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DIVERSITY, ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION OF PIGEONS AND DOVES (FAMILY COLUMBIDAE) IN PAKISTAN

Bibi Abida Sirhandi, Kalsoom Shaikh*, Sahibzado Farmanullah Rashidi, Waheed Ahmed Shabrani, Iqra Arain, Misbah Arain, Ghulam Sarwar Gachal, Iqra Raees, Hira Lakho, Khalid Saifullah Rajput, Abdul Rehman Shaikh

University of Sindh, Department of Zoology, Jamshoro, Pakistan;

*Corresponding Author Kalsoom Shaikh, e-mail: kalsoom.shaikh@usindh.edu.pk;

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ABSTRACT

Pigeons and doves have highly adaptive nature; they not only thrive stably in urban habitats, contribute to a balanced ecosystem for human settling areas as well. They are valued for food, pollination, and trade though their habitat preference and distribution is different in Sindh province of Pakistan. Their current conservation status was also needed to be confirmed, therefore we aimed to record their diversity, ecological conditions as well as their conservation through surveys in different types of habitats from sun rise to sun set. The species of pigeons: *Columba livia* (rock pigeon), *Columba livia domestica* (domestic pigeon), and *Columba leuconota* (snow pigeon) were found from the study area along with doves including *Streptopelia decaocto* (Eurasian collared dove) and *Streptopelia risoria* (barbary dove). It was recorded that pigeon's most preferred habitat was urban areas followed by suburban areas, however dove population was denser in agricultural areas. Roosting and nesting sites were observed in wide variety of human habitations especially in brick or stone buildings. *C. livia*, was recorded as most abundant species of genus *Columba*, however *C. leuconota*, was observed very rare in study area roosting on cliffs. Population density of doves was recorded lower than that of the pigeons and they were often recorded in agricultural areas where their nests were sighted often on trees. Urban areas provide shelter to pigeons and doves where they maintain ecological conditions balanced by controlling pest insects. It was also determined that pigeons and doves are vulnerable due to hunting and illegal trade in the study area.

Keywords: Avifauna, Family Columbidae, Ecology, Dispersal, Protection, Pakistan.