

## *Patagioenas speciosa* (Scaled Pigeon)

Family: Columbidae (Pigeons and Doves)

Order: Columbiformes (Pigeons, Doves and Dodos)

Class: Aves (Birds)



**Fig. 1.** Scaled pigeon, *Patagioenas speciosa*.

[<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/scaled-pigeon-patagioenas-speciosa/adult-male-perched-frontal-view>, downloaded 1 March 2017]

**TRAITS.** The scaled pigeon *Patagioenas speciosa* is named for the scale-like pattern of the neck and breast feathers (Fig. 1); it was previously known as *Columba speciosa*. Adults can be 28-34cm long. Adult males have a brownish-purple head, and the neck, shoulders and underparts have shades of pink, gold and other colours. The back and lesser wing-coverts are reddish-brown with glossy green while the remainder of the wing to the tail is dark brown. The eyes are also dark brown with a red eye-ring, white and red beak and coral feet (Fig. 1) (Restall et al., 2007). Adult females and juveniles are less colourful than adult males, with plain brown backs and wings (Restall et al., 2007).

**DISTRIBUTION.** The scaled pigeon is found over a wide range of tropical environments, from south Mexico to south Brazil (Fig. 2). It is also found in Caribbean territories such as Trinidad, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Guyana and more (IUCN, 2017). The bird is native to these territories.

**HABITAT AND ACTIVITY.** Found typically in the edges of rain forests, open forests and flying over savannas with scattered trees, during the day. The bird spends most of its life in the canopies of these trees, rarely descending, sometimes only for feeding purposes (Schauensee and Phelps, 1978). It should be noted that the species is most frequently found over the Northern Range of Trinidad, and is not found in Tobago (Ffrench, 2004).

**FOOD AND FEEDING.** The species has a very simple feeding routine, where it feeds only on fruits and berries in the canopy of trees. It sometimes let food items drop to the ground before descending to eat, but it is rare (Aves 3D, 2017). Birds have also been seen to feed on fresh green leaves and sometimes crops (Perrins, 2003).

**POPULATION ECOLOGY.** Individuals of this species are believed to have an estimated lifespan of 6.6 years (IUCN, 2017). The scaled pigeon reproduces by laying one egg, usually in flimsy stick nests, 1-18m above the ground (Hilty, 2003).

**BEHAVIOUR.** Usually solitary and seen perched in tree canopies alone or in pairs. When flying over long distances, the species may be seen in groups of 3-4, rarely in groups more than 4 (Hilty, 2003). Flocks of over 100 have only been seen in Colombia and are very rare (Restall et al., 2007). The bird is also considered to be rarely seen due to its wary nature (Aves 3D, 2017).

**APPLIED ECOLOGY.** Listed as Least Concern by IUCN. This is due to the extremely large range of the species which prevents it from reaching the values necessary for it to be considered as Vulnerable, based on the range size criterion. Even though the population of the species is decreasing mainly due to hunting by humans and removal of forested areas for development, the rate of reduction is not occurring quickly enough to approach the threshold value for Vulnerable, under the population trend criterion. Additionally, the population of the species is very large and thus doesn't not approach the threshold values to be considered as Vulnerable, under the population size criterion (IUCN, 2017). It is important to note that the species is not kept as pets, but is hunted by humans for food.

## REFERENCES

- Aves 3D. (2017). *Columba speciosa*. A three-dimensional database for avian skeletal morphology. [https://aves3d.org/species\\_instances/87-Columba-speciosa](https://aves3d.org/species_instances/87-Columba-speciosa)
- Ffrench, R. (2004). Birds of Trinidad and Tobago. Second edition. Macmillan Caribbean.
- Hilty, S.L. (2003). Birds of Venezuela. Second Edition. Princeton University Press.
- IUCN. (2017). *Patagioenas speciosa*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22690235/0>
- Perrins, C. (2003). Firefly Encyclopedia of Birds. Firefly Books (U.S) Inc.
- Restall, R., Rocher, C and Lentino, M. (2007). Birds of Northern South America: An Identification Guide. Volume 1. Yale University Press New Haven and London.
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**Fig. 2.** Distribution of scaled pigeon.

[<http://www.planetofbirds.com/columbiformes-columbidae-scaled-pigeon-patagioenas-speciosa>, downloaded 3 March 2017]

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