



Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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Christmas Counts

Here are details on several local Audubon Christmas counts. Each of these counts requires a fee of \$5.00 payable to National Audubon, which is used to help offset the costs of conducting the counts and publishing the results. If you live in one of the count circles, you can report the count from your feeders, even though you don't want to participate in the whole count. There is no charge for feeder watchers, or for participants under age 18.

If you object to the NAS fee, there are some alternatives. The Hamilton County Park District conducts a free count in all the county parks on Saturday, December 14. You can contact them at 521-7275 to sign up for your favorite park. Or, the Northern Kentucky Bird Club conducts several counts which are not reported to National Audubon, so they don't have the NAS participation fee. Those are December 14 at Warsaw, December 28 at Burlington, or January 4 at Falmouth. Contact Lee McNeely at (859)586-7520 for more information on those counts.

Hamilton-Fairfield CBC: Saturday, December 14. Contact Mike Busam at 755-0057 or mjb@schaffer.cc. The area includes Gilmore Ponds, Hamilton Riverside Park, Joyce Park, Drabo Gravel Pits, Kerns Nursery, and parts of the Great Miami River.

East Fork Lake CBC: Sunday, December 15. Contact Joe Bens at 353-4229 or brdrjoe@compuserve.com. The area is centered on East Fork Lake, and includes other nearby locations in Clermont County.

Ohio River CBC: Saturday: December 21. Contact Joe Bens at 353-4229 or brdrjoe@compuserve.com. The area is centered on the Oxbow, and includes the Oxbow, Shawnee Lookout, and nearby areas in Ohio, Indiana and northern Kentucky.

Western Hamilton County CBC: Sunday, December 22. Contact Ned Keller at 941-6497 or keller@one.net. The area includes Miami-Whitewater Forest, Mitchell Forest, Winton Woods, Mt. Airy Forest, and Spring Grove Cemetery.

Cincinnati CBC: Sunday, December 29. Contact Jay Stenger at 522-4245 or Jste100727@aol.com. The area includes the Cincinnati Nature Center, Lunken Airport, Woodland Mound, and other nearby areas in eastern Hamilton County and western Clermont County.

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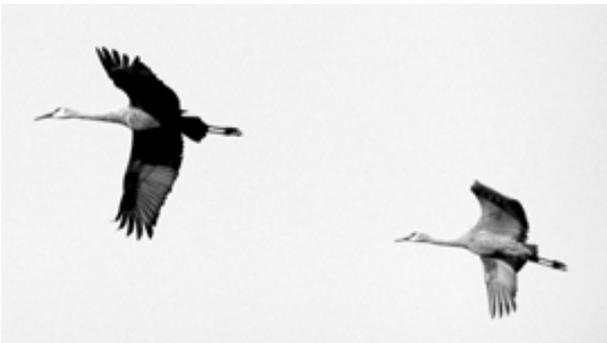
Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area

by Bill Stanley

photos by Jack Zimmerman

Darlana Graham, our fearless finder of feathered flocks flying toward Florida across Indiana, led the Cincinnati Bird Club on a trip to Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area. On October 26, 2002 nine peregrinating bird club members followed Darlena to Jasper-Pulaski, which is located in northern Indiana, and is the congregation point of tens of thousands of Sandhill Cranes as they migrate south.

An employee of the Wildlife Area claimed that the last count tallied up fourteen thousand Cranes gathering in the Jasper-Pulaski field at one time. During the evening of our visit, this field (approximately three quarters of a mile long) filled with Cranes as they returned from a day feeding in the surrounding corn fields, and prepared to go to the marsh and roost for the night. Counting these birds as they moved within the flock was impossible, and as I imagined trying to estimate these numbers for a Christmas bird count, I realized that there must be a better way. According to the attendant at the lookout, the Cranes are counted by two strategically placed people watching them fly into the field in groups of three to fifty or more birds. As I watched the imposing number of birds enter the field I still thought that this must be an impossible task, but I would love to attempt it some day.



Some Cranes were present in the field all day, but many others could also be seen foraging in the harvested cornfields around Jasper-Pulaski. The Sandhills were searching the corn stubble for leftover grain, or insects. The day grew long and evening was on its way. The loud, raspy call of the Cranes was more insistent and soon many small flocks were flying in. The sky filled with hundreds of cranes as they arrived to congregate in the field. As the Cranes approach, they call, and the birds on the ground answer. This constant call and answer was the rhythm of life for the field where the Cranes gather. The juvenile birds make a high pitched whistle as they fly in. When we first arrived at this throng of Cranes, the sound of the juveniles' call had me looking for finches in the surrounding pines. The flock continued to grow until dusk. While the sun set, groups of Cranes began to leave, heading for the marshes where they roost at night.

