

# The expansion of the Eurasian Collared-Dove into the Central Valley of California

Steve Hampton, 1201 Elk Place, Davis, CA 95616

The Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) is a relatively large dove of open country. It was originally limited to a region extending roughly from Turkey east through the Indian subcontinent to Bangladesh and western Myanmar. In this range, it is found in a variety of lowland habitats, typically favoring small towns in agricultural regions. In India, it is described as preferring “semi-desert and arid country with scattered trees” and avoiding “city centers and moist evergreen tracts” (del Hoyo et al. 1997).

Since the early 1900s, the species has expanded across Western Europe, where it occurs in towns and suburbs of large cities, as well as in regions that are far from arid (Hengeveld 1993). It has proved adaptable to different climates, and now breeds from near the equator in southern India to above the Arctic Circle in Scandinavia. In recent decades, the Eurasian Collared-Dove has dramatically expanded its range across North America, spreading from Florida north and west across the United States (Romagosa and McEneaney 1999). At the same time, several isolated populations of the species became established in California as a result of unrelated releases of captive birds. This paper provides information on recent reports in the Central Valley of California, along with some background on the status and expansion of the species in the nation and state as a whole.

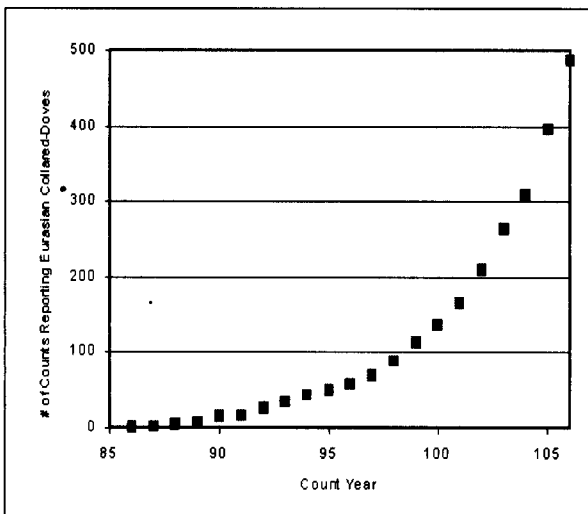


Figure 1. Number of Christmas Bird Counts reporting Eurasian Collared-Doves in the United States for CBC years 86 (1985-86) through 106 (2005-06).

## METHODS

Much of the California data was gathered directly from personal communication with birders, several of whom were contacted because of their role in compiling county or regional summaries for North American Birds, or through a solicitation for sightings via the Central Valley Birds e-mail listserv (Central Valley Birds). Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data was also used to examine nationwide and statewide trends. This data was obtained from the CBC website of the National Audubon Society. Additionally, many state bird record committee reports were accessed via the internet to further understand the spread of first state records across the nation.

## EXPANSION INTO WESTERN NORTH AMERICA

The Eurasian Collared-Dove was first observed in Florida in the late 1970s (Smith 1987, Hengeveld 1993, Romagosa and Labisky 2000). These birds likely originated from an accidental release in the Bahamas in 1974 (Smith 1987). Since then, their spread has been well documented by Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data (Figure 1; also, see Birdsource) and by state bird record committees. By the mid 1990s, the species had been recorded throughout the southeast United States. By 2000, Arizona, Idaho, Oregon, Utah, and Washington had documented records. On the 106<sup>th</sup> CBC (December 2005 – January 2006), over 30,000 individual birds were reported nationwide, compared to just 560 fifteen years earlier. Their rate of increase has averaged 34% per year.

## PRE-EXPANSION RECORDS IN CALIFORNIA

Independent of this nationwide expansion from Florida, several small populations have been established at various locations in California, primarily along the southern and central coast. These include:

- Ventura County: released in 1992 (Romagosa and McEneaney 1999) and spread north through Santa Barbara County (D. Compton, pers. comm.);
- San Luis Obispo County: first observed in 1997; spread south, presumably merging with birds from the Ventura County source population in southern San Luis Obispo or northern Santa Barbara County (D. Compton, pers. comm.);
- King City, Monterey County: established in 1999 from a known release (Roberson 2002); has not obviously expanded beyond the town, although some records from the Monterey Peninsula may be related to these birds;
- Morgan Hill, Santa Clara County: discovered in 2001 from an apparent release; no noticeable spread beyond the vicinity of an aviary.
- Santa Cruz County: small numbers of birds have been noted at two locations since 1995, with some nesting but no noticeable increase until

2005, but this is thought to be due to an influx of birds from the nationwide expansion (D. Suddjian, pers. comm.).

