



Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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May Program

Ohio's Rarest Birds, by Jim McCormac

Jim McCormac will present an overview of selected records of the rarest finds ever made in Ohio, including some that are downright bizarre. Some of these records have amusing stories attached to them, and some are rather tragic. We'll also touch on some of the early ornithologists and their work, and shamelessly speculate about what rarities might show up in Ohio next. This talk comes recommended by Bill Whan, Editor of the Ohio Cardinal, as an informative and often amusing talk that features a lot of unusual graphics.

About the Speaker: Jim McCormac is a botanist with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Natural Areas, where he has worked for the past 17 years. He is particularly interested in the conservation and biology of rare species, wetland ecology, and plant migration. He has found a number of new native species to the Ohio flora, as well as a number of plants that were considered extirpated. Jim has published numerous scientific papers and popular articles on Ohio botany, and is a co-author of the new Ohio Floristic Quality Assessment Index.

Jim became interested in birds by the age of 8, and has birded extensively throughout Ohio and North America. An avid lister, he has 345 species on his Ohio list. He has been Secretary of the Ohio Bird Records Committee for the past six years, and in 1999/2000 coordinated an extensive

survey of Ohio's grassland birds, made possible by a grant from the Ohio Division of Wildlife. He is the author of the soon to be released book "Ohio Birds", a 400 page comprehensive treatment of Ohio's bird life, published by Lone Pine Publishing Company.

May Field Trip

On Sunday, May 18, we'll look for summer residents and the last lingering migrants at Miami-Whitewater Forest and Wetlands. We'll start by looking for forest species, and then move on to the wetlands. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Timberlakes parking area. From I-74, take the Dry Fork Road exit, and turn right. At the first stop sign, West Road, turn right again. Just past the small bridge, turn left into the park and follow this road to Timberlakes. For more information, call Ned Keller at 941-6497, or e-mail him at keller@one.net.

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Do my cardinals need rogain?

contributed by Connie McNamee

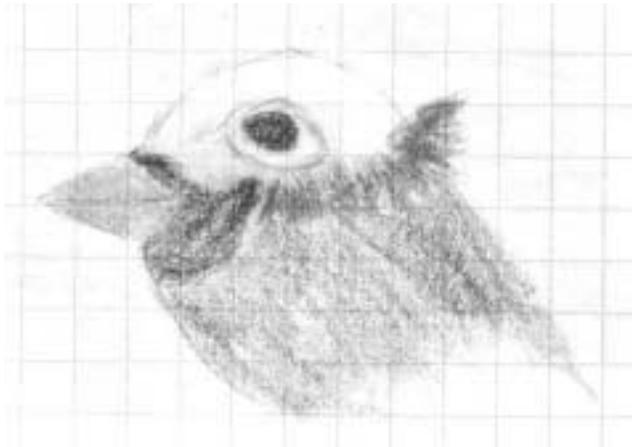
Looking through a journal that my husband Greg and I keep, I was searching for our recorded sightings of a bald cardinal. To my surprise (and disappointment), I could not locate anything about this peculiar bird.

But this was the first BALD bird I had ever seen! This male cardinal, absent head feathers, immediately captured our attention. As with any uniquely marked bird seen around our

feeders, Greg and I gave it a proper name. We agreed that “Old Flattop” was most appropriate.

Although I have no specific date, Old Flattop first appeared in the fall of 2002 (sometime before Sept. 7). He returned to the feeder often for black-oiled sunflower seeds. As winter was approaching, I felt he would not be with us for long. How could a bald bird keep from freezing to death with no insulating head feathers? But survive he did, for I would see him daily, through rain & sleet & snow.

In January, he was joined by a second male, balding cardinal. My sketches dated Jan. 31, 2003 are below.



1st Bald Cardinal



2nd Bald Cardinal



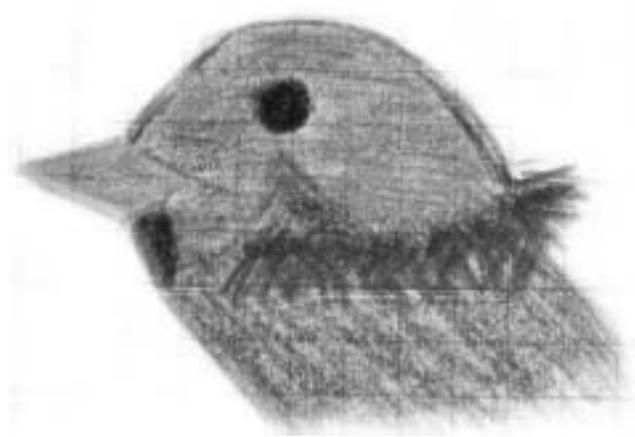
1st Bald Cardinal (top)

After mid-February, we only saw 1 skin-headed bird. I cannot be certain if this was Old Flattop (whose condition had not worsened) or the 2nd feather-missing bird (whose state might have deteriorated). But as I write this on April 2, 2003, Old Flattop 1 or 2 is still at my feeder, behaving as any other cardinal would.

