



SPOTTED TURTLE DOVES

Feral Spotted Turtle Doves first became established in Alice Springs in the early 1990s when approximately 10 birds were liberated from a backyard aviary. Since that time, the population has steadily grown and today numbers are thought to exceed 8000 birds. The Spotted Turtle Dove impacts on the environment and residents of the town in a number of ways.



Competition with native species

Spotted Turtle Doves (*Streptopelia chinensis*) are domesticated birds that are highly suited to life in urban areas. They are able to breed all year round and will eat a wide variety of items including seeds, pet food and household scraps. Native birds in Alice Springs now have to compete with this highly adapted and aggressive species for food, shelter and nesting sites.

Nuisance Factor

Feral doves can be a nuisance around aviaries, fowl yards and pet feeding areas, where they scrounge for scraps and other food items. High concentrations of droppings deposited around these sites not only increase cleaning chores, but may pose a health hazard. Feral doves can be very noisy and disruptive with their constant 'cooing'.



Spotted Turtle Dove

Identifying Spotted Turtle Doves

Spotted turtle-doves are common in human inhabited areas, where they can be observed in parks and gardens. In their natural habitat, Spotted Turtle Doves feed on grains and seeds, but in their introduced range, they feed on scraps and commercial foods that can be obtained from chicken pens and people's backyards. The Spotted Turtle Dove is unlike any other dove found in Central Australia. It is a large (around 30cm in length) pinkish-grey bird and has a distinctive black and white ring around its neck. Legs are pink-red. It does not have a crest like the native *Crested Pigeon* and is found only within close proximity of human activity and settlements. Spotted Turtle Doves have a preference for backyards that support reliable water supplies and shade (ornamental shade trees, large palms and citrus are all favoured). Doves can breed all year round and build a flimsy stick and twig nest between 2-3m off the ground in tree forks and along horizontal branches. Detailed descriptions can be found in most Australian bird guides.

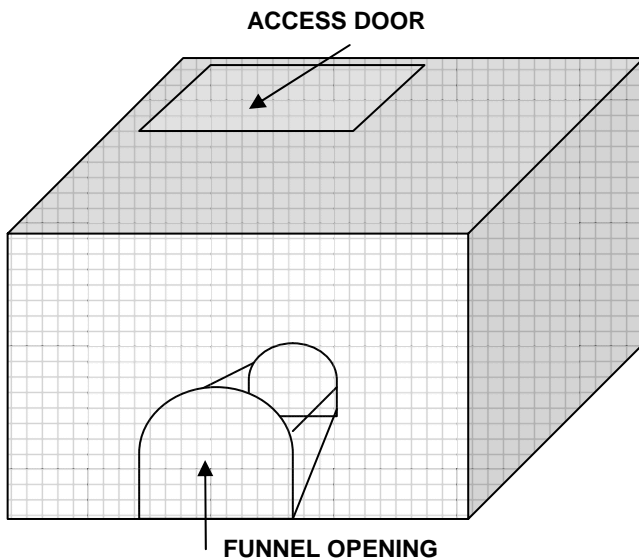
How you can help

If you have a problem with feral doves around your house, you might consider the following options:

- Avoid feeding your pets outside, as this attracts Spotted Turtle Doves into your yard.
- Always cover chicken pens to prevent access to Spotted Turtle Doves.
- Remove/reduce possible water and food sources that feral doves can access.
- Destroy feral dove eggs and nests using a high pressure hose or broom handle to reach.
(Seek a second opinion if you are unsure about nest/egg identification)
- Keep dense and shady introduced plants and trees well trimmed and maintained.
- Inspect your entire property regularly for feral dove nesting activity, including eaves, verandas and shady trees and bushes.

'Passive' trap design

Members of the public can get involved in managing feral doves in their backyards by utilising the passive trap design detailed below. The trap should be placed in a quiet shady area and stocked with food and clean water to entice Spotted Turtle Doves to enter.



- Use 1inch gauge weld mesh or chicken wire to construct the trap
- Use wire or metal netting clips to hold the trap together
- Use plastic gutter guard to construct a funnel entrance
- Multiple funnels may be attached to larger traps
- Include a door to allow for access/dove removal (best attached to roof)
- Traps should measure a minimum of 50cm x 60cm
- Ensure that the funnel is at least 20cm long and no taller than 8cm at the small end
- You may be able to convert an old bird cage into a trap by removing the base of the cage and affixing a funnel to it.

Animal Welfare

A food and water supply must be provided for all trapped birds. All native bird species are protected in the Northern Territory (Section 43, *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*) and must be released without harm immediately if caught. All feral doves caught are to be taken to the 'holding aviary' on the *Service Road* at Alice Springs Desert Park between 8am and 6pm (7days a week). Care must be taken when moving birds into the 'holding aviary' to ensure feral doves do not escape.

For more information, contact:

Wildlife Management Branch - Northern Territory Parks and Wildlife Service

Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport

PO Box 1120, Alice Springs NT 0871 www.nt.gov.au/nretas