

Fruit Doves and Pigeons

by John Pire
Texas City, Texas

I would like to add a pair of fruit doves/pigeons to my bird collection. There are many questions I need answered before attempting to keep these exotic species. Are the fruit doves/pigeons cost prohibitive to my budget? Do I have to construct special aviaries to house them? How hard is it to feed these specialized eaters? How big or small are the fruit doves/pigeons? Are they really as hard to keep as everyone says they are?

This article will hopefully answer these and any other questions you may be asking yourself. I have spent many hours on the phone talking with the limited number of aviculturists and several zoos keeping these species of birds. I have asked many questions and found that everyone

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Photo by George D. Dodge and Dale R. Thompson

Blue-tailed Imperial Fruit Pigeon of the East Indies (*Ducula concinna*)

AFA is Conservation too!

Common Name: Great Green (Buffon's) Macaw

Scientific Name: *Ara ambigua*

Distribution: The Caribbean slope of eastern Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, locally on both slopes of Panama, and in northwestern Colombia, with an isolated population in western Ecuador (AOU 1983).

Status In The Wild: Listed in Appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered

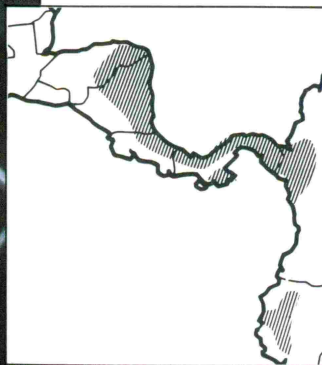
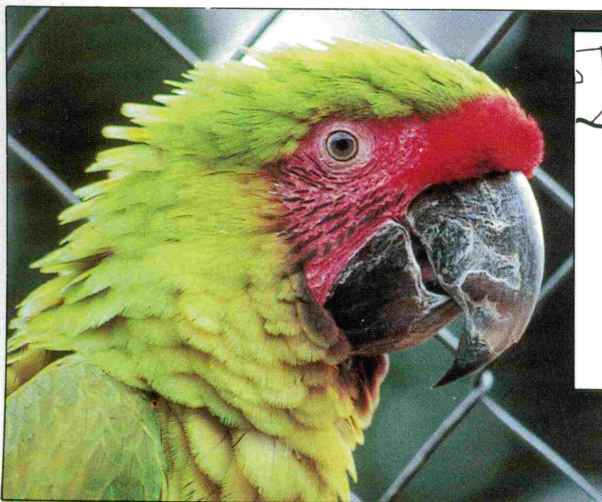
Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (C.I.T.E.S.). The macaw is not, however, included in the "ICBP World Checklist of Threatened Birds" (1989) nor listed in previous editions of the Red Data Book of the IUCN/ICBP. Nevertheless, recent data indicates the species numbers are being reduced annually due to habitat destruction and illegal trade.

Status In Captivity: Several hundred birds have been imported into the United States legally within the past two decades. Numerous others have entered, being misidentified as Military Macaws or by smugglers. The species has bred in captivity on several occasions.

Conservation Action: An aggressive campaign has been launched by the Conservation - Committee (macaw conservation sub-committee) to encourage the propagation of this species. The program includes printing material as to the differences between Buffon's and Military Macaws so as to prevent unintentional hybridization.

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Vitamin B ₁	800 mg	Hesperidin	60,000 mcg	Alanine	8,172 mg	Threonine	12,258 mg
Vitamin B ₂	600 mg	Bioflavonoids	60,000 mcg	Arginine	8,626 mg	Tryptophane	13,984 mg
Vitamin B ₃	600 mg	MINERALS AND SALTS				Tyrosine	14,710 mg
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Niacin	3,000 mg	Copper (0.028%)	127 mg	Histidine	7,264 mg	Kelp, Liver, Capsicum.	
Pantothenic Acid	300 mg	Zinc (0.08%)	345 mg	Isoleucine	16,888 mg		
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was very willing to share their gained knowledge with me.

I've been in the dove fancy some 12 or 13 years now and have always wanted to add a pair or two of the fruit doves to my collection of foreign doves and pigeons. I never purchased a pair because of the questions I raised at the start of this article. These fears have been erased. The next pair of doves added to my existing collection of 34 different species of doves/pigeons will be the fruit doves.

There is very little information published and available to the interested aviculturist on the fruit doves/pigeons. There is also a very limited number of aviculturists who keep these species among their bird collections. Although many U.S. zoos have them in their collections, not many zoos publish data about their success or failure with their birds (which is available to the private aviculturist).

