



# Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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## Local 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. 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 11. You can contact them at 521-7275 to sign up for your favorite park. The Clermont County Park District counts in their parks on Saturday, January 8. Contact Keith Robinson at 831-7606 to join them. Or, the Northern Kentucky Bird Club conducts two counts which are not reported to National Audubon, so they don't have the NAS participation fee. Those are Saturday, December 18 at Warsaw, and Saturday, January 1 at Burlington. Contact Lee McNeely at (859)586-7520 for more information on those counts.

### Hamilton-Fairfield CBC:

Saturday, December 18. 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.

### Ohio River CBC:

Saturday: December 18. Contact Joe Bens at 353-4229 or jbens@cinci.rr.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 19. 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.

### Paint Creek CBC:

Sunday, December 19. Contact Steve Wagner at 831-7606 or waggies5@hotmail.com. The area includes Paint Creek Lake and Rocky Fork Lake State Parks.

### Cincinnati CBC:

Sunday, December 26. Contact Jay Stenger at 522-4245 or jaystenger@cinci.rr.com. The area includes the Cincinnati Nature Center, Lunken Airport, Woodland Mound, and other nearby areas in eastern Hamilton County and western Clermont County.

### East Fork Lake CBC:

Sunday, January 2. Contact Joe Bens at 353-4229 or jbens@cinci.rr.com. The area is centered on East Fork Lake, and includes other nearby locations in Clermont County.

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## Bird Watching in Peru

by *Albert Lane*

My wife & I, members of the Cincinnati Bird Club since 1953, have just completed a 19 day exciting sojourn in Peru. (vacation arranged by Victoria Travel, Cincinnati, Ohio). On October 8, 2004, we flew by way of Atlanta to Lima, Peru. Then (Lan Peru Airlines) to the city of Cusco in southern Peru situated at an altitude of 12,000 feet. This city was the center of the old Inca (Quechuan) world. Its present day Spanish colonial architecture includes the town square with its prominent cathedral and adjacent cobblestone narrow streets. At 9 am that same day (after storing our luggage and having a cup of coca tea to combat altitude sickness), Debbie, myself and a U.S. Treasury economist from Washington D.C. (Dr. Randall "Randy" Mariger PhD) joined together with our biologist guide (Alexus Gallo) who is working on his masters degree at Urb. Mariscal Gamarra College in Cusco, and van driver (Carlos Romano) were off driving towards eastern Peru's Manu Tropical Rain Forest Preserve. We made our first stop about 10km east of Cusco at a salty/fresh water wetlands impoundment (803 hectares, partially public and privately owned), adjacent to the towns of Huacarpay and Lucre fed by the polluted Lucre River. Cattle & dogs walk through these shallow waters increasing the pollution. The towns' natives harvest the reeds which according to Alex should be left to help cleanse the water. Alex and his girlfriend Susana Muttepaza Urgarte are both members of a group called Ecoan, that would like to see this wetlands dedicated as a park. I told them that I would do all I could to enlighten the members of both Cincinnati's Bird Club and Oxbow Inc. to their goal, especially the need for identifying signs and educating the natives about pollution and prevention. There is a small bird watching tower along the road from where we saw Andean Gull, Andean Teal, Andean Duck (Common Moorhen) and others). (note: Peru has 1,804 species of birds, source web site, birdwatching peru at a glance.)

The five of us then resumed our adventure east towards the Manu World sponsored biosphere jungle preserve by way of the Pillcopata Rd. (a single lane gravel and bumpy road, winding through the snow capped and volcanic Oriental Andes at 10,000 to 12,500 feet elevations). On many curves, we could not see the bottom of the canyons below. We took a rest (acclimating to the heights, chewed coca leaves and took pictures in the city of Paucartambo with its statues and symbols of heroes at the town square). By then we had seen a Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager, Blue-crowned Mot-mot (one of my favorite birds) the Chestnut-winged Chacalaca and Silver-beaked Tanager (all birds on trip were identified by Alex).

