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TEXAS BIRD RECORDS COMMITTEE REPORT FOR 2000

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The Texas Bird Records Committee (hereafter “TBRC” or “committee”) of the Texas Ornithological Society requests and reviews documentation on any record of a TBRC Review List species (see Lockwood 2000 or TBRC web page at <http://members.tripod.com/~tbr/>). Annual reports of the committee’s activities have appeared in the Bulletin of the Texas Ornithological Society since 1984. For more information about the Texas Ornithological Society or the TBRC, please visit www.texasbirds.org. The committee reached a final decision on 59 records during 2000: 44 records of 29 species were accepted and 14 records of 13 species were not accepted, an acceptance rate of 76% for this report. There were 85 observers who submitted documentation (to the TBRC or to other entities) that was reviewed by the committee during 2000.

In 2000 the TBRC accepted first state records of Buff-breasted Flycatcher and Blue Mockingbird. These actions brought the official Texas State List to 620 species in good standing. This total does not include the five species listed on the Presumptive Species List.

In addition to the review of previously undocumented species, any committee member may request that a record of any species be reviewed. The numbers of accepted records are also listed for California Gull, which was recently removed from Review List A, though retained on Review List B. The committee desires written descriptions as well as photographs, video, and audio recordings if available. Information concerning a Review List species may be submitted to the committee secretary, Mark Lockwood, 6710 Lancret Hill Drive, Austin, Texas 78745 (email: mark.lockwood@tpwd.state.tx.us). Guidelines for preparing rare bird documentation can be found in Dittmann and Lasley (1992).

The records in this report are arranged taxonomically following the AOU Check-list of North American Birds (AOU 1998) through the 42nd supplement (AOU 2000). A number in parentheses after the species name represents the total number of accepted records in Texas for that species at the end of 2000. All observers who submitted written documentation or photographs of accepted records are acknowledged by initials. If known, the initials of those who discovered a particular bird are in boldface but only if the discoverers submitted supporting documentation. The TBRC file number of each accepted record will follow the observers’ initials. If photographs or video recordings are on file with the TBRC, the Texas Photo Record File (TPRF) (Texas A&M University) number is also given. If an audio recording of the bird is on file with the TBRC, the Texas Bird Sounds Library (TBSL) (Sam Houston State University) number is also given. Specimen records are denoted with an asterisk (*) followed by the institution where the specimen is housed and the catalog number. The information in each account is usually based on the information provided in the original submitted documentation; however, in some cases this information has been supplemented with a full range of dates during which the bird was present if that information was made available to the TBRC later. All locations in italics are counties.

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TBRC Membership.—Members of the TBRC during 2000 who participated in decisions listed in this report were: Mark Lockwood, Chair, Keith Arnold, Academician, Greg Lasley, Secretary, Brush Freeman, Petra Hockey, Terry Maxwell, Martin Reid, Willie Sekula, and Barry Zimmer. During 2000, Kelly Bryan was elected as a new member, Brush Freeman was elected to a second term, and the Academician was re-elected. John Arvin replaced Lockwood as the committee Chair and Lockwood replaced Lasley as the Secretary.

Contributors.—**AF** - Anthony Floyd, **AW** - Alan Wormington, **BB** - Bob Behrstock, **BD** - Bob Doe, **BFe** - Bert Frenz, **BFr** - Brush Freeman, **BH** - Bob Honig, **BK** - Bert McKee, **BMc** - Brad McKinney, **BP** - Bill Principe, **BZ** - Barry Zimmer, **C&OB** - Charles & Olivia Brower, **CH** - Christine Hirst, **DB** - David Blankenship, **DM** - Doug McNair, **DP** - Dwight Peake, **DS** - David Sarkozi, **EC** - Eric Carpenter, **ER** - Eric Horvath, **EW** - Ed Wetzel, **F&JD** - Fred & Judy Donaldson, **FB** - Frank Bumgardner, **FR** - Forrest Roland, **GC** - Greg Cook, **GK** - Greg Keiran, **GL** - Greg Lasley, **GM** - Guy McCaskie, **J&Bri** - John & Barbara Ribble, **J&WR** - Jan & Will Risser, **JA** - John Arvin, **JH** - John Hoogerheide, **JJ** - Jimmy Jackson, **JK** - John Karges, **JMc** - Jimmy McHaney, **JO** - John O'Brien, **JPa** - Jim Paton, **JR** - John Rosford, **JSi** - Jim Sipiara, **JSt** - Jim Stevenson, **JW** - John Whittle, **JZ** - James Zabriskie, **K&PH** - Ken & Patsy Hunter, **KBa** - Keith Bartels, **KBr** - Kelly Bryan, **KSz** - Ken Sztraky, **L&NL** - Larry & Nancy LaBrant, **LD** - Larry Ditto, **LH** - Linda Hedges, **LM** - Laura Moore, **Mab** - Melissa Abbott, **MAd** - Mark Adams, **MAu** - Mike Austin, **MC** - Mel Cooksey, **ME** - Mark Elwonger, **MF** - Mark Flippo, **MI** - Marshall Iliif, **ML** - Mark Lockwood, **MR** - Martin Reid, **MS** - Marcy Scott, **MW** - Matt White, **ND** - Nancy Devlin, **P&RA** - Pam & Reid Allen, **P&TF** - Phyllis & Tony Frank, **PDH** - P. D. Hulce, **PG** - Peter Gottschling, **PH** - Petra Hockey, **RBe** - Robert Benson, **RBu** - Roger Burrows, **RD** - Rich Damron, **RF** - Robert Frew, **RH** - Rich Hoyer, **RK** - Rich Kostecke, **RMS** - Rose Marie Stortz, **RN** - Russell Namitz, **RS** - Robert Schwaller, **SB** - Steve Bentsen, **SC** - Scott Clark, **SJ** - Simone Jenion, **SP** - Steve Phillips, **SW** - Steve West, **TB** - Tim Brush, **TG** - Tina Gallegos, **TH** - Tom Hobby, **TK** - Tim Kaspar, **WM** - Wayne Meyer, **WR** - Will Russell, **WS** - Willie Sekula.

