

DOCUMENTATION --  
RARE BIRD SIGHTING

single observer  
A

25-81-63  
MOUNTAIN WEST REGION  
AMERICAN BIRDS

Species: Common Ground Dove  
(Vernacular name)

Columbina passerina  
(Scientific name)

If you watch birds solely for your own enjoyment, a written description of your observations is unnecessary. But, if you have seen something unusual, and would like to share this with others, a written description is essential. Compilers of regional bird lists must insist that their records be scientifically sound; future bird students--those studying occurrences 50 years from now--must have a written record on which to depend. By providing the verifying written description, you are employing a basic rule of the scientific method.

We recognize that experienced field observers can provide important and reliable records, if supported by an adequate verifying description. Thus this request is an effort to perpetuate your record by obtaining concrete evidence which may be permanently preserved for examination by others in the future. This procedure is required for every extraordinary observation, irrespective of the observer.

Date (s): 17 December 1981 Time Bird Seen: 9:05A.m. to 9:10A.M.

Locality: the west side of Tamarack Ranch (Game Dept. property), north side of river  
Crook, Logan, Colorado  
Nearest town, county and state:

Optical equipment: 7x35X Swift binoculars

If photographed, please enclose copy. Equipment used: N/A

Number of birds seen: 1 Sex: ? Plumage: N/A

Light conditions: sunny day

Distance from bird, and how measured: approximately 20 feet, estimated

Describe the bird's overall behavior: I was watching a large flock of about 50 Mourning Doves fly up from underneath some shrubs. They took off in groups of 2-5 birds. As I was watching these birds the Ground Dove flew up by itself and alighted on small shrub. The first thing noticed was its small size and rufous patches on wings and rapid wing beat. After watching the bird for a few minutes it flew away.

Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird: A mixed shrub - cottonwood habitat about 10 feet from a branch of the South Platte River.

Other observers who independently identified this bird (Please list name and address):  
None, one other person saw bird but was not a birdwatcher

Describe in great detail the bird which you saw. Emphasize particularly the field marks used to identify the bird, but include a complete description of the bird. Include size, overall shape, plumage and color pattern; details on shape or size of bill, wings, and tail. (Reference to its resemblance to field guide descriptions is not enough.) Describe what you actually saw in the field.

The field characters noted were:

1. Small size in comparison to Mourning Doves which it was with. It appeared to be about half the size of the Mourning Doves.
2. My first impression was that it wasn't a dove but a songbird.
3. The rufous patches noted on its wings in flight attracted my attention to the bird, since it did not look like any songbird I was familiar with.
4. When it alighted on the shrub it looked like a miniature Mourning Dove - similar light color and same body shape (only a shorter tail).
5. Since I only recently moved to Colorado I was not sure how common Ground Dove sightings were in Colorado.

Describe the bird's calls or sounds, if heard; including method of delivery-- i.e., from perch, in flight, etc.:

N/A

List similar species and how you eliminated them:

Inca Dove - Did not have the scaly appearance of an Inca Dove  
Mourning Dove - Was about half the size of a Mourning Dove and had rufous wing patches.

Prior experience with this and similar species:

I have commonly seen Common Ground Doves in Florida. I also have seen Common Ground Doves, Inca Doves, and Plain-breasted Ground Doves in Mexico in the spring of this year.

This report was written from notes made during \_\_\_ after x observation; from memory \_\_\_.

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