Late in the afternoon we were following the Kosnipata River to the Cock in the Rock Lodge where we arrived at 7pm glad the 150 kilometer drive was over. This area is called Selva Sur Reserve within the Manu elfin cloud forest. Incidentally that day we wore t-shirts and then warm clothes because of the temperature change in different elevations. We had a nice dinner at the lodge and felt better. That night we saw the southern cross, other constellations & stars seen only in the southern hemisphere. Our cabin had hot water but candles for light as there was no electricity. We had small fountain pen type flashlights for light. The next morning we were up at 5 am and walked to a blind that concealed us as we watched and listened to the mating selection of the Cock in the Rock bird (the red headed national bird of Peru) at their lek. Later that day we were driven to the end of the Pillcopata Road at Atallaya. We boarded a motor driven boat (named the Peru Queen) and started going down the meandering Alto Madre de Dios River. After about 4 hours the river merged with the Manu River and the name changed to the Madre de Dios River. Late that afternoon we arrived at the Manu Amazonia Lodge (an old tea plantation) run by Alfredo and Nellie Yabar. Alfredo picked us up at the river in a 30 year old land rover for the bumpy ride back to the lodge. As we drove along I had no idea where we were driving. Alfredo kept shifting gears, double

clutching and navigating around the pools of water in the road. I am sure he has a mechanical mind in order to keep this vehicle going. We finally arrived at a series of one story buildings with common showers and bathrooms. All buildings had porches and ours had drinks and snacks on a table prepared by Nellie. The dining room building was in a clearing in the center of the compound.

The next day we saw/heard birds such as Yellow-rumped Cacique, Cape Heron, Cattle Egret, Violaceous Jay, Crested & Russet-backed Oropendola, Cinnamon Woodpecker, Tropical Kingbird, Blue-crowned Parakeet, Cocoli Heron, Great Blue Heron, Chestnut-fronted Macaw, Lesser Kiskadee, Brown-chested Martin, Long-tailed Tyrant, Blue-gray Tanager, White-collared Swift, Plumbeous Kite, White-eyed Parakeet, Andean Guan, Hoatzin, Nightjar, Snowy Egret, Olivaceous Cormorant, Great White Egret, Black Vulture, Greater Yellow-headed Vulture, Brown Violetear, Horned Screamer, Yellow-billed Tern, Roadside Hawk, Giant Cowbird, Groove-billed Ani, Black-capped Donacobius. We left the Amazonian Manu Lodge later in the day and were taken in the old land rover back to the Madre de Dios River, where we then boarded the Peru Queen for our trip to our final destination in the Amazon rain forest, the Cedar Lodge at the Manu Jungle Biosphere wildlife center, arriving there at 5:15 pm. We had mosquito netting over each of our beds, no electricity again but candles and flashlights sufficed. The next morning we took an early morning walk with Alex and saw Squirrel Monkeys while listening to Howler Monkeys. Later took a boat trip on the Manu Oxbow, (Camma or Cocha Blanco). We first saw Ti-Ti Monkeys and the following is a list of the birds that were identified by our guides that morning in that oxbow: Cocoli Heron (White-necked), Blue and Yellow Macaw, Red-throated Caracara, Striated Heron, Wattled Jacana, Hoatzin, Crested Ani, Mealy Parrot, Blue-headed Parrot, Common Piping Guan, Red-and-green Macaw, White-throated Toucan, Blue-gray Tanager, Social Fly catcher, Greater Ani, Yellow-rumped Cacique, Russet-backed Oropendola, Black-collared Hawk,

Screamer, Amazon Kingfisher, Masked Duck (which was a first in this area for our guides) Large-billed Tern, Swallow-tailed Kite, Yellow-billed Tern, Red-capped Cardinal, Lesser Kiskadee, Smooth-billed Ani, Olivaceous Cormorant, Fruitcrow, Muscovy Duck, Anhinga, American Black Skimmer at dusk

Late in the day we walked up the scary steel spiral stairway to the rainforest canopy, the Manu Wildlife Center observation tower. (the stairway ends atop a large sava tree with a man made swaying platform. The entire tower is strengthened by steel guy wires). I saw a White-fronted Nunbird.

The next day we started early by boat to go to the Blanquillo clay lick where we were to transfer over land to a floating catamaran blind 30 to 50 yards from the clay bank. We observed Cobalt-winged, Blue-crowned Parakeet and the Red-and-green Macaws eat the clay to help their digestive system. Also seen that morning Osprey, Drab-water Tyrant, Tui Parakeet, King Vulture and Masked Tityra. To keep this article short, I omitted the huge variety of plants, insects, butterflies, reptiles & aquatic life in this virgin rainforest.

On Thursday October 14 we were taken on our boat up the Madre de Dios river to the airport at Boca Manu where we saw a Great Black Hawk. The "airport" is just a landing strip. A group including the three of us and Alex walked out and boarded the Furze Aerea del Peru airplane at 10:30 and our short flight back to Cusco. Down below you could see the jungle and many rivers. That evening Alex and his girl friend Susana met us in the lobby of the Posada del Inca Hotel and discussed the goals of Ecoan while sipping coca tea. We said good bye and agreed to keep in touch with each other.

