



The Message of the Passenger Pigeon

When I was very young, I heard a story about someone who had trained pigeons to carry notes around a city. At that age, I grouped birds into far more basic categories than I do now, so when I heard the words *Passenger Pigeon*, I envisioned a winged messenger grasping small twists of paper in its feet and carrying them across great distances to reach eager recipients. When, still a child, I was informed these birds were extinct, I presumed we had worked them too hard, that we had burdened them too heavily. It made me sad to think we had been foolish enough to do what I learned we were doing to our forests, depleting them before they could replenish.

The truth, of course, is even worse. It would have been bad enough to have overused them the way we do so many resources, quickly and inconsiderately, until they ran out. But instead, we pursued them deliberately, violently, until the last bird fell from the sky.

Historians say this occurred within a span of thirty to forty years.

That's all.

In approximately the span of my lifetime, we erased an entire species that once numbered in the billions. It is unfathomable. But it is fact.

In Wyalusing State Park, high on the bluffs overlooking the spot where the Wisconsin River merges into the Mississippi stands the Passenger Pigeon Monument erected by the WSO: DEDICATED TO THE LAST WISCONSIN PASSENGER PIGEON SHOT AT BABCOCK, SEPT. 1899. THIS SPECIES BECAME EXTINCT THROUGH THE AVARICE AND THOUGHTLESSNESS OF MAN. Somber words stamped beneath the image of a pigeon perched on the branch of an oak. A stunning bird, it must have been. Compared to our Feral Pigeon, its tail looks exotic as a parrot's. The bill is refined; the neck has a touch of swan. I would like to have seen one.

We've marked 100 years since the death of Martha, believed to be the last Passenger Pigeon on the planet, on September 1, 1914. Despite this, one wants to think there are still a few out there, somewhere, hidden away, unrecognized, undisturbed. One wants to think that someone might catch a glimpse of one, the way in the early 2000s, several people claimed to have sighted the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, another bird we crowded out of existence roughly thirty years after the Passenger Pigeon. But even if the Ivory-billed is still out there, scientists consider it impossible for the bird make a viable recovery. And the truth regarding the Passenger Pigeon is: We ended them. We reduced these once abundant birds to memory. Few people are alive, if any, who witnessed them firsthand.

These birds were not the envoys I imagined them to be in my youth, but they *are* couriers now, bearing the weight of our history, the weight of our choices. It's time we read their message.

I encourage you to attend Dr. Temple's presentation on October 21 (see page 3) to learn more about the Passenger Pigeon and what we can do to protect endangered species that may still be within our power to save.

- Kristin Wegner



Close up of the Passenger Pigeon Monument

Visit Project Passenger Pigeon at www.passengerpigeon.org to explore facts about the Passenger Pigeon in the United States and Canada, read descriptions of the bird from those who witnessed its thriving and its passing, and learn how you can get involved.

To learn more about the efforts to locate the Ivory-billed Woodpecker, visit The Cornell Lab of Ornithology at www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory/

Christmas Bird Counts—SAVE THE DATES!
Watch Hoy's website for details/updates.

Sunday, December 14—Racine CBC
To sign up, contact Eric Howe at cbc@hoyaudubon.org or 262-498-3355.

Saturday, December 20—Kenosha CBC
To sign up, contact Valerie Mann at naturalist@pringlec.org or 262-857-8008.

Burlington CBC Date TBA

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Email addresses of Board members are available at: www.hoyaudubon.org

**Next Board of Directors Meeting:
 Wednesday, October 22, 2014, 7:00 p.m.**

*Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive
 Mount Pleasant, WI 53406*
 All interested members are welcome.
 Come and find out what your club is doing!

Field Trip Coordinator
 Frank Sharkozy 262-770-2481

If you have suggestions regarding future programs or field trips please contact the hoyfieldtrips@hoyaudubon.org

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Ideas for the newsletter? We welcome your suggestions, recaps of birding seminars/activities, fun facts and birding tidbits for use in future newsletters. Please mail to the attention of Newsletter Editor at: Hoy Audubon, P.O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404 or email to: hoynewsletter@hoyaudubon.org

The Hoy Honker is the newsletter of the Hoy Audubon Society, Inc. PO Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404.

