

Two doves: One native, one an intruder

BY BRUCE MCCAMMON

We have two types of doves in north central Washington: Mourning Dove and Eurasian Collared Dove.

I hope this article helps you keep them straight.

The native Mourning Dove is one of the most commonly seen birds across the United States. It helps that they come to backyard bird feeders.

They can be observed in most open habitats including forests, farmlands and suburbs. They are frequently seen sitting on overhead wires or on the ground where they pick up seeds and rocks to aid with digestion.

They may produce up to six broods of young each year, more than any other native bird species. They can also be long-lived. The oldest documented Mourning Dove was over 30 years old when it was killed.

The Mourning Dove is a gray-brown, medium-sized bird measuring about 12 inches in length. They have slender tails, small, rounded heads and a prominent white eye ring.



Bruce McCammon is retired, color-blind and enjoys photographing the birds in north central Washington.



Two similar doves: The one with the black stripe on the neck is the Eurasian Collared Dove and the one with the black spots on the wings is the Mourning Dove.

The distinctive black spots on their wings can be a key mark to help distinguish the Mourning Dove from the non-native Eurasian Collared Dove.

When a Mourning Dove takes flight, their wings make a distinctive, whistling sound. They fly fast and in a straight line. Perhaps the most recognized signature of the Mourning Dove

is its mournful cooing (<https://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Zenaida-macroua>).

The non-native Eurasian Collared Dove has been rapidly advancing across the United States since 1986.

The Collared Dove favors areas that have been heavily influenced by humans so we see them in urban areas. Measuring

13 inches in length, they are slightly larger than the Mourning Dove.

They also lack the black spots on their wings but substitute a black slash across the back of their necks.

When Collared Doves take flight their tails show a flash of white but they lack the whistling sound the Mourning Dove makes. Collared Doves tend to fly upwards to a point and then glide down to perch.

Their common call is much rougher and louder than the soft cooing of the Mourning Dove.

Studies about competition between the two dove species are limited but the worry about Collared Doves replacing Mourning Doves has not been shown to be a credible concern. Time will tell.

Keep your eyes on the overhead wires as you walk, hike or drive and you are likely to see Mourning Doves or Eurasian Collared Doves perched as individuals or in small groups.

Look for the long, slender, pointed tail and then scan for the black spots on the wings toward the back of the bird or the telltale black stripe on the neck.

A profile view will easily show the curved head and a dark, downward-curved beak.

If it is safe, stop and spend a minute or two with them. Good luck.