



The Passenger Pigeon

The Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

November 2007 Vol 43 No. 8

November Meeting:

Thursday, November 15, 7:00 p.m.: "If You Plant It They Will Come: Landscaping a Backyard Bird Habitat," presented by Casey Tucker of Audubon Ohio

Upcoming Field Trips:

- Summit Lake & Brookville Lake, Saturday, November 10, 2007.
- Hueston Woods & Brookville Lake, Sunday, November 18, 2007.

Are Your Dues Due?

If you haven't sent in your dues yet for the September 2007 - May 2008 birding year, please fill out the form on the newsletter cover and mail it in along with your membership fees.

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Hank Armstrong Remembered

Hank Armstrong, a long-time member of the Cincinnati Bird Club, former Bird Club president, and friend to many, passed away last month. Hank knew just about everyone in our local birding scene, as well as throughout Ohio. There are so many Hank stories out there, that rather than writing a single remembrance of Hank, we decided to print a number of pieces written by a few of the people who knew Hank and spent time in the field with him. Hank was an active and well-known birder and member in the Cincinnati Bird Club, and will be missed by all us, but most of all by his wife Lynette, who also went on many birding trips with Hank over the years, and his family. There's room in the December issue for additional remembrance pieces. Please feel free

to contact us via email or regular mail—details on the last page of the newsletter.

"East Fork's Birder"

When I have some free time on Saturday or Sunday mornings I run over to East Fork State Park to see what birds are in the neighborhood. I always looked forward to running into Hank Armstrong. Hank would bird East Fork often and when we bumped into each other we would always bird together. Hank was always optimistic and quick with a joke. We often enjoyed discussions about bird identification including a group of Common Terns that we found at the beach late this summer. These birds were in various stages of molt, most of which did not have a carpal mark yet. The terns created

some lively discussion. Birding with Hank was like birding with Maxwell Smart. We would be walking the prairie trail in the turkey field intent on seeing what we could find. All of a sudden I would hear "Tufted Titmouse, Field Sparrow" in a low monotone voice. Then in the same monotone I would hear "Song Sparrow, Common Yellowthroat", I would turn to see Hank, with his head down and his recorder held close to his mouth like Maxwell Smart speaking into his shoe. All of this to record the birds that he saw.

One memorable event happened when Hank was leading a field trip to East Fork. It was a very foggy day and the birding prospects were not great. Hank led us to one of the abandoned roads that move

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Hank Armstrong Remembered

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through the woods in the park. We were in a wooded area with low fog just above the tree line. An opening in the fog appeared and Hank looked up and proclaimed "Peregrine Falcon". Not only is this the only Peregrine Falcon that I have ever seen in the forest, but it is also the only one I have seen in the fog. Thanks to Hank.

I'll always have fond memories of birding with Hank at East Fork and I will miss him on those weekend mornings birding at the lake.

—Bill Stanley

"More Bark Than Bite"

Hank was a really fun guy but he could be a little crusty at times which bothered me not a bit. I can bark right back. Last winter/spring I was looking for a Loon and wound up at Cowan Lake. There was a really nice raft of ducks out there. I pulled down near the beach and got out to

set up my scope. A car pulled up beside me; it was Hank and Lynette. Hank growled something about people pulling right down to the water, scaring the birds away. I barked about people should look and see that the ducks were still there. After hugs and howdies I walked out onto the jetty to look for a Loon while Hank and Lynette waited in the car. I was about to give up when several people showed up and someone found the Loon. Suddenly I was whirled around and pushed into the front. Hank was doing what he so often had done with me, put me in front of him so I could see, often acting as if I were doing him a favor. The mist turned into a rain, the wind became stronger and it seemed the temperature dropped. I headed out happy to have seen Hank and a Loon. That was the last time that I ever saw Hank. He looked tired and thin but really good to these old eyes. Someday when I get to where Hank is I'm sure he will grab me and shove me

into position to see the Passenger Pigeons.

—Darlena Graham

"On The Road"

I birded with Hank Armstrong in seven different states. He was always enthusiastic about the birds and would exchange high-fives whenever we would find a rarity. We have seen several rarities together in Ohio and elsewhere. Hank was also my partner on the Darrrtown BBS (Breeding Bird Survey) route during the late 1990's. He encouraged me to participate in the East Fork breeding bird survey and he compiled a list of all known birds that have occurred at East Fork State Park for their checklist. He was always willing to share a bird with another observer, such as when he led me quietly to a long-eared owl perched just 2-3 feet off the ground in a pine at Killdeer Plains, or when he allowed me to digiscope a white-winged crossbill through his Kowa scope at Spring Grove Cemetery. We went on several trips

together either alone or with an organized group. Some of the more memorable trips include our trip to Mio, Michigan for Kirtland's warblers and our south central Ohio trip where we found a golden eagle in Chillicothe. I have these and many other memories of times spent in the field with Hank or just sharing stories in the car or on the phone. He is truly a gentleman that will be missed.

