



Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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September 2003

Special October Program

The Identification and Behavior of Sparrows of the Midwest, by Jon Dunn

The Bird Club will join with other local groups to present a special program in October. Jon Dunn will present a slide program on the sparrows of the Midwest, including their behavior and identification. Jon says to be sure to bring your binoculars for this program, so that you can see all the detail in the slides.

The meeting will be on Thursday, October 2 at the Sharon Woods Visitor Center. Note that although this is the usual meeting location, it is not the standard date. The meeting will be followed by a book signing, where Jon will be glad to sign your copies of his books, Peterson's *A Field Guide to Warblers of North America* or National Geographic Society *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*.

Many of us got to know Jon Dunn when he lived in the Dayton area for several years, but he now lives near Bishop, California. He has extensive knowledge of the identification and distribution of North American birds. Jon was chief consultant to the National Geographic Society's *Field Guide to the Birds of North America*. He was co-writer and host of the two-video set *Large and Small Gulls of North America* in the *Advanced Birding Video Series*. Jon is currently a member of the American Birding Association's Board of Directors as well as a consultant for their magazine, *Birding*. He is also a member of the American Ornithologists' Union Checklist Committee and the ABA Checklist Committee. Jon has been a tour leader for WINGS, Inc. for 25 years.

September, 2003 Program

Texas, A Birders Paradise
Jay G. Lehman

Texas includes many top birding spots, and of all the states in the U.S., has the highest list of state birds. Any birder intent on seeing a large percentage of North American birds, must ultimately visit the top birding spots in Texas, and seriously consider visiting this state in different seasons. This program will provide a summary and highlights of eleven birding trips to Texas starting in 1978 to present. It will include slides as well as digital photography of birds, scenery, and some wildflowers to give perspective on the different habitats and what one might expect to see in this vast state. Last but not least, of course, life birds seen will be included, as well as ideas about what parts of the state to go birding in next.

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A.O.U. Checklist Changes

Contributed by Ned Keller

The American Ornithologists' Union has published its latest set of changes to its checklist, the 44th Supplement, in the July issue of *The Auk*. They intend to begin publishing these changes each year, instead of every other year. There are no new species in our area, but there are a few changes in common name, and several more changes in scientific names. Band-tailed Gull is changed to Belcher's Gull, and Three-toed Woodpecker is now American Three-toed Woodpecker, following a split of the species into New and Old World species. Rock Dove is changed to Rock Pigeon, conforming to a change made by the British Ornithologists' Union.

Along with the name changes, there is a major change in the order in which species are listed in the standard checklist order. Waterfowl and gallinaceous birds (turkeys, grouse, quail, etc.) are placed between tinamous and loons. Since we don't have tinamous around here, these birds will now be at the start of the checklist.

There are several other changes in scientific nomenclature. All the New World

Pigeons, including Band-tailed, Red-billed and White-crowned, are placed in a new genus, *Patagioenas*. The *Metascops* subgenus of owls, the Screech-Owls, is elevated to a full genus, so all three of our Screech-Owls are now *Metascops* instead of *Otus*. The genus *Nyctea*, consisting of the single species Snowy Owl, is merged into *Bubo*. Finally, the endings of the specific names of several species are changed: Whiskered Tern is changed from *Chlidonias hybridus* to *hybrida*, Black-capped Vireo is changed from *Vireo atricapillus* to *atricapilla*, Black-capped Chickadee is changed back (it was just changed in 2000) from *Poecile atricapilla* to *atricapillus*, and Ovenbird is changed from *Seiurus aurocapillus* to *aurocapilla*.

Perhaps the most interesting development is that the A.O.U. now recognizes that a number of species and genres are misclassified, quite possibly belonging in different families, but that it doesn't quite know what to do with them yet. These include Yellow-breasted Chat, all the North American Tanagers, White-collared Seedeater, the Grassquits, the Longspurs, and Snow and McKay's Buntings.

The complete new checklist is on the A.O.U. web site, at:
www.aou.org/aou/birdlist.html.



