

Wall-nesting urban Stock Doves in Glasgow

The Stock Dove *Columba oenas* has a restricted and fragmented distribution in Scotland, only found in the south and east of the mainland, though it is likely to be under-recorded (Forrester *et al.* 2007). It is thought to be largely resident, with little evidence of birds moving far from breeding areas and very small numbers noted at migration sites. Breeding is mostly reported from rural and agricultural areas with birds sometimes forming small colonies, mostly found nesting in holes in mature trees, although nests have also been reported more rarely in cliffs and rabbit holes, and pairs will use nest boxes. Similar nesting sites have been described in the rest of the UK and Europe, along with quarries and abandoned buildings (Cramp 1985, del Hoyo *et al.* 1997, Jardine 2000).

Against this background it is noteworthy that a colony of Stock Doves inhabits an urban site in the West End of Glasgow (Clyde). In March 2018 at least seven pairs used holes in a riverside wall to nest along the banks of the River Kelvin underneath Hamilton Park Avenue at NS5731767300 (Plates 115 and 116 a–b). The

wall is about 60 m long and 12 m high, with large cavities used for nesting. It was built in the 19th Century and is partially overgrown with Ivy *Hedera helix* and surrounded and topped by European Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and European Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* trees. A dead Elm *Ulmus* spp. covered in Ivy is also present above the wall.

For a normally shy and wary species, the Stock Doves are unusually approachable at the site, allowing close views as they spend much time perching on branches next to nest holes, undergoing courtship and producing young (Plate 116 c–d). Apparently the birds have used this site for many years but have been overlooked (including by the author) as Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*.

The specific habitat features at the site that have allowed this colony of Stock Doves to establish in such an unusual urban location are not known. But the combination of mature trees, adjacent nest cavities and nearby water is reminiscent of some rural nesting sites elsewhere in Scotland and the UK (Brown & Grice 2005, Forrester *et al.* 2007).



Plate 115. Riverside wall next to the River Kelvin, Glasgow, Clyde, containing a colony of nesting Stock Doves, March 2018; arrows indicate Stock Doves. © Chris McInerney



Plate 116. a–b. Stock Doves nesting in a riverside wall next to the River Kelvin. c–d. Stock Doves next to the River Kelvin, Glasgow, Clyde, March 2018. © Chris McInerny

Whatever the reason it is encouraging that the species can utilize an urban landscape, as it is UK Amber Listed following recent population and range declines (Musgrove *et al.* 2013, BTO 2018). This note also alerts observers to scrutinize ‘Feral Pigeons’ in similar urban habitats, as more colonies of Stock Doves may exist elsewhere in Scotland.

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