



## Wildlife Window: Mourning Dove Soft “Cooing” Sounds Often Heard In Rivendell.

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Doves are a romantic Valentine's Day staple of love. Doves mate for life, cuddle closely and preen each other. A common dove visitor and bird sound in Rivendell is the **Mourning Dove** (*Zenaida macroura*). This graceful, slender-tailed, small-headed dove is also common across the continent. Their soft, drawn-out calls sound like laments. Let's learn more about these “cooing” birds.

### Appearance

Plump-bodied and long-tailed, with short legs, small bill, and a head that looks particularly small in comparison to the body. Males typically are 9-13 inches in length with a wingspan of about 17". The long, pointed tail is unique among North American doves.

Mourning Doves often match their open-country surroundings. They're delicate brown to buffy-tan overall, with black spots on the wings and black-bordered white tips to the tail feathers.

Their flight is fast and bullet straight. Dove's wings make an unusual whistling sound upon take-off and landing. This dove is also a strong flier, capable of speeds up to 55 mph.



(Photos: Bob Frank)



### Behavior and Habitat

Mourning Doves fly fast on powerful wingbeats, sometimes making sudden ascents, descents, and dodges, with their pointed tails stretching behind them.

Mourning Doves feed mostly on seeds and grains on the ground and in the open. They peck or push aside ground litter, but don't scratch at the ground.

Males have favorite “cooing perches” they defend from other males. Members of a pair preen each other with gentle nibbles around the neck as a pair-bonding ritual. Eventually, the pair will progress to grasping beaks and bobbing their heads up and down in unison.

(www.allaboutbirds.org)

### Fun Facts

- The Mourning Dove is monogamous, often pairing for life, and it nests in individual nesting sites, often in very unusual places.
- The mourning dove is preyed upon by falcons, bobcats, and sportsmen. It is also the most heavily hunted game bird in Florida. However, it is in no imminent danger of extinction.

**Your Actions Make a Difference!** Our wildlife friends are experiencing food shortages due to loss of vegetation, use of pesticides and degradation of habitat from urban development that challenge all of our wildlife friends. Working together to implement our healthy ponds and preserves management strategies will help keep our favorite wildlife habitats strong. Your continued support helps attract more of our wildlife friends!

Click here to visit the Ponds & Preserves website at <https://www.rivendellcommunity.com/ponds>.