Backyard Kids: Mourning Dove Profile

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

The Mourning Dove is a common wild bird across the United States. It can be seen, or heard, on a daily basis almost everywhere. This species, like all doves, is a fast flyer. It can reach speeds up to 55 miles per hour!

You can tell between the Mourning Dove and other doves and pigeons by its pointed tail with white markings. The black spots on its face were used to help identify it from the now-extinct Passenger Pigeon. The Mourning Dove's sad, mournful call allows us to tell when this bird is near.

Interesting Facts:

Family: Columbidae

Scientific Name: *Zenaida macroura*

Location: The Mourning Dove can be found in Southern Canada, all of the United States, and into central Mexico. They can live just about anywhere, in open woods, deserts, forest edges, agricultural landscapes, suburbs, and cities.

Migration: Mourning Doves that spend summers further south migrate shorter distances and some do not migrate at all. Birds in Canada migrate the farthest, wintering in Mexico or further south.

Nesting: To find a mate, the male performs an aerial display where he flies downward in spiral flight. Mated pairs will often preen each other's feathers. Once mated, the pair chooses a site to build a nest. The male gathers nesting material while the female weaves the sticks, weeds, twigs, and pine needles into a loose, flat nest. Mourning Dove pairs usually have three or more broods a year and each clutch consists of two white eggs. Both the male and female incubate the eggs. Incubation extends about two weeks, and the nestlings leave the nest 11-15 days after hatching. Pairs often return to the same nesting areas each year.

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Diet:	In nature, the Mourning Dove eats weed seeds and grains and may eat some insects.
Size and Color:	The Mourning Dove is a medium-sized bird that is approximately 12" long. Its coloration is a grayish-brown with black dots on the wings and black spots on the cheeks. The male has a pink shine on the sides of his neck and a bluish-gray cap. The female has an olive-gray colored cap with a green sheen. The male is also slightly larger.
Song:	The Mourning Dove call is sad and mournful, giving this species its name. You may have heard its "ooah woo woo woo" call.
Attract Them:	Mourning Doves like to feed on the ground. You can attract them when you place a platform-style ground feeder filled with mixed or sunflower seed. Or, simply scatter some seed directly on the ground.

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