

STATUS OF THE EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*STREPTOPELIA DECAOCTO*)
IN THE FRENCH ANTILLES

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Subsequent to his earlier-published accounts of the origin and spread of the introduced Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) in the United States (Smith and Kale 1986, Smith 1987), Smith (1995) reviewed the status of this species in the Caribbean. From Cuban observations (Garrido and Kirkconnell 1990, 1996) and his own in the Lesser Antilles, Smith listed the following islands where the collared-dove occurs along with colonization dates: Cuba – before 1990, currently at least in La Habana (Garrido and Kirkconnell 1990, 1996); Montserrat – about 1990, at Plymouth; and Dominica – about 1987, Roseau. In his review, Smith (1995) suggested that other islands had populations and predicted that most of the inhabited West Indies would be occupied by the collared-dove in the future. Francis (1996) has since reported this species on Nevis from at least 1995.

Because two of us (PF, NB) had observed this species on Guadeloupe for more than a decade, we investigated whether that population might have been the source of the regional spread, given that Guadeloupe is situated between the two Lesser Antillean islands where Smith (1995) documented its occurrence (Fig. 1). Here we report the current status of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in Guadeloupe (including close dependencies) and Martinique, and present new evidence that Guadeloupe is the probable origin of this bird in the Lesser Antilles.

Mrs. Suzanne Valeau (pers. comm.) informed us that her father-in-law, Mr. Amédée Valeau, bought several pairs of Eurasian Collared-Doves in a Paris, France, pet shop, "Quai de la Mégisserie," about 30 years ago. He placed them in his aviary at Beauvallon (alt. 230 m) in the lowest part of the municipality of St. Claude, Guadeloupe. He had ca. 20 doves in 1976 when nearby la Soufrière threatened to erupt, forcing the evacuation of the towns of Basse Terre and St. Claude. When Mr. Valeau departed, he opened the door of his aviary. Upon his return, eight birds remained, which he left at liberty and began to regularly feed. The birds flourished in the wild. When we visited the property 20 years later in June 1996, we estimated the population as 600-800 birds, which we learned consumed ca. 20 kg. of corn daily (Suzanne Valeau, pers. comm.). All birds showed the size, color, and call characters of Eurasian Collared-Doves as described by Smith (1987), which easily distinguished them from the Ringed Turtle-Dove (*Streptopelia "risoria"*). Two were cream-colored, a known morph also observed by Smith (1987).

Considering its size and longevity, this population, near the center of the reported Lesser Antillean range of this species, is almost certainly the source of its natural spread,

not only to Guadeloupe (Fig. 2), but also to neighboring islands (Fig. 1). Nevertheless, we cannot discount the possibility of some human introductions in places quite distant from the source (Point-à-Pitre, St. François), and particularly on Martinique, where we also documented the presence of Eurasian Collared-Doves (Fig. 3). The known locations and sub-population sizes in the French Antilles are summarized in Table 1 and Figs. 2 and 3.

Neither the Eurasian Collared-Dove nor any other exotic Columbidae is mentioned by Pinchon (1976) or Barré and Bénito-Espinal (1985). Bénito-Espinal and Haucastel (1988) do state (without date) that *Streptopelia decaocto* and *Columba guinea* were introduced to Guadeloupe as "game" birds. If so, the latter species failed to become established, and the basis of the statement concerning the former is uncertain. The Ringed Turtle-Dove, the domesticated form of *S. roseogrisea* (Smith 1987), is a common cage-bird in the French Antilles, where it sometimes escapes and survives in inhabited areas, usually only for short periods. The Rock Dove (*Columba livia*) is also found in the wild, in and around towns.

In summary, a growing population of Eurasian Collared-Doves, originating from birds first released in 1976, is centered in St. Claude, Guadeloupe, and is spreading outward on Guadeloupe and beyond. We believe that it is the source of individuals observed in the nearby Lesser Antilles. This population is independent of birds released in the Bahamas at about the same time (Smith 1987), which now have spread at least to the United States and Cuba.

We thank Mrs. Suzanne Valeau for the precise and interesting information she provided us.

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Table 1. Locations, dates, and numbers of Eurasian Collared-Doves observed in the French Antilles.

