



The Passenger Pigeon

Volume 49, Number 7

The Newsletter of the Cincinnati Bird Club

October 2013

Program:
East Asian Avian
Phylogeography Research

Speaker:
Dr. Herman Mays

Date:
Friday, Oct 18
7 p.m.
Sharon Woods
Visitor Center

Our October speaker will be Dr. Herman Mays, Curator of Zoology for the Greier Collections and Research Center and the Cincinnati Museum Center. Herm of course, is no stranger to the Cincinnati Bird Club (CBC), as he has made himself available to local birders and presented annual programs to the CBC. Herm also has local connections to the Greater Cincinnati area, as he was born in Cincinnati and raised in central Kentucky.

Herm received a PhD from the University of Kentucky and his PhD thesis was on the breeding behavior of Yellow-breasted Chats. Following graduate school, he spent five years at Auburn University where he was a National Science Foundation postdoctoral researcher. While at Auburn, Herm used molecular genetic tools to study mate choice in Eastern Bluebirds, population genetics of House Finches, and many other projects

involving genetic tools in studies of avian biology. After Auburn, he took a position as an assistant professor at Georgia Southern University. In June 2007 Herm took the position as Curator of Zoology at the Cincinnati Museum Center.

Under Herm's tenure, the Museum Center has been strongly involved with avian genetics research. So it is no surprise that Herm's October program will be about their ongoing research and updating the CBC on the latest results from their DNA lab.

Here's a brief summary of the October program in Herm's own words.....

“Avian diversity in Asia is, comparatively speaking, poorly known. My collaborators and I have developed a long-term research program in the region to uncover the evolutionary history and biogeography of the birds of East Asia, specifically the broad region covering Japan, Taiwan, the Korean peninsula and the Eastern portions of Russia and China. Our primary approach to untangle the history of avian species in this region is to examine the genetic diversity across a variety of co-distributed species using the latest molecular genetic tools. This talk will be an update on the latest results from the lab on Chinese and Taiwan Bulbuls, the Varied Tit, Narcissus Flycatcher and Japanese Paradise Flycatcher. The latest results from this research are opening up many new and interesting questions about the evolution of birds across the island archipelagos of East Asia.”

The Cincinnati birding and natural history community is fortunate to have someone at the museum with such a strong ornithological background and who is so willing to make himself available to us. So mark your calendars and come on out and see what should prove to be an entertaining and informative program.

-Jay Stenger, Program Coordinator

Field Trips

(Contributed by Jack Stenger, Field Trip Coordinator)

Location: Big Sit at Woodland Mound

Date: Saturday, Oct 12

Meet: Any time before
2 p.m.
(see directions below)

Leader: Jack Stenger
(513) 503-3389
jackstenger@gmail.com

Grab a lawn chair, thermos, and any of your portable creature comforts. It's time for the Cincinnati Bird Club's first Big Sit.

A Big Sit is similar to a Big Day, where you tally as many species as possible within 24 hours. However, all birds must be observed within a 17-foot diameter circle, hence the sitting. Bird Watcher's Digest sponsors a national Big Sit event on this weekend, so many other birders throughout the country

will be participating. For more detailed information on the history and "rules" go to:

www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/bigsit/about.php

Our 2013 Big Sit will take place at Woodland Mound, a Hamilton County Park situated along the Ohio River upstream of Cincinnati. The Sit will take place along the Steamboat Drive portion of Woodland Mound. From our count circle we will have views of the Ohio River and surrounding bottomland forest and shrubland. This should provide us with a diversity of waterbirds using the river corridor and any October migrants such as sparrows, kinglets, and Hermit Thrushes. The exact location of the Big Sit is to be determined. Please check the "Message Board" on www.cincinnatibirds.com for updates during the preceding week.

Jack will be present from dawn until 2:00 p.m. and depending on interest others may stick around beyond that time. Feel free to stay for as long or short as you want. Stop-ins are welcome. If you plan to stay for a while please bring a lawn chair and anything else to keep you comfy. As you can imagine there will be lulls in bird activity and the patient will be rewarded. We will have plenty of time to focus on the species we do see and talk about all things birding - identification, local hotspots, and the history and future of the Bird Club.