**Meet a Member:
 Elizabeth Wheeler**



Hi, everyone! I am 54 years old and I am in retail management. I love the outdoors and of course my main passion is birding. I met my husband when I was planning a trip to Africa with the River Bend Nature Center back in 1980. I was attending UW-Parkside in the Geology program until I left for Africa in the summer of 81. I had recently transferred from UW-Eau Claire to save money for my trip.

I married in 1983 and a day after our wedding we spent the day at Bong (yes, my new husband now realized how crazy I was about birding) and than left 2 days later to live in Missoula, Montana (via station wagon with a golden retriever and all our of wedding gifts). I saw my very first American Dipper at Glacier National Park.

After 3.5 years we moved to Phoenix, Arizona where we stayed for 16 years. The birding was awesome; we had so many different types of hummingbirds in our backyard I couldn't keep track of them. Than we decided to head back home to Wisconsin to be closer to family and here we are now.

I've been a Hoy member for one year and three months. I went on my first ever Warbler Walk at Colonial Park where I met Jenny Wenzel, who made sure I was able to see all the warblers everyone was identifying. I love the camaraderie of Hoy and the friends you make. I love spending time with all you guys who love to talk about birds.

My interest in birds started when I was about 8 years old. My mom gave me the Golden Book from Western Publishing Company on Birds. I identified a Killdeer on the Giese Elementary school playground that summer and I was hooked for life.

Regarding how many birds are on my Life List, oh my gosh, I was not as disciplined as I should have been. I of course went to Africa for birding, and than to Montana where I went birding in every State west of the Mississippi. I traveled up through Canada and down through Mexico. I also went to Japan in hopes of spotting a Steller's Sea Eagle (sorry to say I only was able to see one in the Tokyo Zoo). So my answer would have to be "a lot" :)

Locally, I really love going to Hawthorne Hollow and Wadewitz Nature Center. At Hawthorne Hollow it's just so nice to sit on the bench and let the birds come to you. Wadewitz is my 2nd favorite because I just sit on top of a picnic table and look down at the beautiful meadow and of course to seek out the ever elusive Pileated Woodpecker, whom I had been trying to see all summer.

I enjoy all birds but I love the hawks, woodpeckers, jays, and gulls. What makes them interesting is you can readily see them even if you are not birding.

I use quite a few different guides. My favorites are The National Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding, Volume 1, which cover birds like hawks, shearwaters, and waterfowl. Volume 2 covers the gulls, owls, and swallows, and Volume 3 has the warblers, thrushes, and sparrows. I also use the National Geographic Society Field Guide to the Birds. Last, the Birds of Minnesota and Wisconsin by Lone Pine.

My advice to novice birders is, first, always keep a pair of binoculars in each car you own, and second, keep a day pack with your best binoculars, a guide book, paper and pen, insect repellent, hat and a long sleeve shirt so you can always be ready to go birding at any time. Nothing is worse than trying to run around your house looking for your guide book and binoculars.

Never feel shy about reaching out to any of the officers and board members if you want to ask a question or just talk birds. Everyone should always feel welcome.

100 Years of Extinction:

The Passenger Pigeon and Our Sustainable Future

October 21, 2014, at 7:00 p.m. at the Golden Rondelle Theater, Dr. Stanley Temple will share the story of the Passenger Pigeon and discuss current extinction crises, endangered species recovery, human relationship with wildlife, and sustainable use of biological resources. The Racine Heritage Museum will display their rare taxidermy Passenger Pigeon at the event. Despite the fact that billions of these birds once roamed America, not a single photograph of a Passenger Pigeon in the wild is known to exist.

The event is sponsored by several groups, including: The Racine Zoo, SC Johnson, Hoy Audubon, The Sierra Club, River Bend Nature Center, Eco-Justice, the Kenosha/Racine Land Trust, and Seno Center. Reservations are required. You can visit www.scjohnson.com/visit and click Schedule Your Tour Now, or call 262-260-2154.

