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Green-winged Doves

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Undoubtedly, the principal reason why the Green-winged Dove, [Chalcophaps indica](#), is so consistently sought after by both amateur and experienced dove as well as domestic pigeon lovers is its beautiful green colour. Numerous inquiries have come to me, and still do, especially from domestic pigeon fanciers wanting to use the Green-winged Doves for purposes of crossing with some small domestic pigeon variety in the hope of sometimes producing a hybrid with as many beautiful green feathers in its plumage as possible. But regrettably I had to inform my enquirers that this lively wild foreign dove is addicted to habits of feeding, mating, and nesting much different from those of any domestic pigeon; hence it would be most difficult to induce the Green-wing "to take up" with any fancy domestic pigeons.

Green-winged Dove ([Daintree Rainforest](#))



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The Green-wing, as well as some closely allied races, is in all probability the only wild seed-eating dove boasting a very attractive green feather dress. There are, as is well known, numerous species of fruit pigeons attired partly or wholly in leafy-green feathers, which incidentally serve as their protective colouring against enemies amidst the luscious green leafage of tropical shrubs and trees. But fruit pigeons likewise are not at all inclined to mate with domestic pigeons.

I have kept Green-winged Doves in my aviaries in Sherman Oaks, California and have found them to be an active, but rather shy and nervous bird, rarely inclined to become really tame and trusting. While it likes to fly swiftly and dexterously about shrubs in a spacious aviary and settle on tree branches or fairly high perches day and night, the Green-wing is essentially a ground dove, running swiftly about on the aviary floor in search of seeds and grubs. In the wilds, this colourful dove's diet consists for the most part of various kinds of seeds, including those of the [castor-bean](#) plant and the [candle-nut](#) tree, as well as [rice](#) and [wheat](#), and various small berries in season. It is said to be fond of [termites](#) and other small, soft insects. Even though I tempted my Green-wings with small, soft [mealworms](#), the only insect food I had available, they disdained my well-meant offering again and again, but they did relish diced cheese, which is rich in protein and apparently requisite for their well being. In addition, I gave them the so-called wild bird mixture, [millet](#), [milo](#), [popcorn](#), and now and then some [niger seed](#) as an aid to fertility. On this varied feeding scheme they were thriving. Small bird grit was available for them at all times.

Before commenting further, I must emphasise one outstanding habit of this lovely bird... a tendency to live a more or less solitary existence, and at times to become quite aggressive toward other members of the species. To ensure successful breeding, a mated pair of Green-winged Doves is best kept by itself, assuredly not with other Green-wings or doves of similar size, unless it be a very large and well planted park-like aviary. I have kept Green-wings with [Diamond](#), [Cape](#) and [Galapagos Doves](#) in a roomy, planted enclosure, where this mixed dove family lived in peace and "happiness" season after season.

There is a distinct advantage in keeping Green-wing Doves in that the males and females are readily sexed. The distinguishing characteristics of the male's plumage is, in addition to the blue-grey crown, the white patches on the eyebrows, on the forehead, and on the wing-bends; in the female Green-wing, the white is replaced by grey. The beauty of this dove's plumage lies principally in the deep rich vinous of the head, neck, and underparts, the bright green mantle, and the blackish lower-back. Prominent in colouration is also the male's red beak. Incidentally, this dove goes also by the name of the Emerald Dove which is extensively used by English fanciers.

This lovely dove is at home throughout India, Sri-Lanka, portions of Indo-China, the Philippines, and south to Australia and New Guinea. Various local races in Australia and New Guinea differ slightly in plumage colouration, and these are rarely imported into the United States. Currently, most of the Green-wing Doves imported come from Thailand and are priced quite reasonably. Of course, airfreight and quarantine charges add very appreciably to the final cost of importation, as many an importer has learned to his chagrin.

For nesting accommodations, the Green-wing Dove is best served with an open-top box or a little basket placed five or more feet in the sheltered portion of the aviary or else in a leafy shrub or tree. A layer of short-cut hay will serve as a suitable foundation, which the female will then fashion into a nest with twigs and straws. This nesting material she will usually carry herself, her mate supervising her labours. The two cream coloured eggs are incubated for about 14 days; at times both male and female sitting on the nest. This is a habit quite common to many wild foreign doves, but with the female doing most of the brooding. During incubation, my hen Green-wing lost much of her shyness, and her fear of me. The squabs were fed by both parents. They left the nest at the age of 17 days, flying quite well at this rather early age, all the while being anxiously watched by their parents.

There have been instances in which a pair of Green-winged Doves has in one season raised three pairs of young to maturity, even though such breeding successes are not common. Such desirable breeding records are usually achieved by doves which have in no wise been interfered with... their nervousness and native shyness have been religiously respected by their keeper - no frequent nest inspections. And that seems to be the secret of breeding these delightful doves successfully. Another important requirement is reasonably warm quarters, particularly in regions known to have cold climates.

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