There are restrooms at Woodland Mound, however they may not be present near the site of the Big Sit itself. No hiking boots necessary.

For a map and directions to Woodland Mound go to:

<http://greatparks.org/parks/woodland-mound>

Location:
Miami Whitewater Wetlands

Date: Sunday, Oct 20

Meet: 8 a.m.
Baughman Rd parking lot
(see directions below)

Leader:
Ned Keller
(513) 349-3369
nedkeller49@gmail.com

Late migrant passerines, late shorebirds, early waterfowl, raptors and early winter visitors are all possible on this trip to one of our areas finest wetlands, the Shaker Trace at Miami Whitewater Forest. The focus of this trip however will be on sparrows. While most neo-tropical migrants move through during September, the month of October sees the bulk of the sparrow passage. Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, an otherwise rare migrant through our area, has become an annual and regular migrant at the wetlands, and is seen fairly often here during the month of October. We have a good chance of finding one or two. Lincoln's Sparrow is also expected at this time of the year and many of the winter sparrows should be in by then. LeConte's Sparrow are a long shot, but it's the right habitat and right time of the year. We can expect some surprises and a mixed bag on this trip.

The weather could prove to be the star of this trip as mid-October has typically cool, crisp autumn days. Fall colors will be abundant and make a picturesque backdrop to what should

be a great trip. The trip will consist of level, moderate walking. However the trails through the wetlands are not paved and can be damp and muddy, so wear appropriate footwear. This trip should end around noon. If time permits, Ned may make a quick visit to nearby Fernald Preserve. There are no restroom facilities at the Miami Whitewater wetlands, but they are available nearby in the main park area and at Fernald Preserve. A Hamilton County Park pass is required (\$3.00 daily, \$10.00 annual) at Miami Whitewater for each vehicle. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. at the wetlands parking area on Baughman Road. From I-74, take the Dry Fork Road exit # 3, and turn right. Continue past West Rd, and stay on Dry Fork until it ends. Turn right onto New Haven Road. At the first stop sign, turn left onto Oxford Road, and then immediately left again onto Baughman Road. The dirt parking area is on the right side of the road, just past the bike trail crossing. Contact Ned to answer any of your questions.

Directions to Miami Whitewater as well as maps and other information can be found at the following website:

<http://greatparks.org/parks/miami-whitewater-forest>

For information about Fernald Preserve go to:

www.lm.doe.gov/fernalld/

Local Calendar

Audubon Society of Ohio

Program: *Nambia, Nambia and Victoria Falls*

Date: Mon, Oct 21

See www.cincinnati.audubon.org for additional details.

Cincinnati Nature Center

Field Trips

Oct 12	Darlana Graham
Oct 26	Debra Hausrath
Nov 09	Steve Bobonick

See www.cincynature.org for additional details.

Oxbow, Inc.

Field Trips

Oct 06	Ann Oliver
Nov 16	Darlana Graham

See www.oxbowinc.org for additional details.

Fernald Preserve

Field Trip: *Fifth Anniversary*

Date: Sat, Oct 12

See www.lm.doe.gov/ferald for additional details.

Regional Migration Forecast:

4-11 October 2013

(From www.birds.cornell.edu, 05 Oct 2013. Reprinted with permission.)

Continental Summary:

Both West and East experience periods of moderate to locally heavy movements this week, as the large but increasingly less diverse movements of October are in full swing. Birds on the move this week will include Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco.

Upper Midwest and Northeast

Much of the region will experience sparse light movement to begin the weekend, with the exception of the eastern Great Lakes and northern Appalachians North and East through New England. These areas will experience more favorable conditions for moderate and even locally heavy movements. Northern New England will continue to experience moderate movements into the weekend, as the remainder of the region experiences greatly diminished movements. By early in the week, a dissociating tropical system brings southerly flow to much of the region East of the Ohio River valley, where migration will be scant. This system will likely deposit most of its entrained and displaced birds much farther South, but birders East of the Appalachians should be vigilant from mid-to-late week for potential strays still associated with the system (e.g. frigatebirds). Farther to the West, a pulse of moderate and heavy movements will occur in much more favorable conditions early in the week. This general pattern of more movement to the West continues on Tuesday night, with a gradual shift eastward in the distribution of bird movements, until Wednesday and

Thursday nights when much of the region East of the Mississippi will experience moderate to heavy flights. The week ends with only coastal flights, as the remainder of the region begins to experience the circulation around a strong low moving through the center of the country. Birds on the move this week will include Turkey Vulture, Chimney Swift, Northern Flicker, Red-eyed Vireo, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Black-throated Green and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Red-winged Blackbird, White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, Purple Finch, and Pine Siskin.