Additionally, there have been numerous isolated reports of this species from elsewhere in California prior to 2001. While it is generally assumed that most of these are based on locally released or escaped birds, it is possible that some may have their origins in the small populations listed above or from the nationwide expansion. The birds are occasionally kept in aviaries. They are not deliberately released by hunt clubs or any government agency (K. Mayer, California Department of Fish and Game, pers. comm.).

#### RANGE EXPANSION IN CALIFORNIA POST-2000

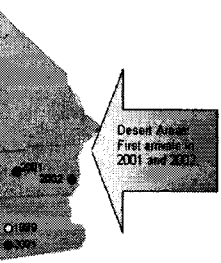
The first reports of birds in California that were seemingly associated with the nationwide expansion appear to be from Riverside and Imperial Counties in 2001. By 2002, over 50 birds were observed in Calipatria, Imperial County, with additional records from a variety of locations in southeast California deserts. As a result of these observations, the California Bird Records Committee added the Eurasian Collared-Dove to the state list (Cole and McCaskie 2004). The arrival of the species in the southeastern deserts is consistent with the dramatic increase of birds in Arizona (Table 1).

In 2003, Eurasian Collared-Doves began to be reported from locations in California west of the deserts, such as San Clemente Island, where a local escapee is unlikely. In 2004, there were many isolated records from

Table 1. Eurasian Collared-Doves reported on Arizona and California Christmas Bird Counts for CBC years 95 (1994-5) through 106 (2005-06).

Count Year	Arizona		California	
	Number of birds	Number of Counts reporting birds	Number of birds	Number of Counts reporting birds
95	0	0	0	0
96	0	0	5	1
97	0	0	27	1
98	0	0	47	2
99	0	0	53	4
100	0	0	42	3
101	0	0	78	3
102	4	2	43	3
103	61	4	130	7
104	204	8	284	6
105	666	13	383	16
106	1000	20	694	28

ding populations  
 possible new colonies  
 dependent releases  
 st records in established areas)  
 ated with nationwide spread  
 ated with released birds



a California (records through  
 sources cited in text.

Norte, Humboldt, Shasta,  
 teo Counties (Figure 2). At  
 hout much of southeastern  
 ll towns. They remain rare  
 iego (CBC data).

anuary 2004), the Eurasian  
 ore than seven count circles  
 species was reported from  
 a significant spread during

ve of the statewide pattern  
 w and isolated. There was  
 nal records from Kern, San  
 re reported on 13 occasions  
 2006, there were 25 records

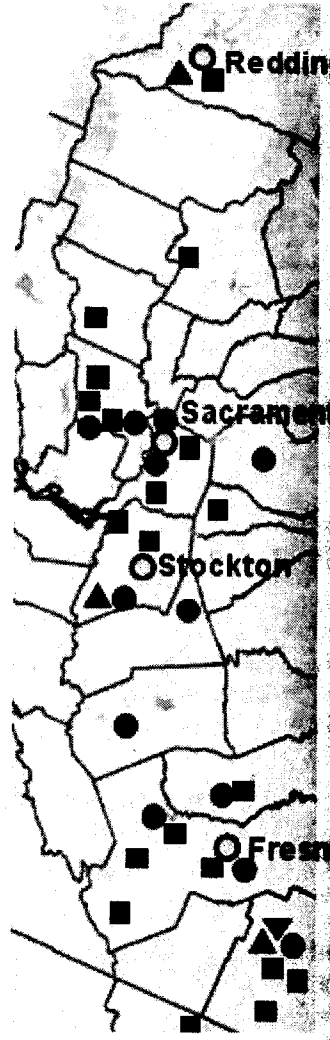


Figure 3. Records of Eurasian Collared-Flycatcher (2003 - 2006; see text for specific data for

