

Book Review

"Wild pigeons and doves" by Dr. Jean Delacour, 1980, T.F.H. Publications, Inc. pp. 189 is a beautiful book of convenient size with photographs and paintings, many in color, of a good sampling of the 300 or so species of pigeons and doves existing in the world. Ranges and subspecies are often given along with the scientific name, very good to have. The book does not pretend to be complete for species, nor for comments on housing, feeding, breeding, or diseases; but it is a useful, convenient and attractive book to have.

There are some inaccuracies and misleading labels and statements which ADA members need to know about to keep from having later confusions.

p. 35 "hybrids between ring doves and domestic pigeons.. are practically unsexed".. I have produced over 30 of these "mules" myself, scattered over the years and the only unsexed ones were the rare females (about 2% according to the Cole and Hollander study - see the American Naturalist, 1950) from the usual direction of cross (male pigeon with female ringneck dove). The males were and are vigorous and sexually dominating among ringnecks. They court assiduously and drive off competitors persistently. They copulate normally and sit on eggs appropriately. They may successfully raise youngsters, if fertile eggs are fostered. They have plenty of sex!

p. 43 The text more or less equates serum and vaccine, which are quite different. Serum is the fluid portion of the blood that includes antibodies against bacteria, etc.; vaccine is killed or attenuated bacteria, etc. which induce the recipient to make its own antibodies.

p. 52 The label "Indian ring dove, S. decaocto", is wrong. I think it is a blond pied, S. risoria. The collar is sometimes, but rarely, affected by the pied condition.

p. 60 Again, these are probably S. risoria and just white with "dirty" tails and ventral feathers or extreme peds.

This matter of species is troublesome. From blood-typing results plus consideration of the blond-white mutants and behavior, I regard Streptopelia risoria, to be the domestic form of S. roseogrisea which is sometimes confused with S. decaocto. Derek Goodwin's book on Pigeons and Doves of the World agrees in this.

p. 61 The "silver" mutation here, I strongly suspect, is the usual sex-linked white. "Silver" is a frequent mutation in many species of birds. It generally is a sex-linked recessive, and is characterized by a dilution of eumelanin. Therefore, blond is more correctly the equivalent of a silver mutation than is white.

p. 76 While I have not seen the Indian subspecies of "palm turtle" dove, I strongly suspect the painter of this attractive picture incorrectly placed the neck spotting on the "back" of the neck of the bird on the left, but correctly on the "front" of the neck of the bird on the right. Derek Goodwin has a good paper on different display behavior of the neck pattern in such species.

I suspect that the editors of T.F.H. rather than Dr. Delacour were responsible for the errors.

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...W. J. Miller