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Additional Abbreviations.—AOU = American Ornithologists' Union; HMNS = Houston Museum of Natural Sciences; NP = National Park; NWR = National Wildlife Refuge; SNA = State Natural Area; SP = State Park; TCWC = Texas Cooperative Wildlife Collection (Texas A&M University); WM = Witte Museum.

ACCEPTED RECORDS

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*) (37). One at Offat's Bayou, *Galveston*, on 13 March 1999 (**J&WR**; 1999-27).

Leach's Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) (19). A specimen was located during 2000, one from Freeport, *Galveston*, on 23 July 1976 (*HMNS 13).

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) (15). One on an oil rig off North Padre Island, *Kenedy*, on 30 October 1999 (**AW**; 1999-107; TPRF 1798).

American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*) (7). One at Village Creek Wastewater Plant, *Tarrant*, from 9 December 1998 to 2 January 1999 (**JSi**, **SJ**, **MR**, **BFe**, **GK**, **SC**; 1999-3; TPRF 1778).

Masked Duck (*Nomonyx dominicus*) (56). Two at Fort Bliss sewage ponds, *El Paso*, from 8-19 July 1976 (**BZ**, **BP**; 1999-42). Two on the Kenedy Ranch, *Kenedy*, on 20 March 1999 (**BFr**; 1999-35).

Short-tailed Hawk (*Buteo brachyurus*) (11). One at Lost Maples SNA, *Bandera*, from 6-20 April 1999 (**RN**, **RS**, **RF**, **RH**; 1999-50).

Northern Jacana (*Jacana spinosa*) (28). A specimen collected at Mitchell Lake, *Bexar*, on 1 January 1930 (*WM 135) was located in 2000.

Little Gull (*Larus minutus*) (32). One at South Side Water Treatment Plant, *Dallas*, from 14-21 January 2000 (**MW**, **B&JRi**; 2000-2; TPRF 1792). One at Hagerman NWR, *Grayson*, from 17-18 January 2000 (**GC**, **WM**; 2000-6; TPRF 1776).

Black-headed Gull (*Larus ridibundus*) (20). One at Cooper Lake, *Hopkins*, from 26 November 1999-27 February 2000 (MW; 1999-110; TPRF 1756). One at Village Creek Wastewater Plant, *Tarrant*, from 24 December 1999 to 18 February 2000 (MR, EW; 1999-115). Both of these records refer to returning birds.

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) (15). One at Village Creek Wastewater Plant, *Tarrant*, from 3 December 1998 to 2 February 1999 (MR; 1999-2; TPRF 1801).

California Gull (*Larus californicus*) (59). One at Corpus Christi, *Nueces*, on 15 January & 13-15 February 1999 (WS, B&Jri; 1999-30; TPRF 1780). One at Galveston, *Galveston*, on 13 March 1999 (J&WR; 1999-26). One at La Marque, *Galveston*, on 24 March 1999 (MR; 1999-34; TPRF 1779). One at Cooper Lake, *Delta*, from 19-20 May 1999 (MW; 1999-61; TPRF 1791).

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*) (43). One at Village Creek Wastewater Plant, *Tarrant*, on 28 February 1999 (MR; 1999-33; TPRF 1777).

Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus marinus*) (31). One at Bolivar Flats, *Galveston*, from 22 December 1997 to 15 March 1998 (P&RA, MAu, PDH, JW, DS; 1998-14; TPRF 1796).

Northern Saw-whet Owl (*Aegolius acadicus*) (20). One at El Paso, *El Paso*, on 24 October 2000 (JPa; 2000-119; TPRF 1789).

Green Violet-ear (*Colibri thalassinus*) (29). One at Corpus Christi, *Nueces*, from 7-13 May 2000 (MC, RBe; 2000-64; TPRF 1787).

Green-breasted Mango (*Anthracothorax prevostii*) (7). One at Los Fresnos, *Cameron*, from 22-23 May 1999 (BH, BMc; 1999-56; TPRF 1790).

Violet-crowned Hummingbird (*Amazilia violiceps*) (5). One at Weslaco, *Hidalgo*, from 10-11 May 1999 (WS, PH, B&Jri, BMc; 1999-47; TPRF 1775).

Lewis's Woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*) (40). One at Frijole Springs, Guadalupe Mountains NP, *Culberson*, on 16-20 October 2000 (JJ, MAd; 2000-106; TPRF 1795). Up to two at El Paso, *El Paso*, from 22-30 October 2000 (JZ, MS, JPa; 2000-91; TPRF 1783). One in Alpine, *Brewster*, from 22-24 November 2000 (ML; 2000-103; TPRF 1784).

