

## A Foreign Invader - Eurasian Collared Dove

**I**N SEPTEMBER 2006, I wrote about our fairly common Mourning Dove (MD). Now the Eurasian Collared Dove (ECD) has expanded its range even into New Mexico. The ECD was introduced into the Bahamas in 1975. By 1982, a breeding colony was established in Dade County, Florida. In the early 1990s, the birds were present throughout Florida and some had moved into Texas. By 2002, a few birds were found in New Mexico and now large populations exist in about 30 states, including New Mexico.

The ECD is 11 to 12 inches long with a wingspan of 14 inches, a sandy gray with a black half-collar on the back of its neck. Males and females are alike. The MD is 9 to 13 inches, with a wingspan of 15 to 18 inches, a light brown body with black spots on its wings. Males are larger and more colorful, with a pink chest and bluish crown. Both species have a typical dove call, but they are somewhat different. In flight, the MD wings make a whistling noise.

By number, the MD is in the top 10 species of U.S. birds.

But remember the Passenger Pigeon (PP). PPs

once made up 25 percent to 40 percent of the total U.S. bird population of the It is estimated that there were 3 billion to 5 billion PPs at the time Europeans discovered America. The large colonies of these birds were over hunted, although no one thought so many birds could just disappear. By 1900, there were few PPs and the last, Martha, died September 1, 1914.

It is unknown if our native MD will be negatively affected by the ECD intruder. Both doves share habitats in many areas, including in New Mexico. Observations indicate that the ECD eats larger and thicker seeds than the MD. Both species build twig nests in trees and don't seem to compete for nest sites. In Eldorado, our observations can help identify how these two birds get along in the same habitat. Keep your binoculars handy and contribute to this developing story (through Project Feeder Watch, <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/>).

Thanks to *Wild Bird* and several Internet sites for the up-to-date information.



—Pam Herliove