

# Notes

## Collared Doves feeding on food pellets in an urban feral cat shelter

In many cities, cat lovers set aside enclosures where feral domestic cats *Felis catus* are provided with food, water and shelter. There are several of these in Sitges, in Catalonia, Spain, including one in Carrer de Fonollar, a busy area on the waterfront.

Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* routinely forage in open areas around bars and restaurants along Carrer de Fonollar. The species has been expanding its range in Europe for over a century, but arrived in the

in a large open area, but what is unusual in the case of the Collared Doves in Sitges is their feeding in a low, confined space underneath a wooden structure, with the additional risk of predation from the feral cats. The doves were obviously wary when feeding and would spend several minutes perching on fences above the enclosure before flying down alone or in groups of up to five birds. During the times when doves were seen to forage in the area, cats rested in the enclosure

less than 1 m from the food bowl.

I am not aware of any reference to a feeding situation of this type for Collared Doves. Columbids, despite a high degree of urbanisation in many parts of the world, have the lowest diversity of feeding innovations of all avian families measured when research effort is taken into

account (Overington *et al.* 2009), so observations of novel urban feeding strategies in this family are useful.

### References

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32. Feral cat shelter, with Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* and food bowl (inset).

Sitges area only around 1989–91 (Pocino *et al.* 2005). In March 2017, several Collared Doves were observed feeding on dry commercial pellets provided for the cats in bowls under a wooden shelter in the enclosure (plate 32). Pellets fed to dogs and cats are a good potential source of energy for columbids, which can swallow the pellets whole and crush them in their crops.

In Barbados, Zenaida Doves *Zenaida aurita* routinely eat some of the dog pellets we use in field experiments on grackle dunking behaviour (Morand-Ferron *et al.* 2004). Our experiments there are conducted

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