

Bird of the Month



DESCRIPTION: MOURNING DOVE

Zenaida macroura

Size: 12" sleek profile, grayish-fawn colored with pinkish tinges on neck and upper breast, especially on male. Long pointed tail with white edges, black dots on wings and pinkish-red feet.

Male: Light gray crown and iridescent sides of neck.

Female: Evenly brown on head and neck.

NESTING:

Flimsy, loose flat platform nest of twigs, grass, weeds and pine needles usually placed in a tree in a vertical fork or horizontal branch 3-30ft high, or occasionally on the ground. Nest often falls apart in a storm. 2 white, unmarked eggs are incubated by both parents. Parents feed the young a regurgitated liquid called crop "milk" for first few days of life. 2 broods per year. The Mourning Dove mates for life, roughly seven to ten years.

FEEDING:

Common at bird feeders where it feeds on scattered seed from trays or the ground. Often arrives in small flocks. Eats weed, grass, grain seeds and some insects. At feeders, prefers **white proso millet**. Also seen eating sunflower kernels, cracked corn, safflower and Nyjer.

RECOMMENDED ROGUE SEED: Rogue Dove and Quail.

RECOMMENDED FEEDERS: Ground trays/platform feeders, open gazebo or fly-through feeders.

HABITAT:

Can be found in almost any open habitat, including suburban areas. Breeding in open woodlands and forest edges next to grasslands and parks. Rarely uses extensive woods or forests. Widespread in agricultural areas, waste areas and gravelly areas during winter. Year-round resident in interior, western valleys.

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS:

The Mourning Dove is one of the most widespread land birds of North America. Its name comes from its rhythmic, soft, mournful cooing, "ooahoo oo oo oo," often misidentified as an owl hooting. Wind rushing through wing feathers in flight creates a characteristic whistling sound.

COMPARE TO:

Rock Dove (Pigeon): stockier, typically with iridescent neck, white rump, dark wing bars and broad, fan-shaped tail. Wider range of color combinations, due to breeding by humans.

Band-tailed Pigeon: much larger with a partial white "collar" and iridescent, green nape. Yellow bill and feet, broad, fan-shaped tail.

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