spread to Florida around 1980, although it was not formally identified here until 1986 (Smit and Kale 1986). Around that time, the population in its southern Dade County and lower Keys strongholds was estimated at less than 10,000 individuals, and only a few other modest outposts in the state were known (Smit 1987). Five years later, the population in Dade and Monroe Counties alone is probably closer to 100,000, and many other growing centers of colonization, as far west as Walton County in the Panhandle, have been discovered. It is not difficult to predict that the Eurasian Collared-Dove eventually will be abundant throughout Florida.

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