Bird North Beach? Why Knot!

Racine’s North Beach has had its usual run of fall migrants (Sanderlings, Least Sandpipers, and so forth) this year, but a few notable exceptions also graced these shores.



A Baird’s Sandpiper was reported July 31, and from August 24–26, North Beach hosted a Whimbrel, possibly the same bird reported August 19–23 at Samuel Myers Park.

Whimbrel, photo by Drew Goldberg

The most exceptional North Beach migrant was the Red Knot that appeared on July 31, still boasting some of its lovely breeding plumage. The bird lingered through August 1, but, unfortunately for this birder, it moved on before I arrived later that evening looking for it.

While no eBirders reported Red Knots at North Beach last year, three Red Knots were reported in 2012. (Fortunately, I didn’t need a time machine to get my lifer Knot, thanks to another bird that stopped over in Hustisford later in August.)



Red Knot, photo by Rick Fare

- Kristin Wegner

**Nicholson Wildlife Refuge:
New Committee is Seeking Members**

Nicholson Wildlife Refuge was created in 1976. At approximately 122 acres, it is the Village of Caledonia’s largest park, acquired through private donations and state and federal grants which were, in large part, awarded to preserve the wetlands for wildlife.

Nicholson is protected from hunting and trapping, and the Village “No Hunting” boundaries have recently been expanded from 100 feet to 40 rods (approx. 620 feet). The Village continues to extend the boardwalk and is working on identifying and resurrecting the original path as well as tackling the large amounts of invasive species. Nicholson Wildlife Refuge has been a forgotten gem. It is coming back to life.

What are **YOUR** ideas for the continued preservation of Nicholson?

A committee is forming to specifically address Nicholson Wildlife Refuge. We are looking for environmentalists, nature and wildlife enthusiasts, and private citizens who love this Refuge.

If you are interested in participating, have questions or concerns, or would like to know more about NWR in general, please call Sue Schuit at 262-752-5955 or email salav@wi.rr.com.

- Sue Schuit

Spectacular Swift Night Out!

Hoy members Helen and Bill Pugh and Frank Sharkozy participated in a swift count on September 16. At St. Patrick’s Church at the corner of Douglas and Prospect in Racine, they tallied an astonishing **1,336 Chimney Swifts!**



Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas 2

The first Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas (WBBA) was conducted from 1995-2000 to collect data on the distribution, abundance, and habitat of breeding bird species throughout the state. The comprehensive data now serves as baseline data for current and future monitoring programs and to assist in avian conservation.

The WBBA 2 is set to begin field work in early 2015. A Planning Committee and 4 other committees composed of members from agencies, Wisconsin Society for Ornithology, Western Great Lakes Bird & Bat Observatory, and other nonprofit organizations have been at work for two years on developing protocols, starting fundraising, and setting this 2nd version of the atlas in motion.

Join us at Hoy’s October 2 meeting to learn about the history of Atlas 1, how Atlas 2 will be different, and how you can participate in this important 6-7 year-long citizen science effort. Mike Reese is Director of Volunteers for Atlas 2, and Bill Mueller is Director of the WGLBBO. They will share the latest atlas news, and answer questions about what to expect this time.

Hoy's 2014 Bluebird Batch

This year the Hoy Audubon trails had 368 boxes that produced 695 Eastern Bluebirds, 840 Tree Swallows, 102 House Wrens, and 29 Black-capped Chickadees. Bluebird numbers were similar compared to last year's 707 fledglings but down compared to 2012 when we had 956. Last year we produced 683 swallows and 64 wrens.

2012 was a very good year for producing Bluebirds, therefore it was a huge disappointment when the cold Springs of 2013 and 2014 delayed nest building. Bluebirds arrived late and started building nests even later. By that time, they had to compete with Tree Swallows, House Sparrows, and House Wrens. Bluebirds usually get started building nests before these other species, and, with more effort invested in their nests, defend them. The late start meant second and third broods were likely to be in smaller proportions as well.