Island and municipality	Population location	Date	Comments
GUADELOUPE			
St. Claude	Centered at Beauvallon and along Rivière des Pères; absent above 400 m	Observed from about 1980; introduced at Beauvallon in 1976	About 1000 present (600-800 at Mrs. Valeau's property)
Basse Terre	Town, widespread; numerous in botanical garden	Observed from about 1980	100-200 present
Baillif	Town; as far as Blanchette, 3 km away	Observed from about 1980	50-100 present
Vieux Habitants	River, sea coast	January 1994	2 observed
Bouillante	Pigeon	June 1996	1 observed
Gourbeyre and Trois Rivières	No data	No data	Observed
Capesterre	Town	May 1996	1 observed
Point-à-Pitre	Destrellan	April 1996	2 observed
	Bergevin	May 1996	6 observed
	Town; place de la Victoire	May 1996	20-30 observed, some build nests
Abymes	Raizet	September 1995	2 observed
Gosier	Marina Bas du Fort	June 1995, May 1996	5 observed
St. François	Devarieux	January 1995	2 observed
	Pradel	February 1996	1 observed
	Raisins Clairs	April 1996	1 observed
LES SAINTES			
Terre de Haut	Town	May 1996	1 observed, tentatively mated with a male <i>S. risoria</i>
	Anse Mire	August 1996	3 observed
MARTINIQUE			
Le Prêcheur	Town	May 1994	1 bird; others seen recently
Fort de France	Dillon	June 1996	1 observed
Schoelcher	Town	January 1996	4 observed
Basse Pointe	Town	June 1996	2 observed



Fig. 1. Distribution (stars) of the Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) in Florida and the Caribbean, with dates of first records (primarily from Smith 1987, 1995).

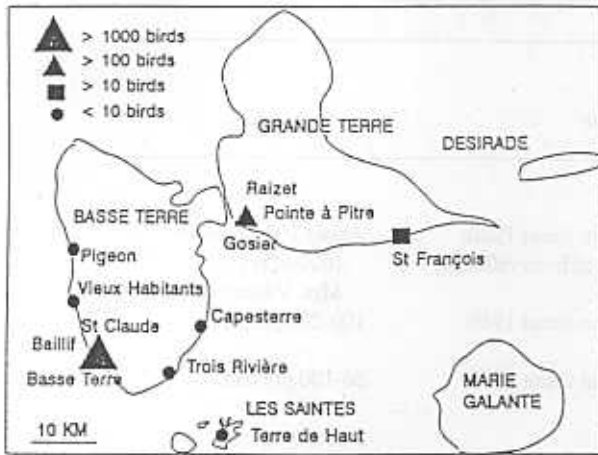


Fig. 2. Distribution of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in Guadeloupe and nearby satellites, with estimated sizes of sub-populations.

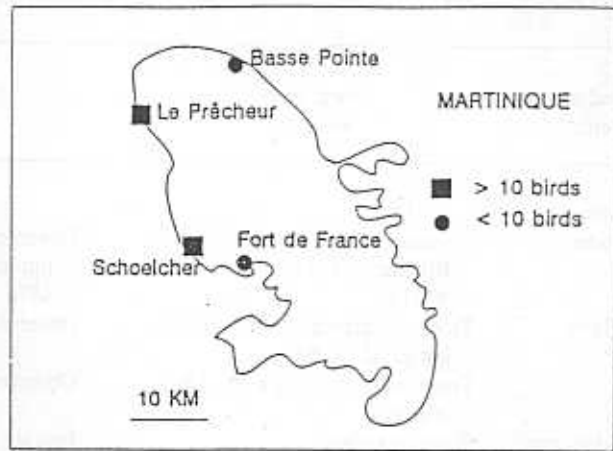


Fig. 3. Distribution of the Eurasian Collared-Dove in Martinique and estimated sizes of sub-populations.

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THE EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE ON NEVIS

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Bill Smith's note in the Fall 1995 edition of *El Pitirre* has prompted me to report some sightings of Eurasian Collared-Dove, *Streptopelia decaocto*, on Nevis, one of the smaller islands in the Lesser Antilles. Up to six birds were resident at Montpellier Plantation Inn during my stay there between 28 March and 9 April 1995. Four of the birds appeared to be paired; they were flying together in pairs and one pair was seen displaying. During my stay there this year from 29 March to 11 April, only four birds were present; one pair was seen mating. I had previously stayed at Montpellier Plantation Inn for two weeks during the period January to mid-April in 1990, 1992 and 1993, but had not seen any Eurasian Collared-Doves. Although I am familiar with the Eurasian Collared-Dove, which is common in Britain and Europe, I was initially misled by the American field guides, which seemed to indicate that the birds must be Ringed Turtle-Dove, *Streptopelia risoria*. These field guides do not seem to have taken into account Smith's analysis (1987).

The overall coloring of the birds was light buff or tan with contrasting blackish primaries, with a distinctive black collar around the nape reaching each side of the neck. They had a distinctive tri-syllable call (000-0000-00) with the emphasis being on the second syllable. The call was often repeated in a monotonous fashion. They also made a mewling call, particularly when landing. Having reviewed Smith's 1987 article, I am now confident that they are Eurasian Collared-Doves. The origin of these birds requires further investigation. Obviously, we should all be keeping a look-out for the birds on other islands where they have not so far been identified.

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