



# The Passenger Pigeon

VOLUME 50, NUMBER 7      OCTOBER 2014

## DIRTY SOCKS AND MIXED-SPECIES FLOCKS: ORNITHOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE PERUVIAN JUNGLE

**Speaker:**  
**Sean Williams**

**Date:**  
**Friday, 17 Oct, 7 PM**

**Location: Sharon  
Woods Visitor's Center**

Our guest speaker on Friday will be Sean Williams. Sean is a Ph.D. student at Michigan State University where he studies the behavioral ecology of mixed-species flocks. Sean's presentation will focus on his bird research and travels in Peru.

Local birders will realize the intricacies of mixed-species flocks since we have our own: chickadees, titmice and woodpeckers joined by various migrants and winter

visitors. In Peru these flocks are similar, but they co-defend territory and exist throughout the entire year. What are the advantages of this flocking behavior? What are the costs? How do the species that comprise these flocks interact with

each other and rival flocks? Sean will touch on all of these questions, along with some stories from his adventures and birding in Peru.

*Continued next page*



Photo courtesy Sean Williams

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Fall migration is upon us. Check out all the great field trips.*
- *"Martha," the Passenger Pigeon, and her impact on conservation, at Xavier University*
- *Photo quiz*
- *Winter finch forecast*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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## BLUEBIRD FEATURED ON 2015 OHIO WILDLIFE LEGACY STAMP

The photograph of an Eastern Bluebird perched on a Redbud tree was selected as the winning image of the 2015 Ohio Wildlife Legacy Stamp contest, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources ([ODNR](#)). [Link](#).



Eastern Bluebird. Courtesy Jim Mundy

## SEAN WILLIAMS



**Nelson's Sparrow,  
Ingham County,  
Michigan. Courtesy  
Sean Williams**

*Continued from Page 1*

Sean received his B.S. from Ohio Wesleyan University in 2011. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in zoology at Michigan State University where he is supported by a National Science Foundation graduate research fellowship. Many of you may know Sean from the Ohio birding scene. He frequently birds in Ohio and last year participated in the Cincinnati Christmas Bird Count. Sean serves on the

Michigan bird records committee and his research on bill color was published in *Birding* magazine. Perhaps most importantly, Sean is the first correct respondent to the CBC Newsletter photo quiz. Sean is also a fantastic birder and I challenge you to find someone more enthusiastic about the natural world.

Please join us at 7 PM for wine, soda, schmoozing and light snacks.

*~Jack Stenger  
Program Chair*

## CROOKED RUN NATURE PRESERVE

**Date: Sunday, 19 Oct**

**Time: 8 AM**

**Leader: [Kathi Hutton](#)  
(513) 305-8015**

On Sunday October 19, 2014, Kathi Hutton will be leading the Cincinnati Bird Club on a walk at Crooked Run Nature Preserve. Kathi birds this location regularly and knows it well with 127 species logged in eBird for this eBird hotspot. Total number of species logged in eBird for this location is 141. To see the birds logged for Crooked Run go to [eBird](#).

Crooked Run is a wonderful place to bird and has a wide variety of habitat to attract a great number of migrant and local bird species. The preserve is bordered to the south by the Ohio River that attracts gulls, terns, ducks and grebes. Bald Eagles are regu-

larly see over the river as well as Ospreys. Dispersed though much of the preserve is a large backwater area created by the Crooked Run as it flows into the Ohio River.

This area has many nooks and crannies where you can find various herons, kingfishers and other water specialist that you wouldn't see on the river. There are fields that attract sparrows, wrens and black-birds, woodland with warblers, woodpeckers, nut-hatches and chickadees, and a marsh with herons. Just north of the preserve on the other side of US 52 are hills that produce updrafts that many hawks and vultures utilize.

Join Kathi for what will surely be great morning birding along the Ohio River and if you use eBird be sure to submit a list for the area and add to the collection of bird data

for the preserve.

