

Facts at a Glance

TYPE OF ANIMAL

Avian/Bird

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Zenaida macroura

FOUND WHERE

All of North America; from Alberta, Canada to Puerto Rico

HEIGHT/LENGTH

8.5 – 14 in. (22 - 36 cm)

WEIGHT

Averages 96 - 170 g

CONSERVATION STATUS

Least Concern



Mourning doves get their name from their low, mournful bird calls. A medium-sized bird, they are covered in a soft, beige-gray plumage with patches of black spotting on the backs of their lower wings and tails. They usually have a lighter breast and stomach, occasionally with a slightly rosy tone in the males. These doves have a distinct blue ring around their eyes and red legs and feet. They have a long, tapered tail, with bluish-gray under down that may reflect purple in certain lights.

HABITAT

Some of the most adaptable birds - they are common in many open woodlands, forest areas, and fields. Due to their grain-based diet, they are also fairly abundant in agricultural and suburban areas, such as farmsteads and prairie ranges. These birds are typically migratory birds, though some will remain in their range through winter. They may fly over 1000 miles to reach their winter respite zones.

DIET

Doves are mostly granivorous birds, meaning they eat grains. They typically feed on 95 to 99% seeds and grains. Mourning doves particularly favor seeds, cultivated grains such as corn, millet, or barley, fruits, and rarely insects. They may occasionally be seen eating grasshoppers, ants, or even snails in the morning. Doves forage mostly on the ground and will regularly swallow small gravel to aid in the digestion of hard seeds.

LIFE & BEHAVIOUR

Known for their signature and longing, “cooo-cooo” calls, these doves use a variety of body displays and suitable songs to communicate with other mourning doves. These birds are monogamous and will occasionally stay with their bonded pair long-term. There are low mournful calls that may be heard during courtship, as males glide up to the females and approach, chest puffed and head bowing, ready to perform their courtship dance. They typically raise about 2 eggs per season, but are prolific breeders and may raise up to 6 broods per year.

ATTRACTING BIRDS

Doves are perch or platform nesters - similar to robins. Their nest tends to be loose and messy, so leaving nesting materials like grass clippings, twigs, pine needles, and leaf litter provides convenient matter to attract these birds to your backyard.