

Peruvian Pigeon

Columba oenops

Alfredo J. Begazo



The Peruvian Pigeon *Columba oenops* occurs in a small area of north-central Peru, principally within the upper Marañón valley in the departments of Cajamarca and Amazonas³. Bangs & Noble¹ considered it to be 'apparently rare' in the north-west of the country, while Dorst (cited in Collar *et al.*¹) regarded the species as uncommon in this region. More recently, Parker *et al.*⁴ judged it fairly common within its range, referring to the valley bottom near Balsas north-east of Celendin.

The species is characteristic of the riparian forest in the upper rio Marañón valley. It has also been observed in vegetation characterised by *Ceiba* trees and *Prosopis*, and scrub interspersed with cacti on the slopes surrounding the Marañón valley¹. Repeated visits to riparian forest around Balsas, in June and August, indicate that it is still fairly common in this area. The habitat here comprises *Prosopis*, *Acacia* and columnar cacti, as well as mango and lemon orchards. Other species in this area include Marañón Thrush *Turdus maranonicus*, Yellow-faced Parrotlet *Forpus xanthops*, Peruvian Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium peruanum*, Spot-throated Hummingbird *Leucipus taczanowskii*, Streaked Saltator *Saltator albicollis striatipectus* (streaked form) and White-tipped Dove *Leptotila rufaxilla*. Peruvian Pigeon was seen in orchards, hedgerows and native plant formations, and was active in the morning and late afternoon when groups of 2–12 individuals would fly along the río Marañón at speeds and heights that suggest they were travelling some distance. On one occasion, a group of four was seen descending, at high speed, from the hills above the river bottom. They usually flushed when observers approached to within 50–80 m. Song was heard throughout the day, with peaks in the morning and afternoon. The song closely resembles that of Pale-vented Pigeon *Columba cayanensis* and, to lesser extent, Picazuro Pigeon *C. picazuro*. Recordings have been deposited at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Neither pair interaction nor evidence of breeding was observed.

Few data concerning the species' feeding habits are available. Baron² indicates that coca seeds are part of its diet, but in July 1996 Peruvian Pigeons were noted feeding on the ripe fruits of a tree locally known as overo *Cordia lutea*. This plant is used as a hedgerow around orchards and other crops. No other feeding observations were made.

Peruvian Pigeon is considered vulnerable³. Conflicting reports concerning the abundance of this species exist, with some considering it rare or difficult to find away from the Marañón valley bottom, and others regarding it as fairly common in the latter area. The variation in abundance between riparian forest and dry plant formations on the hills surrounding the Marañón valley suggests that the species only uses the latter as secondary habitat. Alternatively, observations of greater abundances in the Marañón valley come from nearby and may only be true in areas where natural vegetation is interspersed by crops.

References

1. Bangs, O. & Noble, G. (1918) List of birds collected on the Harvard Peruvian expedition of 1916. *Auk* 35: 442–463.
2. Baron, O. T. (1897) Notes on the localities visited by O. T. Baron in northern Peru and on the Trochilidae found there. *Novit. Zool.* 4: 1–10.
3. Collar, N. J., Gonzaga, L. P., Krabbe, N., Madroño Nieto, A., Naranjo, L. G., Parker, T. A. & Wege, D. C. (1992) *Threatened birds of the Americas: the ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation.
4. Parker, T., Parker, S. & Plenge, M. (1982) *An annotated checklist of Peruvian birds*. Vermillion, South Dakota: Buteo Books.

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Figure 1. Peruvian Pigeon *Columba oenops* (Alfredo J. Begazo)



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Figure 2. View of the Marañón valley, showing the river, riparian forest and surrounding xeric habitats (Alfredo J. Begazo)

Figure 3. Riparian forests interspersed with agricultural areas used by Peruvian Pigeon *Columba oenops* (Alfredo J. Begazo)

Figure 4. Xeric habitat dominated by ceiba (Bombacaceae) on hills surrounding the valley (Alfredo J. Begazo)



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