



Animal Pest Alert

Barbary Dove

NOT INDIGENOUS

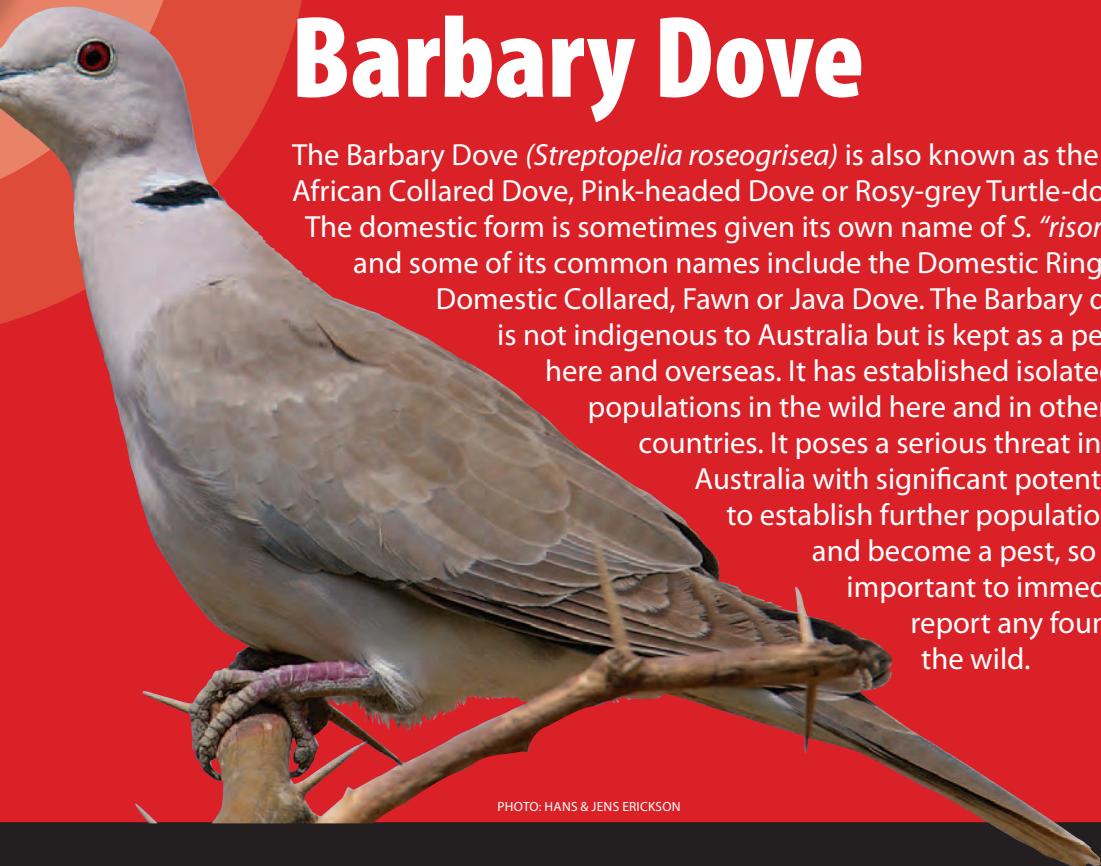


PHOTO: HANS & JENS ERICKSON

INDIGENOUS

Bar-shouldered Dove



PHOTO: IAN COLLEY

Laughing Dove



PHOTO: DEAN INGVERSEN

NOT INDIGENOUS

Spotted Dove



PHOTO: ALAN FLETCHER

Domestic Pigeon



NOT INDIGENOUS

Barbary Dove



Figure 1. The distribution of the Barbary dove including natural (blue) and introduced (red) populations.

Description

The Barbary dove is a medium-sized, sandy or creamy buff bird 29 to 30 cm in length (body and tail). The neck and head are paler, while the chin, underwings and vent area are white or pale cream; the flanks are pale grey. New plumage is tinged mauve-pink on the head, foreneck and breast. The back of the neck has a narrow black half-collar and the undertail has broad white tips. The iris is dark red, the bill black and the feet and legs purple-red.

Males and females are similar. The immature bird is similar to the adult, although the plumage is duller, the half-collar absent and the feet and legs are pale grey.

Domestic forms are generally white or light-coloured, or mottled white and brown, with or without a collar, but with pale bills (Figure 2).

Barbary dove calls include a soft *ku-k'rroo* and a high-pitched excited *heh-heh-heh*, sounding like a jeering laugh.



Figure 2. Domestic forms of the Barbary dove are generally white or light-coloured, or mottled white and brown (photo: Peter Reese).