Time permitting Kathi will continue up river to the confluence of Bullsken Run where it flows into the Ohio River and Meldahl Dam, which are both excellent birding areas.

Directions: From I-275 take Exit 71 to US 52 East toward New Richmond. Go 25.9 miles through Chilo, Ohio, and watch on the right for the entrance to Crooked Run Nature Preserve. Take the road into the preserve and when you come to a cross road turn left and you will end up in a parking lot. We will meet there at 8 AM.

[Link](#) to directions from Cincinnati.

*~Bill Stanley  
Field Trip Coordinator*

KATHI BIRDS  
THIS LOCATION  
REGULARLY AND  
KNOWS IT WELL  
WITH 127  
SPECIES LOGGED  
IN EBIRD FOR  
THIS EBIRD  
HOTSPOT.

## SAW-WHET OWL BANDING AT FERNALD

**Dates: 07 and 09 Nov**

**Time: 7 PM**

**Contact: Fernald Preserve  
(513) 648-3330 to register**

Join Fernald for a memorable evening at our scientific research station capturing and banding Saw-whet owls! Our licensed bird bander will share his years of knowledge regarding these feathered treasures as they migrate south. Learn about the banding process, data collected,

and the many aspects of the Saw-whet owl's life, including migration routes, habitat requirements, food sources, and behavior.

Plan on a 2-mile hike, dress warmly, and bring a flashlight.

Registration is required.



**Saw-whet Owl. Courtesy Fernald Preserve**

## CAESAR CREEK STATE PARK

**Date: Saturday, 01 Nov**

**Time: 8 AM**

**Leader: Jay Lehman  
(513) 527-4701  
(513) 668-3006 (cell)**

On Saturday November 1, 2014, Jay Lehman will be leading the Cincinnati Bird Club on a trip to Caesar Creek State Park. We will meet at 8 AM at the Swimming Beach parking lot. Various waterbirds should be showing up including loons, grebes, and various gulls. And in early November there are always some migrant songbirds still passing through and birds from the north are starting to show up. The beach at Caesar Creek has hosted many unusual gulls over the years including such species as Laughing Gull, Franklin's Gull, California Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, and Great Black-backed Gull so there is

great potential for something good to show up. In the eBird database, that is administered by Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology, there have been 217 species logged at the Caesar Creek State Park Beach. The eBird list can be accessed [here](#).

Jay has led this trip before and knows his way around the park. If time allows Jay could also go to nearby Spring Valley Wildlife Area and the Roxanna gravel pits.

This will be a day trip, extending well past noon, so be sure to bring a lunch and drinks. The trip will consist mostly of driving from one lake view to another, interspersed with short walks here and there. Restrooms are available throughout the area. Scopes will be useful of course, but if you don't have one don't let that stop you

from coming.

To get to the Caesar Creek beach from Cincinnati, take I-71 north to the State Route 73 Exit #45. Turn left (west) onto SR 73 and go about 5 miles. After crossing the SR 73 Bridge over Caesar Creek lake, turn right at the State Park entrance and follow the signs to the swimming beach.

WATERBIRDS  
SHOULD BE  
SHOWING UP  
INCLUDING  
LOONS, GREBES,  
AND VARIOUS  
GULLS AS WELL AS  
MIGRANT  
SONGBIRDS



**Winter Wren. Courtesy Bill Stanley**

## WINTER FINCH FORECAST 2014-2015



Hoary Redpoll. Courtesy eBird

This winter's theme is a "mixed bag" of finch movements. For example, some species such as Purple Finch will go south while White-winged Crossbills will likely stay in the boreal forest in widely separated areas where spruces are laden with cones. Common Redpolls should move into southern Canada and the northern states because birch seed crops are thin to average across the north. See individual finch forecasts below for details.

