

TAXONOMIC NOTES ON THE AMERICAN GROUND DOVES

BY DEREK GOODWIN

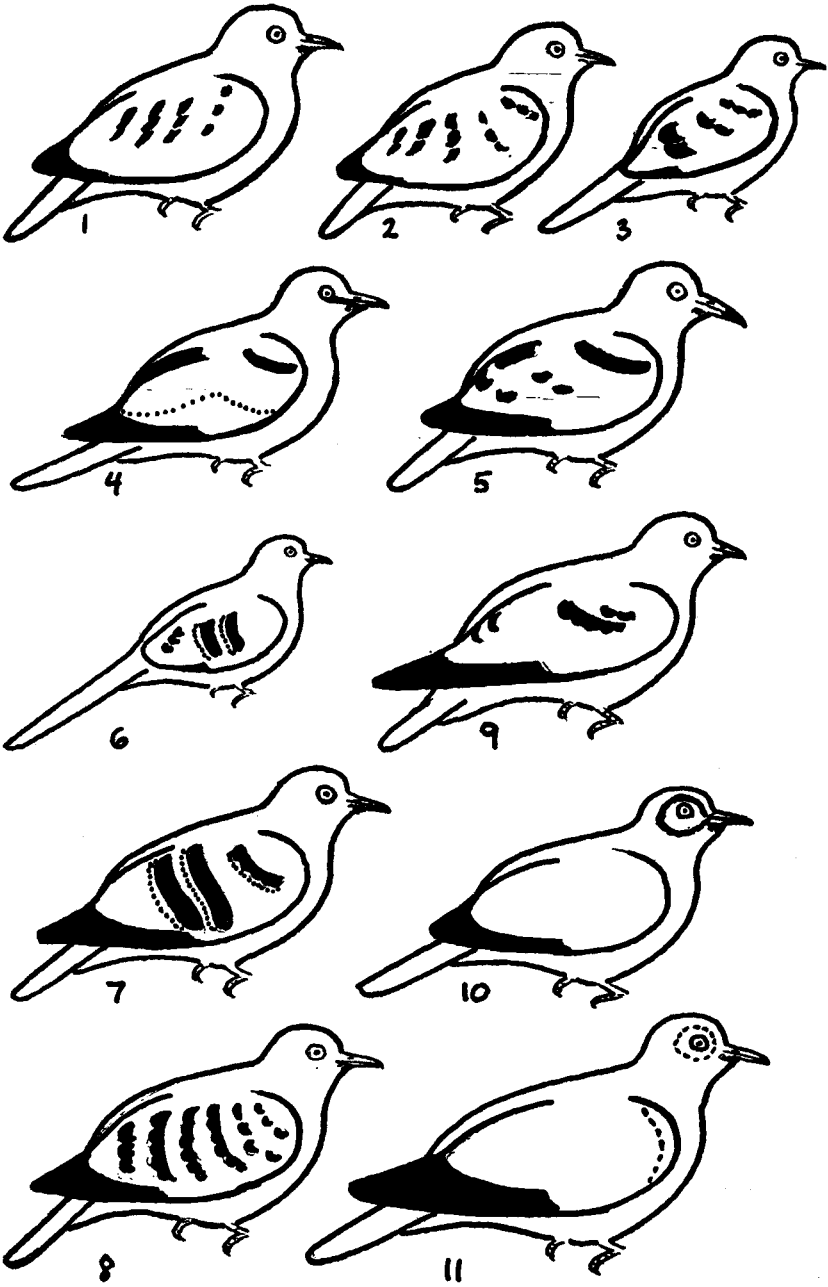
The group of small South and Middle American doves that are usually termed "Ground Doves" show considerable divergencies between some of the species, but all appear to be more closely related to each other than they are to any other pigeons. In the most recent general revision (Hellmayr and Conover, 1942: 505-564) the species involved are called: *Columbigallina passerina*, *minuta*, *buckleyi*, and *talpacoti*; *Eupelia cruziana*; *Columbina picui*; *Oxytelia cyanopsis*; *Claravis pretiosa*, *mondetoura*, and *godefrida*; *Leptophaps aymara*; *Metriopelia melanopectera*; *Gymnopenia morenoi* and *ceciliae*; *Uropelia campestris*; and *Scardafella squammata* (including *inca*). The recognition of so many genera tends to conceal relationships.

