

Welcome A Pet Dove Or Pigeon

Pet doves and pigeons are great pet birds for bird lovers.

By Karl Lieberman

Doves and pigeons make great pet birds. The diamond dove has always been a favorite of bird enthusiasts. This is a little bird, about the size of a cockatiel.

Life with birds isn't limited to bird species like macaws and conure parrots. Many bird enthusiasts have discovered the joy of bird species like doves and pigeons.

There are about 300 species of pigeons and doves. They range in size from the tiny African pygmy ground dove to the knee-high Victoria crowned Pigeon. The terms pigeon and dove are basically interchangeable. Pigeon generally refers to the larger species and dove to the smaller ones. The types most often kept as pets in the U.S. are the ringneck dove, or Barbary dove, and the diamond dove.

Diamond Doves

The diamond dove has always been a favorite of bird enthusiasts. This is a little bird, about the size of a cockatiel. Both sexes coo, but only the male dove does an elaborate courtship dance. Diamond doves have been bred into many color mutations including white, pied, silver and many more. This bird is extremely widespread in its native Australia, favoring open grasslands and scrub.

Diamond doves are perfect for those who like birds but don't have the time for a hookbill. They are lovely to look at and to listen to but don't need much direct attention and their coos are soothing.

Care & Feeding: Diamond doves are peaceful when kept in pairs, though male doves will usually fight. Therefore, keep only one pair per enclosure. They mix very well with most species of finch, and breed very readily.

Although they are small, diamond doves should be given a cage big enough to allow some flight. One measuring 18 by 18 by 30 inches (or larger) is comfortable for a pair. Perches should be placed at either end to allow for unobstructed flight between them. They appreciate a small wooden platform with a shallow lip for roosting and for nesting. Diamond doves can be a bit flighty and it's a good idea to have their cage placed directly against a wall to help them feel secure. They make excellent aviary birds.

Doves are not known to show much interest in toys. Attention to making their home comfortable and attractive is probably more appreciated. Bird-safe plants of various kinds can be placed in or around their cage which will help them to feel more secure while creating an attractive environment for them.

Diamond doves are easily maintained on a base diet of finch seed. Shredded greens and cooked brown rice can also be offered. Unlike birds that hull their seeds prior to swallowing them, all doves require grit and crushed oyster shell to digest their food.

Diamond doves can live to be 15 years old, but the average is about 8 years.

Ringneck Doves (Barbary Dove)

The ringneck, or Barbary dove, is also commonly available. This is a much larger bird than the diamond dove. Its total length is around 10 inches. Although there are many color varieties, the most common are the normal (wild color) and the white.

The normal colored bird is a pretty shade of sandy tan with a distinctive black ring around the neck, which is how it got its common name. The feet are reddish and the beak is reddish with a dark cast. The eyes are brown. There are no visual differences between males and females, although males tend to be somewhat larger and have a distinct courtship display. This bird originates in Africa where it is extremely common. They prefer open grasslands and forest edges of their native home.

Ringneck doves make a pleasant pet for those who would like a medium-sized bird without the time and emotional requirements of a parrot. They are excellent for gentle children and older folks.

Because the ringneck dove is a good sized bird, its cage should measure at least 18 by 18 by 30 inches, though larger is preferable. This species should also be offered flat rather than round perches for the comfort of its feet. Like most doves, not much play behavior is usually shown by ringnecked doves. Many enjoy pecking at knotted strips of leather hung from the sides of the cage, though.

Ringnecked doves should be offered a dove mix or wild bird seed as a base diet although they can eat smaller or larger seeds from time to time. They appreciate cracked corn and oat groats as treats. Shredded greens, cooked brown rice and mixed vegetables can also be offered. Like all doves, ringnecks need constant access to grit and crushed oyster shell for digestion.

This bird species can be quite long lived. Under good care, 12 years can be expected, and up to 25 years is possible.