

This week on the Llano Estacado

September 13-18, 2009



White-winged doves moved to Midland in 1980, and by 1990 thousands were living in town. Originally found along the Rio Grande, their range has been increasing quickly.

Four species of doves now live in Midland. The mourning dove has always been here, while the Inca dove (a small dove with red under the wings) moved here in the 1950's, and in 1997 the Eurasian Collared Dove arrived after escaping from pet owners in Florida in the early 1990's.

This white-winged dove's chest is swelled with air. In a second he will call "who cooks for you" although Spanish speakers say he says "Que lastima."

Doves feed on seeds on the ground. When feeding young (they produce 2 young each month from March to November) both males and females regurgitate "pigeon's milk" for the babies. They need water daily, and will fly up to 20 miles to find water. During hot afternoons, they spend hours up in trees, resting and waiting for evening. In the evening sometimes hundreds will gather on electric lines near favored feeding areas.

Challenge for teachers and students;

Doves are the first birds drawn to bird food, but they prefer it on the ground. Select an area where their droppings will not cause a mess, and begin putting wild bird chow on some bare ground. Estimate how many come to the school each day. Even without feeding, try to estimate how many visit the trees of the school.