

Claravis pretiosa (Blue Ground Dove)

Family: Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

Order: Columbiformes (Pigeons, Doves and Dodos)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Blue ground dove, *Claravis pretiosa*.

[<http://jimburnsphotos.com/pages/crbluegrounddove.html>, downloaded 4 February 2017]

TRAITS. *Claravis pretiosa* is a small tropical dove, rarely seen travelling in flocks but rather in pairs, and is sexually dimorphic. Adult males have light, powder-blue heads with paler grey underparts (Schulenberg, 2007). Their wings are dotted black, legs are pinkish and claws are black (Fig. 1). Females have grey-brown heads and reddish brown spots on the upper side of the wings as compared to the males. They have a greyish under body with a hint of brown on the chest and a ruddy brown colour on their back. The females' highly contrasting tail is cinnamon brown with legs and claws being much like the males (Fig. 2). Young birds are similar to the female except they have a ruddy scaling on the surface of their back (Wikipedia, 2017). Males are about 17.8-23cm in length and weigh 52-72g while the females are 18.5-21.5cm long and weigh 65-81g (Del Hoyo et al., 1997).

DISTRIBUTION. The blue ground dove is widespread over most of the tropical, rain forested areas of Central and South America (Fig. 3). This ranges from the east of Mexico to the north of Argentina, and from western Ecuador to Trinidad and Tobago and Brazil (Del Hoyo et al., 1997; Skutch, 1959). They are also native to Venezuela, Guatemala, Columbia, Panama, Peru, Guyana, Paraguay and Surinam (IUCN, 2016). They have no migration patterns as they are resident throughout their range.

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. They are rarely seen in thickly forested areas but live near roadsides and forest edges. Found mostly in humid to semi-humid regions, flooded grasslands and savannas. Blue ground doves are diurnal and are mostly seen on bare ground and grass, feeding in the company of other foraging pigeons. Other times, they are perched on tree branches resting after long periods of pecking seeds, dry foods and small insects (Fig. 4). They shelter within trees during rainfall. When disturbed or threatened, they fly off to higher ground or in different directions. Although they travel in pairs, flocks of 10 or more are observed (Del Hoyo et al., 1997; Skutch, 1959). Pairs call each other using a soft monotonous “coo”.

FOOD AND FEEDING. Food is obtained by pecking small seeds, fruits, arthropods and leaf litter off the ground (Del Hoyo et al., 1997). They do this either in small flocks of approximately 10-20 individuals or in pairs. Capturing food and storing it in their crops allow for quick foraging periods due to disturbance or threats in their environment. They later fly to safety where they can grind the food in their gizzard using grit. Their diet mostly consists of dry food, so these blue ground doves are often seen taking in water through their bill near streams and drains. The young birds are fed through pre-mastication where both sexes pre-chew the food into a bolus form and transfer it into the beak of their offspring. They are fed until their flight feathers develop and can feed on their own outside of the nest (Skutch, 1959).

REPRODUCTION. Breeding begins in the dry month of February where copulation involves energetic wing flapping, preening and billing. Nests are found in trees and tangled vines, consisting of dried twigs, vines and flower stalks closely stacked together. The adult male is responsible for collecting the materials while the female re-arranges and works them into the nest. The male always rests his contribution either by her breast or head, but the female has the last input in the distribution of the pieces around the nest. Most of the materials are obtained from the thickets beneath. Both sexes take turns for the incubation of their one or two eggs, which lasts for 14-15 days. A study revealed that of 23 nests, 5 contained only a single egg. The nestlings are given parental care by both parents, and the adults share the responsibility of regurgitating food into the bills of their young (Skutch, 1959).

BEHAVIOUR. Juvenile behaviour: the nestlings are born blind, with dark skin. Whilst sightless, the parents regurgitate food at frequent intervals. After approximately three days old, their eyes begin to open and the nestlings can begin to feed actively from the parents' beak. Feeding time decreases with age. The juveniles depart the nest at approximately nine days old when their feathers are fully developed (Skutch, 1959). If threatened, they fly off and perch on branches with the parents being close behind.

APPLIED ECOLOGY. This species is currently not threatened as there is a large amount present throughout the distribution range. It is deemed of Least Concern (IUCN, 2016).

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. Female blue ground dove.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_ground_dove, downloaded 27 January 2017]



Fig. 3. Blue ground dove geographic distribution.

[<http://www.xeno-canto.org/species/Claravis-pretiosa>, downloaded 4 February 2017]



Fig. 4. Male and female blue ground dove resting on a branch.

[<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/species/blue-ground-dove-claravis-pretiosa>, downloaded 27 January 2017]

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