

Inca Dove *Columbina inca*

The history of the Inca Dove has been one of slow, steady spread to the northwest. The dove reached Tucson by 1872, Yuma by 1942, and the Imperial Valley by 1984. In San Diego County only a few pioneers have been noted yet, but colonization of the Anza–Borrego Desert at least is only a matter of time. In California, the Inca Dove is a commensal of man, living only in towns or rural ranchyards.

Migration: The Inca Dove is still known in San Diego from about eight records. The reason for the “about” is that some individuals may have been escapees from captivity rather than pioneers of the wild population. This was evidently the case with the single specimen from San Diego County, a bird wearing an unmarked anodized aluminum band, found dead in East San Diego (R10) 13 March 1994 (SDNHM 48791). The first individual seen in the county, in the Tijuana River valley 9 September–30 November 1974 (AB 29:122, 1975), preceded the range’s growth front so much that Garrett and Dunn (1981) raised the possibility of the bird’s being an escapee. A natural origin seems almost certain for the records for the Anza–Borrego Desert, of one in Borrego Springs (G24) 16 February–April 1992 (A. G. Morley, AB 46:315,



Photo by Anthony Mercieca

481, 1992), another nearby 22 December 1996 (P. D. Ache, NASFN 51:802, 1997), one at Butterfield Ranch (M23) 18 February–24 April 2000 (M. B. Mulrooney, NAB 54:221, 327, 2000), and two at the Roadrunner Club, Borrego Springs (F24), 20 June 2000 (M. L. Gabel). Records from the coastal slope are of one photographed in Spring Valley (R12) 3 February–12 May 1997 (M. and D. Hastings), one singing and photographed in the Hillcrest area of San Diego (R9) 1–9 June 2001 (J. W. Schlotte, P. Unitt, NAB 55:483, 2001), and one in Encinitas (K7) 22 July 2001 (L. E. and C. Taylor, NAB 55:483, 2001).