

# Diamond Doves

## Pleasant Additions to any Aviary

(*Geopalia cuneata*)

by Nancy Vigran  
Studio City, California

Native to Australia, Diamond Doves (*Geopalia cuneata*) have become a domesticated species in the U.S. and Europe. Perhaps it is due to their adaptability in the wild (Diamond Doves live throughout most of Australia) that has made them such a hardy species for aviculturists to work with.

Diamond Doves can be housed in flights or cages. Cages should be a minimum of three feet in length to allow for flying room. Diamond Doves can be kept with a variety of other species such as finches, budgies, cockatiels and grasskeets. In fact, Diamond Doves can be housed with any species that will not harm them.

For breeding, Diamond Dove pairs should be kept separately. Because

they build such flimsy nests, nests can easily be destroyed resulting in broken eggs or loss of babies. Male Diamond Doves can be aggressive to nests other than their own.

Diamond Doves seem to prefer open cup-type nests to wooden bottomed, but can be found nesting almost anywhere, even in their seed cups. Most Diamond Doves will tolerate your firming up their nests a bit when necessary. They nest off the ground anywhere from three feet upward. Once a pair has chosen a site, it is almost impossible to get them to change it.

Two white eggs are laid (rarely three) and incubation, done by both male and female, lasts 15 days. The

chicks should hatch a day or so apart, giving the older chick an advantage at survival.

The young fledge in approximately 15 days and will usually remain on the ground for a day or so. Sometimes the parents will become attentive to only the older fledged chick, neglecting feeding the younger one in the nest. Some breeders will either return the older chick to the nest for a day or so or remove the younger one, placing it beside its older sibling to ensure it getting fed.

Diamond Doves can survive on the blandest of diets, however it is better to offer them a well-rounded, healthy diet. A finch mix with red and white millet and canary seed should be provided along with soaked seed, whole wheat bread and greens. Grit should be offered to aid the gizzard in grinding food and shaved cuttlebone, crushed, baked eggshells and/or calcium powder mixed with soft food should be provided.

Diamond Doves have grey wings sprinkled with white dots resembling diamonds. The body feathers are grey-brown with white on the abdomen. Males and females are similar except that the males' eye rings are far more pronounced and a brighter red, especially when in breeding condition. Upon fledging, young are a dark grey-brown. They will receive adult plumage at approximately three to four months of age. Young Diamond Doves can go to nest after six months but it is more desirable to hold them back until they are nine to 12 months old to allow for sexual maturing.

As with many domesticated species, Diamond Doves can produce year round in most cases. They can stand weather extremes of over 100 F in the summer and down into the 40's in the winter. It is best to offer supplemental heat sources such as heat lamps when temperatures drop into the lower 40's and below.

The silver mutation of the Diamond Dove is almost as abundant as the normal and more mutations such as the white-tailed are cropping up.

Diamond Doves are affordable birds, often available for as little as \$10 per pair. They are very quiet (emitting only a gentle cooing) and docile to keep with other birds. They are an added delight to any aviary and remember "diamonds are a girl's best friend." ●

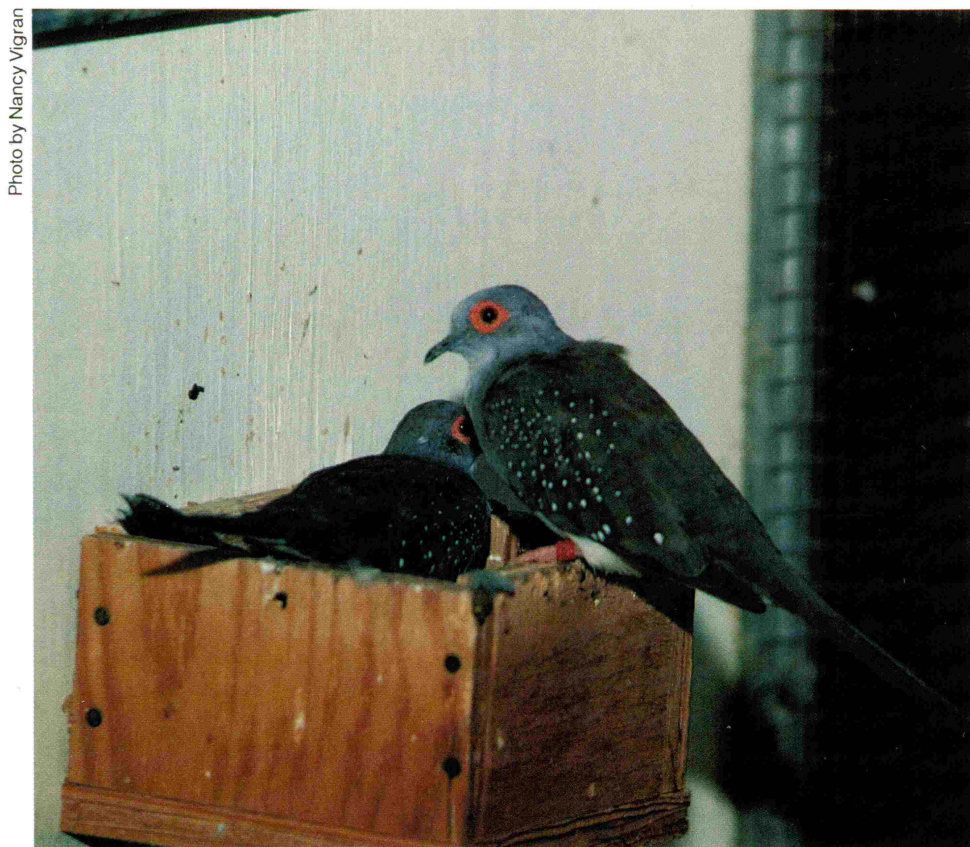


Photo by Nancy Vigran

A pair of Diamond Doves tending their nest.



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