Greater Pewee (*Contopus pertinax*) (7). One at Boone Ranch, *Midland*, on 30 May 1998 (RMS, FR; 1998-78).

Buff-breasted Flycatcher (*Empidonax fulvifrons*) (1). Two at the Davis Mountains Preserve, *Jeff Davis*, from 3 May to 25 July 1999 (EH, JK, KBr, MAd, LH, GL, B&Jri; 1999-48; TPRF 1799; TBSL 225). This represents the first documented sighting and nesting record for Texas.

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*) (9). One on Galveston Island, *Galveston*, on 22 May 1999 (JSt; 1999-52; TPRF 1774).

Rose-throated Becard (*Pachyramphus aglaiae*) (24). One male at Los Fresnos, *Cameron*, from 27-29 January 2000 (JR, CH; 2000-38; TPRF 1786).

Yellow-green Vireo (*Vireo flavoviridis*) (24). One at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson*, from 20-28 April 1999 (BFe, BB, JW, KSz; 1999-53). One at Quintana, *Brazoria*, on 28 May 1999 (C&OB; 1999-62).

Black-whiskered Vireo (*Vireo altiloquus*) (14). One at Quintana, *Brazoria*, from 2-19 May 2000 (C&OB, MAd, BFr; 2000-26; TPRF 1800).

Clark's Nutcracker (*Nucifraga columbiana*) (15). One near Mount Livermore, *Jeff Davis*, on 1 October 2000 (KBr, BFr, EC; 2000-77; TPRF 1782). Up to three at El Paso, *El Paso*, on 9-10 and 15-16 October 2000 (JZ, MS, JPa; 2000-85; TPRF 1781).

Blue Mockingbird (*Melanotis caerulescens*) (1). One at Weslaco, *Hidalgo*, from 9 May 1999 to 1 November 2000 (WS, BMc, PH, JMc, B&Jri, ML, JA, LD; 1999-46; TPRF 1797). This represents the first documented record for Texas.

Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) (18). Up to three at Lubbock, *Lubbock*, from 25 December 1999 to 4 March 2000 (AF, MAb, GK, PH, MAd, JMc, FB, RK; 1999-114; TPRF 1773). One at Davis Mountains SP, *Jeff Davis*, from 4-10 November 2000 (TH, KBr, PH; 2000-95; TPRF 1788).

Gray-crowned Yellowthroat (*Geothlypis poliocephala*) (39). One at Santa Ana NWR, *Hidalgo*, from 17-22 June 1999 (SP, SB, LM, TB, TG, RD; 1999-59; TPRF 1793; TBSL 228).

Red-faced Warbler (*Cardellina rubrifrons*) (18). One at Boot Spring, Big Bend NP, *Brewster*, on 6 May 1999 (EH; 1999-38). One at the Davis Mountains Preserve, *Jeff Davis*, on 6 August 2000 (MAd, KBr; 2000-75; TPRF 1794).

Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*) (32). A specimen collected 30 miles south of Marfa, *Presidio*, on 30 December 1965 (*WM 242) was located in 2000. One 11 miles south of Balmorhea, *Jeff Davis*, on 28 November 1996 (P&TF; 1997-25). One 20 miles south of Marathon, *Brewster*, on 25 April 2000 (MF; 2000-47; TPRF 1785; *BBNP).

UNACCEPTED

A number of factors may contribute to a record being denied acceptance. It is quite uncommon for a record to not be accepted because the bird was obviously misidentified. More commonly, a record is not accepted because the material submitted was incomplete, insufficient, superficial, or just too vague to properly document the reported occurrence while eliminating *all* other similar species. Also, written documentation or descriptions prepared *entirely from memory* weeks, months, or years after a sighting are seldom voted on favorably. It is important that the simple act of not accepting a particular record should by no means indicate that the TBRC or any of its members feel the record did not occur as reported. The non-acceptance of any record simply reflects the opinion of the TBRC that the documentation, as submitted, did not meet the rigorous standards appropriate for adding data to the formal historical record. The TBRC makes every effort to be as fair and objective as possible regarding each record. If the committee is unsure about any particular record, it prefers to err on the conservative side and not accept a good record rather than validate a bad one. All records, whether accepted or not, remain on file and can be re-submitted to the committee if additional substantive material is presented.

Red-necked Grebe (*Podiceps grisegena*). Buffalo Creek Reservoir, *Wichita*, 11 February 1999 (1999-29).

Scarlet Ibis (*Eudocimus ruber*). Green Island, *Cameron*, June 1972 (1999-57). Photos of an adult Scarlet Ibis were submitted. The TBRC learned of the escape of an adult Scarlet Ibis from the Gladys Porter Zoo shortly before this bird was discovered.

Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*). Port Lavaca, *Calhoun*, 16-17 April 1999 (1999-39).

Mew Gull (*Larus canus*). Galveston, *Galveston*, 23 February-14 March 1998 (1998-28).

Thayer's Gull (*Larus thayeri*). Bolivar Flats, *Galveston*, 18 April-2 May 1998 (1998-61).

Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*). Offshore from Port O'Connor, *Calhoun*, 8 August 1998 (1998-117).

