

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON.

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The disappearance of the passenger pigeon in Ontario dates back at least forty years, though as late as 1870 some of the old roosts were still frequented, but the incredible flocks, of which so much has been said, had gone long before that date, and by 1880 the pigeon was practically exterminated, not only in Ontario, but over the greater part of its old range. There are, however, occasional records of birds taken, for some years later, an immature bird taken Sept. 9, 1887, in Chester county, Pennsylvania is said to be the last for that part of the state, (1) a bird also immature is in my collection taken in December 1888, at Montreal, Quebec; there are other Montreal records of the same date (2) but with the exception of one taken at Tadousac, July 20, 1889, (3) these are last Quebec records of birds actually taken. In Ontario two were taken at Toronto in 1890, on September 20, and October 11, both immature females, the latter is in my collection, as is an adult female taken by Mr. Walter Brett, at Riding Mountain, Man., May 12, 1892, one of a pair seen. I also have an adult male taken at Waukegon, Ill., Dec. 19, 1892. I was in New York in the latter part of Nov. 1892 and was then assured by Mr. Rowland, a well known taxidermist, that he had recently seen several barrels of pigeons that had been condemned as unfit for food, they had come to New York from the Indian Territory (4) and I believe had had their tails pulled out to permit of tighter packing. Mr. Wm. Brewster has recorded the sending of several hundred dozens of pigeons to the Boston market in December of the same year, and in January, 1893; these were also from Indian Territory; these are the last records we have of the passenger pigeon as any thing more than a casual migrant. The

(1) Proceedings of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club, II, 1898, 17.

(2) Wintle, Birds of Montreal, 1896, 51.

(3) In collection of Dr. J. Dwight, Jr.

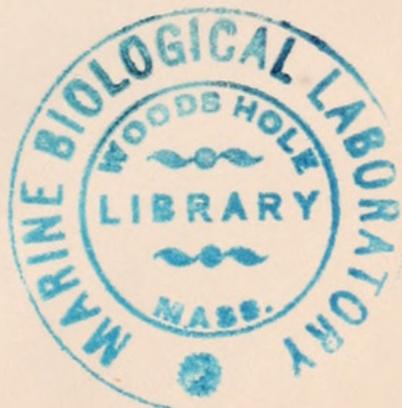
(4) Minot, Birds of New England, 1895, 395.

records ceased after this till 1898 when three birds were taken at points widely apart, an adult male at lake Winnepegosis, Man., on April 14, (5) an immature male at Owensboro, Kentucky, on July 27, now in the Smithsonian Institution, and another immature bird taken at Detroit, Michigan on September 14 (5) is in my collection, these are the last records that can be based on specimens. (6)

In 1903, I published a list (5) including sight records one as late as May 1902, this latter is possibly open to doubt, but the ones I gave for 1900 are, I feel confident, correct, as the birds were seen more than once and by different observers. For all practical purposes the close of the nineteenth century saw the final extinction of the passenger pigeon in a wild state and there remained only the small flock, numbering in 1903 not more than a dozen, that had been bred in captivity by Prof. C. O. Whitman of Chicago. These birds the descendants of a single pair, had long before that ceased to breed and it was in an effort to obtain fresh blood for this flock that I started a newspaper enquiry that brought many replies none of which could be substantiated as records of the passenger pigeon and many referred to the mourning dove. I am aware that there has been lately widely spread and persistent rumours of the return of the pigeons, but no rumour has borne investigation, and I feel that Prof. Whitman's small flock now reduced in 1906 to five birds are the last representatives of a species around whose disappearance mystery and fable will always gather.

(5) Auk, XX, 1903, 66.

(6) There is a mature female in the collection of the Carnegie Institution of Pittsburg Pa. marked "Pennsylvania" August 15th 1898 but without further locality.





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