

Genus *Phaps* Selby

Phaps Selby, *Nat. Hist. Pigeons*, 1835, p. 194. Type, by original designation, *Columba chalconota* Latham.

The mid-sized to fairly large pigeons in this genus belong to a group of closely allied, exclusively Australian species collectively known as bronzewings, a term derived from iridescent markings on their wings forming a wing-speculum. These markings are strongly developed in *Phaps* and *Ocyphaps*, less prominent in *Geophaps*, and vestigial or lacking in *Petrophassa*. Goodwin (1983) postulates that their evolution has involved reduction of this iridescent wing-speculum, and the ancestral form probably had the wing-coverts and scapulars wholly or largely iridescent, as in the *Chalcophaps* doves. A connecting link may be represented by the two *Henicophaps* species from New Guinea, which are very similar to *Chalcophaps* in plumage colouration, but resemble *Phaps*, especially *P. elegans*, in body size.

Goodwin notes also that, within the 'bronzewing group', phylogenetic affinity is indicated by colour patterns, behaviour and geographical distribution, but the presence of morphologically distinct genera illustrates well the principle of adaptive radiation.

Subgenus *Phaps* Selby

The two species in this subgenus are closely related as indicated by similarities in plumage colouration and habits. Facial patterns and a lower degree of sexual dimorphism are similar, and juveniles more closely resemble the adult female. Both feed on the ground, but nest in trees and shrubs, and the strong, direct flight is undertaken with

The generic differences are due to adaptation to differing habitats, because among the species are both woodland and open country forms, strong fliers with continuous wing beats, and partly or wholly terrestrial forms that fly short distances with alternating wing beats and gliding. Frith (1982) suggests that *Phaps* is probably nearest to the ancestral form, and within this genus the Common Bronzewing *P. chalconota* has remained the most generalised type, while its near relative the Brush Bronzewing *P. elegans* has undergone some specialisation to enable it to use coastal scrubs more efficiently, and the more distinctive Flock Bronzewing *P. histrionica* has become specialised to open, treeless grasslands. These degrees of specialisation are reflected in subgeneric differentiation.

Sexual dimorphism is slight to pronounced, and juveniles differ from adults.

The genus ranges throughout Australia, including Tasmania.

continuous wing beats. They overlap geographically in southern Australia and Tasmania, but show different habitat preferences: the Common Bronzewing preferring more open, drier woodlands, and the Brush Bronzewing preferring coastal or contiguous shrubbery or forest understorey, especially in moist gullies, and mallee in drier areas.