Buff-collared Nightjar (*Caprimulgus ridgwayi*). Lawrence Wood picnic area, *Jeff Davis*, 12 June 1999 (1999-54).

Dusky-capped Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tuberculifer*). Pine Canyon, Big Bend NP, *Brewster*, 4 April 1993 (1999-36). Dugout Wells, Big Bend NP, *Brewster*, 12 April 1999 (1999-37).

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*). High Island, *Galveston*, 5 May 1999 (1999-44).

Yellow-green Vireo (*Vireo flavoviridis*). Santa Ana NWR, *Hidalgo*, 16-17 June 1999 (1999-58).

Black-capped Gnatcatcher (*Polioptila nigriceps*). Santa Elena Canyon, Big Bend NP, *Brewster*, 7 March 1999 (1999-25).

Olive Warbler (*Peucedramus taeniatus*). Rio Grande Village, Big Bend NP, *Brewster*, 23 March 1999 (1999-28).

Golden-crowned Warbler (*Basileuterus culicivorus*). San Ygnacio, *Zapata*, 7 November 1998 (1999-23).

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ADDITIONAL RECORDS OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON IN TEXAS

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ABSTRACT.—A review of the literature, particularly newspapers, has provided additional information on the history of the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*) in Texas. These data establish new county records, document breeding and arrival of flocks in various localities, as well as providing insight into the impact of pigeons on swine production, the commerce in meat, skins and eggs of pigeons, the use of pigeons in trap-shooting and the alleged return of the species to southern Texas during the early 20th century.

The Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes migratorius*, Fig. 2), once one of the most abundant birds in North America, nested in southern Canada and southward into Montana, Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Georgia. In the fall, the wild pigeon, as it was formerly known, migrated south as far as northern Florida, the Gulf of Mexico, and Texas (A.O.U. 1998). Arriving in Texas during September or mid-October, the pigeons appeared suddenly, sometimes in small flocks and at other times in such enormous numbers that they darkened the horizon as would an approaching storm (Oberholser 1974).

The Passenger Pigeon was primarily a bird of the forest, preferring to nest and roost in woodlands composed largely of oaks (Schorger 1973). The forests of northeastern Texas were a favored location and it is probable that large numbers of birds overwintered each year along the headwaters of the Trinity and Neches Rivers. At irregular intervals during the 19th century, immense numbers of pigeons not only entered east Texas but also penetrated as far south as Austin and San Antonio and west to Edwards County.

The roosts of Passenger Pigeons often contained millions of birds and their evening arrival in vast converging flocks presented an almost indescribable spectacle. The combined weight of the enormous numbers of birds often broke even the stoutest branches leaving trees stripped of limbs and foliage as if a cyclone had passed (Terrell 1948). Smaller trees and saplings were sometimes crushed to the ground and broken off at the roots (Askew 1939). Guano, which accumulated to depths of a foot or more at roosts such as the one on Wolf Creek north of Palestine (Anon. 1876b), completed the devastation by killing all ground level vegetation.

Although Passenger Pigeons ate a wide variety of food, the fruits (mast) of the beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) and oak (*Quercus* spp.) were their favorites (Schorger 1973). Since beech is not abundant in eastern Texas, oak mast was the primary food of the wild pigeon during its sojourn in the state. In all probability, their nomadic wanderings throughout Texas were an extended search for food dictated by the irregular and regional production of mast. The pigeons were also fond of salt, a craving readily satisfied at locations such as the saline springs in Van Zandt County (Brune 1981, Manning 1919).

During March the overwintering flocks returned north to their breeding grounds. A few reports indicate that some pigeons occasionally remained to nest in Texas and this is confirmed by the collection of eggs in Tyler County by Edmond Floyd Pope in May 1887. Although hundreds of thousands of birds were slaughtered at their winter roosts in Texas, there are no known museum skins. Skeletal remains have, however, been found at three prehistoric archaeological sites; the George C. Davis site (A.D. 900–1350) on the Neches River in Cherokee County and the Mitchell and Hatchel sites (circa A.D. 1200) on the Red River in Bowie County (Lord and Thurmond 1979, Story 2000). Remains have also been found at six mid to late 19th century homestead sites in Dallas and Tarrant counties (Jurney 1988).

HISTORY OF THE PASSENGER PIGEON IN TEXAS

Little was known of the Passenger Pigeon when H. C. Oberholser arrived in Texas during March 1900. In that same month, a report was published describing two mysterious columbids seen in a Galveston market. This report and the birds described therein provide the date and the 'specimens' from which Oberholser began

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his reconstruction of the history of the Passenger Pigeon in Texas. The unusual chain of events by which these two birds were made known to the public began, almost unbelievably, with a casual observation made by an individual known only as "Mr. Barr."

During March 1900, while examining the wild game offered for sale in a Galveston market, "Mr. Barr" noticed two birds with which he was unfamiliar. When asked to identify the birds, the manager of the store replied that they were wild pigeons collected on the upper reaches of Galveston Bay. Barr later related this incident to a local sportsman along with his observation that the birds were "much larger than the doves, of dark slate color, with red legs and feet and very long tails." The sportsman, skeptical that the birds were actually wild pigeons, repeated Barr's account of the mysterious birds in a letter of inquiry to the editor of *The American Field*. Based on the description contained in this letter (HAW 1900), these two birds were declared by Oberholser (1974) not only to be Passenger Pigeons, but also the last members of their species collected in Texas.