Past Program Reviews

Contributed by Jay G. Lehman

Editor's Note: I omitted these from last year's newsletter, partly due to my oversight and partly due to lack of space.

November (2002) Program: "Bird Sight"

"Bird Sight" is a new television program totally devoted to birds appearing on digital cable that includes footage by Cincinnati's best known and nationally renowned bird and nature photographers, The Maslowskis (in this case Steve) and Ron Austing. This program shown on public TV covers all kinds of information about birds, including segments on birding equipment, endangered species, unusual sightings around the US, identification tips, sight and sound and all the latest news about birds. Steve Maslowski's excellent digital video presentation of this episode was hosted by Ken Kaufmann but David Sibley is also co-host, both of whom are noted ornithologists and authors of field guides. There were segments and excellent photography on the endangered Florida Scrub-Jay and Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Operation Migration for Whooping Cranes (WHCR) to initiate a new migration pattern for an additional population of WHCRs, and rare birds reported recently, such as the Shy Albatross on a west-coast pelagic trip, the Blue Mockingbird in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, Texas, and White-winged Dove in Massachusetts. Other topics of note were the electronic version of the Christmas Bird Count database, the water recovery project for Everglades NP, the Bird Recovery Rescue Center in California and a class for identification of fall warbler by Julie Zickefoose, noted bird artist who lives in the Appalachian foothills of southeast Ohio. I was fascinated by footage about big-day and big-year birding in Florida, because they included shots of Paul Bithorn and David Simpson. I have been reading about their birding reports on Florida Birds on the internet. For those who didn't make it to this program, you missed a great show!

February Program: "Bird Photography from Ohio and Beyond"

"Eye candy" in abundance! This is probably an understatement. Bob Royse of Columbus showed slide after slide on two carousels full of exquisite close-ups of waterfowl, shorebirds, warblers and sparrows and other birds from Ohio, Michigan, Manitoba, Churchill and elsewhere. The sharpness, clarity and artistic quality of Bob's photographs are sometimes beyond words. Many shorebird and waterfowl photos were complimented by beautiful reflections of the bird in the water. You have to see them to believe. All his photos of warblers, some singing with beak open, such as Worm-eating Warbler, are on open twigs. His understated and modest style belies the effort, the high quality and expensive equipment required, the patience, the number of shots/rolls of film taken to get great photos and knowledge of behavior that are required to obtain such astonishing results. For example, the warbler photographs, are so good with all birds in the open that some folks in the audience asked, as a joke, whether he takes his own twigs into the field. However, Bob indicated that he photographs warblers in Ohio very early in the spring when males arrive on territory and are singing from perches unobstructed by leaves. And he indicated that he never will take contrived photos of birds; only photos of birds in their natural element. Some shorebird photos were obtained by wading through deep mud, but many were obtained by sitting quietly at Conneaut waiting for shorebirds to fly in to be photographed. It was a great show, and thanks to all who attended for the large audience of 36 attendees. For those who missed this program, you can see some of his photos on his website, <http://www.roysephotos.com>, and learn about the equipment he uses. Bob assures me that he has lots more photos of birds, so look for another program in the future.

Birding by Bicycle

contributed by Jim Perry

During a bike ride from Chillicothe to Portsmouth and back over the weekend of May 10-11, I observed several birds. This ride is called TOSRV (Tour of the Scioto River Valley). The route follows the Scioto River and passes lotza woodland. Other habitats include agriculture farmland and towns. It rained and the Scioto River was overflowing by Sunday morning.

Some birds that I usually observe regularly on bike rides were lacking on this weekend. Chickadees and Chipping Sparrows were virtually absent on this ride. Mallards and Canada Goose also belong on this list. I do not remember seeing any house finch. There are neither raptors nor vultures on the list. I did not see any Kestrels sitting on a power line waiting for a tender mouse or juicy grasshopper. There are virtually no water birds. I did see one unidentified shore bird flying over a flooded field searching for a shore. I was not able to identify any of the swallows from my bike. On a dry day when I pass so many agricultural fields, I usually hear the tinkling of horned lark. I still have difficulty distinguishing within the whistling-warbling complex of grosbeak-oriole sounds so if I do not know for sure I do not record it and instead simply delight in the sound. That leaves passerines who know my ear.