Later Debbe and I were to go to Machu Picchu, the sacred valley, Lake Titicaca, Arequipa and lastly the Colca Canyon where we saw a large Andean Condor with its approximate 10-12 feet wide, silvery white wingspread as seen from far above, flying in the air currents. I/we hope you enjoyed our narrative.

## (George W.) Bush Hogging the High Meadow

by Mike Busam

Birders familiar with the Voice of America Park since it opened to the public in 2000, have probably noticed that in the past four years sections of the park have become overgrown with invasive plants such as teasel and woody shrubs including dogwoods and less desirable species such as Russian olive. Such is the nature of succession as fallow fields transition from open, grassy areas to scrub-shrub to finally second growth forest.

In time, the succession of the VOA fields would drive out the current crop of grassland breeders, including bobolink, eastern meadowlark, savannah and Henslow's sparrows, and sedge wrens. I met last August with Bill Zerkle, West Chester's director of Parks and Recreation, and Mark Shank and Tim Greive, who oversee West Chester's maintenance department. Our goal was to come up with a mowing plan for the core area used by grassland breeders at the VOA. For the past four years as part of my VOA grassland bird survey, I've called this area of the park "the elevated fields north of the parking pull-off opposite Ballfield A and to the east of the roadway that runs past the picnic shelter." After three or four of minutes of trying, awkwardly and unsuccessfully, to put into words this particular area of the park, Shank and Greive nodded and said "you mean the High Meadow area." Couldn't have said it better, myself. Really. I actually *couldn't* say it any better. So "High Meadow" it is.

The High Meadow section of the VOA is approximately 52 acres in size. From the famous parking pull-off opposite Ballfield A, High Meadow is bounded to the west by the road that runs north-south past the picnic shelter; to the east by the road that runs north-south past "Wiggly Field," roughly parallel to Butler-Warren

Road; and to the north by an area of mowed trail just shy of the border with Butler County MetroParks' Ronald Reagan Voice of Freedom Park. Other areas of the VOA will be mowed occasionally as well in future years, but for economic and practical reasons, we decided to concentrate on the High Meadow as the core area that we will actively manage for grassland birds. The plan was to mow all 52 acres in fall 2004 and then mow approximately a fourth of the area each fall in subsequent years. It was a good, simple plan. In fact, we thought it was rather daring. I was working on a detailed map showing what was to be mowed and what wasn't to be mowed. There were circles and arrows and labels and descriptions and directions, and I planned to have it appear with this very article.

But then the George W. Bush presidential campaign decided to hold a rally at the Voice of America on September 27, 2004. To ensure that there was enough parking for the estimated 50,000 people the planners hoped would attend the rally, the majority of the 300+ acres of West Chester VOA property was mowed. So there's really no point in putting a VOA mowing map together this year. Basically, it was all mowed. Fifty-two acres? Try something closer to 252 acres!

But this shouldn't be a disaster. In fact, it could be just what the doctor, if not Karl Rove, ordered, so to speak. Large patches of teasel and shrubs were mowed to the ground to create temporary parking for the Bush rally. While this won't eradicate the problem plants—teasel in particular—it will slow the spread and growth of the shrubs, at least. Additionally, the mowing should provide the elbow room that various forbs such as red clover, black-eyed susan, and oxeye daisy need to flower. The mowing should be a good thing for the breeding grassland birds of the VOA. I hope, too, that it will prove to benefit the wintering birds of the VOA, as well, particularly the short-eared owls. I believe (hope?) that the short-eared owls will find enough cover remaining in the few unmowed sections of West Chester's

property as well as the largely unmowed MetroParks' Ronald Reagan park. Only time will tell, though. It's one big experiment in grassland management on the cheap. I'm personally grateful to West Chester Parks and Recreation for giving this a try, and we hope that the plan is successful. But we shall see.

## Are Your Dues Due?

Bird Club dues run from summer to summer, but we usually allow a couple of months grace period. But, if the box next to your label is checked, your time is up. To continue to be a member, just fill out the form below and mail it in. If the box is checked, but you sent your dues in the last few days, or if you believe that we've made a mistake, please call Peg Gatch to verify your membership status.

## Corrections

**Hot Line Phone Numbers:** I made two errors in the 2004-2005 Rare Bird Hotline from last month. Mary Dermody's home number should be 922-0559, not 992-. And Jay Lehman's work number should be 622-2399, not 662-.

**AOU Checklist:** In my article from the October Passenger Pigeon on the changes contained in the Forty-fifth Supplement to the AOU Checklist, I omitted a change in the order in which species are now listed. The *Branta* geese are now listed in the order Brant, Barnacle Goose, Cackling Goose, Canada Goose.

## Bird Club Membership

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