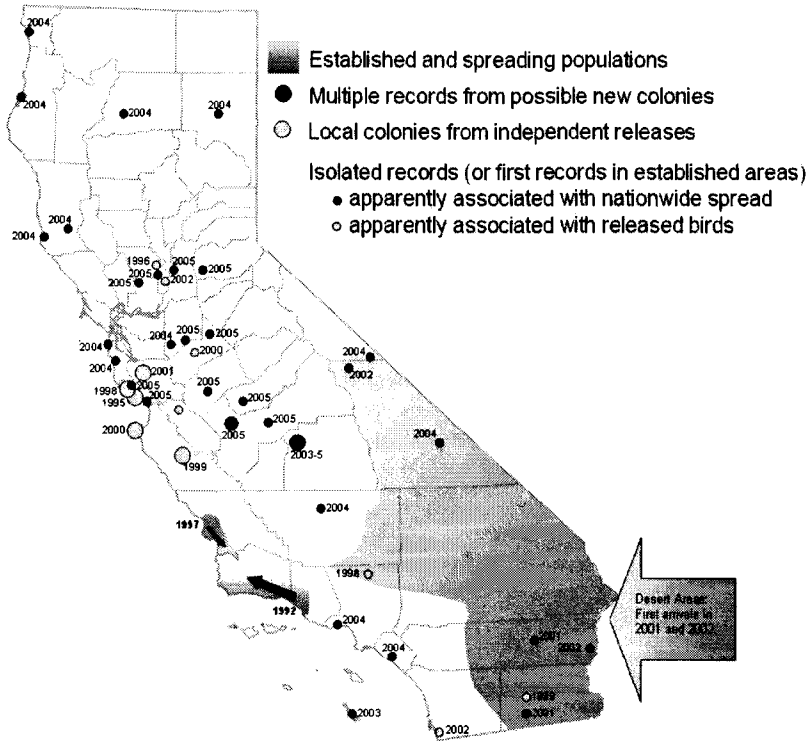


Figure 2. Spread of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in California (records through 2005). Data from personal communications and sources cited in text.

throughout northern California, including Del Norte, Humboldt, Shasta, Lassen, Mendocino, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties (Figure 2). At the same time, the birds became regular throughout much of southeastern California, particularly in rural areas around small towns. They remain rare on the coastal plain from Los Angeles to San Diego (CBC data).

Through the 104<sup>th</sup> CBC (December 2003 – January 2004), the Eurasian Collared-Dove had never been reported from more than seven count circles in California. On the 105<sup>th</sup> and 106<sup>th</sup> counts, the species was reported from 16 and 28 count circles respectively, implying a significant spread during 2004 and 2005 (Table 1 and Figure 2).

## EXPANSION INTO THE CENTRAL VALLEY

Records in the Central Valley are reflective of the statewide pattern described above. Prior to 2003, records were few and isolated. There was one record in 2003. In 2004, there were additional records from Kern, San Joaquin, and Shasta Counties. In 2005, birds were reported on 13 occasions from 10 different counties. In just the first half of 2006, there were 25 records

