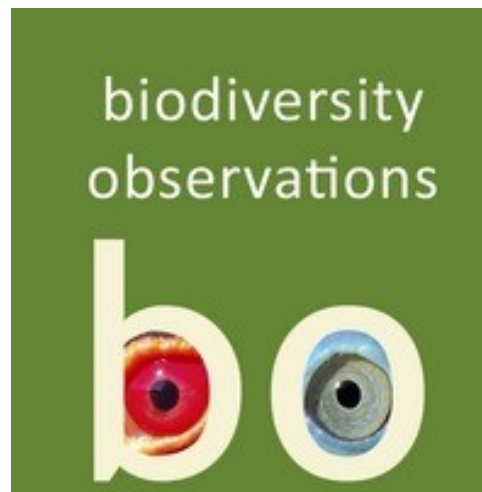


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Ornithology

Record of Progressive Greying in Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* in Nigeria

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Observation

While birding at Okinni (7°50'38"N, 4°30'57"E), Osun State, Nigeria, on 22 September 2022, a Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* was seen with an unusual plumage that distinguished it from the other Laughing Doves in the area. OBA photographed the dove in the city, which is adjacent to the Osun Osogbo Sacred Forest. Patches of white feathers covered the bird's breast and wing area, and its head was white (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Progressive Greying in Laughing Dove *Spilopelia senegalensis* (Photo by Bibitayo Ayobami Owolabi).

One of the causes of aberrant white feathers in wild birds is known as Progressive Greying (van Grouw 2012, 2013, 2018, 2021). According to van Grouw (2021), this aberration is characterized by the progressive loss of melanin-producing cells, resulting in parts of the plumage becoming white over time (van Grouw 2021). There are different forms of Progressive Greying, and the causes are unknown for most conditions. In Progressive Greying, the white feathers are typically spread randomly in the plumage, and the number of white feathers increases with successive moults (van Grouw 2021).

An inspection of the dove in the picture revealed that its aberrant-coloured plumage was almost certainly the result of Progressive Greying. The deduction is made because of the scatter of white feathers through the plumage. In Progressive Greying, juvenile plumage is usually coloured, normally and the loss of melanin starts after the replacement of juvenile plumage. In some cases, the loss of melanin commences during the first moult into adult plumage; in other cases, it begins when the bird is several years of age.

Most forms of Progressive Greying are not straightforwardly heritable, and the causes are not understood. The true state of Progressive Greying in a wild bird is frequently impossible to detect without knowledge of the bird's history (van Grouw 2021).

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