

The Luzon Bleeding-heart Dove

Gallacolumba luzonica

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The Philippine Islands are home to five species of bleeding-heart doves – or pigeons as they are sometimes called. Several of the larger islands have their own species although several of the doves overlap on to a few of the smaller islands. The birds' scientific names sometimes reflect the island on which the dove is found.

The bird in the photograph is a Luzon Bleeding-heart Dove which is the most common in aviculture and is found on the largest island in the Philippines – Luzon.

The birds not covered in this article include the Mindoro Bleeding-heart, *Gallacolumba platenae*, the Negros Bleeding-heart, *Gallacolumba keayi*, the Mindanao Bleeding-heart, *Gallacolumba criniger*, and the Sulu Bleeding-heart, *Gallacolumba menagei*. The scientific names vary a bit according to which reference book one uses.

The doves on Mindoro and Negros differ from the others in having a pale yellow or bright orange spot in the center of the breast compared to the red spot of the Luzon bird.

The Luzon Bleeding-heart was first bred in captivity in England in 1893 by Rosie Alderson. The first U.S. breeding took place in 1917.

I have kept the Luzon Bleeding-heart for many years. An established pair will nest and rear their young in a pen at least 10 feet long by 6 feet wide and high with a shelter. Although they come from a tropical environment, they are rather hardy in the southern California climate although they must be protected from cold wind and rain.

My pens are planted with red fountain grass, bamboo, and guava.


The Luzons are fed a standard mix plus safflower and small hookbill seeds. Softbill pellets are added. Boiled rice and cubed cheddar cheese sprinkled with vionate and meal worms is fed weekly. A pot of grit is in all the pens.

Luzons like to nest high in a

secluded spot. I provide at least three nest boxes for each pair. Alfalfa stems are placed in each box as a starter and tobacco stems are placed on the ground.

The hen will pick the nest site and the male will carry the nest-building stems to her. When the nest is completed, the hen will lay two white

eggs that hatch in 18 to 19 days. The chicks are fed by both parents and fledge in about two weeks. They should be removed when weaned as the male will chase the young.

Luzon Bleeding-heart Pigeons are not an easy bird to breed. They require proper feed and housing to feel comfortable. They are difficult to sex visually and I've know of luzons living together for years while the keeper was at a loss as to why there was no breeding. 

Male Luzon Bleeding-heart Dove.

Photo by Cyril Laubscher

