

## Western Palearctic list updates: Yellow-eyed Dove

Yellow-eyed Dove *Columba eversmanni* is currently on the Western Palearctic (WP) list based on a series of records in Russia (cf van den Berg 2008, Cramp 1985, Snow & Perrins 1998). These records have never been reviewed properly and this prompted us to investigate their status. In this article we present the conclusions of our review.

[*Dutch Birding* 32: 191-193, 2010]

## Distribution and movements

Yellow-eyed Dove breeds in western Asia, from the Aral Sea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan east to Tien Shan and south to north-eastern Iran and Afghanistan. Most populations are migratory, moving south in winter to south-eastern Iran, Pakistan and north-western India (del Hoyo et al 1997, cf Dutch Birding 31: 375, 2009). Interestingly, one is said to have been shot near Tuzlukkul river, Belyaevski district, Orenburg oblast, on the Asian side of the Ural (and thus just outside the



**248-249** Yellow-eyed Dove / Oosterse Holenduif *Columba eversmanni*, adult (collected at Orenburg, European Russia, on 12 May 1881), Zoological Museum, St Petersburg, Russia, October 2009 (Vladimir Loskot)

WP) on 18 October 1998, supporting its vagrancy potential in the south-eastern part of the WP (Davygora 2000, AV Davygora in litt).

#### Records in the WP

Cramp (1985) mentions three WP records in Russia. Extensive survey of Russian literature by Vladimir Arkhipov revealed one additional report. Below are these records and report listed chronologically.

#### *Orenburg, Russia, 12 May 1881*

An adult male was shot by N A Zarudny on 12 May 1881 from a flock of Stock Doves *C. oenas* near the city of Orenburg. Zarudny (1888) wrote [in Russian]: 'On 30 April 1881 [May 12 according to the Gregorian calendar] I shot five birds from a flock of Stock Doves, one of them was a true specimen of the Yellow-eyed Dove. After this incident, in the flocks of Stock Doves in the spring-time, three or four times I observed these Yellow-eyed Doves, which were clearly different because of white rump. I have no doubts that they were Yellow-eyed Doves.' Beneath this text there is a note [in Russian]: 'a male, Orenburg. 30.IV.81.'

The specimen (plate 248-249) is currently in the Zoological Museum in St Petersburg, Russia (specimen number 31440) and clearly shows a Yellow-eyed Dove. There is thus no doubt on the identification of this specimen.

Its geographic origin is a bit more problematical. Orenburg is situated along the Ural river which marks the border of the WP region in this area and there is no mention on the specimen labels or in the registration catalogue of the precise location where the specimen was shot. However, Orenburg city was wholly on the northern (European) side of the river at that time and there were settlements on the southern (Asian) side with a different name. The use of the name Orenburg on the specimen label ('30 4 1881, Orenburg') and in Zarudny's (1888) text is thus a clear indication that the specimens must have been shot in Europe. In addition, according to Nikolai Formozov (in litt) it might have been difficult to cross the river in the late 19th century. The record has always been interpreted in the Russian literature as originating from Europe and we see no reason to doubt this conclusion.

*Ulyanovsk oblast, Russia, 28 September 1895*

This individual was seen by S A Buturlin in a large flock of Stock Doves in the centre of the Sura river valley between Belyi Klyuch (54.43° N 45.83° E) and Lava (54.48° N 46.90° E), on the border between the Karsunsk district of Ulyanovsk oblast and Alatyр districts of the Republic of Chuvashia (both formerly Simbirsk guberniya). The dove was not collected, but Zhitkov & Buturlin (1906) mention that [in Russian] ‘it stood clearly out in the flock by the clear brown tone of its plumage’ and that ‘it possibly was a vagrant Yellow-eyed Dove’. Nearly 30 years later, though, the record was published as being beyond any doubt in Buturlin & Dementiev (1934-1941). It is possible, however, that a mistake has been made, because an aberrantly coloured Stock Dove or even a Common Pigeon *C livia*, which is highly variable, cannot be ruled out (cf Borodin 1994). The record is certainly not substantiated sufficiently to be retained.

*Kuroedovo, Buguruslan district, Orenburg oblast, Russia, 10 November 1895*

Karamzin (1901) mentions a record of a first-year shot at Kuroedovo, Buguruslan district, Orenburg oblast (formerly Samarskaya guberniya), Russia, on 10 November 1895. This specimen is still in the Zoological Museum in St Petersburg (specimen number 31674) and has been re-identified as a first-year Stock Dove (Vladimir Loskot in litt).

*Balakovsky district, Saratov oblast, Russia, August 1946*

Gorshkov (1977) mentions a bird shot in August 1946 by V S Zaletaev, an experienced ornithologist, in the Balakovsky district, Saratov oblast (Lower Volga). However, the specimen was not taken or has been lost, as it is currently not known to be kept in any collection.

### Conclusion

Two of the four European records are supported by specimens. One of them was recently re-identified as a Stock Dove and the other was identified correctly as a Yellow-eyed Dove. The other two

involved sightings that were published without any supportive evidence (photograph or description) and, also in the light of the misidentification of one of the old specimens, we conclude that these reports cannot be accepted.

We conclude that the May 1881 record from Orenburg is the only one of Yellow-eyed Dove for the Western Palearctic. The other three reports are either mistakes or should be considered doubtful.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Anatoly Davygora, Nikolai Formozov, David Khaidarov, Vladimir Loskot and Yaroslav Redkin for their help in tracing and/or photographing specimens, providing references or helping in other ways.

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Vladimir Yu Arkhipov, Institute of Theoretical & Experimental Biophysics, Russian Academy of Sciences, 142290 Pushchino, Moscow Region, Russia (v.arkhipov@rambler.ru)  
Marcel Haas, Helmweg 12 C, 1759 NE Callantsoog, Netherlands (zoodauma@gmail.com)  
Pierre-André Crochet, CNRS-UMR 5175 Centre d'Ecologie Fonctionnelle et Evolutive, 1919, route de Mende, 34293 Montpellier cedex 5, France (pierre-andre.crochet@cefe.cnrs.fr)