Accepting March 1900 as the date of the extirpation of the Passenger Pigeon, Oberholser began to reconstruct the history of the species in Texas. He was disappointed to find that the technical and outdoor literature contained very little contemporary information regarding the natural history of the species within the state. To supplement the meager data from the literature, Oberholser spent several years gathering accounts from individuals who, during their youth, had witnessed the immense flights and roosts of wild pigeons. From these combined sources, he then prepared his narrative of the "Haunts and Habits" of the Passenger Pigeon in Texas.

Oberholser's bibliography of the Passenger Pigeon suggests that the existence and extirpation of the species passed with little written commentary. However, numerous contemporary sources, particularly newspaper accounts, document the Passenger Pigeon in 19th century Texas (Table 1). These sources not only provide insight into the natural history of the species, but also the impact of pigeons on swine production, the use of pigeons in trap-shooting, the commerce in the meat, skins and eggs of pigeons, as well as the alleged return of the species to southern Texas during the early 20th century.

DISTRIBUTION, SEASONALITY AND NESTING

The Passenger Pigeon ranged widely over the northeastern portion of the state. Oberholser (1974) found records of 49 counties from which specimens, i. e., birds killed by hunters, had been collected or for which there was a sight record. This study extends the distribution of the species to include the counties of Atascosa, Bastrop, Bexar, Bowie, Burnet, Cherokee, Colorado, Comal, Comanche, Dallas, Denton, Falls, Grayson, Gregg, Harrison, Hopkins, Hunt, Madison, Marion, Milam, Montgomery, Nacogdoches, Polk, San Saba, Smith, Titus, Tyler, Upshur, Walker and Washington (Table 1). The distribution of the Passenger Pigeon including the locations of all known roosts is given in Figure 1.

The Passenger Pigeon generally departed from Texas about the first of March and returned the following September (Oberholser 1974). This pattern of departure and arrival was radically altered during 1843 when millions of pigeons were seen flying over Nacogdoches on the 25th of March (Sterne 1969). Large flocks were next seen at Clarksville in Red River County about the first of June. The arrival at Clarksville this early in the season was so unusual that even the oldest residents could not remember a previous occurrence (Table 1).

A few reports hint at possible nesting of the Passenger Pigeon in Texas. The enormous numbers of pigeons at Nacogdoches near the end of March and their appearance at Clarksville only two months later, suggests that a significant number of birds did not migrate north during the spring of 1843 but instead remained to nest somewhere in northcentral Texas or Indian Territory. What was perhaps a nesting in San Saba County during the spring of 1873 was thwarted by burning the stands of junipers in which the birds were established (Krueger 1976). Alexander Scougale, a former pigeon-netter, recalled that during 1882 there was a rookery in the Texas Panhandle said to be 40 miles long and 20 miles wide. Although claimed to be the largest nesting ever known, no pigeons were harvested since the site was 75 miles from the nearest shipping point (Bryant 1913). Given the unlikely locality and lack of corroborating evidence, the Panhandle nesting was considered by Schorger (1973) to be of questionable occurrence. Based on the recollections of Mrs. J. L. Evans, Oberholser (1974) concluded that nesting probably occurred in Henderson County from 1883 to 1892.

An egg collected by E. F. Pope on 3 May 1887 near Mobile in northwestern Tyler County represents the only known documentation of nesting in Texas. This egg, taken from a nest 40 feet high in a white oak tree,

Table 1. Records of the Passenger Pigeon Not Cited in *The Bird Life of Texas*

Year	Locality	Authority	Comments
900	Cherokee County	Lord & Thurmond (1979)	remains of at least 27 birds at Davis site, A.D. 900-1350
1200	Bowie County	Lord & Thurmond (1979)	skeletal fragments at Mitchell and Hatchell sites, c. A.D. 1200
1840	Northwestern Texas	Moore (1840)	immense flocks on headwaters of the Trinity & Neches Rivers
1841	Houston County	Sterne (1969)	thousands of thousands flying over camp on December 4th and 5th
1843	Nacogdoches County	Sterne (1969)	millions of pigeons flying over Nacogdoches on March 25th
1843	Red River County	Northern Standard (13 July 1843)	several roosts near Clarksville for the past six weeks
1843	Red River County	Northern Standard (16 December 1843)	pigeons killed at roost 10 miles from Clarksville
1845	Montgomery County	Telegraph & Texas Register (31 December 1845)	immense flocks in lower county and near mouth of Trinity River
1848	Comal County	Bracht (1931)	pigeons seen only once or twice
1853	Washington County	Flack (1866)	enormous flights for three days
1855	Harrison, Hopkins, Upshur & Woods Cts.	Askew (1939)	large numbers seen from 1855 through 1870s
1856	Houston County	Houston Weekly Telegraph (22 October 1856)	immense flocks flying over Crockett every day
1856	Anderson County	Houston Weekly Telegraph (17 December 1856)	report of a pigeon hunt at a roost near Palestine
1868	Polk County	Baker (1956)	roost covering ten acres near Corrigan
1870	Wise County	Terrell (1946)	roost on Sandy Creek, 10 miles northwest of Decatur
1872	Cherokee County	Galveston Daily News (23 October 1872)	roost 9 miles northwest of Rusk . . . mast being destroyed
1872	Hunt County	Galveston Daily News (29 November 1872)	pigeons migrating down Sabine River, via Greenville
1872	Robertson County	Galveston Daily News (6 December 1872)	wild pigeons plentiful around Calvert
1872	Travis County	Austin Statesman (24 December 1872)	abundance of wild pigeons . . . mania for hunting has taken over
1872	Madison County	Galveston Daily News (25 December 1872)	wild pigeons have consumed the mast
1872	Travis County	Galveston Daily News (25 December 1872)	immense flight over Austin on December 24th
1872	Travis County	Galveston Daily News (31 December 1872)	many flocks in the area . . . birds being sold in restaurants
1872	San Saba County	Krueger (1976)	thousands killed . . . attempted nesting in the spring
1874	Titus County	Galveston Daily News (24 October 1874)	pigeons playing havoc with the mast crop
1874	Dallas County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (29 October 1874)	great numbers of wild pigeons flying over Dallas
1874	Houston County	Brenham Daily Banner (5 November 1874)	enough mast to fatten hogs if not destroyed by pigeons
1874	Marion County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (12 November 1874)	pigeons depredating on mast around Jefferson
1874	Grayson County	Galveston Daily News (24 November 1874)	mast in cross timbers heavy . . . pigeons making the most of it
1874	Smith County	Brenham Daily Banner (26 November 1874)	pigeons are destroying the mast
1874	Houston County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (26 November 1874)	thousands of wild pigeons . . . destruction of mast feared