Winter Finch Forecast 2013-2014

*(From www.birds.cornell.edu, 24 Sept 2013.
Reprinted with permission.)*

As days shorten and cooler temperatures descend into North America, it's time for one of our favorite features of the Autumn – Ron Pittaway's Winter Finch Forecast. Here it is: This is not an irruption (flight) year for winter finches, but there will be some southward movement of most species into their normal winter ranges. Ontario's cone crops (except white pine) and deciduous seed/berry crops are generally above average to excellent. Very good to bumper spruce cone crops extend across Canada's boreal forest from Yukon (bumper) east to Atlantic Canada, with rare exceptions. Cone crops are good to excellent (poor on white pine) in central Ontario and Laurentian Mountains in southern Quebec with heavy crops extending east through the Adirondack Mountains of New York and northern New England States.

Birch, alder and mountain-ash berry crops are good to excellent across the boreal forest. Most reporters said that finches were thinly

dispersed in their areas with few concentrations noted, except for southern Yukon which had abundant Pine Siskins this past summer. Finches this winter should be widespread given the almost continent-wide extent of the seed crops. Limited movements southward to traditional wintering areas such as Algonquin Park are expected. See individual species forecasts below for details on each species. Three irruptive non-finch passerines whose movements are linked to finches are also discussed. Please note that the forecast applies mainly to Ontario and the Northeast.

FINCH TREES: The key trees affecting finch movements in the Northeast are spruces, pines, hemlock, birches and mountain-ashes. Other trees normally play minor roles unless their crops are bumper. This year many tree species have spotty or patchy crops with some trees being heavy with cones or fruit while nearby trees of the same species have few or no cones or seeds. A similar patchy distribution is evident on a larger scale, with stands heavy with cones or seeds versus stands in the next township or county that have scanty crops.

INDIVIDUAL FINCH FORECASTS

PINE GROSBEAK: Most Pine Grosbeaks will remain in the north this winter because mountain ash berry crops are very good to bumper across the boreal forest from Alaska to the island of Newfoundland. European mountain-ash, crabapple and buckthorn have heavy berry crops in southern Ontario and elsewhere so if grosbeaks wander south they will have plenty of food. They prefer sunflower seeds at feeders, often feeding on spilled seeds on the ground.

PURPLE FINCH: In most years Purple Finches migrate south of Ontario in the fall, but this winter some should remain in the north where tree seed crops are abundant.

They will likely visit sunflower seed feeders and be attracted to heavy berry crops on mountain-ashes, eating the seeds not the flesh. Similar to the Evening Grosbeak decline, Purple Finch numbers dropped significantly after 1980 as major spruce budworm outbreaks ended.

RED CROSSBILL: Small numbers are being reported in Algonquin Park and northern Ontario usually in pine stands. Red Pine cone crops are fair to good in many areas, but White Pine crops are poor with a few exceptions such as around Temagami just south of the boreal zone. Expect to see a scattering of Red Crossbills where pine, spruce and ornamental conifers have good crops. Red Crossbills comprise at least 10 “types” in North America. Each type probably represents a separate or recently evolving species. The types are usually impossible to identify without recordings of their flight calls. Matt Young (may6 at cornell.edu) of The Cornell Lab of Ornithology will identify types for you from recordings and this will help his research. Most Type 3 crossbills from last winter’s irruption have apparently returned to their core range in the Pacific Northwest. Matt says it is important to monitor the distribution of types in more “normal years” such as this winter. This crossbill rarely goes to feeders.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: Spruce cone crops are generally good to excellent from the Yukon east across the boreal forest to the island of Newfoundland. Large crops extend south into the northern states. White-winged Crossbills should be widely dispersed this winter given the enormity of the cone crops. Expect to see this crossbill in Ontario’s Algonquin Park, New York’s Adirondack Mountains and in the northern New England States. This crossbill usually feeds on native conifers with small soft cones such as white, red and black spruces and hemlock.