**TREE SEED CROPS:** Key trees affecting finch movements in the boreal forest are spruces, birches and mountain-ashes. Spruce cone crops are variable in Ontario. Crops are excellent around southern James Bay and very good to excellent west of Lake Superior. Crops are mostly poor elsewhere in the province such as Algonquin Park in central Ontario. The heavy spruce cone crop around James Bay extends east in a broad deep band across north-central Quebec into the Gaspé Peninsula. East of Ontario cone crops are generally poor in the Atlantic Provinces, New York State, New Hampshire and other northern New England States. West of Ontario cone crops are poor in the boreal forest in Manitoba and Saskatchewan but improve westward with average crops in southern Yukon and excellent crops in Alaska. Birch seed

crops are poor to average in the boreal forest. Mountain-ash berry crops are very good to bumper across the boreal forest, but crops are low in northeastern Ontario and poor in Newfoundland.

**INDIVIDUAL FINCH FORECASTS:** Forecasts apply mainly to Ontario and adjacent provinces and states. Three irruptive non-finch passerines whose movements are linked to finches are also discussed. There will be local exceptions to individual forecasts. You can follow the movements of winter finches this fall and winter on eBird.

**PURPLE FINCH:** Last winter many Purple Finches stayed in the boreal forest because of bumper seed crops there. This fall most Purple Finches should migrate south of Ontario because many coniferous and deciduous tree seed crops are much lower in central and northeastern Ontario. When Purple Finches leave Ontario in October and November, they return in mid-April to mid-May to breed. At feeders Purples prefer sunflower seeds. Old-timers remember when Purple Finches were much commoner than they are today. The principal cause of the decline may be the absence of large outbreaks of spruce budworm.

**PINE SISKIN:** Siskins were observed in numbers this summer around southern James Bay and in southern Yukon. They will move east

and west this fall searching for areas with excellent spruce cone crops. Siskins should winter in Alaska and north-central Quebec where spruce crops are excellent. However, those that fail to find adequate cone crops will probably wander south where they will frequent bird feeders with nyger seeds in silo feeders. Siskins are often detected by their wheezy clee-ip call, which is the best way to identify them in flight.

**THREE IRRUPTIVE PASSERINES:** Movements of the following three passerines are often linked to the boreal finches.

**BLUE JAY:** Expect a good to heavy flight (many more than last year) moving westward along the north shorelines of Lakes Ontario and Erie because the acorn, beechnut, hazelnut and soft mast crops averaged low in northeastern, central and eastern Ontario. However, acorn crops were much higher in the Carolinian Zone south of Toronto. Expect fewer Blue Jays at feeders in Ontario this winter because many jays will migrate out of the province this fall.

**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:** This nuthatch is a conifer seed specialist when it winters in the boreal forest. Cone crop failures cause irruptions. It began wandering southward in mid-summer

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FORECASTS APPLY MAINLY TO ONTARIO AND ADJACENT PROVINCES AND STATES. THREE IRRUPTIVE NON-FINCH PASSERINES WHOSE MOVEMENTS ARE LINKED TO FINCHES ARE ALSO DISCUSSED

## SEPTEMBER BIRD QUIZ - ANSWER

The theme of this bird quiz could be “can’t get there from here” because it depicts a bird in between plumages. On to the analysis:

The bird’s small size is readily apparent by comparing it to the telephone wire it is perched on; we are dealing with a smallish songbird. But what songbird has a pronounced black cap, flanks and upper breast, but a grayish-brown belly, throat and head? If you rely purely on what’s illustrated in field guides, the answer is... nothing. Where do we go from here? In her response, Kathi Hutton put it perfectly: “It’s a passerine, it’s messy, and it has large dark patches that look like the bird is going to be mostly black when it is done [molting]. I wish I could see its bill.”