—David Brinkman

"Well, they sort of look alike"

Hank was one of those folks that just made you happy to run into them. Seemingly always in good spirits, Hank was quick to laugh and always appreciated a little humor. One of my favorite Hank stories didn't actually directly involve Hank, not at first anyway. Hank and I just recently got another laugh over this story as we rehashed it over the phone just a month before he passed away.

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On a cold winter day a while back, maybe ten years or so, I visited Killdeer Plains WA. My birding companions that day included Paul Wharton, Joe Bens and Jack Stenger who at the time was elementary school aged. On one of our stops we pulled into the gravel parking lot of Pond 27. There were a few birders already standing atop the adjacent dike scanning the water and they turned to see who was pulling into the otherwise deserted lot. Because of the frigid temperatures, the birders atop the dike were considerably bundled up with the hoods to their jackets covering their heads. One of the tall and lanky figures looked like Hank, although in retrospect, I don't know how we came to that conclusion considering how little of each person was actually exposed. I remember the dialogue in our car going something like; "Is that Hank up there?" "I'm not sure?" "I'm pretty sure it is." "What's he doing here?" "No, that's Hank all right." "I didn't know

he was coming up here today?"

Now as anyone who knew Hank can tell you, it wouldn't be terribly unusual to run into Hank at a quality birding site anywhere in Ohio. As I remember, none of us mentioned seeing Lynnette, and that might have tipped us off as she frequently birded with Hank more often than not. So the consensus in the car was that it was definitely Hank up there on that dike and all of us just coincidentally picked the same time and place to bird, remote and wintry as it was.

Now depending on who tells this story the ensuing facts get muddled and as usual I got most of the blame. But I was there and I can set the record straight. Because Hank was our buddy and appreciated humor we weren't about to give him a polite and civilized greeting. So quite naturally, as we were getting out of our car (some people say it was me, but I'm sure it was Paul) Paul flips Hank the bird and

yells something along the lines of "What the h*ll are you doing here you old *#*#\$*%*." without too much concern for Jack's GP rated ears I might add. Now that should have gotten a few laughs among friends and been the end of the story. Except it wasn't Hank up on that dike. It didn't take us too long to realize our mistake and needless to say our rather rough and informal greeting at first put the strangers on the dike a little ill at ease. It turned out that the person we confused Hank for was Dan Sanders, a well-known Columbus, Ohio birder, and not surprisingly, also a pretty good friend of Hanks.

After humble apologies and an explanation all was set right. But sometime later Dan was talking to Hank over the phone and brought the incident up. Dan kidded Hank that apparently Hank must not be very popular in the Cincinnati birding community if that was how his friends greeted him—and with friends like

that who needs enemies. Hank always got a kick out of this story and it appears that it's been told a few times. Mike Busam recently told me he first heard this story from Bill Whan, the editor of the *Ohio Cardinal* and another Columbus birder. Hank loved life and his good nature made many friends far and wide. He will be greatly missed.

—Jay Stenger

"Trippin' to Texas..."

Of the several birding trips that I organized during my 2005 ABA Big Year, Hank was along with me on three of them; two to Texas, and the other one to Nova Scotia in search of an Ivory Gull. Hank was very excited to be going on these trips, and everyone else was always happy that Hank had joined us. During the many hours of being on the road, Hank's jokes, stories, and good humor helped to turn an otherwise boring travel time into an upbeat experience with lots of

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laughs. Hank was always excited about the prospect of adding new birds to his "state" list or to his "life" list, and as some of you may remember, the Rio Grande Valley of Texas was a virtual rare bird mecca in 2005. During our January 10-16th tour, the five of us were able to add a combined total of 34 new bird species to our life lists! Not bad, considering everyone was already at 589 or above for the ABA area. The best birds that we found and that were "new" for at least one in the group included Crimson-collared Grosbeak, White-throated Robin, Social Flycatcher, Green-breasted Mango, Gray-crowned Yellowthroat, Blue Bunting, Blue Mockingbird, Sprague's Pipit, White-collared Seedeater, Golden-crowned Warbler, and Rose-throated Becard. All of these were life birds for Hank, with # 600 being the very unreliable Blue Mockingbird at the Williams' place in Pharr. Before we left Ohio, Hank didn't think that there was a "snowballs

chance..." of seeing the eleven birds he needed to reach this milestone, and so he was on "Cloud 9" for most of the drive back to Ohio.