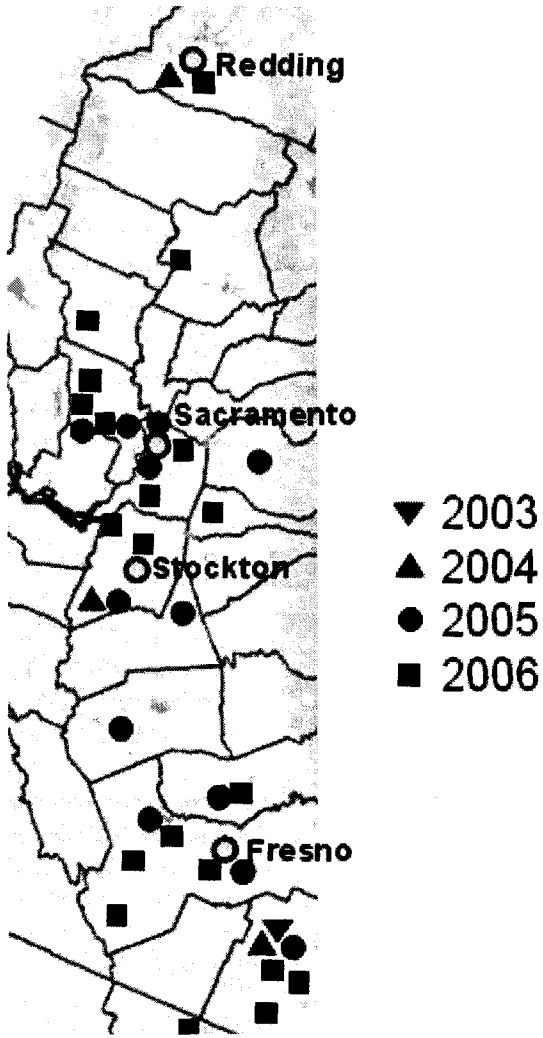


Figure 3. Records of Eurasian Collared-Doves in the Central Valley (2003 - 2006; see text for specific data for each report).

coming from throughout the valley. As of this writing, there are no confirmed breeding records. All records from the Central Valley that I could obtain through early June 2006 are listed as follows:

#### Records Before 2003

- Sept 3-4, 1996, Woodland, YOL (Brian Williams)
- Dec 29, 2000, Modesto, STA (4 birds) (John Sterling)
- Sept 29, 2002, South River Rd, YOL (Leo Edson)

#### 2003

- 1. May 8, Visalia, TUL (Rob Hansen)

#### 2004

- 1. Mar 7 – Nov 28, Visalia, TUL (up to 3 birds, but one paler)(Rob Hansen)
- 2. June 25, Redding, SHA (Brad Bergstrom)
- 3. Aug 7, Hart Park, KER (Alison Sheehy)
- 4. Sept 12+ , Tracy, SJO (Terry Ronneberg)

#### 2005

- 1. Apr 23, Shingle Springs, ELD (Tim and Angela Jackson)
- 2. Apr 30, Mendota Wildlife Area, FRE (Rob Hansen, John Luther, Jeff Seay, Jeff Davis)
- 3. Aug 1, Sacramento, SAC (Gil Ewing)
- 4. Sept 3, Visalia, TUL (2 birds, different locations) (Rob Hansen)
- 5. Sept 11, Davis, YOL (Steve Hampton, Michael Perrone)
- 6. Oct 28, Madera, MAD (3 birds) (Jeff Davis)
- 7. Oct 30, Fresno, FRE (Linda Cover)
- 8. Nov 1, Mendota Wildlife Area, FRE (3 birds, but one paler) (Steve Summers)
- 9. Nov 12, eastern Stanislaus County, STA (6 birds) (Jim Gain)
- 10. Dec 11, Natomas, SAC (8 birds) (Steve Pagliughi)
- 11. Dec 18, Lake Solano Campground, SOL (2 birds, with 6 Ringed Turtle-Doves) (Ed Harper; Putah Creek CBC)
- 12. Dec 28, Los Banos, MER (24 birds) (Frank Gibson and Kim Kuska; Los Banos CBC)
- 13. Dec 31, near Caswell Memorial State Park, SJO (6 birds) (Harold Reeve, John Vixie; Caswell-Westley CBC)

#### 2006

- 1. Jan 3, Cosumnes River Preserve, SAC (John Trochet; Rio Cosumnes CBC)
- 2. Jan 7, near Durham, BUT (3 birds) (Daryl Coldren, Cliff Hawley, Ed Pandolfino)
- 3. Jan-May, Madera Country Club Estates neighborhood, MAD (6+ birds) (Irene Moon)
- 4. Jan-May, Madera Ranchos neighborhood, MAD (4 birds) (Rich Gilman)
- 5. Jan-May, Mendota Wildlife Area, FRE (4+ birds) (various observers)
- 6. Feb 13, Ave 56, TUL (2 birds) (Steve Summers)
- 7. Apr 10-13, Redding, SHA (Bob Yutzy)
- 8. April 15, Fresno, FRE (Linda Cover)
- 9. Apr 16, Lindsey, TUL (Steve Summers)
- 10. April 19, northwest Fresno, FRE (Scott Terrill)

