

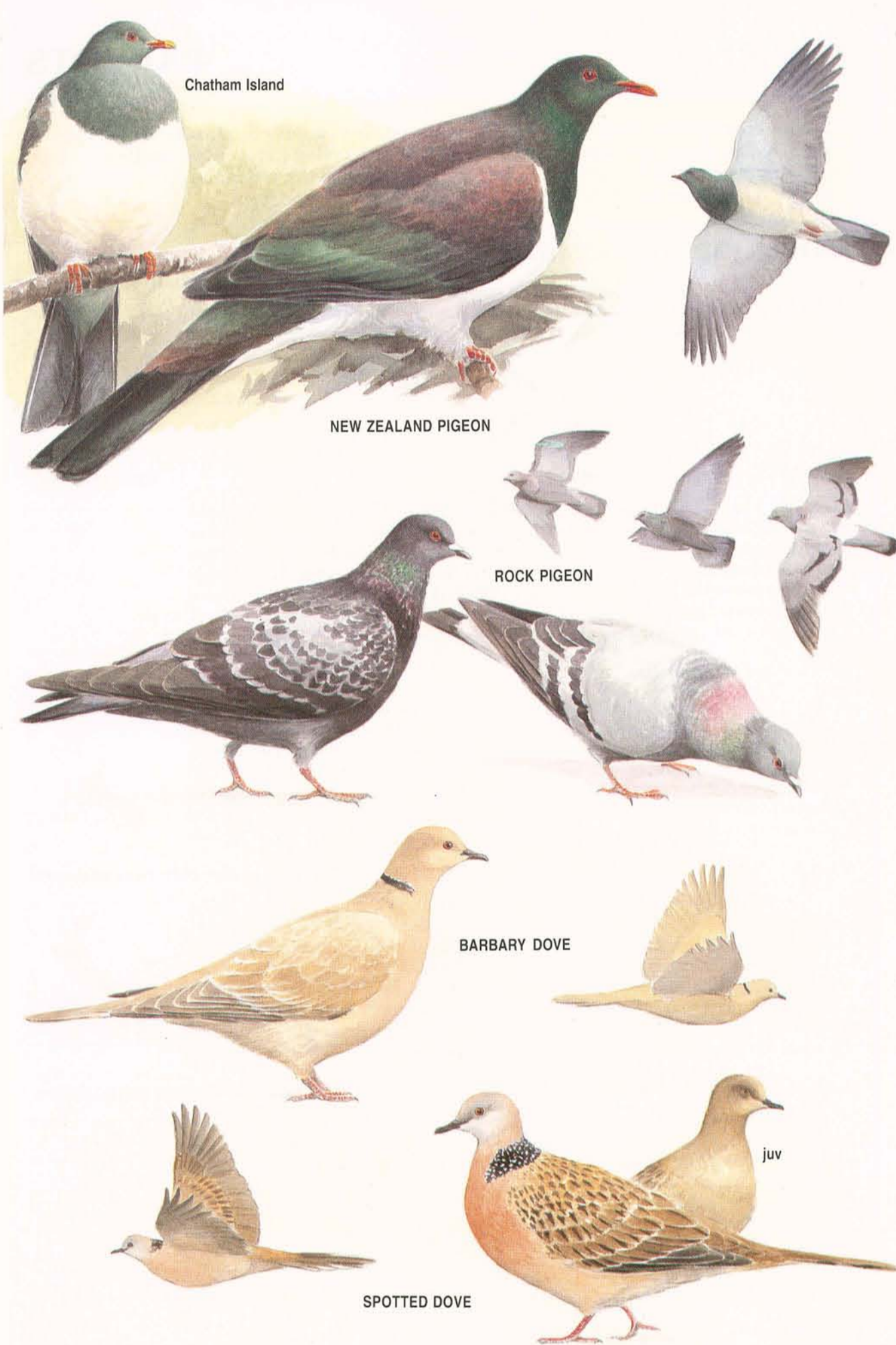
Medium to large landbirds with short bill, small head, rounded wings and short feathered legs. Sexes alike. Calls simple and often repetitive variations of 'coo'. Flight strong, direct and often noisy. Aerial displays of stall dives are part of breeding displays. Can breed at any time of year if food supplies are suitable. Lay 1–2 white eggs on a flimsy platform of sticks. Short incubation and nestling periods; young fed 'crop milk' and, later, other regurgitated food. They often fledge well below adult weight, with short wings and tail, and dull bill and feet. All are herbivorous; the New Zealand Pigeon feeds on fruit and foliage, the three introduced species feed on seeds, especially grain.