The last morning at Jasper-Pulaski we wanted to see the gathering of Cranes again. On this foggy morning we pulled into the parking lot near the lookout. As we moved toward the lookout the sound of Sandhills was louder than the night before. Maybe the fog amplified the birds' calls, or maybe the excitement of another day searching the areas corn stubble for tasty morsels amplified their voices. Whatever the reason for their magnified calls, the collective sound of their voice as it rose through the fog was awe inspiring.

Jasper-Pulaski Fish and Wildlife Area has been designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) by the American Bird Conservancy because of its importance as a stop-over point for 90% of the eastern population of Sandhill Cranes.



Future Events

We have several good programs and field trips scheduled for early next year. We'll have more details here later, but mark your calendars now so you won't forget!

January 16 program: Members' slides, photos (& digital?)

February 20 program: Ohio shorebirds and birds from other locations, Bob Royse

March 20 program: birds and history of Gilmore Ponds, Mike Busam

January 25 field trip: Killdeer Plains

February 15 - 17 field trip: Reelfoot Lake

Ohio Winter Bird Atlas

Vic Fazio has begun a winter bird atlas project for all of Ohio. Preliminary work was done last year, and was quite successful. The project is intended to run five years, beginning in January. It will chart the occurrence, and in very rough terms the frequency, of birds throughout Ohio during January. It will be based on survey blocks, similar to those used in the breeding bird atlas, but larger. Instead of being based on one-sixth of each USGS quadrangle, the entire quadrangle will be included. You won't need USGS maps, since those quadrangles correspond to grids on the DeLorme Atlas maps. (By the way, if you don't have the DeLorme Atlas, you are missing a great birding tool.) You won't need to sign up for a particular block; the project can use your sightings anywhere in Ohio. If you have internet access, you can get all the details at <http://aves.net/winter-atlas/>. There is far too much information there to condense into the small space I have here, so if you think you might want to participate, but can't get onto the internet, call Ned Keller at 941-6497.

More Checklist Additions

As I mentioned last month, the American Birding Association maintains the standard checklist of "countable" species for North America north of Mexico. The latest additions to the checklist are available online at <http://www.americanbirding.org/checklist/update.htm>, although the article detailing the reasons for accepting these additions isn't expected until the April issue of *Birding*.

The species most likely to affect local birders is Yellow-chevroned Parakeet. It was originally lumped with White-winged Parakeet into the species which was then known as Canary-winged Parakeet. It is now considered to be established as a species in Florida, where it outnumbers White-winged in most locations. White-winged Parakeet was already on the ABA list.

The other new countable species are Greater Sandplover, Band-tailed Gull, and Dark-rumped Petrel. The petrel is not a true species, but rather a species complex consisting of Hawaiian Petrel and Galapagos Petrel. ABA's position is that one or both species has occurred in our area, but the two are not reliably separable in the field.



Contributors Wanted

Passenger Pigeon by eMail

You can choose to receive your copy of the Passenger Pigeon by eMail instead of getting a paper copy through the regular mail. Getting the newsletter by eMail will save the Bird Club the expense of printing and mailing your copy, and you will receive it several days sooner than the paper copy would arrive. You will need to have the free Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. If you do not already have it, a free copy can be downloaded from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.

To sign up for this service, send an eMail to the editors at keller@one.net. You can switch back to a paper copy at any time.

The Passenger Pigeon needs your help! Don't worry, we're not hitting you up for money. Instead, we need your contributions in the form of articles or artwork for our newsletter. Or should we say, *your* newsletter. Please send your submissions to Ned or Kathy by the 20th of the month. If possible, we would prefer them by eMail to keller@one.net. But if that's not possible, you can also send them to 7899 Bridgetown Road, Cleves OH 45002.

Are Your Dues Due?

If the box next to your mailing label is checked, this is your last Passenger Pigeon. To renew, just send in the form below. If the box is checked, but you sent your dues in during the past couple of days, then you can probably ignore this message. To be on the safe side, check with Peg to be sure she got your dues.

Bird Club Membership

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____

eMail _____

____ Individual \$12.00

____ Family \$15.00

____ Student \$6.00

Make your check payable to Cincinnati Bird Club, and mail to:
Peg Gatch, 11 Mound Avenue, Milford, OH 45150

If this box is checked,
this is your last issue.
See inside for details.



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Recent Bird Sightings

<http://w3.one.net/~keller/cincybirds/goodbird/sighting.htm>