—Dan Sanders

November Meeting

Casey Tucker of Audubon Ohio presents: "If You Plant It They Will Come: Landscaping a Backyard Bird Habitat" Thursday, November 15, 7:00 p.m. Sharon Woods Visitor Center.

In addition to being birders, many of us are also gardeners and are interested in landscaping around our homes and properties. If you are one of these, you know that it is not too early to start planning for gardening and planting activities for next year. Why not plant and landscape for birds, if you are not already doing so? Come to Casey Tucker's presentation to find out what you can do.

Join us as we explore the relationships and

interactions between birds and plants and how understanding these interactions can help guide our choices in the plants we use in landscaping and gardening projects around our homes.

You will also learn why some plants are more harmful than others to birds, and how you can help conserve some of Ohio's birds just by landscaping around your home.

Casey Tucker serves as the Education Specialist for Audubon and is tasked with the responsibility of providing outreach, education, and training opportunities for adults on a variety of different topics including Audubon At Home and bird conservation in Important Bird Areas (IBA).

Casey began his tenure with Audubon as a member and leader of the Oxford Audubon Society (now Audubon Miami Valley).

A birdwatcher and photographer, some of his most memorable moments in the field in-

clude seeing the second North American record of a White-throated Robin in Texas, birding in Alaska, and walking in the footsteps of Roger Tory Peterson and James Fisher at the Northern Gannet colony of Cape St. Mary's Eco-Reserve in Newfoundland, fifty years after those two naturalists first visited in 1953.

November Field Trips

Location: Summit Lake SP & Brookville Lake
Date: Saturday, November 10, 8:00 a.m.
Leader: Jay Stenger, (513) 522-8147, jaystenger@cinci.rr.com

November represents the peak of fall waterfowl migration and Summit and Brookville Lake both have well deserved reputations as a couple of the best waterfowl sites in our region. Summit Lake State Park is located in Henry County, Indiana, about 30 miles north of Brookville Lake. There is minimal disturbance to the waterbirds here

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as the entire lake has restricted boat speeds and there is no hunting in the park. We expect to find good numbers of waterfowl and waterbirds on the lake and ponds, and raptors and winter residents and late fall migrants in the adjacent open country habitats. On our way back we will check the shallows at the north end of Brookville Lake, which usually holds a few late season shorebirds and quite often, Sandhill Cranes. This is a joint trip with the Cincinnati Audubon Society and will continue well into the afternoon, so bring your lunch and drinks. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Park & Ride lot located on S.R. 128, at I-74 exit # 7, marked Cleves-Hamilton. We will caravan from there. Feel free to contact me for more information.

Location: Hueston Woods & Brookville Lake

Date: Sunday, November 18, 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Ned Keller, (513) 941-6497, keller@one.net

Ned's plan is to first hit several spots at Brookville Reservoir and then to make the short hop over to Hueston Woods and Acton Lake. We'll look for waterfowl, plus sparrows, raptors, and who knows what else. Both Brookville and Acton Lakes are tried and true locations for attracting waterfowl and waterbirds. The rural countryside surrounding these two large lakes has diverse habitats so we expect to find a lot of different species along the way. This trip will continue into mid afternoon, so bring your lunch and drinks. This joint trip with the Cincinnati Audubon Society will meet at 8:00 a.m. in the Park & Ride lot located on S.R. 128, at I-74 exit # 7, marked

Cleves-Hamilton and caravan from there. This is the first exit just west of the Great Miami River. For more info feel free to contact Ned.

December Events

As is our tradition, there will be no December Bird Club meeting or scheduled Bird Club field trips. We encourage members to take part in one or more of our local Christmas Bird Counts or Winter Bird Counts. After this month's meeting on November 15, we'll meet again for our January meeting—"Members' Slide Night"—which is always a popular event.

December's issue of the *Passenger Pigeon* will feature information about all of our area's Christmas Bird Counts and Winter Bird Counts. Until then, good health, safe travels, good birding, and Happy Thanksgiving!



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VISIT US ON THE WEB:

www.cincinnatibirds.com/birdclub/index.php

Bird Club Membership

Name _____

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_____ Individual \$12.00 _____ Family \$15.00 _____ Student \$6.00

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