I found some interesting things in my observations. I think that the flooding displaced some birds and had an impact on what birds I observed. I suspect that I would not have heard a BobWhite if conditions made unflooded fields available. On the first day, I heard Warbling Vireos in the rain on each side of the entrance to White Lake. The next day it was sunny there and I heard none at that location. However, this was probably the most abundant woodland bird I heard along the way in both directions. Moreover, the vireo family was probably the most abundant woodland family. Warblers were second followed by (song) sparrows and (indigo) buntings.

Another interesting thing to me is that I would hear several individuals of a given species together adjacent to each other. When I would hear one, I would hear several others nearby as I rode down the road.

There were several bird songs that I was not able to identify. Many were intriguing and interesting. I once heard a thrush that sang with a vireo cadence. What would that be? Maybe the wind was playing with my ears. I attributed most other unidentified songs to warblers and flycatchers.

The following is a list of birds seen.

Great Blue Heron
 Rock Dove
 Mourning Dove
 Chimney Swift
 Northern Mockingbird
 American Robin
 American Crow
 European Starling
 Yellow Warbler
 Northern Cardinal
 Indigo Bunting
 Red-winged Blackbird
 Common Grackle
 Baltimore Oriole
 American Goldfinch
 House Sparrow

The following is a list of birds heard but not seen.

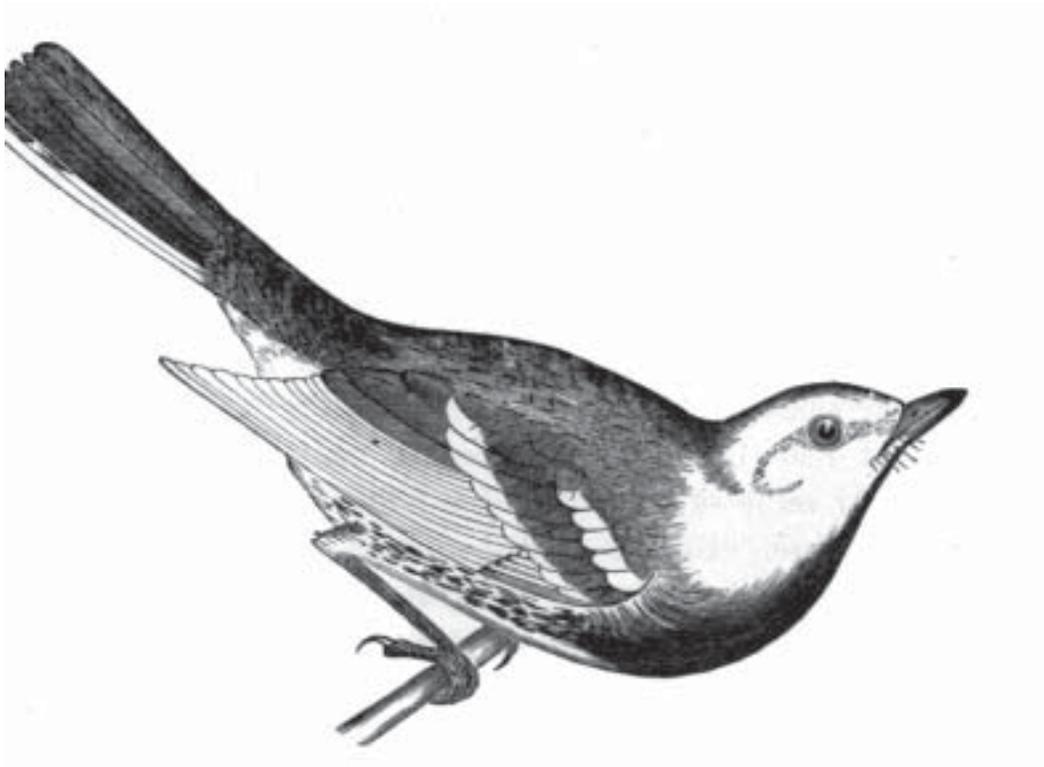
Killdeer
 Common Nighthawk
 Northern Flicker
 Eastern Wood-Pewee
 Great Crested Flycatcher
 Carolina Wren
 House Wren
 Gray Catbird
 Wood Thrush
 Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
 Carolina Chickadee