My remarks on these species have, of necessity, to be based on their external taxonomic characters. I have seen only two species alive, *talpacoti* and *cruziana*, and these were in a zoo where I was unable to make any detailed study of their behavior. The little that I have been able to find recorded of the habits of these doves is, with the exception of two papers on the behavior of *talpacoti* (Skutch, 1956, and Haverschmidt, 1953), too fragmentary and uncritical to be of value. From experience with other pigeons with which I am familiar in life or about whose habits and behavior much more is recorded, I am, however, convinced that appraisal and comparison of external characters, particularly of the color-pattern of the plumage, can, and usually does, give a true indication of relationships.

Of the species listed above all, except *morenoi* and *ceciliae*, were placed by Salvadori (1893) in his subfamily Peristerinae. This subfamily he characterized as having "metallic spots on the wings (except in *Metriopelia melanopectera*), size small, much smaller than that of a Common Dove: tail of 12 feathers; the base of the outer tail feathers

FIGURE 1. SCHEMATIC DIAGRAMS OF SOME AMERICAN GROUND DOVES (p. 511). Wing markings and approximate proportions of more divergent species. Only black or iridescent signal markings on coverts or secondaries and those portions of primaries visible when the wings are folded have been shaded black, as have black markings on heads of *picui* and *morenoi*. White areas on wings have been enclosed in a dotted line, except where adjoining a dark marking or the wing edge. A dotted line also encloses bare orbital skin of *melanopectera*, but not that of *morenoi*, which is ringed with black feathers.

1 *Columbina talpacoti*, 2 *Columbina passerina*, 3 *Columbina cyanopsis*, 4 *Columbina picui*, 5 *Columbina cruziana*, 6 *Uropelia campestris*, 7 *Claravis godefrida*, 8 *Claravis pretiosa*, 9 *Metriopelia aymara*, 10 *Metriopelia morenoi*, 11 *Metriopelia melanopectera*.



never of a grey color, sharply defined from a dark apical band; primaries not much longer than secondaries (except in *Metriopelia melanoptera*) general color almost uniform. Confined to America." Within this subfamily he placed *picui* in the monotypic genus *Columbula* (later replaced by *Columbina*), which he characterized as having the tail longer than half the wing, first primary not attenuated; central and outer tail feathers shorter than the intermediate ones and a steel blue band on the upper wing coverts. The species *passerina*, *minuta*, *buckleyi*, *talpacoti* and *cruziana* he separated from *picui* because of their rounded tails and "separate metallic spots" on the wing-coverts, and placed in the genus *Chamaepelia* (later *Columbigallina*). He put *campestris* into the monotypic genus *Uropelia* because of its longer tail, and *cyanopis* into another monotypic genus *Oxypelia* because of its different wing and tail proportions and attenuated first primary. His genus *Peristera* (later *Claravis*), which he distinguished from *Oxypelia* only by its allegedly shorter tail, embraced the three closely related species *pretiosa*, *mondetoura* and *godefrida*. In *Metriopelia*, which he defined as having "tail short, about half the length of wing, under tail-coverts black", he placed *aymara* and *melanoptera*.

Without recognizing so many subfamilies, Peters (1937: 102-111) concurred with Salvadori in the arrangement of these species, except that he also included *ceciliae* and *morenoi* in *Metriopelia*. These two species (as well as the genus *Scardafella*) Salvadori had placed in his subfamily Geopeliinae, presumably because of their having the tarsus anteriorly scutellated and (like *melanoptera*) lacking metallic or black markings on the wings. Hellmayr and Conover (1942: 510-564) deviate from Peters by retaining the genus *Gymnopelia* for *morenoi* and *ceciliae*, by following Todd (1913: 512) in removing *cruziana* from *Columbigallina* and placing it in the monotypic genus *Eupelia*, and by putting *aymara* in the monotypic genus *Leptophaps*.

When all the above species are compared their affinity is obvious, although the amount of difference shown between certain of them is such that it seems inadvisable to include them all in one genus. All the same, I think it is best, where feasible, to combine several species in a single genus, thus emphasizing their phylogenetic affinities and bringing them more in line with currently accepted criteria of genera in other groups, such as the turtledoves, *Streptopelia*, and wood doves, *Turtur* (Peters, 1937), and the fruit doves, *Ptilinopus* (Cain, 1954).

COLUMBINA

I think that the genera *Eupelia*, *Columbigallina* and *Oxypelia* are all best included in *Columbina*. In both its coloration and color-

pattern "*Eupelia*" *cruziana* is obviously intermediate between *Columbina picui* and the species currently placed in *Columbigallina*. The somewhat longer tail of *picui* and the proportionately larger feet and bill of *cruziana* should not, in my opinion, be rated higher than specific characters. "*Oxytelia*" *cyanopsis* shows a resemblance to the *Claravis* species in having an attenuated first primary. It also has more rufous in its plumage and, unlike other species which I place in *Columbina*, has this rufous color on its head as well as elsewhere. I do not, however, think that these characters should be considered as more than specific.