Mistaken identity

In Australia, the Barbary dove may be mistaken for other doves and pigeons. However, the predominantly single body colour and lack of markings apart from the black half-collar will usually set it apart from the:

- Bar-shouldered Dove (*Geopelia humeralis*) (eastern and coastal northern Australia)
- Laughing Dove (*S. senegalensis*) (south-western Western Australia)
- Spotted Dove (*S. chinensis*) (coastal eastern and south-eastern Australia; Alice Springs in the Northern Territory; Tasmania; Karratha and south-western Western Australia)
- Domestic Pigeon (*Columba livia*) (all states and territories).

Distribution

The natural range of the Barbary dove is sub-Saharan Africa from Mauritania to Ethiopia, south east Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula including Saudi Arabia and Yemen (Figure 1). Introduced populations occur in the Canary Islands, the United States and New Zealand. In the Bahamas, Bulgaria, Italy, Japan, Puerto Rico, Spain and the United Kingdom, feral populations occasionally occur in urban areas (where no specific locations are known, the country is not included on the distribution map).

In the US, dove populations are considered to be closely associated with, and possibly dependent on, people for food, water and shelter to survive in the wild.

In New Zealand, the Barbary dove was successfully introduced from 1862 to the 1920s. Small populations still persist in the wild on the North Island close to artificial food sources and where the regular additions of escaped or released birds maintain population size and survival.

In the Northern Territory, Barbary doves are established in the wild in small areas in Alice Springs and, to a lesser extent, in Darwin. These birds are not dependant on food supplied by humans; they forage like other doves, taking seeds from native plants and grain from poultry yards and other spills.

In Western Australia and Victoria, Barbary doves have been occasionally discovered in the wild but they are reported



Figure 3. Escaped Barbary dove sighted in a Melbourne suburb (photo: Rohan Clarke).

more frequently in New South Wales and South Australia (Figure 3).

Habitat

In its natural range the Barbary dove occurs in deserts with annual grasses, arid farmlands, thornbush scrub, dry bushlands and sandy riverbeds. In its introduced range it occurs in towns and cities, particularly in parks, gardens, along roadsides and in orchards.

Reproduction, food and behaviour

The Barbary dove builds a flimsy, open cup or platform nest in a tree or bush. Sometimes nests are also built on buildings or in hanging baskets under eaves. Two white eggs are laid. Breeding is usually during spring and summer but can occur all year.

The dove forages on the ground, eating grass seeds, berries, grains, green plant parts, snails and various insects. In rural areas, it feeds on newly-sown grain crops or stubble. In urban areas it is frequently fed by people and it freely accepts seed, bread and other offerings. It also scavenges in garbage.

In urban areas the dove perches on windowsills and other parts of houses, poles and telegraph wires. In other areas trees, thickets and shrubs are used.

The dove is usually seen in pairs or in groups of up to 25. However, in its natural range large flocks of hundreds of birds form near water and food sources at plantations and farms, while roosts may contain thousands of birds.

In the wild and in captivity, the Barbary dove can live for up to 12 years and possibly to 20 years.

Damage by the Barbary dove

Overseas, the Barbary dove is considered a pest of agriculture when it consumes newly sown grain crops.

The Barbary dove is also considered an environmental pest as it can hybridise with other *Streptopelia* species.

In urban areas, the Barbary dove causes noise-related problems with its calling, and fouls areas with its droppings.

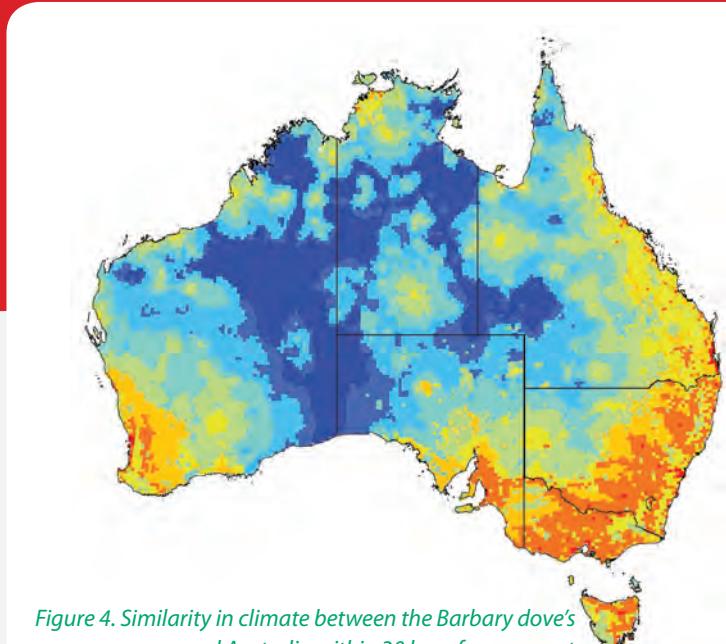


Figure 4. Similarity in climate between the Barbary dove's overseas range and Australia within 30 km of permanent water; red and orange areas are most similar.

