

# White-crowned Pigeon: New to Ontario and Canada

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Figure 1. White-crowned Pigeon at Pembroke, Ontario. 14 November 2018.

Photo: Mark E. Dojczman

**ONE OF THE MOST AMAZING RECORDS** in recent years, for Ontario and Canada, was the discovery of a White-crowned Pigeon (*Patagioenas leucocephala*) at Pembroke, Ontario, on 14 November 2018. This was the fifth new species for Ontario in 2018, along with Reddish Egret

(*Egretta rufescens*), Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), Costa's Hummingbird (*Calypte costae*) and Calliope Hummingbird (*Selasphorus calliope*) (Burrell *et al.* 2019). Truly an amazing year.

Unfortunately for the rest of us, only one extremely lucky birder saw this bird. While walking along the Kiwanis Way behind Algonquin College in Pembroke, Mark E. Dojczman observed an unfamiliar pigeon. He observed it both in flight and perched and was fortunately able to photograph it (Figure 1). After examining the image, he determined it to be a White-crowned Pigeon. Mark texted the photograph to me (BMD), and I, too, identified the bird as a White-crowned Pigeon. At the time I was down in Prince Edward County. Needless to say, I almost immediately did a “180” and headed for Pembroke — after quick phone calls to my son, Ben, in Carp and Doug McRae, in Brighton. Ben and I arrived at Pembroke during the early afternoon but neither we, nor several local birders, were able to re-find the pigeon. There were high winds and cold temperatures for most of the day. The following morning a few birders arrived but the bird was never seen again.

The Pembroke White-crowned Pigeon was subsequently identified as a bird in first basic plumage (Burrell *et al.* 2019); thus it hatched earlier during 2018. The primary range of the White-crowned Pigeon is the Caribbean; within the United States, it is usually found only in southern Florida (Raffaele *et al.* 1998, Bancroft *et al.* 2020). Although this species is known to wander somewhat within the Caribbean range and is capable of long-distance flights between islands in the Caribbean (Raffaele *et al.* 1998), it is not prone to wandering long distances to the north. There are very few extralimital records (Bancroft *et al.* 2020), unlike some other pigeons and doves, e.g., White-winged Dove (*Zenaidura asiatica*) and Eurasian Collared-Dove (*Streptopelia decaocto*). A search of eBird (2020) revealed only four records outside Florida and the Caribbean: Virginia (9 June 2013), Texas (4-14 October 2018, 4 September 2019) and Alabama (27 October to 12 November 2019). The species is also known to be in decline in many parts of its normal range because of hunting, disturbance and habitat loss (Bancroft *et al.* 2020). This highlights the truly remarkable nature of the Ontario record.

What was a fruit-eating pigeon from the mangrove swamps somewhere around the Gulf of Mexico doing in Pembroke on a cold and windy day in November? One could speculate that it was caught earlier in a Caribbean hurricane. However, hurricanes are hardly new to the Caribbean or Florida yet there is little history of long distance storm displacement of White-crowned Pigeons.

The likelihood of this bird being an escapee is remote, given that White-crowned Pigeons are not known to be kept in captivity regularly or sold in North America (Raffaele *et al.* 1998).

### Acknowledgements

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