

**EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES (*STREPTOPELIA DECAOCTO*)
OBSERVED IN MONTGOMERY**

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In 1986 and 1987, a few writers noted that Eurasian Collared-Doves (*Streptopelia decaocto*) had arrived in the United States and speculated that the birds would spread rapidly, first along the coast, and then throughout the southeastern United States (Smith 1987; White 1986). During the past five years, birders have recorded Eurasian Collared-Doves progressively farther west along the Gulf Coast (Jackson 1992; Purrington 1990, 1991; Stedman 1991; Langridge 1988, 1989; Ogden 1989; Atherton 1989; Imhof 1988; Muth 1988). Until this year, however, there was only one possible record north of the coast, one bird reported in Jackson, Mississippi (Purrington 1991).

1992 may mark the beginning of a northern invasion. A group of more than 40 Eurasian Collared-Doves appears to have become established in Montgomery, approximately 150 miles (240 km) from the coast.

In addition to Mourning Doves (*Zenaida macroura*), Rock Doves (*Columba livia*), and Common Ground-Doves (*Columbigallina passerina*) recorded on the 1991-92 Christmas bird count (Imhof 1992), the city has had a self-sustaining population of Ringed Turtle-Doves (*Streptopelia risoria*) since the mid 1950's (pers. comm. Doug McGinty). That population never expanded its range and the birds were never found more than a block from the neighborhood (Gay Meadows) in which they were released (pers. comm. Doug McGinty). By the time I arrived in Montgomery in 1978, the numbers of Ringed Turtle-Doves had apparently diminished. I never saw more than six or seven birds at any one time, always within a block of Gay Meadows. Around 1980, a second group of Ringed Turtle-Doves was released in the Normandale neighborhood, about two miles west of Gay Meadows. The doves spread west about one mile (1.6 km) (pers. comm. Louis Greene).

About 9 a.m. on 1 March 1992, I was returning from an early birding outing when I noticed two stocky "collared" doves feeding in the pebbled parking lot of a restaurant in Normandale on Edgemont Drive, just east of Norman Bridge Road. They immediately struck me as being larger and thicker-necked than Ringed Turtle-Doves, but they flew off when I approached to get a closer look.

On 3 March, I spotted a group of approximately a dozen "collared" doves in a field across from Floyd School on Augusta Road in Normandale. When this group took flight, I followed the bird heading to the nearest tree. It was not particularly stocky, and as it alit, it called out "heh-heh-heh-heh," thereby declaring itself a Ringed Turtle-Dove. At this point, I started to question my identification of the two birds I had seen earlier. I also questioned whether the "collared" doves I had observed on telephone poles and wires were actually dark-vented, or whether this effect was an artifact of early morning light. At the suggestion of Greg Jackson, a birder who has studied the doves in some detail, I decided to wait until I had heard distinctive vocalizations.

During early morning jogs in March and April, I heard several stocky "collared" doves calling from telephone poles. Each phrase ended emphatically, and there was only a brief pause before the next phrase. Finally, in May, I heard one bird give its drawn-out "mew" call as it flew off, clinching the identification as a Eurasian Collared-Dove.

Doug McGinty, Phil Snow, Carolyn Snow and I went out on 18 June to investigate the situation. We heard five different Eurasian Collared-Doves calling, and one bird give the

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“mew” note. One of the doves we saw had scalloped feathers, indicating that it was a young bird.

Throughout June, July and August, whenever I jogged at approximately 6:30 a.m., I encountered Eurasian Collared-Doves, usually about six to eight birds, but on one occasion 20. On 26 October, I encountered 34. On almost every occasion, at least one bird was giving the series of phrases typical of the species, and at least once every two weeks I would hear the “mew” note. Most of the records came from the Normandale/Edgewood area, but in early August, I encountered about ten near Woodley Baptist Church on Antoinette Drive, approximately a block west of Gay Meadows. They were accompanied by about six smaller, much whiter birds which I presumed were Ringed Turtle-Doves. In early August, I saw two Eurasian Collared-Doves flying across the Southern Bypass. On 28 October, I saw four about two blocks east of Norman Bridge Road. At this time, it is still unclear to what extent the doves have become established in the Montgomery area.

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