

SOME SPECIFIC BEHAVIOUR OF *STREPTOPELIA DECAOCTO*, FRIVALDSZKY

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A detailed study on the behaviour of *S. decaocto* is described.

INTRODUCTION

Doves have long been regarded as the personification of gentleness and a good emblem of peace, but there are some exception. At times like the maturing season, the ring doves appear to be pugnacious and a pest. Very little work has been done on Indian Ring doves, *Streptopelia decaocto*, except preliminary observations made by Ali (1946), Dwivedi (1986, 1987 & 1988) and Saxena & Dwivedi (1978 a, b). It is for this reason that a detailed study of *Streptopelia decaocto* was taken up to study its specific behaviour.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The observations were recorded from various natural habitats located 5 to 12 km around University campus. The nearest perch was selected for detailed observations for a period of 3 to 4 hours. Each ring dove was given numerical designation and the observations were made to record different behaviours and sound produced by the bird.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Silence

It was observed that the ring dove does not utter sound continuously. It makes a sound only when it is prompted by some form of excitement. It remains

silent usually when is busy with non-social occupations, such as feeding, drinking and preening.

Fear

It is very much the same as in other birds and no peculiarity in the expression of fear was recorded. It has been observed that all the feathers are raised to the maximum degree, and in sudden fright the tail is also widely spread. The head is drawn in close to the body, and is always turned towards the object of fear

The feathers of the head are slightly raised which swell out around the eye giving somewhat the effect of a frown. Moreover, the eyes assume a ferocious glare, which is very different from its mild look. The eyes open to the maximum limit exposing the fiery red iris. At other times it will "freeze" on its perch in a crouching posture with feathers sleeked down and head stretched forward. On sudden appearance of an enemy it is literally paralysed with fear and it produces inaudible sound of very low pitch.

Alarm

The emotion of fear is observed when the enemy is at a very close distance. But the emotion of alarm is always exhibited when an enemy is at a distance. The expression of alarm is always accompanied by a change in body posture. These changes always make the ring dove either invisible to the enemy from above or is to watch the enemy; the former is accomplished by the reduction of body size to minimum as the contour feathers, wings, and tail are closed and are pressed tightly, and the latter is served by, standing high on the legs and stretching the neck, which is always combined with the reduction in belly bend, due to pressed feathers.

Conversely, if the dove is sitting on the nest, it does not show any of these reactions. It is disinclined to make noise and reluctant to produce any sound. When closely approached, the either sex remains motionless when inside the nest sitting on eggs or nestlings or fledgelings.

Head shaking

It is a sudden, quick, movement of the head, which is mostly lateral. Head shaking is observed when there is some irritation on the head or is followed by the act of drinking water. It has also been observed that when the bow-coo is made by one, the other will often shake its head.

Nodding

The nodding movement can be "friendly" or "hostile". When it is

“friendly” it is very slow and slight, but when “hostile” the movement appears to be incomplete but more faster and powerful. Nodding is observed during the following conditions :

- (a) Both the sexes at the nest site and during nidification, which can be interpreted as if indicating “Here I wish to nest”.
- (b) It also appear when either of the member of pair meet again after short parting.
- (c) Sexually receptive females nod in response to sexual, self assertive or aggressive behaviour of males.

Displacement preening

This is observed in both the sexes. In females normally, it does not occur. If at all exhibited it “switches over” to caressing the male. But in the male doves, it is observed when sexually excited but fails to copulate or the female does not give proper response. During the displacement preening the dove turns its head, pushes the bill between body and scapulars and takes it out quickly.

The displacement preening can be interpreted as consider to “use up” part of the specific action are outlets through which thwarted can express themselves in motion. In other words, this activity is significant only either in frustrated males or it provides stimulation and signal to the mate.

Caressing

It consists of a gentle-looking nibbling movement of the bill, which is pushed into and moves about the partners feathers as a result of which some small foreign object is picked up and removed. Generally this act is confined only to such parts of the partner where the bird can not reach with its own bill, such as head, nape etc. The newly paired doves show mutual caressing on the nest site which may occur before or after the copulation.

Driving

Driving pairs are observed when other males are present in near vicinity. If the female of the pair is approached by an intruder male, the male mate would get between them and drive the mate away. The posture assumed by the male mate is very similar to that of the attacking-posture. But if females are in the near vicinity, the driving by the male is never observed.

If the female mate during driving stops or is at a distance from the

male, the male is seen to stop the drive.

These observations suggest that driving always takes place in response to the presence of sexual rivals.

At several occasions I shot one of the partner which turned out to be male, I observed that the female which is sexually receptive allows another male to tread her.

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