Its general nesting behaviour is said to be a nuisance to landholders. Control methods used for problem doves, including this species, are the use of anti-roosting products and holistic options such as provision of alternate roosts like dovecotes.

Potential to be a pest in Australia

A scientific risk assessment of the Barbary dove was conducted by the Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia and endorsed by the national Vertebrate Pests Committee. It involved careful use of available information and application of the precautionary approach and indicates that the dove poses a serious threat (the second highest of four categories) to Australia. The risk assessment rated the dove as highly likely to establish further populations here, with several areas of Australia having climates similar to the dove's overseas range (Figure 4). The serious rank assigned to this species indicates that it could become a pest of agriculture, the environment and public amenity.

It is therefore important that the Barbary dove does not establish further populations in the wild in Australia and that any found here are removed quickly.

The habitats of many Australian doves and pigeons (for example, the Common Bronzewing, Crested Pigeon, Diamond Dove, Peaceful Dove) are similar to those preferred by the Barbary dove, increasing potential risks of competition for food, nesting sites and the best habitat.

Agricultural crops that could be at risk include cereals and oil seeds.

The Barbary dove could also add to the nuisance already caused in urban areas by other pest birds with its constant calling during the day, fouling of areas with its droppings and nesting behaviour.

Barbary Dove



Birds in captivity and their appearance in the wild

The Barbary dove is an aviary species in Australia and a declared pest species in

Western Australia. In the Northern Territory the domestic form is listed as a feral species. The very similar Eurasian Collared Dove (*S. decaocto*) is not known to be in Australia, but it is prohibited in Tasmania and is a declared pest species in Western Australia. None of these species can be imported into Australia.

Where Barbary doves are permitted in captivity there are few, if any, requirements to ensure they remain securely in their cages. Barbary doves found in the wild in Australia have all come from captivity and escapes can occur anywhere there is human settlement and captive birds. Release of doves outside, for example for symbolic reasons or during shows involving animals, is illegal where the species is prohibited or a declared pest (Figure 5). Apart from the risk that new wild populations will establish, some escaped and released birds may die of starvation or exposure.

In the Northern Territory, Barbary doves in Alice Springs and Darwin have been managed by the Territory government using trapping and shooting, largely during control activities for spotted doves and feral pigeons. In Alice Springs 30 Barbary doves were trapped between 2000 and 2008. The government now provides advice to the general public on how to catch pest doves and where to surrender them.

In South Australia Barbary doves have been regularly sighted for a number of years. For example, in 2009 there were fifteen reports involving 110 birds from twelve suburban locations north and south of Adelaide. The doves have also successfully bred in suburban gardens around the city.



Figure 5. Release of doves outside, like this white-coloured domestic form, is usually illegal (photo: GlobalP/iStockphoto.com).

Important Disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.



Figure 6. A Barbary dove (centre) found in the wild in Karratha, Western Australia, in the custody of a carer along with a crested pigeon (left) and a spotted dove (right) (photo: Brett Lewis, Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia).

In Victoria Barbary doves have been infrequently reported since the late 1990s and may also occasionally breed in gardens. In early 2010 a small breeding group of about twelve birds was removed from an inner suburb of Melbourne and a pair was sighted in the suburb of Brighton. The most recent report is a small breeding group located at Rutherford, north-east of Melbourne, which authorities plan to remove.

In Western Australia Barbary doves established a small colony of about 15 birds in the eastern Perth suburb of Wattle Grove in 1975 but this was successfully removed. Since then small numbers of birds have been reported in various Perth localities as well as in the north-west town of Karratha (Figure 6).

In New South Wales Barbary doves have been occasionally reported in the wild since 1946, including a recent sighting beside the Goulburn River near Ulan, north-west of Sydney.

Risk management

To help prevent the Barbary dove from establishing further populations in the wild and becoming a pest in Australia, it is essential that it is maintained in secure (preferably double-doored) aviaries. Unwanted Barbary doves should be surrendered to the authorities or a responsible organisation, not released into the wild. People should not feed doves in the wild as this helps escaped aviary birds to survive and breed.

Any Barbary doves seen in the wild should be immediately reported to the nearest relevant government department or wildlife authority on Freecall 1800 084 881 so that appropriate action can be taken.

Acknowledgments

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Department of
Agriculture and Food



Please report all sightings of Barbary Doves in the wild – Freecall 1800 084 881