Table 1. *Continued*

Year	Locality	Authority	Comments
1874	Milam County	Galveston Daily News (4 December 1874)	large numbers of wild pigeons being seen
1874	Milam County	Brenham Daily Banner (10 December 1874)	wild pigeons are raiding upon the mast
1875	Anderson County	Galveston Daily News (10 November 1875)	pigeons by the thousands in the oak forests
1875	Anderson County	Galveston Daily News (12 November 1875)	pigeons darken air . . . depletion of mast threatens food for hogs
1875	Anderson County	Galveston Daily News (17 November 1875)	wild pigeons are eating up the mast
1875	Jasper County	Galveston Daily News (17 November 1875)	wild pigeons robbing hogs of mast . . . people eating pigeons
1876	Anderson County	Galveston Daily News (30 November 1876)	millions at "old roost" on Wolf Creek, 20 miles north of Palestine
1877	North Texas	Waco Weekly Examiner and Patron (11 January 1877)	millions of pigeons have taken possession of the woods
1877	Denton County	Galveston Daily News (27 October 1877)	immense flock seen flying in a westward direction
1877	Leon County	Galveston Daily News (31 October 1877)	large flock of pigeons seen flying over Buffalo
1877	Tarrant County	Galveston Daily News (4 November 1877)	woods full of wild pigeons
1877	Leon County	Galveston Daily News (7 November 1877)	flocks of 100-200 birds seen scouting the area
1877	Tarrant County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (8 November 1877)	woods around Fort Worth full of pigeons
1877	Leon County	Galveston Daily News (14 November 1877)	pigeons are being hunted
1877	Gregg County	Galveston Daily News (15 November 1877)	some mast, but more pigeons
1877	Marion County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (15 November 1877)	numerous wild pigeons around Jefferson
1878	Leon County	Galveston Daily News (12 January 1878)	pigeons flying daily over Buffalo to and from roost
1880	Dallas County (Dallas)	Galveston Daily News (15 May 1880)	5,000 wild pigeons from Chicago used at state shoot
1881	Houston County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (20 October 1881)	mast plentiful . . . presence of pigeons causing anxiety
1881	Nacogdoches County	Galveston Daily News (26 October 1881)	residents fear that pigeons will destroy the mast
1881	Travis County	Galveston Daily News (26 October 1881)	millions roosting on river 12 miles above Austin
1881	Travis County	Austin Daily Statesman (27 October 1881)	vast numbers roosting 25 miles upriver from Austin . . . hunters kill thousands
1881	Houston County	Columbus Colorado Citizen (27 October 1881)	many shot around Crockett . . . birds fat, tender and palatable
1881	North Texas	Texas Siftings (29 October 1881)	vast flocks of wild pigeons are being seen
1881	Burnet County	Austin Daily Statesman (29 October 1881)	large flocks of wild pigeons seen flying northwest
1881	Many Parts of the State	Austin Daily Statesman (29 October 1881)	pigeons eating up acorns
1881	Falls County	Galveston Daily News (1 November 1881)	pigeon roost on other side of Brazos River