CLARAVIS

The genus *Claravis* (formerly *Peristera*) was separated by Salvadori (1893) from the *Columbina* species because of its sharply attenuated first primary. I do not think this feature by itself is of generic value, since it often occurs in species that are, in all other respects, obviously congeneric with related forms that lack it. In doves it seems correlated with life in rather dense cover and may be an adaptation for rapid maneuverability. The *Claravis* species also differ in being larger and showing much greater sexual dimorphism, the males being predominantly bluish grey, the females brown. Taken together these differences seem to me just sufficient to justify retention of the genus for the three species *pretiosa*, *mondetoura* and *godefrida*, of which the two latter should, I think, be considered as forming a superspecies.

METRIOPELIA

Metriopelia melanoptera and "*Leptophaps*" *aymara* have, in addition to the features pointed out by Salvadori (1893), more pointed wings with proportionately longer primaries and shorter secondaries than have the *Columbina* species. *M. melanoptera* also differs in its larger size and lack of display markings on the wings, but it agrees more closely with the *Columbina* group in its general color-pattern than it does with *Zenaida asiatica*, to which it bears considerable superficial resemblance. To some extent *aymara* bridges the gap between *melanoptera* and the *Columbina* species, since in size and in its wing markings it is very close to *picui* and *cruziana* although in other respects nearer to *melanoptera*.

"*Gymnopelia*" *morenoi* and *ceciliae* were placed by Salvadori (1893) in his subfamily Geopeliinae. On the characters he gives for this, however, the only one that would justify even their generic separation from *Metriopelia melanoptera* is their more rounded wings, since *melanoptera* has similar, though less pronounced, scutellation of the

tarsus. "*G.*" *ceciliae* and "*L.*" *aymara* both have short tails and very long upper tail-coverts, while "*G.*" *morenoi* and *M. melanoptera* are strikingly alike in coloration, although in other characters *morenoi* and *ceciliae* most closely resemble each other. All four seem to represent offshoots from *Columbina* stock which have become adapted for life at high altitudes and have, *aymara* excepted, lost the display plumage on the wings. *Ceciliae*, *morenoi* and *melanoptera* all have, however, extensive areas of bright yellow or orange orbital skin, which contrasts with the iris color (blue, green or brown) and probably "compensates" for lack of display plumage in hostile and sexual intra-specific encounters. Distinct as each of these four species is, I think Peters was right to emphasize their relationship and similarities by putting them all into the one genus *Metriopelia*.

UROPELIA

Uropelia campestris agrees with some of the *Columbina* species in its general size and coloration but has a longer tail and very rounded wings. Its wing markings very much resemble those of the *Claravis* species, from which, however, it differs in its much smaller size, short rounded wings and long pointed tail. I think it is sufficiently distinct to justify its retention in the monotypic genus *Uropelia*. The only reasonable alternative would be to place all the species here dealt with in *Columbina*, giving *Metriopelia*, *Claravis* and *Uropelia* only subgeneric rank. The difficulties of defining such a morphologically heterogeneous group would seem to outweigh the advantages gained by more sharply emphasizing the close phylogenetic relationship of all these forms.

SCARDAFELLA

The genus *Scardafella*, comprising the South American Scaled Dove, *squammata*, and the Middle American Inca Dove, *inca*, considered by Hellmayr and Conover (1942) to be representatives of a single species *squammata* (but *contra*, A.O.U. Check-list, 1957: 265), was placed by Salvadori (*sub nom.* *S. squamosa* and *S. inca*) in his subfamily Geopeliinae. *Scardafella* has a striking superficial resemblance to the Old World *Geopelia humeralis* and *G. striata*, but its closest affinities are undoubtedly with the other American ground doves. Peters (1937: 103-104) placed it between *Metriopelia* and *Uropelia*. Though having a much longer tail, *Scardafella* is quite close to *Columbina passerina* in its colors and color pattern, differing principally in having dark edges to most of its covert feathers, instead of only a slight indication of such markings on crown and neck as in *passerina*, and in lacking the iridescent wing markings. *Columbina*

picui approaches *Scardafella* in its rather long tail and, like the South American *Scardafella squammata*, has a white wing-patch. In the color pattern of its tail *Scardafella* is close to *Metriopelia ceciliae*, which also has a considerable amount of white in the wing. Mr. E. Eisenmann informs me (*in litt.*) that in the field *Scardafella inca* shows a general resemblance to *C. passerina* and *C. talpacoti* in habits and appearance. Mr. R. F. Johnston of New Mexico State College is, I understand, at present engaged on a detailed study of *Scardafella*, the results of which will, no doubt, produce decisive evidence of its affinities. Provisionally it seems justifiable to retain the genus because of its longer tail and lack of the iridescent wing markings.

