



# Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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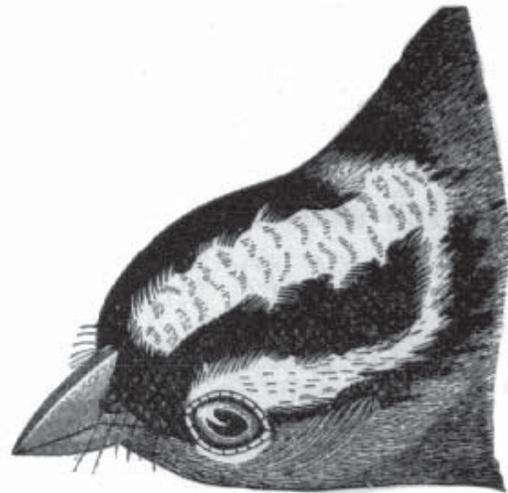
October 2003

## October Program

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

As announced last month, the October program will not be on the regular third Thursday. Instead, we will meet at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 2, at the Sharon Woods Visitor Center. 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.

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.



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# Pt. Pelee Solo

*contributed by Darlena Graham*

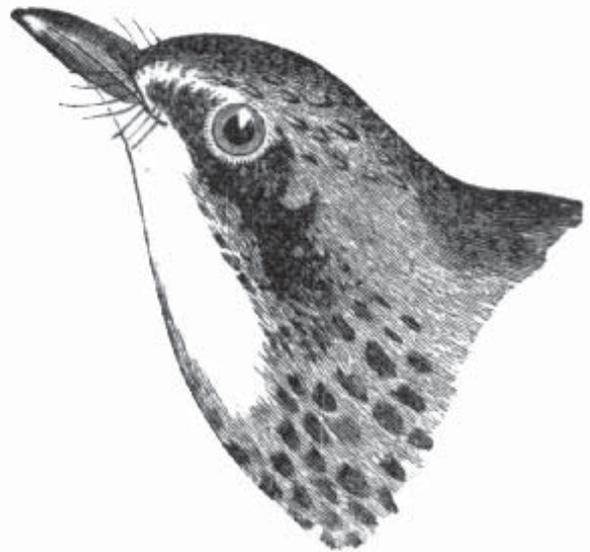
Some people may be aware that for years I have taken my Mother birding to Pt. Pelee in September. When she was unable to go this year, several friends expressed an interest in joining me which was delightful. However as the time neared for one reason or another the crowd dwindled to one. Me! Ok, my bags were packed, and my engine revving so off I went alone. Leaving home at 8:00 a.m., I flat out hit it to Pelee. On my way in I stopped by one of the local fresh fruit & veggie stands, a nice little Deli, and the Pelee Winery to pick up foods for the next few days and was in the park by 2:30. It was a beautiful day. There were hordes of people but the birds were ominously quiet. I did find a few warblers out at the point but just enjoyed the day and renewed memories of the area.

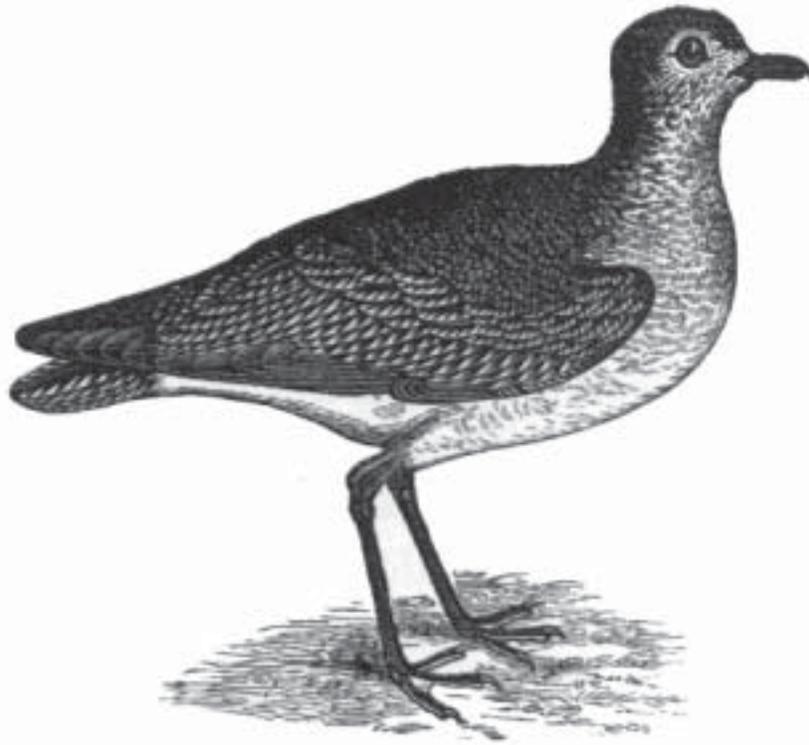
Some might not like birding alone but I am not one of them. I usually meet folks I know and always people I'm glad I met. This year I ran into two gentlemen from Indianapolis whom I had met in the past, Steve Wagner and his friend from Cincinnati, and two ladies from the Ontario Field Ornithologists. The Ontario ladies invited me to join them in two years when they come back to Pelee. I may take them up on it.

