

Turtle Doves

If you rescue a baby turtle dove that needs hand raising please also read [**Caring for a Baby Pigeon.**](#)

All the information about Turtle Doves was generously provided by Rob Taylor who has the knowledge and experience of this bird that I lack! He also provided the photographs.

Turtle doves are slightly smaller than the Eurasian Collared Dove that we see



so often, and much rarer. They are quite colourful, with appearance of sandy-bronze dappled wings and striped chequered neck marks. In this photograph of two adult turtle doves the cock is on the left and the hen on the right.

Youngsters are much more drab in appearance and lacking neck patches. The youngster in this photograph is 14 days old.



Young turtle doves look very much like collared dove youngsters up until they are 5-7 days old when the pin feathers show a definite sandy - bronze coloration.

Turtle dove nests are normally built in hawthorn or low thick trees / hedges (between 8ft -15ft from floor.) The nests are flimsy, so young turtle doves are prone to same mishaps as young collared doves and woodies and youngsters are likely to fall to the ground. The parent doesn't recognise the young until they are fledged, so if you see a youngster that is unable to fly, please move or take it to safety but remember that they have to be handled very gently as stress can kill them!

Turtle doves are even more nervous than collared dove and not as hardy. They frequent mostly farmland, scattered woodland and scrub and are not normally found in gardens or built up areas. They are mostly found scattered through south east of England and are getting scarcer to non existent the further north you travel.

Turtle doves are difficult to spot as they normally perch in leafy trees or thickets - sometimes wires, though they can occasionally be seen feeding with flocks of wood pigeons.



When perching, their position can given away by a purring coo.

Nestlings and squabs need the same care needs as collared doves - but more time needs to be taken as can stress easily (they are very delicate up to around 21 days old). Heart attacks are imminent in youngsters if stressed too much. If they display signs of stress such as open mouthed breathing they should be placed back in seclusion and another slow-steady attempt made later to feed, etc. By the time youngsters are 21 days old - they are much more robust and can handle stress.

Adults have the same care needs as collared doves although individuals can be quite nervous, just like wood pigeons.



This is a video of an adult (I assume male!) turtle dove cooing: