



# Passenger Pigeon

Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

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March 2005

## March Field Trips

### East Fork State Park

*Sunday, March 13, 2005, 8:00 a.m.*

*Leader: Bob Foppe, 732-0274*

*fopsinc@aol.com*

Join Bob on what should be a good day of birding, as spring waterfowl and waterbird migration should be near peak and will be the focus of this trip. Raptors and early spring migrant songbirds should also be found. East Fork also has a good reputation for pulling in rare and unusual birds. The idea is to visit all of the lake access sites for waterbirds, and Bob will have a few spots in mind to pick up songbirds. This trip is scheduled for a half day and should end around 12:00 or 1:00 P.M. Meet at the South Beach parking lot. From I-275 Exit # 65, take Rt 125 east, about 8 miles to Bantam Rd, turn left onto Bantam Rd. and follow the signs to the State Park entrance and beach.

### Summit Lake State Park

*Saturday, March 19, 7:30 a.m.*

*Leader: Jay Stenger, 522-8147*

*jaystenger@cinci.rr.com*

Summit Lake is one of our area's best waterfowl spots. Waterfowl, waterbirds and early spring migrants will be expected in good numbers on the trip to this Indiana State Park. If we have time, we will visit a few locations at Brookville Reservoir on our way home. We will meet at 7:30 am at the Park & Ride on SR128, located at the I-275/ Miami town exit. This trip will break up in late afternoon, so pack a lunch.

## March Program

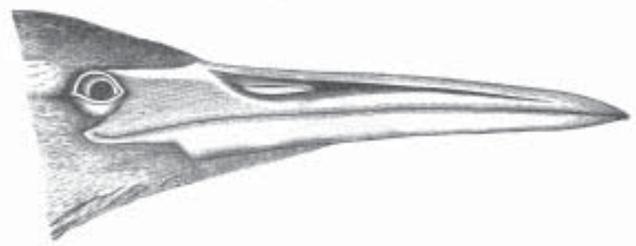
### Ron Austing

### Recent Bird Videos

*Thursday, March 17 at 7:00 pm*

*at the Sharon Woods Visitor Center*

Besides being one of our finest local nature photographers, Ron Austing also has a national reputation. 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 over the years. This year, Ron will present a selection of his recent work in bird-oriented video photography. 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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## Rick Dage, 1962—2005

*contributed by Mike Busam*

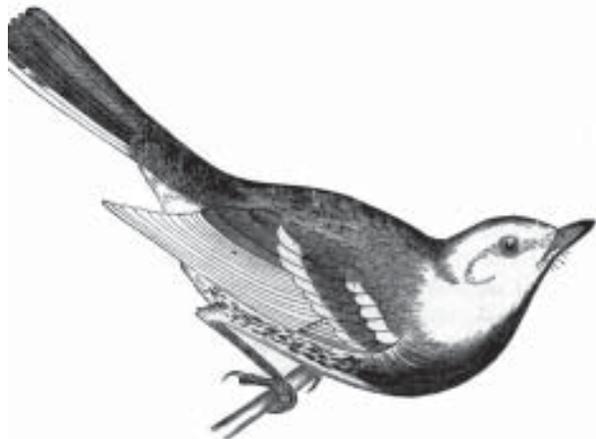
Rick Dage passed away at his home on January 26, 2005, at age 42. Rick and his wife Wendy have a two-year-old boy named Elijah, and have been members of the Cincinnati Bird Club, as well as the Cincinnati chapter of the National Audubon Society, for a number of years. Many people reading this article will remember meeting Rick and Wendy at meetings and on various field trips.

Rick was an avid birder, and enjoyed meeting and being around others with similar interests. Jay Stenger recalls that Rick went through the Audubon Bird Class taught each March by Stenger and Charlie Saunders *twice*: once with his father, and once with Wendy. But he was also particularly interested in botany. In 2001, Rick created a VOA plant list that helped in the development of a long-term management plan for the site and for which I've been very grateful. Armed with Rick's plant list and the plants he taught me to identify, I was able to at least *sound* like I knew what I was talking about when writing up reports and discussing grassland-related issues with the experts; Rick and Wendy also helped throughout the summer of 2001 during the initial season of the VOA survey, and continued to offer encouragement in following years.

Rick was fun to be around, and a day in the field with him was always welcome—and often memorable. In August 2002, while running a butterfly survey at Gilmore Ponds, we found a salamander, which Rick correctly identified as a subadult tiger salamander, despite my insistence it was a spotted salamander. We took photos and within a day Wayne Wauligman confirmed Rick's ID—it was, remarkably, a subadult tiger salamander, and is probably one of the most significant animal sightings ever recorded at Gilmore Ponds. Rick wasn't one to say "I told you so!" though I deserved it. He was humble

and comfortable with the knowledge that he was right, and eventually, others would realize that, too. On another occasion, in early May 2002 while running the VOA survey, we found a savannah sparrow nest containing four beautiful blue eggs, providing the first solid confirmation that this species breeds at the site. One year on the Hamilton-Fairfield Christmas Bird Count, while heading to lunch with Rick and Charles Hoffman, Rick saw a raptor perched in a field off of state route 747 in West Chester. "It's not another red-tail!" he insisted. So we pulled over, took out the scope, and enjoyed excellent views of a stunning peregrine falcon. Once again, Rick was right. A couple years later, in 2003, Rick, Wendy, and Charles Hoffman found a saw-whet owl, a first record for the Hamilton-Fairfield CBC, in a demolition site along Seward Road. Truth be told, Wendy deserves credit for the discovery—it was she, after all, who crawled into the pile of smashed conifers and found the owl—but it was another great moment in the field, and one Rick remembered fondly. He was just as pleased to share other people's discoveries as to make his own.

Rick was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan on March 31, 1962. He graduated from the University of Cincinnati with an MBA in finance and worked in marketing and data analysis for companies in Colorado and Ohio. He and Wendy were married in September 2001. Rick will be missed especially by his family. The Cincinnati-area birding community will miss him, too.



## Morris Mercer, 1920-2005

### A Life Well Lived is a Life to Celebrate

*contributed by Jon Seymour*

Morris Mercer lived the Oxbow! He spent his youth hunting ducks in the Oxbow. He raised his children to love and respect nature in the Oxbow. He defended the Oxbow from attack as he had defended his country during WWII, with all his mind, his courage, his strength, and his love. He taught others to enjoy the Oxbow and believe in the healing powers of nature. He spent his last years visiting the Oxbow and enjoying the ducks, beaver, eagles, cormorants, egrets, herons, and shorebirds that would not have been there if it were not for his efforts. If it was in the Oxbow, Morris had a way of enjoying it and teaching you to enjoy it also. Morris could also find mystery in a morning fog, elation in an evening sunset, resignation in a flooded river, peace in a flower blossom, and majesty in the call of a crane. He was one of nature's true gentlemen.

Morris was never formally trained in biology. It was his hobby, but a lifelong hobby of love. Morris was beloved by everyone he met because, I believe, he was like Will Rogers in that he never met anyone he did not like. His "Field Notes" in the Oxbow, Inc. newsletter, Wetland Matters, were legendary. Everywhere a member of Oxbow went we heard how much everyone loved the homespun stories that Morris called "Field Notes". They were never just "Field Notes" but intriguing mixtures of observations of nature in the Oxbow, personal reflections on how observing the beauty of nature wove into the fabric of his life and memories and those of his family, and a glorification of how being one with nature refreshes the soul.

Others can tell "Morris Stories" of canoe trips, cold mornings on Lost Bridge, lectures to

innumerable community groups, school buses in the Oxbow, duck hunting, the famous search for the St. Patrick's Day Green-winged Teal and boxes of Lorna Dunes consumed at the sight of this diminutive duck. All these stories and shared memories have endeared Morris to us. We will miss him. We can not fill the void left to us because there is no one like him. We can honor him by carrying on his work and by holding his memory dear to our hearts. I will miss him. Even though there was a generation between us, I was proud and honored to call him friend. In the end it seems fitting to celebrate the fact that he was here among us for but a short time, but taught us by deed and example how to live that "life well lived". Thank you Morris!



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

## Recent Bird Sightings

Field Trips:  
Jay Stenger  
522-4245

President:  
Jay Lehman  
527-4701

Treasurer:  
Peggy Gatch  
831-3378

Programs:  
Jay Lehman  
527-4701

Newsletter:  
Ned Keller  
941-6497

## Bird Club Officers

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