



Passenger Pigeon

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February Program

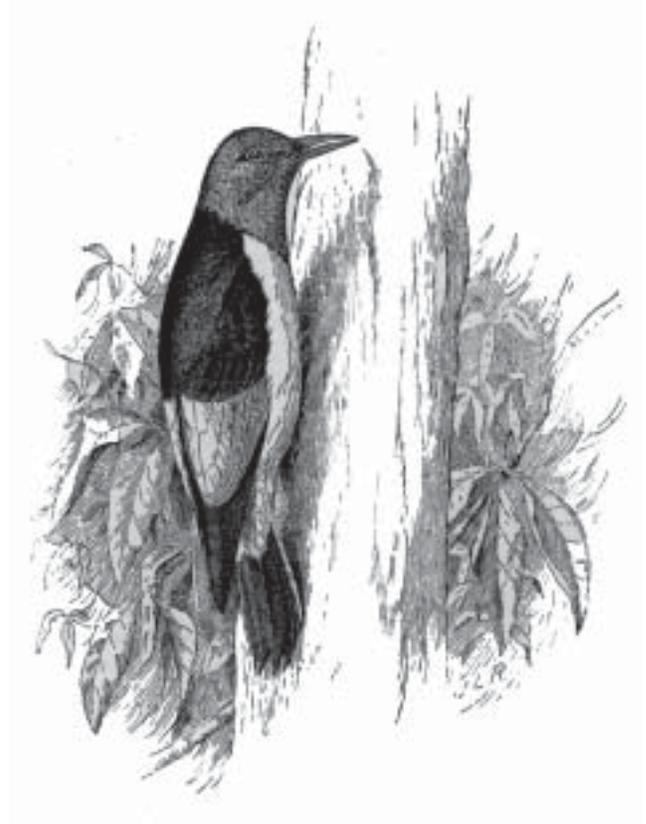
Ron Austing

Combination of Most Recent Bird Videos

Thursday, February 19, 2004

7:00 pm at the Sharon Woods Visitor Center

Ron Austing is one of our local outstanding photographers of national renown. His work is published in many national nature, conservation and wildlife magazines and has been included in programs on public television. Ron has given many great programs to the Cincinnati Bird Club, such as "Owls", March, 1994; "That Was Then, This Is Now", September, 1995; "Raptors and Hawk Videos", March 1997; "Highlights of Bird Photography Through The Years", March 2000, "Owls: Snowy Owls And Other Owls", March, 2000; and "An Evening With Ron Austing About Raptors", March 2002, just to name a few. Obviously, Ron's work is well known in the Cincinnati area! For those who are interested in bird photography as art, Ron will also bring prints of his bird photographs for exhibit and sale.



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Caching of Prey by Northern Hawk Owl

contributed by Jay G. Lehman

Jay's article was originally published in the September 2003 issue of The Kingbird, the publication of the New York Federation of Bird Clubs. -- Editor

On March 8, 2003 I drove 659 miles from Cincinnati, Ohio just to see the spectacular Northern Hawk Owl in Montgomery County, Town of Root. Sounds like a long trip, you say? Any day spent at close range with a Northern Hawk Owl is a special day, justifying a long trip. This observation on March 8, 2003 was an extra special one. The last time I saw Northern Hawk Owl was a long time ago in 1991 along Route 5 halfway between Chittenango and Canastota (Region 5), while I was living in Norwich, NY (Region 4). Although I live out of state, I'm still a member of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, and am interested in New York birds. After a whole winter (2002-2003) of severe weather on weekends that eliminated any long-distant attempt to see this bird, good weather prevailed on Saturday, March 8, as predicted.

I arrived at the Corbin Hill Road location in the Town of Root at about 5:00 pm. The sun was getting low in the sky and the beginnings of a high thin cloud cover indicated a weather change, but there was still enough good light for observation. The owl was on location at the top of the maple trees in front of the farmhouse at the top of the hill surveying its territory, swiveling its head from side to side as is typical when hunting. As I watched from the road edge, the owl flew down to a lower perch, pulled out some prey from its cache, which was in a dead hollow branch, and proceeded to eat. From my roadside

view, the prey looked like a rodent, as I could see a long thin tail dangling below the owl's perch. I walked up the road and up into the driveway to get the light at my back for a better view. As I watched from the new location the bird took another bite of a headless dead rat. After a few minutes, the owl flew to the hollow dead branch returning the rat to its cache, and then flew up to the treetop to continue scanning and surveying the area.

The eating behavior observed for this Hawk Owl is consistent with that reported in the literature. Northern Hawk Owl is known to be "a less ravenous eater than most owls, (and) it does not swallow whole any prey larger than a mouse. Bigger prey is eaten piecemeal much in the manner of a hawk eating its prey." (Eckert & Karalus 1987).

Caching of prey is known for several species of raptors and has been previously reported for Northern Hawk Owl in New York. "Caching of the parts of the remains of uneaten prey is a well-known habit of the American Kestrel, and has also been reported for the peregrine, goshawk and several owls." (Brown & Amadon 1968) A Hawk Owl in 1962 in Keene was observed caching mammalian prey. "Various observers reported seeing the Hawk-Owl drop down from his perch to capture prey that included shrews, voles, meadow mice, deer mice and red squirrels. The only avian prey reported was a Pine Grosbeak that was eaten on the spot, but most of the mammalian prey was cached in the top of nearby broken elm stubs." (Crowell 1982)

It is not surprising that the Root Northern Hawk Owl cached prey. In early March during my visit, approximately two to three feet of

packed snow still covered the area, the remnant of at least six feet of snow that fell throughout the winter. Severe weather conditions, high wind and blowing snow, reported on bird listserves on the internet throughout the winter forced this bird to change its habits and move from this high perch. Perhaps this may have made hunting conditions difficult at times.

