

DO SOME OF YOUR RINGNECK DOVES HAVE LONG TAILS?

by

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The tail of two or three ringneck doves, Streptopelia risoria, suddenly struck us as being exceptionally long. When we measured a number of ringnecks we found that our dove population was indeed polymorphic for tail length.

We used a plastic ruler graduated in centimeters and millimeters. The end of the ruler was cut off at the zero mark. The ruler was inserted along the feather length between the main tail feathers and the under tail coverts, gently rested on the birds skin, and then the length read. Of course, other measuring methods might be preferred, such as plucking the middle tail feather and measuring its exact length. But this simple method is sufficient for our purposes.

Three males were over 14 cm in length: 14.3, 14.6, and 14.9 cm (5 and 7/8 inches). Only one female had a tail 13 cm long, but four were over 12 cm. To contrast these obviously long tailed birds with a random group, I measured 23 male and 22 female ringnecks in adult holding pens. The trend is toward a bimodal distribution based on sex. The results are given below:

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Average	12.3 ± .39 SD	11.67 ± .44 SD (Standard deviation)
Range	11.5-13 cm	10.8-12.6 cm

Since the first measurements, we have found a male with a tail only 10.8 cm long, and females now have a wider range, 10.5 (4 1/8 inches) to 12.7 cm.

The juvenile plumage is less complete and is shorter than the adult plumage. For example, one young male changed from 12.5 cm juvenile tail length to 14.3 cm in the adult plumage.

Naturally we put such extreme tail length birds into mating as soon as space became available. But it may be several years before I have enough data to describe it better, especially its inheritance. Meanwhile, some ringneck breeders might be interested in comparing their birds with our results. Do you have any especially long-tailed doves, or any especially short-tailed ones?