In the last several years there have been fruit doves/pigeons imported into the United States. The San Diego Zoo has been importing many of the fruit doves/pigeons for their bird collection. Two men well known in the dove fancy for importing doves and pigeons are Don Hanover and Lynn Hall. Both have imported seed-eating doves and pigeons. At the same time they also imported many different species of the fruit doves and pigeons. Both have also shared their knowledge of keeping and raising the birds, along with pairs of birds, with other interested aviculturists. If it were not for these two, many of the now available species of doves and pigeons would not be in American aviaries.

The fruit doves and pigeons come

in a range of sizes. Some are as small as the popular Diamond Dove. Others are as large or larger than the European Wood Pigeon. Some of the species are very colorful and would rival any parrot for showiness.

The cost of obtaining a pair of fruit doves was my main excuse for not having them in my collection. When I sat down and remembered what I had already spent on obtaining the birds in my collection, I was amazed. I could have purchased several pairs of these beautiful doves long ago. I look at the cost of a pair of fruit doves this way. I keep a minimum of two unrelated breeding pairs of each species in my collection, sometimes three unrelated breeding pairs. The cost of one pair of the fruit doves would be the same as buying two or three pairs of Bleeding Heart Doves or another exotic species.

Do I need to construct special aviaries to house the fruit doves/pigeons? No! The basic walk-in aviary will suit most of the species. My aviaries are from three feet to six feet wide, six to eight feet high and all are eight feet deep. The aviaries are covered completely on the top. Several are planted with native trees and bushes. Each row of aviaries has a safety entrance. The planted aviary best suits the fruit doves because they come from tropical areas with plenty of trees.

The only special item everyone suggested to me, which really makes sense, is the use of an elevated feeding platform. Fruit doves/pigeons rarely come to the ground for any length of time. Thus, keeping the food elevated is ideal. I am constructing my feeding platform from an old circular kitchen table. I attached a 12" by 12" cake pan to the stand. I removed the circular pressed board top. I can then place a ceramic bird crock inside the secured cake pan.

Can I feed these specialized eaters a good diet? Yes! There are many proven diets used for the fruit doves/pigeons. There are also several fruit pellets which are available. I feed fruit and soft foods to the parrot and finches in my collection so there should be no trouble mixing up one more dish for the fruit doves. The International Dove Society is compiling a list of the many different diets used by the members keeping these species. This information will be published in their monthly newsletter for members. This helpful data will help the fanciers in selecting a diet or a

combination of several diets to use on their birds.


Another most frequently asked question by me was, can seed-eating doves be housed with a pair of the fruit doves? Yes. You cannot neglect the fruit doves' food, as you can with the seed-eating species. Most fanciers use self feeders of some sort to feed their seed eaters. This cannot be done with the fruit eating species. As long as you supply the fruit-eating doves/pigeons with a daily supply of their own food they will not eat the seeds. If they should eat some of the seed, don't become worried. The seeds will be passed through the digestive tract without being digested. In the wild, when the bird eats the ripened fruit the seeds of the fruit are still inside. These are passed through.

What types of nesting containers suit the fruit doves/pigeons? Any type that you already use for your other doves and pigeons will work such as platforms with wicker baskets firmly attached, the typical single pigeon nest box, wire platforms, etc. The nesting materials can be pine needles, small twigs, leaves, hay, etc. A sound idea for placement of the nest, whether high or low, should be that the nesting bird can see you as you approach. If not, the birds can be spooked off the eggs or young which sometimes leads to abandonment. Always move slowly when around or inside the aviary. With time, your birds will come to expect your daily visits as part of their routine.

I hope this article is encouragement enough to pique your interest in the world of fruit doves and pigeons. With only a select few fanciers keeping and raising these species in private aviaries, there is a need to make more aviculturists aware of the fascinating hobby of dove/pigeon keeping. The more interest shown by the aviculturist the better we can secure the future of the dove hobby for all future generations, plus keep the species which are currently in American aviaries, and all future importations (if there are any more) alive.

To learn more about the enjoyable hobby of dove/pigeon keeping you can become a member of the International Dove Society. The IDS has a worldwide membership, an informative monthly newsletter, a yearly directory of members and their birds and holds an annual national dove show. To join, send \$20 (annual dues) to: IDS Treasurer W, 2507 3rd Avenue North, Texas City, Texas 77590. ●

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