This is a blackbird going through its first prebasic molt. The light brown feathers are the juvenal plumage, which is being replaced by the metallic black adult plumage. The small-size and short tail on this bird rule out Common Grackle. The pale, unstreaked juvenal plumage rules out Red-winged Blackbird. Bobolink is an intriguing option, but this bird lacks the pointed tail feathers, distinctive structure, and detailed facial pattern of a molting Bobolink. Purple Martin can be ruled out due the bird’s stubby wings – not sufficient for an aerial insectivore. That

leaves us with one option:

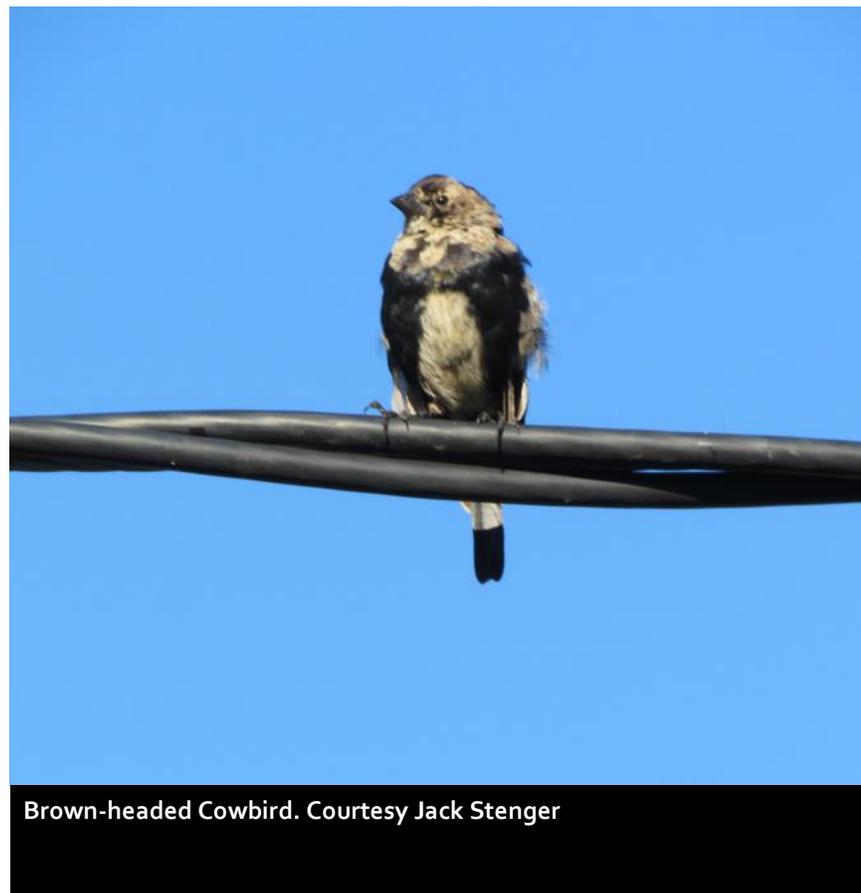
Answer: Brown-headed Cowbird

Two of three participants responded correctly. Sean Williams, temporary Michigan and this month’s program speaker was the first to respond, and Kathi Hutton was the brave CBC member to respond with a description. Although only three folks responded, I know that many were flummoxed by the bird and perhaps this kept them from submitting answers. No guts, no glory. The only incorrect guess was Indigo Bunting.

I took this picture of a Brown-headed Cowbird at the mouth of the Kentucky River on September 8th, 2014. Interestingly on the way home from the CBC field trip to Brookville Lake on September 21st we had the chance to observe a large flock of cowbirds (200+). None of those birds showed this plumage – they were already done molting into the familiar all black-body. This piebald plumage doesn’t last long.

~*Jack Stenger*  
Program Chair

THIS IS A  
BLACKBIRD  
GOING  
THROUGH ITS  
FIRST PREBASIC  
MOLT.



**Brown-headed Cowbird. Courtesy Jack Stenger**

## PASSENGER PIGEON SYMPOSIUM



Xavier University will hold a symposium, **The Legacy of Martha: The Last Passenger Pigeon and the Rise of Conservatism**, to commemorate the centennial of the death of Martha, the last passenger pigeon in captivity, and who lived at the Cincinnati Zoo. The symposium will be held on the evening of October 29, 2014, 7 PM, at Xavier University's Cintas Center.