I am looking forward to improvement next year and suspect the rest of the monitors are too. Thanks to all the trail monitors for their dedication and hard work.

- Stan Rosenstiel

162 Purple Martins Fledged!

Hoy members Tom and Karen Gavahan, Mary Schroeder, and Helen Pugh monitored 70 nest boxes located at the Racine Water Department, Coast Guard House, and Gateway Technical College. 197 eggs were laid in 42 nests. From those eggs, the Racine boxes fledged 157 Purple Martins, which is 23 more than in 2013, and is **our best year yet!**



In Kenosha, the Water Department was monitored by Stan Rosenstiel, and he counted 5 Purple Martins fledged. Only 2 Purple Martins fledged last year in Kenosha County, so it is encouraging to see even a slight increase.

It is an amazing natural phenomenon to watch the nests being built and then count the inch-long eggs and hatchlings. We watch the hatchlings grow into sub-adulthood, sometimes see a first flight, and hope for their successful migration to Brazil and back next spring.



Purple Martin monitoring is a weekly get-together from May through July. The birds emit cheery songs, chortles, and clicks. Their aerial maneuvers are fascinating to watch. If this activity is of interest to you, contact any of the above-mentioned monitors in Racine or Kenosha. They would love to have you join them!

-article and photos by Helen Pugh

Become a Bluebird Monitor!



Checking a Bluebird box, photo by Kristin Wegner

Do you enjoy watching bird behavior?

Would you like to see up close the birth and raising of young birds?

Would you like to participate in a project to help bird populations grow?

Do you like to take a healthy walk or ride in a golf cart?

If you answer yes to these questions, why not become a Bluebird monitor?

Opportunities exist to either have your own trail or assist others on theirs. It's a lot of fun and very rewarding. - Rick Fare

If you are interested in becoming a Bluebird monitor, please contact one of our Bluebird coordinators:

Stan Rosenstiel: 262-694-2206

Rick Fare: 262-902-9020 or email rick.fare@hoyaudubon.org

Chiwaukee Prairie in Kenosha County

This State Natural Area is located in the most southeastern corner of the state and the county. Bordered by Lake Michigan on the east and Illinois on its south border, it represents one of the largest and finest prairie and coastal wetland areas in the state. It hosts an excellent diversity of common and rare plants including a couple of native orchids. For this reason, visitors to the area are asked to exercise extreme caution when hiking the trails. Though typically more interesting to the botanist than the birder, it is simply a fascinating area to explore for anyone with an interest in nature. Nesting birds seen here include American Woodcock, Marsh and Sedge Wrens, Sora and Virginia Rails, and Savannah and Field Sparrows. During migration, Nelson's and LeConte's Sparrows have both been seen. Due to its proximity to Lake Michigan and its open environment, it provides the best place in Kenosha County to observe migrating raptors.

To get to this area, go south from Kenosha on Hwy. 32 to 116th Street. Go east on 116th Street across the railroad tracks to 1st Ct., go south to the first road to the right and follow that one block to the entrance. you will have to park along the road and look for one of the access trails.

Kenosha Harbor

This area consists of a protected harbor that has been nicely improved. Changes have improved the habitat and increased the variety and numbers of migrant and wintering waterfowl as well as wintering gulls. The best way to get to the harbor is to follow Hwy. 158 east from I-94 all of the way to the lake. Once at the lake, it is easy to find your way around the harbor area. A sheltered marina lies to the south off of 3rd Avenue which is good for wintering gulls and waterfowl.

The harbor itself lies to the north of this spot with the best view possible from behind the Best Western Harborside Inn. Just a few blocks north is 50th Street where you can go east onto Simmons Island Park where a beach provides an excellent spot for loafing gulls and terns. Rarities seen here include the standard gull rarities, Barrow's Goldeneye, and Harlequin Duck.

-Jerry DeBoer, "Wisconsin's Favorite Bird Haunts"

Upcoming Activities

Thursday, October 2, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Wisconsin Breeding Bird Atlas 2
Kenosha Northside Public Library,
1500 27th Avenue, Kenosha, WI 53140

Learn about the history of Atlas 1, how Atlas 2 will be different, and how you can participate in this important 6-7 year-long citizen science effort. Mike Reese, Director of Volunteers for Atlas 2, and Bill Mueller, Director of the WGLBBO, will present.

