Streptopelia capicola

Ring Necked Dove


Other names: Ringed turtle dove, ringed-neck dove, domestic ring dove, Cape Turtle Dove, Cape Ring-dove, Dark-eyed Ring-dove, Damara Dove

Physical Description: The Ring-necked Dove is a gentle and easy-going bird. They are slender, pale sandy brown dove, with a narrow, black half collar on the back of the neck. Ring Necked Doves have a white tipped, relatively long, rounded tail to aid in balance. The eyes, legs, and feet are all a reddish hue. Adult size is up to 12”; avg. 5 oz. Ring necked doves are monochromatic but can come in a variety of over 40 colors and varieties due to selective breeding. These colors include white, sliver, fawn, tangerine, rosy, pink, frosted, pied, silky and apricot.

Diet in the Wild: Ring-neck doves in the wild forage for food on the ground searching for seeds and berries. They need grit in order to digest the seeds because they swallow their seeds whole. They also eat insects on occasion, especially flying ants.

Diet at the Zoo: finch seed, oyster shell, millet sticks, mealworms

Habitat & Range: The domesticated dove does not exist in the wild, but there are wild ring-neck doves in Africa where they are widespread across the continent south of the Congo basin, ranging through East Africa North to Ethiopia, Somalia and southern Sudan living in woodlands, savannas, plantations, and farmlands. It has been introduced and established in Los Angeles and in Miami, Tampa and many other cities of the world where it inhabits city parks and suburban areas, ordinarily where trees are available.

Life Span: 12-15 years

Perils in the wild: The same as for other wild birds: birds of prey, domestic cats and dogs. The Ring-necked Dove is widespread and abundant in its range. They have many natural predators such as snakes, wild cats, birds of prey, crocodiles and jackals. Humans are also a threat because they hunt them for food and sport as well as capture them to sell as pets. Fortunately, they breed year round so their numbers are not severely impacted.

Physical Adaptations:
- They have hollow bones, so they are light when in flight
- They have a small, skinny, pointed beak used to pick up and ingest food, preen the feathers, and build the nest
- The beak is also used to drink, inflict injury, and to produce song.
- Soft, dense feathers detach easily as a defense adaptation
- Feet shaped for perching
- Long tail for balance

Behavioral Adaptations:
- Diurnal, resting in tree tops at night to avoid most predators

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• Usually Live alone or in pairs; but may form quite large flocks around food sources or drinking areas.
• Both male and female ring-necked doves make different sounds for various uses, including alarm calls and mating coos.
• They are recognized by their calls from a distance; they have a high pitched crooning sound that they repeat 10-30 times in a row.
• Migrate to warmer areas in winter.
• They form flocks of up to 50 birds to protect themselves from predators.
• It is quite a noisy bird when taking flight; it claps its wings loudly and since it moves in groups this can result in a significant amount of noise. They are quiet flyers in their downward glides with outstretched tail and wings.
• Due to their domestication, these birds are quite fearless of humans, but they do maintain an instinctive freeze response when startled by a shadow overhead; this may indicate a bird of prey.
• They often bathe in shallow water, dust, or sunshine, sometimes lying on their side with a wing outstretched.
• When they walk on the ground, their heads bob with each small step.

Reproduction and Development:
• Male doves perform elaborate bows to entice a female to breed. Like all members of the pigeon family, ring-neck doves engage in the characteristic “bow-coo” courtship ritual. This is a combination of bowing postures and cooing songs, which are very species specific. Researchers have shown that mating does not occur naturally between species when one of the potential partners displays a “bow-coo” that is not mutually appropriate.
• As the pair begin to "bond" they will "preen" each other about the head & neck areas. This strengthens the pair bond. This is called "allo preening".
• Pair mate for life.
• Ring-necked doves are terrible at constructing nests and the eggs often fall out. Nests are made of twig and grass and are placed in a tree, on a bush, or on window ledges.
• Two white or cream colored eggs are incubated for 15 days by both parents.
• The hatchlings are altricial (parent dependent). Both parents feed the young “crop milk,” the sloughed lining of their upper digestive pouch, regurgitated directly into the nestlings’ beaks.
• As the young mature, increasingly more seed and grit are mixed with the milk solution until weaning occurs and they learn to peck and to eat seeds on their own.
• The young leave the nest after 14-18 days; reaching their adult size in around six weeks.
• The adults can breed again a week later.
• Ring-necked doves are good foster parents and will raise other species young.

Additional Information:
• Apparently no other bird (except the Japanese quail) has adapted so well to small quarters. Ring-neck doves are hatched, reach sexual maturity, mate, build nests and lay eggs, and live out their lives in cages that may be no larger than 12” square, which is a remarkable adjustment for a bird.
• The pleasing calls and ease of adapting to small quarters make this dove a popular cage bird.
• These doves are widely used in research. Their ease of husbandry means they can be kept comfortably in small enclosures and fed a simple diet. Their quick and recognizable breeding cycle allows scientists to study effects of hormones on behavior. For example, the pair of doves coordinates the decision to construct a nest and synchronize production of crop milk. The hormones which regulate these behaviors are comparable to other vertebrates, including humans.
The ring-necked dove has been domesticated for over 2000 years. They are descended from the African collared dove.

Because of the unusual sound of the birds' call, in Africa it is said that in the morning the call of the dove is saying work harder, ['work haaarder'], and in the evening, the call is saying drink longer, ['drink laaager']

Doves can change direction quickly in flight. They are extremely swift and can fly at 45 to 50 mph.

Doves have extremely refined navigational abilities. They use magnetic tissues within their heads that help them to detect the Earth's magnetic field, which helps them to determine flight path direction. Because of their navigational abilities, doves and pigeons were often used as messengers throughout history, especially in times of war.

**Conservation Status:** (IUCN Status) Least Concern

**Sources:**
- Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens
- Diamonddove.org
- [http://www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/birds/pigeonsdoves/ringneckeddove/](http://www.stlzoo.org/animals/abouttheanimals/birds/pigeonsdoves/ringneckeddove/)
- [http://www.kenyabirds.org.uk/dove-rn.htm](http://www.kenyabirds.org.uk/dove-rn.htm)