

1999 - 181

CFO-ORC-FILE# \_\_\_\_\_

ACCEPT 7-0

COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

Results: \_\_\_\_\_

FIRST DUAL OBSERVER  
RECORD;

Species:

Common Ground-Dove

Columbina Passerina

Dates: 11/20/99

Number of birds seen: one

Sex: male

Plumage:

Locality: Road 3.5, 0.5 miles north of intersection of roads Y.5 and 3.5

Elevation: not sure. I believe about 4000 feet.

Nearest town: Fort Morgan

County: Morgan

Time observed: around 1 pm

**Duration of observation:** about 10 seconds to one minute at a time over a half hour period. Most views were flying. The first time I saw it perched was for about a minute or two. The other time I saw it perched was for a few seconds.

**Other observers with you:** Of the others who saw it, Gail Evans saw it best. Also Warren Finch, Bob Spencer, Diana & Don Mullineaux, Mort Staatz, Marty Woodford, Beverlee Guild, Carolyn Cooley, and Charlotte Ossman.

**Other observers who saw the bird independently:** none that I know of yet  
**Light conditions:** Mostly to partly cloudy. The sun was in and out of high clouds. The first time I saw it perched it was between the sun and me so the light was not the best. It was only about a foot off the ground so the background was brown ground and the sun was not a problem. The second time I saw it perched the sun was directly to my right and the light was quite good.

**Optical equipment:** Leica 10x42

**Distance from bird:** Both views of the perched bird were pretty close, about 15 or 20 feet at a guess.

**Describe the bird's behavior:** On a DFO field trip, after some earlier birding at Jackson Lake SP proper, we drove to where the outlet canal drains the lake and drove up Road 3.5 toward the dam along the canal. I noticed some sparrows 0.5 miles up the road so we stopped for a while to check out the sparrows. After 10 minutes or so observing sparrows Gail Evans and I walked around a row of 3 or 4 foot high weeds between the road and a corn field on the west side. Right away we noticed a non-sparrow perched about a foot off the ground and facing directly away from us. It was not moving. I looked in binoculars and started thinking ground-dove right away. Gail said something about a Mourning Dove but I said I thought it was a ground-dove. There was a weed obscuring the bottom of the tail and I think it may have hidden the tail completely from the much shorter Gail so she could not see it. I walked toward the bird and to my right so I could see the entire tail. When I did see the entire tail I started yelling, "Common Ground-Dove". This was unfortunate as I scared the bird and it flew low over the weeds toward the canal. At this point I was not completely sure it was not a Ruddy because I had not seen any scaliness yet but I did see the rufous in the

wings plainly. There was some pinkishness visible too. We ran around the weeds to the canal and unfortunately nobody, including Bob Spencer and Warren Finch, had heard us and so nobody saw where the bird went. I looked along the canal for a few seconds and the bird flew about 10 or 15 feet and landed in front of me in plain sight right next to a White-crowned Sparrow. It was perched in the middle of some weeds probably about three feet off the ground. I saw it fairly well for a short period and finally saw the scaliness on the head. Soon it flushed again and flew to the other side of the canal. Whenever it flew it flew low and just skimmed over the row of weeds.

At this point I called Norm Erthal. Then we searched for a way across the canal. We found one about 100 yards to the south and Gail, Carolyn Cooley, and I walked over and came down the canal. We were hoping to get better looks and get everybody on the field trip to see it. Unfortunately we never could spot it before it flew. Warren Finch saw it land once and saw it for a little while. It flew a couple of more times, always about 15 to 50 feet and it always stayed low. Then we could not refind it. It did not ever seem to go far so I was surprised that we could find it again. I think everybody saw it fly and saw the short, square tail and the rufous wings but not many saw it perched.

**Describe the bird (what you actually saw):**

Head, back, and breast: When I first saw the bird I thought dove for sure. It was facing away from me. The back was one solid color and I am not real clear exactly what color but an earthy type color like brown. The back of the head appeared to be a different more grayish color but still solid with no scaliness apparent. I believe that the angle and less than perfect light at this time kept me from seeing any scaliness. There was also a vague impression of pinkness around the breast, which I could only see partially from the back and a little to the side. Other observers on the trip mentioned a pinkish breast. I did not note this very carefully myself but I had some concern at first that it might be a Ruddy Ground-Dove since I had not seen any scaliness and was not completely clear what the differences were. When I saw the bird perched the second time I clearly saw scaliness on the side of the face.

Tail: The tail was short and while perched appeared darker than the back with straight sides and a fairly square tip making it look rectangular. When it flew I could easily see the dark outer feathers on the tail contrasting with the lighter center feathers. The central feathers looked like a rectangle that was narrower than the rectangle of the entire tail. The first time it flew the darkness seemed to extend across the base of the tail like a tail band. This may have again been because of the poor sun angle. In all other views it looked like the lighter feathers extended to the base of the tail.