Greg was able to find some info on balding birds from the internet. However, this has not been studied in depth. One theory is feather-eating pests, such as mites or lice, are destroying the area where a bird cannot preen well, it's head. Another idea is that balding birds are juveniles, in an unusual molt. The bird's diet could be a cause.

Bald-headed birds have been reported in cardinals, both male & female, & also in bluejays. One source says a bald cardinal looks black-headed because it's dark skin is revealed. I disagree. Old Flattop 1 and 2 appeared to have very white heads during the winter months (dry skin?). Only within the last 2 weeks has my remaining bald-headed cardinal developed "dark" skin, along with more feather loss.

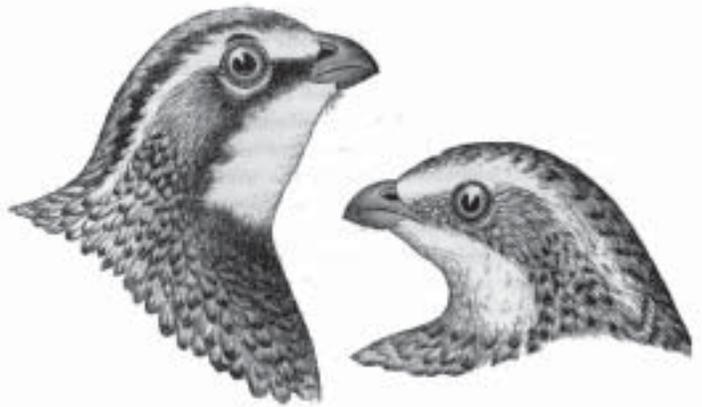
I ask that anyone with sightings of bald birds &/or comments share them with me in a future CBC newsletter. Meanwhile, I'm off to purchase some rogaïne.



Bald Cardinal
April 2, 2003

Information Please

Bill Whan is working on a series of articles on Ohio pelagic records for the Ohio Cardinal. We have a local record of a Magnificent Frigatebird from September 29, 1967, but the published details on this record are remarkably sparse. It apparently was found on the ground somewhere around Cincinnati and taken to the zoo, where it died. Does anyone have any recollection of who found the bird, where it was found, how long it survived, or any other details about it? Please contact Ned Keller at 941-6497 or keller@one.net, and I'll collate the information and send it on to Bill.



Bird Club Picnic

We're tentatively planning a Bird Club picnic at Miami-Whitewater Forest for June 19. Mark your calendars now, and we'll send out details on exactly where, what time, how to sign up, and so forth in early June.

Hidden Gems, Part II

contributed by Jay Stenger

This article concludes the list of underbirded local and regional sites, begun last month.

11) ROCKY FORK SP (3,464 acres) and PAINT CREEK SP & SWA (10,200 acres), Highland Co. OH

These two State Parks are located within a few miles of each other. Both have large reservoirs, Rocky Fork 2,080 acres and Paint Creek 1,200 acres, and both attract waterfowl, waterbirds and shorebirds in season. Bald Eagles are regular at Rocky Fork. The farmland around these two parks has decent grassland areas that usually attract good numbers of winter raptors, including Short-eared Owls. Rocky Fork is just a few mile east of Hillsboro Oh, and an easy drive from the east side of town (about 45 miles east of I-275), yet I know of only one local birder who visits the area with any regularity. A considerable number of rarities have occurred here, most recently 4 Roseate Spoonbills.

12) CALIFORNIA WOODS NP (117 acres) and MAGRISH NP (45 acres), Cincinnati Park Board, OH

These two city of Cincinnati owned Nature Preserves are located within a quarter mile of each other and are situated along the Little Miami floodplain. California Woods, located on Kellogg Ave just east of Salem Rd, has one of the finest climax mixed mesophytic woodlands in our area. The many trails make access easy and the woodlands abound with songbirds. Excellent during migration, it is also surprisingly good in all seasons. Cerulean Warblers can be common here and Great Horned Owls are usually easy to find. Magrish is a fairly new property located along the east shore of the Little Miami River just north of Kellogg, but accessed from Salem Rd, This small area preserves a section of wooded riparian bottomland.