It normally avoids the larger harder cones of pines. This crossbill rarely goes to feeders.

COMMON REDPOLL: Most redpolls should stay in the north this winter because birch, alder and conifer seed crops are generally good across the boreal forest. Some redpolls should get south to usual southern parts of their winter range such as the Atlantic Provinces and Ontario’s Algonquin Park (Latitude 45.5), where redpolls have been recorded on 33 of 39 Algonquin Christmas Bird Counts. The rare “Greater” Common Redpoll (subspecies *rostrata*) from Baffin Island and Greenland is not expected in the south this winter. For reference photos of “Greater” Common Redpolls see link #4 below.

HOARY REDPOLL: The rare Hoary Redpoll is usually found in flocks of Common Redpolls. It is not expected in the south this winter because this is not an irruption year for redpolls. The “Southern” Hoary Redpoll (exilipes) is the usual subspecies seen. “Hornemann’s” Hoary Redpoll (*hornemanni*) is a great rarity south of the tundra even during irruption years.

PINE SISKIN: Siskins will winter across the north because conifer crops (except white pine) are excellent. They should be attracted to heavy cone crops in southern Quebec’s Laurentian Mountains, New York’s Adirondacks and northern New England. Watch for siskins on spruce and hemlock. They prefer nyger seeds at feeders.

EVENING GROSBEAK: This big “eye-catching” golden grosbeak should visit sunflower seed feeders again this winter in Ontario and the Northeast. Numbers are increasing due to expanding spruce budworm outbreaks in northern forests. However, spraying to control budworms, if not already occurring in some provinces, will limit an

increase in grosbeaks. Breeding success is higher in areas with budworm outbreaks because the abundant larvae are eaten by adults and fed to young. Evening Grosbeak populations peaked during the 1940s to 1980s when massive budworm outbreaks stretched across Canada. The last Algonquin Christmas Bird Count with very high numbers was the winter of 1984/85 when 1474 Evening Grosbeaks were found on the count (Birds of Algonquin, Tozer 2012).

THREE IRRUPTIVE PASSERINES

Movements of the following three passerines are often linked to the boreal finches.

BLUE JAY: Blue Jays move south in varying numbers every fall beginning in mid-September. This year expect a small to moderate flight along the north shorelines of Lakes Ontario and Erie because the acorn, beechnut, hazelnut and many soft mast crops are good to excellent across central Ontario and elsewhere. Interestingly, I found a Blue Jay feather stuck on a hazelnut north of Toronto on 11 August 2013. Good numbers of Blue Jays should visit feeders this winter in Ontario because many northern birds will not migrate south this fall.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH: No movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches this year reliably predicts that spruce cone crops are heavy in the boreal forest. This indicates a non-irruption year for finches, especially Pine Siskins and White-winged Crossbills which similarly specialize on conifer seeds, especially white spruce seeds. Some more southerly nuthatch populations may be permanent residents. We have Red-breasted Nuthatches year-round at our suet, sunflower and peanut feeders in Toronto and they annually bring their young to the feeders.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Most Bohemians will remain in the boreal forest this winter because mountain ash berry crops are very good to bumper from Alaska to Newfoundland and Labrador. When feeding on mountain-ash berries, Bohemians and Pine Grosbeaks often occur together. The superficial resemblance of Bohemian Waxwings to female Pine Grosbeaks is striking and may be functional. If some Bohemians move south they will be attracted to abundant berries on European mountain ash, small ornamental crabapples and buckthorn. Some are likely to occur in traditional areas such as Ottawa and Peterborough.

Finch Facts, Seed Crops and Irruptions:
www.jeaniron.ca/2012/winterfinches.htm

Ron Pittaway

Ontario Field Ornithologists

Toronto, Ontario

21 September 2013



*Purple Finch. Courtesy Lana Hays,
www.lanahays.com*



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2013-2014 Dues:

If you haven't sent in your dues yet for the September
2013 - May 2014 birding season, please fill out the form
below and mail it in along with your membership fees.

Visit us on the Web at:

www.cincinnatibirds.com/birdclub/index.php

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