Wings: About the only thing I noticed was that the wings seemed short and broad and they had a definite rufous color that contrasted noticeably with the body.

Bare parts: I did not note any color on the bill, legs, or eyes.

Underparts: Not noted.

Size: It was in the same binocular view with a nearby White-crowned Sparrow and appeared to me to be slightly larger than the sparrow. The third edition of NGS Birds of North America lists the Common Ground-Dove as 6.5 inches long and the White-crowned Sparrow as 7 inches long. Since the sparrow is not as bulky and has a longer tail this seems consistent with my impression.

**Describe the bird's song and call if heard:** it was silent

**Describe the habitat in which you observed the bird:** It was in an area with a small canal with slow running water with dirt roads on both sides of the canal and fallow corn fields next to the roads with thigh high dry weeds along the canal and roads. Nearby was Jackson Reservoir. There was a lot of dry corn on the ground.

**How did you eliminate similarly appearing species:**

Mourning Dove: The tail was short and rectangular with dark sides. This is much different than a Mourning Dove's long tapered uniformly colored tail. The wings were rufous while a Mourning Dove's are brownish or grayish. Also I believe that a Mourning would look noticeably larger than a White-crowned Sparrow sitting next to it.

Ruddy Ground-Dove: The scaliness on the face eliminates the Ruddy Ground-Dove. Also, from the illustration in NGS Birds of North America, I don't believe that the color of the wings would contrast as much with body in Ruddy Ground-Dove as it did with this bird.

Inca Dove: The tail was too short and boxy for Inca Dove. Also I believe that I would have seen the white edging on the tail if it was an Inca Dove. The first view of the bird that I had would have shown scaliness on the back if it was an Inca Dove. Even though the light was not perfect and I could not see any scaliness on the head from the view I had, I could see the entire back and indeed, almost nothing but its back, and I am sure that the scaliness of an Inca Dove would have been apparent. The pinkish impression I had is also wrong for Inca Dove.

**What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species:** Of course I have seen many Mourning Doves. In California I had a Common Ground-Dove at my bird feeder for several days. I observed it for hours and took several photographs. At the time it was one of the northernmost Common Ground-Doves that had been found in California. I have also seen many Common Ground-Doves in Arizona, Florida, and the Salton Sea. I have seen many Inca Doves in Arizona and the Salton Sea. I have never seen a Ruddy Ground-Dove.

**List books if they helped in your identification:** A Field Guide to North American Birds, third editions, by National Geographic Society.

This report was written from notes taken during x, or after observation    or from memory x. I used a microcassette recorder to record my observations within minutes of observing the bird. I consulted those notes however the experience is still very fresh in my mind and I am writing this largely from memory. It is now 11am on 11/21/99.

Reporting observer:

David W. Quesenberry

Signature: David W. Quesenberry

Address:

6254 S. Elmira CIR E

Englewood, CO 80111

# COLORADO FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS SIGHT RECORD FORM

CFO-RC FILE #: 1999-181

Results : \_\_\_\_\_

Please print or type. Attach photographs and additional pages if necessary.

Species : COMMON GROUND DOVE  
(Common Name)

COLUMBINA PASSERINA  
(Scientific Name)

Date(s) of occurrence : November 20, 1999

Number of birds seen : one Sex : male Plumage : adult

Exact location : Along outlet canal, 1/2 mile south of Jackson Reservoir

County : Morgan County Nearest town : Fort Morgan Elevation : about 4500 ft.

Length of observation : 10-15 minutes Times(s) of observation : off & on between 1pm and 1:45pm

Other observers who saw the bird(s) with you : David Quesenberry plus Carolyn Cooley, Warren Finch, Bob Spence, Diana & Don Mullineaux, Mort Staatz, Beverly Guild, and Charlotte Ossman

Other observers who independently saw the bird(s) : none that I know of

Light conditions [quality; direction relative to bird(s); position] : light overcast to sunny, no wind, 57°F. We were facing south, the sun was coming from the west.

Optical equipment used : Celestron binoculars 10x42

Distance from bird(s) (estimated unless otherwise noted) : 4 to 10 yards, 7 - 10 yards when we first saw it.