Tufted Titmouse
Blue Jay
Yellow-throated Vireo
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue-winged Warbler
Nashville Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Eastern Towhee
Chipping Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Rose-breasted Grosbeak
Eastern Meadowlark
Brown-headed Cowbird

The following is a list of birds seen only in Yocangtee Park in Chillicothe.

Mute Swan – a graceful pair
American Coot – one with a curious molt
Canada Goose
Mallard – several with nature's variations
White ducks and geese – one 'AFLAC' duck in the shelter among the throngs of people probably selling insurance

So, if you want to hear any of these birds, I suggest you hop on your bike in Yocangtee Park in Chillicothe and ride 54 miles to Tracy Park in Portsmouth.



September Field Trips

Saturday, September 6

Gilmore Ponds

Mike Busam

mjb@schaffer.cc

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the new Symmes Road parking lot. From I-275 go north on Route 4 to Bypass 4 and turn right, then left onto Symmes Road. The lot is about a half mile on the right, across from Burke Boulevard.

Join Mike for a leisurely walk around the ponds on this half day trip that should end around noon. Mike knows the ponds as well as anyone, and we expect to see a diversity of species as fall migration will be under way. While everyone knows Gilmore Ponds as an excellent wetland location, and rightfully so, many do not realize that it is also an excellent place to find migrating songbirds, especially warblers. Herons, egrets and shorebirds should also be present. Bring something to drink for this walk of about two miles. Bring insect repellent, too – we'll be in a marsh.

Saturday, September 13

East Fork State Park

Neill Cade

662-7623, or neill.cade@worldnet.att.net

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the park office parking lot, located on the south side of the lake. To get there from I-275, take Route 125 east to Bantam Road. Turn left and follow the signs from the park entrance. The office is just up the road a short way, on the right.

Most recent field trips to East Fork have been in late fall or early spring to look for water

birds. The emphasis on this trip, however, is to find migrant songbirds, particularly warblers, as well as raptors and other migrating species. East Fork is somewhat overlooked at this season, and can be excellent for passerines. Shorebirds and other water birds, while not expected, could also be present. Neill will take us to several spots around the park, where we will take several short walks. This half-day trip will end around noon., but Neill will stay longer if the birding is good, so you may want to bring lunch.

Sunday, September 21

Brookville Reservoir / Hueston Woods

Paul Wharton

353-3403, or pwharton@fuse.net

Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the Park and Ride lot located on I-275 at the Cleves/ Miami town, Route 128 exit. We will caravan from there. Fall migration will be at peak, and we expect to find a variety of birds. We will start at Brookville Reservoir to look for migrant songbirds, especially warblers, which should be near peak. The ridgetops along the lake can be excellent corridors for migrating hawks, particularly Broad-winged and Sharp-shinned. Shorebird habitat is usually unpredictable, but we should find at least a few, along with terns, herons and egrets. After Brookville, we will head to Hueston Woods for another shot at water birds.

We should be finished by mid-afternoon, so pack a lunch. There may be a five dollar per car fee to enter parts of the BV area. There may be moderate walking in the morning, but the afternoon will be mostly auto touring.



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 by the 20th of the month. If possible, I 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?

Everyone's dues are for the period September through May. Unless you joined over the summer or late last spring, your dues for this year are due now. If you haven't sent in your dues yet, just fill out the form below and mail them in.

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

<http://cincinnatibirds.com/goodbird/sighting.php>

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