Sunday morning as I entered the park I was informed that there would be a bicycle race that morning and the road would be closed to cars from the DeLaurien Trail to the visitors center from 8:45 to about noon. Decisions, decisions. She said that the point itself would be accessible so thinking to myself that there are worse fates than being stuck out there for 3 hours I opted to stay. She neglected to tell me that there was also a foot race, half a Marathon, from the visitors center to the point! Making lemonade from this lemon I took myself to the woods for the morning and found the mother lode of Thrushes, Swainsons, Grey-cheeked and Wood. Some purist will probably ask how I eliminated the

Bicknell's Thrush. My answer is "Give me a break"! There were only a few warblers at the point and very few gulls. Oh boy! Hillman Marsh in the afternoon was beautiful but again, very slow unless you count Ring-billed Gulls. The onion fields yielded a nice little bunch of Black-bellied and Golden Plovers, Killdeer, Least and Pectoral Sandpipers.

Monday it rained. I mean it rained! Isabel had arrived. I dressed for the occasion and headed to the point to see what might blow in. By 10:00 I gave up and fled into the interior to spish at song birds. At 11:30 when the Sooty Tern (!) flew by the point giving the last 3 hardy souls a retina-searing look I was less than a km away chasing warblers! My only excuse is that it was a driving rain and a killer wind and I am a fair weather fan. Later I learned that the wind had been gusting to





70 km. I understand one of the hardy three was found in the men's room at the visitor center trying to dry his clothes enough to go back out there.

Tuesday was a beautiful sunny day but again the wind was a killer. And again I was chased off the point by it. Actually, with a little thought the climatic and people conditions can be dealt with. When the wind is from the west bird the east side and vice versa. People sometimes ride the tram out to the point. Unfortunately they miss the best birding. Behind the visitors center a trail heads into the woods. There is a more or less direct path or one that loops out to the east and around. Choosing either of these provides good access to forest birds. They open onto the road which provides good edge territory out to the point.

Coming back from the point, you can walk down the west side through what is optimistically called the Sparrow Fields. This is very different habitat, brushy, sandy and rather dry. I actually have seen a few sparrows there along with many butterflies,

mostly Monarchs. This trail breaks a couple of times but actually can be followed all the way to the visitors' center and beyond. There are 2 side trails which will lead you back to the road should you rather walk the road than the trail. Don't think that you can flag the tram down for a ride. It doesn't work that way. You make a decision to walk or ride and live with it. From the northeast corner of the visitor center parking lot the Shuster trail leads to the east beach. It also connects with the Tilden Woods trail, which connects with the Chinquapin Oak Trail. It makes for a lot of walking but I enjoyed it and found my best little flock of warblers on the Shuster trail. I love Pelee. I love to see the sunrise from the Marsh Boardwalk. We always find Sora, Marsh Wrens, Swamp Sparrows, Yellow-throats and Palm Warblers there. I finally found my Connecticut Warbler near the Sparrow Fields. I had a total of 12 warbler species this year. In all I only tallied 78 species this year which is disappointing but despite the slow birding and nasty weather I didn't want to come home.