Table 1. *Continued*

Year	Locality	Authority	Comments
1881	Milam County	Galveston Daily News (1 November 1881)	thousands of wild pigeons
1881	Van Zandt County	Galveston Daily News (4 November 1881)	pigeons scavenging for the few remaining acorns
1881	Comanche County	Comanche Chief (5 November 1881)	great numbers of pigeons on Walnut Creek near Proctor
1881	Bastrop County	Galveston Daily News (8 November 1881)	hundreds killed nightly at roost below Bastrop . . . mast destroyed
1881	Bastrop County	Brenham Daily Banner (8 November 1881)	pigeons sold in Bastrop for 50 cents a dozen
1881	Burnet County	Galveston Daily News (9 November 1881)	pigeons first seen last week
1881	Wilson County	Galveston Daily News (9 November 1881)	large flights of pigeons seen for several days
1881	Burnet County	LaGrange Journal (10 November 1881)	mast being destroyed by wild pigeons
1881	Van Zandt County	Galveston Daily News (11 November 1881)	pigeon roost 10 miles south of Canton
1881	Burleson County	Austin Daily Statesman (11 November 1881)	wild pigeons abound in the local area
1881	Bastrop County	Austin Daily Statesman (11 November 1881)	many birds killed at the roost below Bastrop
1881	Comanche County	Comanche Chief (12 November 1881)	woods around Walnut Creek full of pigeons
1881	Atascosa and adjacent counties	Galveston Daily News (18 November 1881)	millions of wild pigeons . . . sportsmen having a fine time
1881	Smith County	Galveston Daily News (18 November 1881)	millions roosting in northern part of county
1881	Bexar and Wilson Counties	San Antonio Daily Express (18 November 1881)	thousands near Graytown . . . first visit in many years
1881 (?)	Bexar and Wilson Counties	Menger (1913)	millions of pigeons in the vicinity of Graytown
1881	Burnet County	San Antonio Daily Express (19 November 1881)	large pigeon roost 7 miles south of Burnet
1881	Bastrop County	Galveston Daily News (22 November 1881)	pigeons have left their roost below Bastrop
1881	Smith County	Galveston Daily News (25 November 1881)	pigeons consuming mast
1881	Burnet County	Burnet Bulletin (29 November 1881)	enormous roost near Oatmeal Spring south of Burnet
1881	Burnet County	San Antonio Daily Express (3 December 1881)	hunters killing wild pigeons
1881	Wilson County	San Antonio Daily Express (3 December 1881)	large roost near Floresville . . . limbs of trees broken
1881	Bexar County	San Antonio Daily Express (4 December 1881)	roosts SE of city invite attention of sportsmen
1881	Lampasas County	Galveston Daily News (16 December 1881)	myriads of pigeons . . . hunters are delighted
1881	Burnet County	Burnet Bulletin (20 December 1881)	247 wild pigeons killed at roost south of Burnet
1881	Burnet County	Galveston Daily News (27 December 1881)	millions roosting in shin-oaks near Marble Falls

Table 1. *Continued*

Year	Locality	Authority	Comments
1882	Travis County (Austin)	Galveston Daily News (26 May 1882)	5,000 wild pigeons from Sparta, Wisconsin, used at state shoot
1883	Lampasas County (Lampasas)	Galveston Daily News (18 July 1883)	4,000 wild pigeons used at state shoot
1883	Walker County	Galveston Daily News (26 November 1883)	hunters bag a quantity of pigeons at roost
1883	Walker County	Galveston Daily News (4 December 1883)	hunters go nightly to a large roost 8 miles NW of Huntsville
1887	Tyler County	Notes of E.F. Pope (3 May 1887)	breeding colony of 14 pairs of birds near Mobile
1887	Harris County (Houston)	Houston Daily Post (5 May 1887)	900 (wild?) pigeons used by Houston Gun Club
1891	Bexar County (San Antonio)	San Antonio Daily Express (11 May 1891)	6,000 (wild?) pigeons to be used at the state shoot
1907	Bexar County (San Antonio)	San Antonio Daily Express (21 October 1907)	wild pigeons reportedly fly over San Antonio
1907	Bexar County (San Antonio)	Texas Field and Sportsman (November 1907)	refutes claim that wild pigeons have returned to south Texas
1911	Bexar County (San Antonio)	San Antonio Light (8 September 1911)	wild pigeons reported near La Vernia
1911	Bexar County (San Antonio)	San Antonio Light (9 September 1911)	local hunter reports killing wild pigeons
1911	Bexar County (San Antonio)	Texas Field and National Guardsman (11 Nov. 1911)	refutes claim that wild pigeons have returned to south Texas

was one of six sets collected from a breeding colony of 14 pairs of birds. The egg (No. 869, Fig. 3) is now in the Avian Egg and Nest Collection at the Institute of Natural History, Columbia-Greene Community College, Hudson, New York.

MAJOR INVASIONS

The Passenger Pigeon was a regular visitor in northeastern Texas. In some years, however, unusually large numbers of birds penetrated further south in what might be appropriately called invasions. Contemporary records suggest that major invasions occurred during 1872 and 1881 (Table 1).

During late October 1872 the first wave of arriving flocks established a large roost near Rusk in Cherokee County. In late November a second wave of birds was seen migrating down the Sabine River near Greenville in Hunt County. This flight apparently turned southwest arriving in Robertson County during the first week in December. Continuing to move southwesterly, the flocks eventually turned northwest to make their spectacular appearance at Austin on Christmas Eve 1872. On that morning, commencing at early dawn, enormous flocks of pigeons began flying over the city. Several flocks stopped to forage along the river above Austin and many were killed by the residents. According to an old settler of Travis County, wild pigeons in such numbers had not visited the area since 1840 (Anon. 1872).