11. April 20-May 25, Coalinga, FRE (3+ birds) (Irene Moon, Steve Summers)
12. Late April-early May, W. of Kerman, FRE (2 birds) (Gary Woods)
13. Apr 28, Lake Woolomes/Kern NWR, KER (4 birds) (Steve Summers)
14. Apr 29, Sand Creek Rd, COL (Dan Brown)
15. Apr, Sacramento, SAC (Gil Ewing)
16. May 4, Porterville, TUL (Steve Summers)
17. May 9, north of Three Rocks, FRE (Gary Woods)
18. May 15, Capay, YOL (Sami LaRocca, Roger Adamson, Joan Humphrey)
19. May 18, west Stockton, SJO (Waldo Holt)
20. May 18-25, near Cosumnes River Preserve, SAC (2 birds) (Andy Engilis)
21. May 19, Rds 27 & 88, YOL (Fleur Ng'weno) (2 birds per John Anderson)
22. May, Fair Oaks, SAC (Gil Ewing)
23. June 2, Winters, YOL (3 birds) (Ron Melcer)
24. June 4, near Thornton, SJO (2 birds) (Chris Conard)
25. June 4, Ione, AMA (Chris Conard)

Several observations can be made from these records. First, the number of records began to climb in 2004 and increased dramatically in the following years, consistent with the pattern of the nationwide spread. Second, records prior to 2003 are probably not from the nationwide spread and may represent local escapees, although it is difficult to know with certainty. Third, consistent records from the same location and suspected breeding were rare until 2006. Even now, the records are widely scattered and not concentrated in any particular region (Figure 3). Frequency of records may be associated with birder effort, suggesting a widespread expansion. Fourth, all of the winter observations involve groups of birds, suggesting the species concentrates in small flocks during the winter months. A final observation is the occasional presence of paler birds and association with Ringed Turtle-Doves (*Streptopelia risoria*). This has been noticed elsewhere in the state as well, and hybrid pairs have been documented in Imperial County (Cole and McCaskie 2004).

With its agriculture, scattered towns and homesteads, and aridity, the Central Valley seems to offer much of the Eurasian Collared-Dove's most preferred habitat. Given its preference for rural areas and its dramatic expansion pattern in Europe and North America, the species could become a dominant part of the valley's avifauna within the next 10 years.

#### LITERATURE CITED

National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count webpage:  
<http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr/index.html>

Birdsource webpage: <http://www.birdsource.org/features/eucdov/>

Central Valley Birds webpage:  
[http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/central\\_valley\\_birds/](http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/central_valley_birds/)



- Cole, L.W. and G. McCaskie. 2004. Report of the California Bird Records Committee: 2002 Records. *Western Birds* 35 (1): 2-31.
- del Hoyo, J., A. Elliot, and J. Sargatal, eds. 1997. *Handbook of the Birds of the World, Volume 4: Sandgrouse to Cuckoos*. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona, Spain.
- Hengeveld, R. 1993. What to do about the North American invasion by the Collared Dove? *Journal of Field Ornithology* 64 (4): 477-489.
- Roberson, D. 2002. *Monterey Birds: Status and Distribution of Birds in Monterey County, California*, 2nd ed. Monterey Peninsula Audubon Society, Carmel, CA.
- Romagosa, C.M., and R.F.Labisky. 2000. Establishment and dispersal of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in Florida. *Journal of Field Ornithology* 71 (1): 159-166.
- Romagosa, C.M., and T. McEneaney. 1999. Eurasian Collared-Dove in North America and the Caribbean. *North American Birds* 53: 348-353.
- Smith, P. William. 1987. The Eurasian Collared-Dove arrives in the Americas. *American Birds* 41 (5): 1370-1379