

# BOCAGIANA

## Museu Municipal do Funchal

Madeira

20.XI.1991

No. 146

### BREEDING OF THE TURTLE DOVE, *STREPTOPELIA TURTUR*, IN MADEIRA

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With 1 plate

RESUMO. NIDIFICAÇÃO DA ROLA, *STREPTOPELIA TURTUR*, NA MADEIRA: O autor relata observações da nidificação de *Streptopelia turtur* na ilha da Madeira.

Many authors, including HARCOURT in 1851 and 1855, HARTWIG in 1886 and SCHMITZ in 1899, have considered the Turtle Dove, *Streptopelia turtur*, as a passage migrant in Madeira. BANNERMANN in 1965 stated that nesting had been reported for several years running in São Martinho, near the town of Funchal, but no definite proof was obtained.

In 1964 a broken eggshell was found beneath a palm tree where Turtle Doves had been observed on several occasions. This eggshell was almost certainly that of a Turtle Dove but no nest with eggs or chicks had ever been recorded until 21st July 1990 when a nest with 2 chicks was found by FRANCESCA ZINO in the gardens of Quinta da Vista Alegre, again in the parish of São Martinho, in the hotel area and even closer to the centre of the town of Funchal.

Every year, for at least the past 23 years, one or more Turtle Doves have been seen and heard in these gardens, arriving as early as mid March and often remaining until late August. On 10 July 1971 GASTÃO BIANCHI, a friend living in the

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adjoining property and who was expert on birds, stated that he had been watching the behaviour of Turtle Doves in these gardens and was sure that they were nesting there. On 26 July 1973, in May 1974 and June 1976 as many as four birds were observed here. In June of 1990 Dr. W. R. P. BOURNE observed the behaviour of two doves in the same gardens and stated that they would probably be breeding. This later proved to be the case.

The nest, consisting of some scanty, thin, dried twigs, was 2.5 metres above the ground among vines growing on a trellis. Every day people passed under the nest which was situated some 25 m. from a house where people moved in and out constantly during the day. However, the parent birds were shy and paid infrequent visits to the nest, sometimes over 2 hours elapsing between visits. They would land in a nearby camphor tree and coo for several minutes before taking off towards the nest. They never landed close to the nest but would enter the vines some 3 to 6 m. away, remaining immobile for 2 or 3 minutes and then advance slowly, occasionally stopping, until the chicks would clamour to be fed. Sometimes one bird would feed the chicks, sometimes both at the same time.

The nest was examined several times from below without the chicks showing any signs of nervousness. On 29 July the nest was shown to friends and as we were standing underneath it one young dove flew and landed on a vine branch about 15 m. away. It appeared to be fully developed. The second chick also tried to fly but was unable to do so and landed 10 m. away in a flower bed. It was soon caught but while it was being returned to the nest it died in the hand. Its feathers were not fully developed and it would probably have taken a further 3 to 4 days before fledging. The consolation to this mishap is that this chick is now a museum specimen offering irrefutable evidence that the Turtle Dove has in fact nested in Madeira.

On 8 August two and possibly three Turtle Doves were seen in a magnolia tree near the nest. There were many young blackbirds in this area and some in the same tree. Two blackbirds started harassing a Turtle Dove so persistently that it was forced to fly away and on 12 August a Turtle Dove was seen overhead chased by a blackbird. These two incidents are similar to one observed on 26 July 1973 when a blackbird chased one of 4 Turtle Doves present in and out among the trees for about 30 seconds.

After 12 August 3 birds were seen on most evenings at about 19.00, sometimes settling on the edge of a pond near the house attempting to drink, unsuccessfully, for the water was too low. After 20 August only one bird was seen regularly in the same area and this was undoubtedly a juvenile for there was no sign of the cinnamon and black dotted patches on the sides of its neck. After 29th August no more birds were seen.

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Figs. 1 and 2 - Adult and juveniles of *Streptopelia turtur* photographed on the nest, which was made on a vine trellis.

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Received 11.10.1990