# September Field Trips

## **Miami-Whitewater**

Sunday, October 5

Joe Bens (353-4229, jbens@cinci.rr.com)

Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the Miami-Whitewater Visitor Center parking lot, as near the lot entrance as possible. From I-74, take the Dry Fork Road exit and turn left. Turn right onto West Road at the first stop sign, then left into the park just after the small bridge, and follow the signs. A Park District auto sticker (\$3 annual, \$1 daily) is required. The plan is to first bird the wooded portions of the park amid glorious autumnal color, and then to move over to the wetlands to search for marsh and open country birds. We expect to find a mixed bag of species, including late fall warblers and other migrant songbirds, the first of our returning winter residents, raptors, early waterfowl, marsh birds, grassland species, and if water conditions are suitable, shorebirds. Sparrows should be present in good numbers, and we have a possible shot at Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow at this season. The wetlands have several October records over the past few years for this species. While only a half-day trip, this might last past noon, so plan accordingly. Boots are always a good idea at the wetlands.

## **Caesar's Creek State Park / Spring Valley Wildlife Area**

Saturday, October 18

Ned Keller (941-6497, keller@one.net)

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Caesar's Creek swimming beach parking lot. From Cincinnati, take I-71 North to the State Route 73 exit and turn left. After crossing the bridge over the lake, turn right into the park, and follow the signs to the beach. This is an interesting and beautiful time

of the year, which often brings surprises. We will start at the beach (where Franklin's Gulls are a real possibility) and work our way around the lake, with a stop at Spring Valley at some point. We will look for water birds around the lake, and raptors, late fall migrants, and winter arrivals. Spring Valley could be a wild card, as conditions there are unpredictable after last summer's drawdown. There will be some easy walking, but mostly this will be an auto tour, which should end around noon.

## **C.J. Brown Reservoir / Buck Creek State Park (Springfield, Ohio)**

Sunday, November 2

Jeff Hays (821-9822, jlhays@fuse.net)

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Borders Book Store parking lot, on the northwest corner of the intersection of Princeton Pike (U.S. 747) and Kemper Road. This is located directly across the street from Tri-County Mall. From I-275, take exit 42 (747 south), and go less than a quarter mile, to Borders, on your right. We will caravan from there, about a 70-mile, hour and a half drive. This Ohio State Park and reservoir is located just east of Springfield, and is well worth a fall visit. In late October, the Army Corps of Engineers lowers water levels to winter pool, which exposes a vast mud flat at the north end of the lake. While that timing is past the peak of shorebird migration, these conditions still attract a considerable number of late migrants and encourages them to linger. This is also an excellent loon, grebe, waterfowl and gull location as well, and open areas around the lake attract raptors and wintering songbirds. Franklin's Gulls and Eared Grebes used to put in regular early November appearances here. This trip will last most of the day, so prepare accordingly.

## Rare Bird Hotline

It's time once again to sign up for the Bird Club's rare bird hotline. For anyone who isn't familiar with the hotline, the idea is that anyone who finds a rare bird in our area calls the top of the list, and that person then passes the word along to the next person. When the system works well, everyone has heard about the bird within a few minutes. For better or worse, with the increased usage of the internet, we are seeing fewer calls sent out on the hotline. You can expect that it will be used only for birds seen less than annually in our area, and which have been seen within the past few hours. More common

birds, or birds which aren't reported to the hotline for a couple of days, probably won't be sent out.

To sign up for the hotline, call Jay Stenger at 522-4245 (home) or 522-8147 (work). **YOU MUST CONTACT JAY TO SIGN UP FOR THIS YEAR, EVEN IF YOU WERE ON THE LIST LAST YEAR.** By signing up, you are promising that when you get a call, you will pass it on to the next person, and that if you can't reach that person, you will call down the list until you reach another birder. Answering machines and non-birding family members do not count. Please do not give us a work number unless you can receive, and make, calls at work.

## Are Your Dues Due???

If you haven't sent in your dues yet for the September 2003 - May 2004 birding year, just fill out the form below and mail them in. If you've already sent your dues, why not give the form to a birding friend who isn't a member?

### 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>

## Recent Bird Sightings

Field Trips:  
Jay Stenger  
522-4245

President:  
Paul Wharton  
353-3403

Treasurer:  
Peggy Gatch  
831-3378

Programs:  
Jay Lehman  
527-4701

Newsletter:  
Ned Keller  
941-6497

## Bird Club Officers

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