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FIRST RECORD OF THE INCA DOVE (*COLUMBINA INCA*) FOR ALABAMA

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On 19 April 2008, at about 1340 hrs, we spotted a small dove feeding on the ground with Blue Grosbeaks (*Passerina caerulea*) in the “moat” on the southeast side of Ft. Morgan, Baldwin County, Alabama. We immediately recognized it as an Inca Dove (*Columbina inca*) as we have had considerable exposure to the species in the southwestern United States and Mexico. Lucy Duncan heard its distinctive *cooo-coo* “no hope” call almost simultaneously with the sighting. She immediately began to take photographs for documentation.

The bird was smaller than a Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*), overall light grayish in color with a paler head. The head, nape, back and wings had a distinct scaly pattern formed by darker feather edgings. The long, slightly darker tail was edged in white. A finer scaly pattern was evident on the belly and flanks. The bill was completely dark. The primaries flashed rufous in flight. Both the long tail and its call notes separated it from the Common Ground-Dove (*Columbina passerina*) and Ruddy Ground-Dove (*C. talpacoti*), the two other small doves. In the original thirty-minute observation, the bird flew from the weedy moat area where it was feeding to the top of the fort wall

several times, calling intermittently.

After securing photographs and a digital recording of the call, Lucy Duncan alerted birders attending the Alabama Ornithological Society meeting at Dauphin Island. We then found Eva Barnett and Michael Jordan birding near the runway and took them to see the dove, where they also took photographs and got a digital recording. Greg and Debi Jackson, Larry Gardella, Andrea Menyhert, Stan and Dana Hamilton, and Howard Horne arrived from Dauphin Island by ferry later in the afternoon and were able to see it feeding leisurely between the parking lot and the restrooms. Greg Jackson took more photographs. Additional birders found the bird the following morning, 20 April, but by afternoon it had disappeared.

The Inca Dove is a resident from southeastern California, central Arizona, southern New Mexico and central Texas, south through Mexico to northwestern Costa Rica (American Ornithologists' Union, 1983. Checklist of North American Birds. 6th ed. Washington, D.C., American Ornithologists' Union). In recent years it has expanded its range eastward and is now breeding in southwest Louisiana (Buford M. Myers, pers. comm.).

Its occurrence in Alabama has been expected. On 10 February 2007, fourteen were found in Arcola, Washington Co., west-central Mississippi by Stephen J. Dinsmore *et al.* (Cooley, D. C. 2007. Region reports: Alabama & Mississippi. North American Birds 61:278). In southeastern Louisiana, one or two were found in three parishes between 21 December 06 and 27 February 07 by Harvey L. Patten *et al.* indicating the species' continuing expansion out of southwestern Louisiana (Cardiff, S. W. 2007. Region reports: Arkansas & Mississippi. North American Birds 61:281). This is the first record for Alabama, pending acceptance by the Alabama Bird Records Committee.

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