**BARBARY DOVE** *Streptopelia roseogrisea*

Rare African introduction

28 cm, 140 g. *Pale creamy buff*, shading to white on chin, belly and undertail coverts; distinctive *black half-collar* around back of neck. Eye red; bill horn-black; feet crimson. Juvenile similar but lacks black half-collar and has pale bill. Distinctive call: a *persistent 'coo-crooo'*. **Habitat:** Parks, gardens and orchards in South Auckland and near Whangarei, Rotorua, Whakatane and Havelock North. **Breeding:** Oct–Feb.

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**PIGEONS and DOVES**

**Columbidae**

About 290 species worldwide; 1 is endemic to New Zealand and 3 have been introduced.

Usually the larger members of the family are called pigeons, and the smaller ones, doves.

Pigeons and doves have plump bodies with short legs and necks, small heads and short, straight bills. The plumage is soft, dense and loose, and some have brilliant or iridescent colouring. They feed mainly on vegetable matter and can be split into two groups: grain-eaters and fruit-eaters. Both groups supplement their diet with foliage, buds and flowers. Pigeons and doves have a large crop for storing grain or fruit. The fruit-eating pigeons play an important ecological role in forest regeneration, transporting intact seeds of trees and shrubs and depositing them at a new site.

Unlike most birds, pigeons can drink without raising their heads to swallow. They are strong fliers and have aerial displays in which the bird stalls and dives with wings and tail held stiffly, and they also clap their wings together above their backs during display flight.

The nest is rudimentary, usually a flat basket of interwoven twigs in a tree or on

the ledge of a cliff or an artificial structure. All species lay only one or two small eggs; most granivorous species lay two eggs, and most fruit pigeons lay only one. The total clutch weight, at on average 9% of female body weight, is the lightest of all bird groups. The breeding season is usually determined by suitable food being available, and normally several broods are reared each year. This is helped by having very short incubation and fledging periods, and the young usually fledge well below adult weight. Clutches are sometimes overlapped, eggs being incubated in one nest while chicks are still being fed in another.

Apart from Emperor Penguins and flamingoes, pigeons and doves are the only birds to produce food for their chicks. They feed their chicks (sometimes called squabs) crop-milk, a protein-rich, cottage-cheese-like secretion from the crop wall. At first, crop-milk is the only food, but as the chicks grow, regurgitated foods form an increasingly large part of the diet.

**Reading:** Goodwin, D. 1970. *Pigeons and Doves of the World*. London: British Museum. Robertson, H.A. 1988. *J Zool (Lond)* 215: 217–229.

**256. BARBARY DOVE** *Streptopelia roseogrisea*

Plate 59

**Size:** 28 cm, 140 g

**Distribution:** Natural range is across the Sahel zone of northern Africa from Senegal to Ethiopia, and into Arabia. Domesticated birds were taken to Europe and many other parts of the world. They were brought to New Zealand as cage birds but have become feral from time to time. A few established in Masterton in the 1970s, but this population did not last. Small feral populations are now established near Whangarei, in South Auckland, Rotorua, Whakatane, near Havelock North.

**Population:** The status of Barbary Doves in New Zealand is marginal, with probably fewer than 100 birds, mostly near Havelock North and near Whangarei.

**Breeding:** Breed solitarily in shrubs, hedges or trees. They can breed at any time of year if food is available, but the peak is in spring and summer, and the low is in late autumn. Barbary Doves re-nest several times each season. They lay 2 white eggs (29 x 23 mm,

8 g) on a simple platform of twigs. Both adults incubate for c. 15 days and brood the chicks for the first week. Chicks are at first fed just crop-milk, a protein-rich secretion from the crop wall of both adults, but as the chicks grow, regurgitated seeds form an increasingly large part of the diet. They fledge at c. 15 days old and quickly become independent.

**Behaviour:** Barbary Doves are usually seen alone or in pairs, occasionally in small flocks at good food sources. Calls are a mellow 'coo-crooo', the second note being lower and longer; also a high-pitched excitement cry: 'heh-heh-heh', sounding like a jeering laugh.

**Feeding:** In towns, they readily take scraps of food from people, and spilt grain. In rural areas, they feed on newly sown or stubble grain, and clover and weed seeds, supplemented with occasional invertebrates such as snails.

**Reading:** Stidolph, R.H.D. 1974. *Notornis* 21: 383–384.