

RUDDY GROUND-DOVE BREEDING IN CALIFORNIA

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On 8 December 2002 I found a female Ruddy Ground-Dove (*Columbina talpacoti*) in a farm yard at the intersection of Eddins and Sperry roads 2.5 km west of Calipatria, Imperial Co., California, 33° 07.5'N, 115° 32.5'W. The farm yards at this location support planted palms, eucalyptus, other shade trees, planted shrubs including native palo verde (*Cercidium floridum*) and mesquite (*Prosopis*), and are surrounded by open fields with irrigation ditches, typical of broad areas of the Imperial Valley (Patten et al. 2003). Grain for livestock in half a dozen small pens provided an abundance of food for doves. Common Ground-Doves (*Columbina passerina*) were numerous, as were Inca Doves (*Columbina inca*), with both species resident and presumably nesting. Subsequently, I saw up to six Ruddy Ground-Doves at this location during January and February 2003, and I suspected a pair still present in May was nesting. On 31 May 2003, Peter A. Ginsburg and I saw what appeared to be two recently fledged young perched side by side on a branch about 5 m off the ground in a bottlebrush (*Callistemon*) tree at this location. These two were a little smaller than the adult male perched nearby and appeared to have some wispy down on their crowns. As we were studying the two young, the adult female flew into the tree and landed, at which time both of the young became very excited and fluttered toward her. Unfortunately, all four birds then flew from the tree, and we were unable to witness any feeding of the young by the adults. Kenneth Z. Kurland was able to photograph the two young the following day (Figure 1), and Ruddy Ground-Doves were still present at this location at least through September 2003.

The west Mexican population of the Ruddy Ground-Dove (*C. t. eluta*) has evidently expanded its range northward in recent years. In northwestern Mexico, Ruddy Ground-Doves first appeared in Sonora in the early 1980s (Russell and Monson 1998), but the species went unrecorded on the Baja California peninsula until 1990 (Erickson et al. 2001). The first to be recorded in the southwestern United States were two in southwestern Phoenix, Arizona, 21 October 1981, and nearly 100 individuals had been reported in that state by 1996 (Rosenberg and Witzeman 1998). A male at China Ranch, Inyo County, 31 August–29 September 1984 (Pyle and McCaskie 1992) provided the first endorsed record for California, and more than 100 individuals have been reported in the state as of this date. Records for California extend north to Deep Springs in northern Inyo County (Heindel and Garrett 1995) and west to Goleta on the coast of Santa Barbara County (Patten et al. 1995). Most of these records are for the fall and winter, including the one previous record for the Imperial Valley (Patten et al. 2003), with relatively few in summer. The first to be recorded in New Mexico was photographed in southern Dona Ana County 25 October–2 November 1984, with 30 individuals recorded since that time, most in the last five years (S. O. Williams, III, pers. comm.). The first in western Texas were two at Rio Grande Village in Big Bend National Park 5 December 1987–early May 1988, but the species remains rare there, with only five records since that time (M. Lockwood pers. comm.). Farther to the north, one at Beaver Dam Wash 30 October–2 November 1991 was the first in Utah (Am. Birds 46:128), and one in the Amaragosa Valley 25 September 1990 was the first in Nevada (Am. Birds 45:133).

A pair of Ruddy Ground-Doves with fledglings at the Hassayampa River Preserve in Wickenburg, Arizona, 15–19 May 1993 (Rosenberg and Witzeman 1998) provided the first evidence of nesting in the United States. A "full-tailed juvenile" in the New Mexico portion of Guadalupe Canyon in May 2001 (D. Zimmerman pers. comm.) does not prove local nesting but is strongly suggestive. The pair with two recently fledged young near Calipatria in 2003 provides the first evidence of nesting in California and apparently only the second or third such evidence of nesting in

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United States. Because of the increase in the number of Ruddy Ground-Doves moving north into the Southwest, however, the establishment of this species as a permanent resident can be anticipated.

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Figure 1. Two juvenile Ruddy Ground-Doves (*Columbina talpacoti*) near Calipatria, Imperial Co., 1 June 2003.

Photo by Kenneth Z. Kurland