

season and in the season of 1917, while in the spring of 1916, sixteen Killdeer were on his place, but a pair of bird dogs from a nearby house were continually hunting them so that only two pairs remained to nest.

This is the first time I ever knew of Killdeer nesting in West Haven.—  
NELSON E. WILMOT, *West Haven, Conn.*

**Mourning Doves Sharing a Robin Roost.**—On the evening of September 10, 1918, shortly after sunset in a country place outside of St. Louis, I saw fourteen Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura carolinensis*) flying low through the gathering dusk. Others followed along the same course in small groups or singly, so that I was convinced that there was a general movement toward a roosting place. The next evening I posted myself near the point where the birds had been observed the night before, and discovered that several hundred Doves were going for the night to a piece of low ground only a few rods away. At the same time many Robins were also noted dropping into the same tangle in the manner characteristic of this species when flying to a "roost." For several evenings a count was made of both species as they came to the roost. On September 14, three observers at different points counted five hundred and twenty-five Robins and four hundred and ninety-seven Doves. On September 28 only fifty Doves were noted, and on October 10, none.

The thicket in which both species roosted covered several acres and was made up of wild plum, wild crab, small oaks and elms, many of which were draped with wild grape vines. Through a part of the thicket ran a piece of low ground in which grew taller elms, willows and buttonwood. The thicket was surrounded on all sides by open fields.

The Doves came chiefly to the northwest corner of the thicket, the Robins chiefly to the north and east sides, but a few individuals of each species came along the route used chiefly by the other. A possible explanation of the marked difference in routes lies in the fact that the region to the northwest, from which the Doves apparently came, contained large corn and wheat fields and had fewer trees, while that to the north and east, from which the Robins came, included more small yards and groves of trees.

The first Doves usually appeared later than the first Robins, and their whole flight was spread over a shorter period of time. Many individuals came singly, but loose flocks of as many as thirty-four were noted. They never flew as high as the Robins that came in early, but no lower than the Robins that came late, when it was getting dark. Like the Robins, they occasionally lit on telephone wires before going into the thicket. To the northwest, about a quarter of a mile away, were two small cattle ponds; here, one evening, I observed Doves stopping to drink, apparently on their way to the roost.

The Doves, unlike the Robins, were invariably silent on their way to the roost and after entering it. The Robins very often gave their sibilant note when flying over, and in the roost kept up a considerable interchange of



"pip" notes. For an evening or two a peculiar note, which might be described as a cross between a purring and a mewling note, coming from many points in the thicket, puzzled me until I discovered that it proceeded from Brown Thrashers. There must have been very many of these birds scattered in all parts of the thicket, but I never saw any fly in and conclude, therefore, that they remained in the thicket during the day.

In looking up the literature on the Mourning Dove, I find that very little has been published on the roosting habit above described. Neither Wilson, Coues nor Bendire mentions it. Audubon has the following statement, which is copied by Nuttall and Baird, Brewer and Ridgway:

"The roosting places which the Carolina Turtles prefer are among the long grasses found growing in abandoned fields, at the foot of dry stalks of maize, or on the edges of meadows, although they occasionally resort to the dead foliage of trees, as well as that of different species of evergreens. But in all these places they rise and fly at the approach of man, however dark the night may be, which proves that the power of sight which they possess is very great. They seldom place themselves very near each other when roosting on the ground, but sometimes the individuals of a flock appear diffused pretty equally over a whole field. In this particular they greatly differ from our Common Wild Pigeon, which settles in compact masses on the limbs of trees during the night. The Doves, however, like the Pigeons, are fond of returning to the same roosting grounds from considerable distances. A few individuals sometimes mix with the Wild Pigeons, as do the latter with the Doves."

S. N. Rhoads mentions "several dozen Doves" roosting with Robins, near Haddonfield, N. J. (Cassinia, 1913) but I have found only one writer who seems to have observed them roosting in the same manner and abundance that I have above described. In 'The Auk,' (Vol. 22, p. 150) Stockard in an article on the Nesting Habits of Mississippi Birds, writes as follows:

"This species is extremely common and in fall and winter they are seen collecting in large numbers. Late in summer they begin roosting in company and many hundred come about sunset to their chosen places for the night. During this season they are shot in large numbers while flying to the hedge or small wood that has been selected as a roosting place."

It seems from the dearth of published material on the roosting of the Mourning Dove, as if the habit could by no means be as universal as in the case of the Robin. It would be interesting, however, to hear from other observers, and particularly to get further data on the time of year during which Doves roost in common. Is it only after the young are fledged, or do the males roost while the young are being reared? Were the large numbers in the St. Louis roost due to the presence of migrants? Is the roosting habit continued further south by wintering birds? How often do Doves share a roost with Robins? When roosting in thickets, do the Doves spend the night on the trees, or on the ground in the manner described by Audubon?—RALPH HOFFMANN, *St. Louis, Mo.*



Hoffmann, Ralph. 1919. "Mourning Doves Sharing a Robin Roost." *The Auk* 36, 106–107. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4072797>.

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