

RECORD OF EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*STREPTOPELIA DECAOCTO*) IN
NEVIS, WEST INDIES

MARK MICHAEL LUDLOW^{1,2}

¹PhD Candidate, Ornitho-Archaeology, University of Wales – Trinity Saint David, Lampeter, Wales, United Kingdom; e-mail MMLBird@aol.com; ²Current addresses: 501 Slaters Lane, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, USA; & Blue Roofed House (Blue Monkey), Oualie Lane South, Oualie Bay, Nevis, West Indies

Abstract. --- I observed and photographed a single Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) on a telephone wire strung adjacent to the road to the VON 860 radio station coming from the road leading to Ft. Charles in the village of Bath on the southeastern side of the island of Nevis, adjacent to the Caribbean Sea (IHO 1953: 14-15), in St. John Figtree Parish, Nevis, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis, West Indies, on 5 January 2012.

Key words. --- Caribbean, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Nevis, *Streptopelia decaocto*.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE (*STREPTOPELIA DECAOCTO*)

AOU (1998: 222) and Dickinson (2003: 161) do not show Eurasian Collared-Dove occurring on the island of Nevis. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 300) state 'A few individuals have been reported from St. Christopher, Nevis, Montserrat and Dominica'. Raffaele *et al* (1998: 469) lists the species in the 'Locality Checklist' as a 'Vagrant' to the artificially conjoined listing of St. Kitts and Nevis. Caution is advised: What may be true for the separate island of St. Kitts may not be true for the separate island of Nevis. A fuller description of the current ranges of Eurasian Collared-Dove can be found in Raffaele *et al* (1998: 299-300) and AOU (1998: 222).

NEVIS

Nevis is a compact oceanic island of volcanic origin with an area of circa 93 km² (circa 36 square miles), situated in the northern Lesser Antilles. Politically it is a portion of the two island country, The Federation of St. Christopher and Nevis. The island rises gradually from the shore to a central peak of circa 985 meters (circa 3232 feet) and exhibits a range of natural and secondary habitats which include: elfin woodland, montane forest, palm brake, grassland, coastal scrub, dry woodland, and farmland (Robinson and Lowery 2000).

THE RECORDED SIGHTING

On 5 January 2012, I observed and photographed (Figure 1) a single Eurasian Collared-Dove, perched on a telephone wire adjacent to the road (right side) that goes to the VON 860 radio station building and transmission tower from the road going to Ft. Charles in the village of Bath, Nevis, West Indies. This road runs through the village of Bath in a southerly direction. The location was c. 0.14 kilometers (c. 0.09 miles) north of the VON 860 radio station building: The location of the sighting was circa 0.29 kilometers (c. 0.18 miles) from the Caribbean Sea (the leeward side), on the island of Nevis at: Longitude 17°07'43.43" North; and Latitude 62°37'47.60" West. The location elevation was circa 45 feet above sea-level and was both seen and photographed (Figure 1).

The bird was studied through binoculars (Swarovski, 10x42 EL) at moderately close range (15 meters) in mid-day light. The bird was photographed by Mark Michael Ludlow with a Nikon Coolpix P-90 with a Nikkor 24X Optical Zoom ED VR 4.6 – 110.4 mm, 1:2.8 – 5.0 lenses (Figure1). Elevations were determined by a Garmin hand held GPS unit and Google Earth.

The village of Bath is one of the substantially altered lower elevation landscapes of Nevis which can be characterized as generally arid, with few trees, and by the relatively continuous presence of human dwellings in the area in modern, colonial, and Pre-Columbian periods. These lower elevation areas are in an arrested state of ecological succession and subjected to continuous grazing by introduced ungulate animal species and more concentrated human community activities. Colonial period mono-agribusinesses and other contemporary anthropogenic activities caused the denudation of most vegetation up to the c. 305 meter (c. 1000 foot) elevations on the island which resulted in substantial soil erosion which continues into the contemporary period. This arrested ecological succession is greatly impacted by the behaviors of large populations of island wide free ranging ungulate species, to include: sheep; goats; donkeys; horses; pigs; and cattle. The impacts of these introduced animal species are effectively concentrated in what is relatively small island consisting of circa 93 square km (circa 36 square miles). Large populations of historic period introduced Vervet (Green) Monkeys (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*), believed to be of African origin, as well as introduced Mongooses (Family *Herpestidae*) further contribute to the alteration of the disfigured landscape and to the depauperate faunal composition and numbers.

This photo-documentation represents a rare record of the presence of Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*) on the island of Nevis, West Indies and may represent a first proper record of the species on the island of Nevis.

No action was taken to determine the subspecies, age, sex, or other physiological conditions of the individual.

This observation was part of the efforts of the newly formed Nevis Ornithological Society to document all of the species of birds to be found solely on the island of Nevis (and proximal Booby Island). Historically bird species listings have artificially conjoined the two geologically and ecologically separate and distinct islands (the island of St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and the island of Nevis): An example would be the 'Locality Checklist' within Raffaele *et al* (1998: 453-495). The Nevis Ornithological Society is also attempting to: 1) systematically review and evaluate reported bird sightings on the island of Nevis, as well as Booby Island, with a high degree of academic rigor; and 2) provide a central repository for those accepted reports that are solely for the island of Nevis.

This Eurasian Collared-Dove may represent a continuation of the expansion of the species within the insular Caribbean (Raffaele 1998: 300). A fuller significance of this sighting remains undetermined. Combined with past and future records, fuller patterns may become clearer. As in this case, and in the future, increasing numbers of bird watchers and researchers in the field, on comparatively remote and under frequented islands, for sustained periods of time, may account for increasing numbers of documented reports.

LITERATURE CITED

- AOU. 1998. Checklist of North American birds: The species of North America from the Arctic through Panama, including the West Indies and Hawaiian Islands. 7th Edition. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Bond, J. 1993 impression. Birds of the West Indies. 5th Edition. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, New, York.
- Dickinson, E.C. (Editor). 2003. The Howard and Moore checklist of the birds of the world. 3rd Edition. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- IHO. 1953. Limits of oceans and seas (Special publication No. 23). 3rd Edition. International Hydrographic Organization, Monte-Carlo, The Principality of Monaco.

Ordnance Survey – Nevis, 1984. Nevis: Lesser Antilles 1:25,000. Series 5 O.S.D. 1984. Government of the United Kingdom.

Raffaele, H., J. Wiley, O. Garrido, A. Keith, and J. Raffaele. 1998. A guide to the birds of the West Indies. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

Robinson, D. and Lowery J. 2000. The natural history of the island of Nevis. Charlestown, Nevis, Nevis Historical and Conservation Society.

Sibley, D.A. 2000. National Audubon Society the Sibley guide to birds. Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York.



Figure 1: Photograph of Eurasian Collared-Dove taken on 5 January 2012 in the village of Bath on the island of Nevis, West Indies by Mark Michael Ludlow.