SUMMARY

It is proposed that the ten genera of American ground doves recognized by Hellmayr and Conover (seven recognized by Peters) be reduced to five, with *Columbigallina*, *Eupelia* and *Oxypelia* merged in *Columbina*, and *Leptophaps* and *Gymnopelia* merged in *Metriopelia*.

All the American ground doves are more closely allied to each other than to any Old World genus.

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APPENDIX

GENERA (WITH THEIR COMPONENT SPECIES) OF AMERICAN GROUND DOVES RECOGNIZED
BY SALVADORI (1893), PETERS (1937), HELLMAYR AND CONOVER
(1942), AND PROPOSED REVISION

Salvadori 1893*	Peters 1937	Hellmayr and Conover 1942	Proposed revision
<i>Columbula</i>	<i>Columbina</i>	<i>Columbina</i>	<i>Columbina</i>
<i>picui</i>	<i>picui</i>	<i>picui</i>	<i>picui</i>
<i>Chamaepelia</i>	<i>Columbigallina</i>	<i>Columbigallina</i>	<i>passerina</i>
<i>passerina</i>	<i>passerina</i>	<i>passerina</i>	<i>talpacoti</i>
<i>talpacoti</i>	<i>talpacoti</i>	<i>talpacoti</i>	<i>minuta</i>
<i>minuta</i>	<i>minuta</i>	<i>minuta</i>	<i>buckleyi</i>
<i>buckleyi</i>	<i>buckleyi</i>	<i>buckleyi</i>	<i>cruziana</i>
<i>cruziana</i>	<i>cruziana</i>	<i>Eupelia</i>	<i>cyanopsis</i>
<i>Oxytelia</i>	<i>Oxytelia</i>	<i>cruziana</i>	<i>Claravis</i>
<i>cyanopsis</i>	<i>cyanopsis</i>	<i>Oxytelia</i>	<i>pretiosa</i>
<i>Peristera</i>	<i>Claravis</i>	<i>cyanopsis</i>	<i>mondetoura</i>
<i>pretiosa</i>	<i>pretiosa</i>	<i>Claravis</i>	<i>godefrida</i>
<i>mondetoura</i>	<i>mondetoura</i>	<i>pretiosa</i>	<i>Metriopelia</i>
<i>godefrida</i>	<i>godefrida</i>	<i>mondetoura</i>	<i>aymara</i>
<i>Metriopelia</i>	<i>Metriopelia</i>	<i>godefrida</i>	<i>melanoptera</i>
<i>aymara</i>	<i>aymara</i>	<i>Leptophaps</i>	<i>morenoi</i>
<i>melanoptera</i>	<i>melanoptera</i>	<i>aymara</i>	<i>ceciliae</i>
<i>Gymnopenia</i>	<i>morenoi</i>	<i>Metriopelia</i>	<i>Uropelia</i>
<i>morenoi</i>	<i>ceciliae</i>	<i>melanoptera</i>	<i>campestris</i>
<i>ceciliae</i>	<i>Uropelia</i>	<i>Gymnopenia</i>	<i>Scardafella</i>
<i>Uropelia</i>	<i>campestris</i>	<i>morenoi</i>	<i>squammata</i>
<i>campestris</i>	<i>Scardafella</i>	<i>ceciliae</i>	<i>inca</i>
<i>Scardafella</i>	<i>squammata</i>	<i>Uropelia</i>	
<i>squammata</i>	<i>inca</i>	<i>campestris</i>	
<i>inca</i>		<i>Scardafella</i>	
		<i>squammata</i>	
		(includes <i>inca</i>)	

* For comparison, the specific names given are the current ones; Salvadori in some cases used different names, and treated as species several forms currently regarded as subspecies.

Birds of Martha's Vineyard. Ludlow Griscom and Guy Emerson. 1959. 164 pp., map. Price, \$4.50. Privately printed. Available from Massachusetts Audubon Society, Boston 16, Mass., National Audubon Society, New York 28, N. Y., and Avery's, Martha's Vineyard, Mass.—Martha's Vineyard, a small island off the southern coast of Massachusetts, is ornithologically famous as the last haunt of the now extinct Heath Hen. After short introductory sections, including a nostalgic account of the "background of birding" on this island, the book consists chiefly of an annotated list of the 342 species recorded. Both the systematic list and the bibliography were revised by Mrs. Ruth Emery.—E. EISENMANN.