Saturday, October 4, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Hawk Watch

Illinois Beach State Park (North Unit), Zion, IL

Hawk counters identify and count migrating raptors and Turkey Vultures. The entry to the North Unit is at Sheridan Road and 17th Street, two miles south of the Illinois/Wisconsin border. Take 17th Street into the park and meet at the pavilion just east of Sand Lake.

Tuesday, October 21, 7:00 p.m.

Program: 100 Years of Extinction: The Passenger Pigeon and our sustainable future

The Golden Rondelle Theater

525 Howe St, Racine, WI 53403

Dr. Stanley Temple will explore the ecology and life history of the Passenger Pigeon, current extinction crises, endangered species recovery, human relationship with wildlife, and sustainable use of biological resources. Reservations required; phone: 262-260-2154.

Saturdays, November 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 9:00 a.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Shoop Park/Wind Point Birding

Shoop Park, Racine

We'll meet at the parking lot at Shoop Park and walk north along the lakeshore trail to the Wind Point Lighthouse to look for fall migrants. Dress for cold and windy weather and wear sturdy walking shoes (it's 0.6 miles one way, and the trail may be overgrown). We'll bird here every Saturday morning in November!

Thursday, November 6, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Meeting, Program: Do You eBird?

Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive, Mount Pleasant, WI 53406

Eric Howe will discuss how and why you should use

www.ebird.org, a free website hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that allows anyone to report bird sightings and engage in citizen science.

Friday, November 14, 7:00 p.m.

Hoy Field Trip: Owl Prowl

Bong State Recreational Area

We will drive to various locations around and within the park to listen for owls. Please meet promptly by 7:00 p.m. at the DNR parking lot that is located on the north side of BB, approximately 0.7 mile west of Hwy 75. A Wisconsin State Parks vehicle admission sticker will be required if parking within the park.

Thursday, December 4, 6:00 p.m. Dinner

Annual Holiday Potluck

Sealed Air YMCA, 8501 Campus Drive, Mount Pleasant, WI 53406

Hoy's annual Holiday Potluck. Bring a dish to pass along with your own dinnerware and utensils. Hoy will provide coffee and napkins. We'll discuss upcoming events and share holiday songs.

Advice for Winter Birding

What to Wear: Winter weather can be unpredictable, so warm layers are advised. Comfortable, waterproof footwear is a must, as are a warm coat, hat, and gloves. Hand warmers are highly recommended.

Finding Your Field Trip: Visit Hoy's website for driving directions and maps (when available).

Watch the Weather: Heavy snow, icy roadways, poor visibility, or other potentially hazardous conditions may cause a field trip to be cancelled. We post cancellations on Hoy's website and the Hoy Facebook page/group whenever it is possible to do so ahead of time. **If you are unsure whether a field trip will take place, please use good judgment when deciding whether to attend.**

HOY AUDUBON SOCIETY

P.O. BOX 044626

RACINE, WI 53404

www.hoyaudubon.org



Least Sandpiper, photo by Kristin Wegner

Please take the time to renew your [Hoy Audubon Chapter Membership for 2014/2015](#).

Annual renewals for Hoy Audubon Society "Chapter Supporter" memberships are due on July 1 of each calendar year. Please send a check payable to Hoy Audubon Society.

Chapter Supporter Dues: \$12 per individual

Total amount enclosed: _____

Do you wish to receive chapter newsletter by email only?

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Send to: Hoy Audubon Society, P. O. Box 044626, Racine, WI 53404



Least Sandpiper, photo by Kristin Wegner

See the Hoy Honker "In Living Color."

There are two ways to see our newsletter in color: view it on the Hoy website at www.hoyaudubon.org or get on the email newsletter distribution list by sending an email to hoynewsletter@gmail.com and asking to be put on the electronic mailing list. You can now find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HoyAudubonSociety