Was the bird(s) photographed : no If so, have you submitted photos? \_\_\_\_\_

Who took the photographs? \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the general and specific habitat in which the bird(s) occurred :  
see addendum

Describe the behavior of the bird(s) (flying/feeding/habits/behaviors used in identifying the species or in supporting the identification) :  
see addendum

Describe the bird(s) in detail. This is the most important part of this report. Include overall size and shape, and how you placed the bird(s) in the general group that you did. Give complete details of plumage, including head, throat, undersides, nape, back, wings, and tail. Give particular emphasis to marks you used to identify the bird(s). Describe other details, such as color and shape of bill, legs, eye, etc. That were important in making the identification. (Fill out this portion even if photographs are submitted; you may attach additional sheets, drawings, field sketches, or copy of field notes) :  
see addendum

Discuss similar species and how you eliminated them :

see addendum

What is your prior experience with this and similarly appearing species?

see addendum

List books, guides, recordings, or other sources consulted and how these influenced your identification (during and after observation) :  
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA 2nd EDITION

This report was made from notes made during \_\_\_\_\_ or after x as soon as we lost the bird 24 hours later observation, or later from memory

Date of written report : 11-21-'99 Reporting observer : Gail Evans

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting observer's address : 1480 S. Jasmine Way, Denver, Colorado 80224 ph 303-758-2231

Send report to : Bill Lisowsky, 2919 Silverplume Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80526

*Rec'd 11/24/99 upl  
(Confirmed signature 11/23/99  
by phone)*  
**ACCEPT 7-0**



Addendum to CFO Sight Record Form for COMMON GROUND DOVE  
submitted by Gail Evans - November 21, 1999

**HABITAT:** An area of recently harvested corn-fields with dense three to six foot tall weedy brushy margins, bisected by the water-filled outlet canal from Jackson Reservoir. Dry weedy banks and primitive dirt roads lined the canal on both sides. The ground everywhere was littered with the debris of harvest (corn stalks, leaves, cobs, and kernels).

**BEHAVIOR:** When David Quesenberry and I first spotted this bird it was sitting completely motionless on a horizontal weed stalk 1-2 ft. off the ground. It was in the open sunshine on the west edge of a cornfield with White-crowned Sparrows actively feeding on the ground around it. When it first flew, and all the ensuing times we saw it in the air, the bird's flight was fluttery and slow, although it did not appear to be sick or injured. It flew no more than ten feet above the ground barely skimming the brush and after a short distance, diving abruptly into the dense cover. After the first time we flushed it, the bird became very wary and we were unable to approach without disturbing it. We flushed it three or four times over a half-hour period before it finally gave us the slip.

**DESCRIPTION:** Dave and I were separated from our group when we first saw this bird. It was facing away from us in the open sun 7-10 yards away. Because it sat completely motionless, we had plenty of time to study it. The bird had the distinctive dove shape but was much too small for a Mourning Dove, only slightly chunkier than the White-crowned Sparrows feeding around it. Its back was olive brown with no markings. Its tail was short, neatly squared off and darker brown than the back. Our bird's nape was a soft gray fading to silver on the crown. When I stepped a little to the right and the bird became aware of our presence, it turned its head to look at us. I saw that the sides of its head and neck were a soft pinkish tone and that its eye and the base of its tiny dove bill were a brighter pink.

Because I saw some black spots on this bird's wing coverts and was thinking, "When you hear the sound of hoofbeats, think horses not zebras", I did my best to turn this bird into a juvenile, sick or injured Mourning Dove. However it was not to be. Our specimen was soon frightened off by the rest of our group who came thundering up despite Dave's best efforts to keep them quiet. When the bird flushed, I still had it in my binoculars. Its bright rufous wings flashed in the sun and its tail revealed itself to be very short, broadly fanned, and dark brown with black edges which grew broader toward the tip. I did not see any white in the tail. The little bird's bright rufous wings were noticed by everyone in our group who saw it fly. It obviously was not a Mourning Dove.

Having accepted the amazing fact that our bird was indeed a ground dove, David and I consulted my N.G. Field Guide which I had with me. All our mutually observed field marks pointed to a male Common Ground Dove. However, I still hesitated because the bird had been facing away from us most of the time, and I personally had not clearly seen scaling on its breast.

Everyone in our group rushed ahead of me to the spot where they had seen the bird land. It immediately flushed a second time and flew right across in front of me, no more than four yards away and at about eye level. This time, with my naked eye, I clearly saw the

scaling on the feathers of the bird's neck and breast, it was a male Common Ground Dove.

#### SIMILAR SPECIES

MOURNING DOVE: Our bird was much too small to be this common species, and its bright rufous wings eliminated this possibility.

INCA DOVE: Our bird's tail was too short and lacked white. Its pink bill and unmarked brown back also eliminated this species.

RUDDY GROUND DOVE: Clearly observed scaling on our bird's neck and breast plus pink tones on the side of its head and its pink bill eliminated the Ruddy Ground Dove.

EXPERIENCE WITH SIMILAR SPECIES: I have identified the Common Ground Dove, Ruddy Ground Dove and Inca Dove on several different occasions. Most recently with Norm Erthal in Oaxaca, Mexico February 6-16, 1999 where all three species were abundant and very tame.