The symposium will include four speakers who will give presentations and participate in a roundtable discussion. They are:

**Joel Greenberg**, author of *A Feathered River Across the Sky: The Passenger Pigeon's Flight to Extinction*.

**Thane Maynard**, director of the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden.

**John Reiger**, professor emeritus of history, Ohio University-Chillicothe and author of *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation*.

**Nancy Stranahan**, director of the Arc of Appalachia Preserve System, naturalist, writer, and speaker.

For more information, please call 745-3922 or visit the event [website](#).

## PHOTO QUIZ

THIS COURSE IS GEARED TOWARDS ALL BIRDING LEVELS. WHILE MID-LEVEL BIRDERS WILL LIKELY GAIN THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE, MOST BIRDERS, BEGINNERS AND EXPERIENCED ALIKE, WILL FIND THIS COURSE HELPFUL

The rules are below, along with the October Quiz Bird. We look forward to your participation.

**Rules:** Anybody is welcome and all are encouraged to participate. However, only paying members (it's only \$12 per year) are eligible for prizes and unadulterated bragging rights. To participate send your answers to me ([jackstenger@gmail.com](mailto:jackstenger@gmail.com)) by 20 October. All responses must be the official common English names used by the American Ornithologists' Union checklist ([Link](#)). This means they must be correctly spelled, capitalized, and hy-

phenated or else they are counted as wrong. Mind your plovers and quails. Also include any comments you have about the quiz bird, such as how you arrived at your ID, or how you felt about the picture. Venting is welcome. Any bird that is on the state list for Ohio, Indiana, or Kentucky is fair game. Whoever has the highest number of correct answers by the end of the Bird Club season (May) "wins." Any public discussion of quiz birds will result in a trap door opening up beneath the violator.

**Prize:** To be determined.

**Answers:** I will post the an-

swer with a brief analysis in the next Bird Club newsletter. This will include a list of all those who guessed correctly. Don't worry, wrong guesses will not be published, so fire away: it's better to get a CBC quiz wrong than to have never participated. I think Alexander Wilson said that.

~Jack Stenger  
Program Chair

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## WINTER FINCHES

*Continued from Page 4*

indicating that boreal finches would also move this fall and winter. Many but not all Red-breasted Nuthatches should

move south this fall because white spruce cone crops are generally low to average (some bumper crops) across much of the boreal forest. At

bird feeders Red-breasted Nuthatches prefer black oil sunflower seeds, chopped peanuts and suet.

*Read full report [here](#).*

COMMUNITY  
CALENDAR

- 14... Program: Hognose snake stories, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- 17... Program: Peruvian jungle, [Cincinnati Bird Club](#)
- 18... Field trip: Fall migration, [Oxbow, Inc.](#)
- 19... Field trip: Fall migration, [Cincinnati Bird Club](#)
- 20... Program: Ohio River natural history, [ASO](#)
- 29... Program Passenger Pigeon symposium, [Xavier](#)

OCTOBER 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

PHOTO QUIZ



October photo quiz. Courtesy Jack Stenger



## CINCINNATI BIRD CLUB

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## Bird Club Membership

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\_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$12.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Family \$15.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Student (under 18) FREE

Make your check payable to Cincinnati Bird Club, and mail to our Treasurer:

Lois Shadix ([lcshadix@fuse.net](mailto:lcshadix@fuse.net)), 2928 Saddleback Dr, Cincinnati, OH 45244

2014-2015 DUES:  
IF YOU HAVEN'T  
SENT IN YOUR  
DUES YET FOR THE  
SEPTEMBER 2014 -  
MAY 2015 BIRDING  
SEASON, PLEASE FILL  
OUT THE FORM  
AND MAIL IT IN  
ALONG WITH YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP FEES