13) FRENCH PARK (275 acres), Cincinnati Park Board, OH

Another city park, this one is located along Section Rd in Amberley Village and has extensive woodlands and pleasant trails. This park can be excellent for warblers and other songbirds during spring and fall migration. Lots of surprises found here over the years by the few birders who visit this site regularly.

14) LUNKEN AIRPORT BIKE/HIKE TRAIL (acreage ?) Cincinnati Park Board, OH

This fairly long, paved, multi-use trail is situated atop a floodwall that follows the west shore of the Little Miami River. On one side you have wooded riparian bottomland forest and on the other, grassy successional open habitat that borders the airports runways. A few small ponds and marshy spots are also present. At any season the varied habitats will host a variety of song birds. Woodcock can be common in season and a few shorebirds and waterfowl can also be found at the right time of year. Raptors can be common, but wintering Short-eared Owls have not been found here for several years. A good walk in spring and fall migration.

15) ARMLEDER/LITTLE MIAMI RIVER PARK, aka DUCK CREEK BOTTOMS (350 acres), Cincinnati Park Board, OH

This relatively unknown Cincinnati Parks property has been birded annually on Christmas Bird Counts and by only a few others over the years. Recently acquired by the city, it is slated for development in 2003. While a few soccer fields will be added, a decent sized section is supposed to be preserved in a natural state which will at least make access easier. The park lies in the floodplain north of Beechmont Ave and east of Wooster Pike and attracts a variety of species throughout the year. When the area floods it can be excellent for waterbirds.

16) CURTIS GATES LLOYD WMA (1,179 acres) Grant Co., KY

This little known Kentucky Wildlife Management Area is located only 25 miles south of Cincinnati, 1 mile south of Kenton County and easily accessed from the I-75 Crittenden KY exit. The fairly large area is hunted in season, but during spring and summer it is seldom visited by anyone. The area has woodland, brushland and farmland and supposedly hosts one of Kentucky's oldest virgin tree stands. Walking the trails and roadsides during spring and fall migration and summer will produce a great variety of species.

17) SHAWNEE STATE FOREST (62,583 acres) Adams and Scioto Counties, OH

While not real close to Cincinnati, this outstanding area is only about 65 miles east of town and well worth the drive, particularly during early summer and spring and fall migration. While many local birders are aware of this excellent site, few of us actually visit, which is surprising as it is no further than several other regularly visited places that are just as far away. Covered in extensive mature woodlands with many old roads and trails throughout the area which makes access easy, this area abounds with birds, particularly songbirds. Sixteen species of warblers commonly nest (including Worm-eating) and migration is usually excellent. Get Chuck-wills-widow and Whip-poor-will along Ohio Brush Creek on your way to or from.



18) BROWN/MONROE COUNTIES, IN

Another at the limits of our area location, but easily reached in a two hour drive from Cincinnati and well worth the trip in any season. This area is dominated by the vast Hoosier National Forest and Lake Monroe. Parts of four outstanding areas can be birded in a long day. Brown County SP (extensive mature woodland), Stillwater Marsh (extensive managed marsh/wetlands), Yellowood State Forest (extensive pine and deciduous woodlands, small lake and marsh) and Lake Lemon (large lake, seasonal mudflats). All of these areas together encompass over 60,000 acres. Virtually all of the species found in Indiana can be found in season at one of these places.

19) RED RIVER GORGE, Daniel Boone National Forest, Powell Co., KY

The fact that Swainson's Warblers breed here and can be found with moderate effort compel me to add this location to the list. One local birder I know makes the trip each year in June, but I hear little else from local birders. A little over a 2 hour expressway ride puts you in the region. Extensive mature woodlands are excellent for many breeding songbirds, similar to Shawnee SF.

20) FORT ANCIENT STATE MEMORIAL, Warren County, OH

The mature wooded hillsides above the Little Miami River are best known as an archaeological site, but the area is also an excellent birding site. Either on top of the hill or on the trails along the river birding can be excellent, particularly during migration and summer. Worm-eating warblers used to be reported from here, but again it seems very few reports have come from here of late.

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

Recent Bird Sightings

Field Trips:
Jeff Hays
521-4477

President:
Paul Wharton
353-3403

Treasurer:
Peggy Gatch
831-3378

Newsletter:
Ned Keller &
Kathy McDonald
941-6497

Programs:
Jay Lehman
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