I stayed with this bird for another 45 minutes, just enjoying it, but left at about 5:50 pm. Wish I could have arrived sooner and stayed longer! What a great bird! I've seen Northern Hawk Owl at least four times in the past 30+ years, and each time is special. Three of those times required very long distance trips, luck and the favor of the good weather gods as did this one. I do feel privileged to have succeeded in this

long distance adventure and sharing some time with this magnificent, impressive bird.

Literature Cited

Brown, L. and D. Amaden (1968) *Eagles, Hawks and Falcons of the World*, McGraw Hill Book Company as cited by Terres, J. K (1980) *The Audubon Society Encyclopedia of North American Birds*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Crowell, K. L. *The Kingbird* 32 : 252.

Eckert, A. W., and K. E. Karalus (1987) *The Owls of North America*, Weathervane Books, New York.



Hawk Owl
Root, NY
Jay G. Lehman
3/8/03

February Field Trip

What's So "Great" about the Great Miami River?

Saturday, February 28, 2004, 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

In September 1791 Gen. Arthur St. Clair and his army marched out of Cincinnati with the intention of defeating the Indian tribes in northwestern Ohio and putting an end to their claims to the Ohio country. On his way north, he built Fort Hamilton on the east bank of the Great Miami River, then continued his march to destiny. St. Clair's destiny was to suffer the single greatest defeat ever endured by U.S. forces at the hands of American Indians, when his army was surprised and utterly destroyed by a large force of confederated Indian tribes on November 4 at the site of present-day Fort Recovery, Ohio. Over 700 of St. Clair's 1000 troops perished in one morning. But that has nothing to do with this field trip, other than the fact that one of our planned stops happens to be along the Great Miami River at the site of the original Fort Hamilton. Additional stops along the river will include Mercy Hospital, the Fitton Center For Creative Arts, the low dam opposite Miami University, Hamilton Riverside Natural Area, and possibly other sites. If there are reports of interesting birds from Gilmore Ponds we'll make a stop there as well. The trip will end between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. with a short-eared owl and woodcock watch at the Voice of America Park in West Chester.

Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot for Hamilton Riverside Natural Area. Directions from inside I-275: I-275 to the Route 4 exit. Follow Route 4 North, towards Hamilton, until you reach the traffic light at Symmes Road. (The old Fisher Body plant sits on the northeast corner of the intersection). Turn left onto Symmes Road and follow Symmes until you reach River Road. Turn right at River Road. While on River Road you'll pass Joyce Park before coming to a three-way

intersection where St. Clair (named for you-know-who) runs into River Road. Stay on River Road. The next traffic light marks the intersection of River Road and Fairview, the road that leads to Riverside Natural Area. Turn left onto Fairview and drive about 300 yards until you reach the parking lot--you can't miss it. You can also take I-75 to Route 129 (Mike Fox Highway). Take 129 west into Hamilton. Cross Route 4, then after the railroad underpass turn left on Martin Luther King Boulevard (there is a McDonald's on the left, as well). Right on Knightsbridge. Left on River Road/Neilan Boulevard. Right on Fairview.

We can carpool for the stops in and around Hamilton, but we should probably drive separately when we head out to West Chester to visit the VOA. (And I promise to scout better for this trip than St. Clair did for his.)



The Everglades by Boat

contributed by Darlena Graham

When Katherine Miller and I realized we were to be in South Florida at the same time in late December we decided to hook up for some birding. Her brother, Frank, lives there and has a boat. He invited Jim and me to join him and Katherine for an afternoon out in the bay off Flamingo in the Everglades. I was all over that. It scratched an itch that I had been fighting the entire time down there. You drive along the Keys at low tide and see all of those waders too far out to get to and just go crazy.

It was low tide when we headed out, warm and bright sun. Katherine was in search of a Black Skimmer for a life bird and I was in search of everything. We spotted some Skimmers and Frank headed over close to them. He managed to coast to literally within feet of the flock and Katherine took a roll of pictures. When they lifted off we were in a cloud of Skimmers (leading me to put my hat back on). Someone decided there were probably 5000 Skimmers in that flock. It was incredible. We also found dozens of Roseate Spoonbills, hundreds of White Pelicans and 1 Scarlet Ibis. It was probably a hybrid because rather than actually scarlet it was more hot pink. There were Caspian, Sandwich, Common, Forsters, and 1 Gull-billed Tern. I didn't try to count the Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets, Little Blues Herons, Snowy Egrets, but did count one Tri-colored Heron, 3 Yellow-crowned and 1 Black-crowned Heron. Ospreys were hunting all around us and 17 species of shore-birds fed in the shallows.

It was a totally incredible experience and I highly recommend that birders in the area try to rent a boat or find someone to take them out.

Contributors Wanted

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, Cleveland OH 45002.

Passenger Pigeon by eMail

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