From Austin the flocks moved up the Colorado River to San Saba County where thousands were killed in the following weeks by local farmers and sportsmen. Due to their consumption of the berry-like cones of the Ashe Juniper (*Juniperus ashei*), the flesh of many of the slain birds was found to taste like turpentine. Amazingly, in spite of their persecution, the birds did not return north in the spring but instead began to nest in the dense stands of evergreens. The local residents, fearful that the pigeons would destroy their crops, set fire to the juniper forests destroying thousands of acres of valuable timber in their effort to drive away the pigeons (Krueger 1976).

The invasion of 1881 was the last and most extensive penetration into southern Texas. This invasion perhaps had its origin in the enormous nesting during the spring of 1881 along the Canadian River in what is now

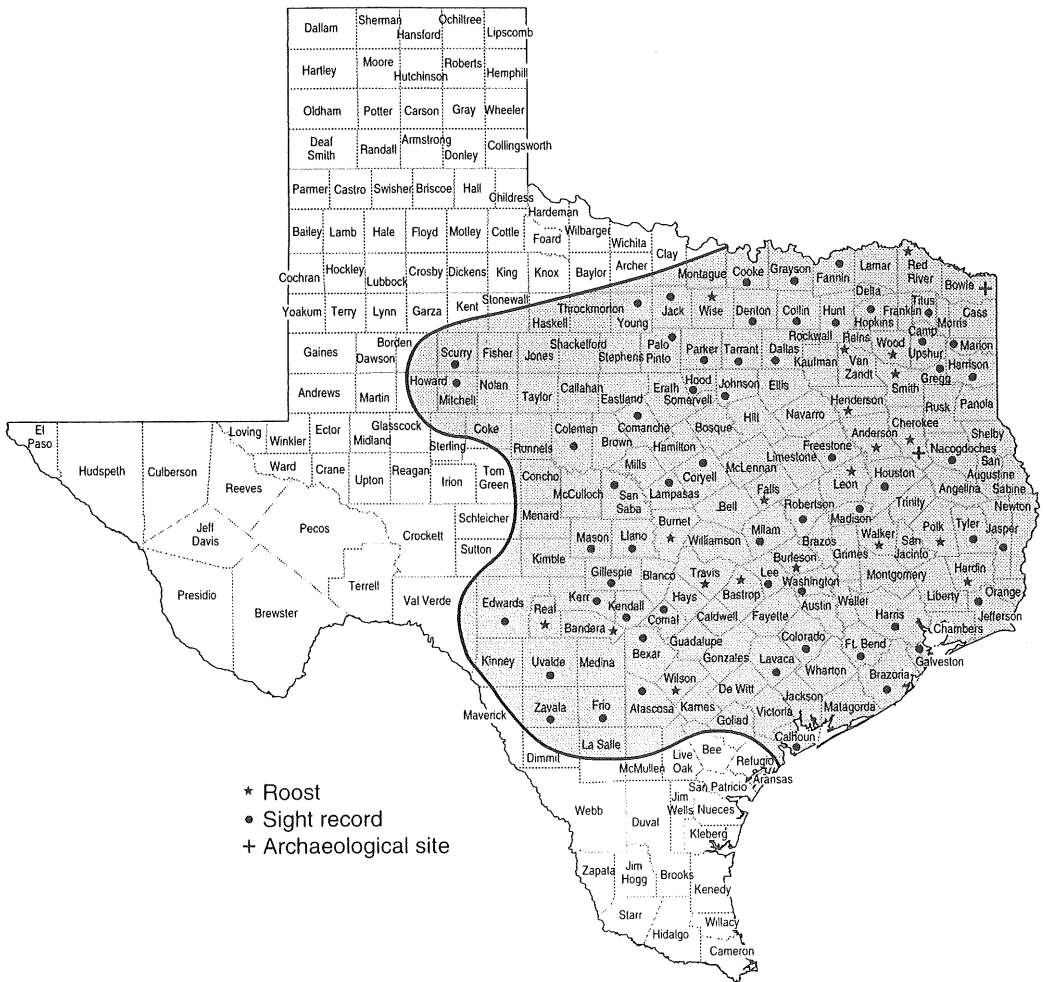


Figure 1. Historical distribution of the Passenger Pigeon in Texas.

Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma (Anon. 1881a, Merrill 1882, Schorger 1973). This rookery, only 75–80 miles north of the Texas border, represents the most southerly mass nesting documented for the species. It is probable that the flocks that invaded Texas in the fall of 1881 contained a high number of birds from Oklahoma.

The invasion of 1881 was apparently two-pronged with some flocks returning to their traditional haunts in northeastern Texas whereas others penetrated much further south. By late October an enormous roost was present along the Colorado River above Austin. As the mast was depleted the main flock apparently split with one group moving upriver and the other downriver toward Bastrop.

The flock that moved upriver established a roost in the shin-oak thickets near Oatmeal Spring ten miles south of Burnet. This roost, which persisted from at least mid-November through December, was intensely exploited by the citizens of Burnet County. One group of hunters slaughtered more than a thousand birds by shooting into the circling flocks and then, as the birds settled onto their perches, catching them and killing them with the ramrods of their guns. This carnage continued from sunset until the last flocks arrived around 10:00 p.m. The slain birds were very fat and the crop of one contained 15–20 acorns (Anon. 1881c). The continued use of this roost, in spite of intense harassment by hunters, was apparently due to the local abundance of acorns which were said to be “as thick as hops on a vine or ticks on a neglected cow” (Anon. 1881b).

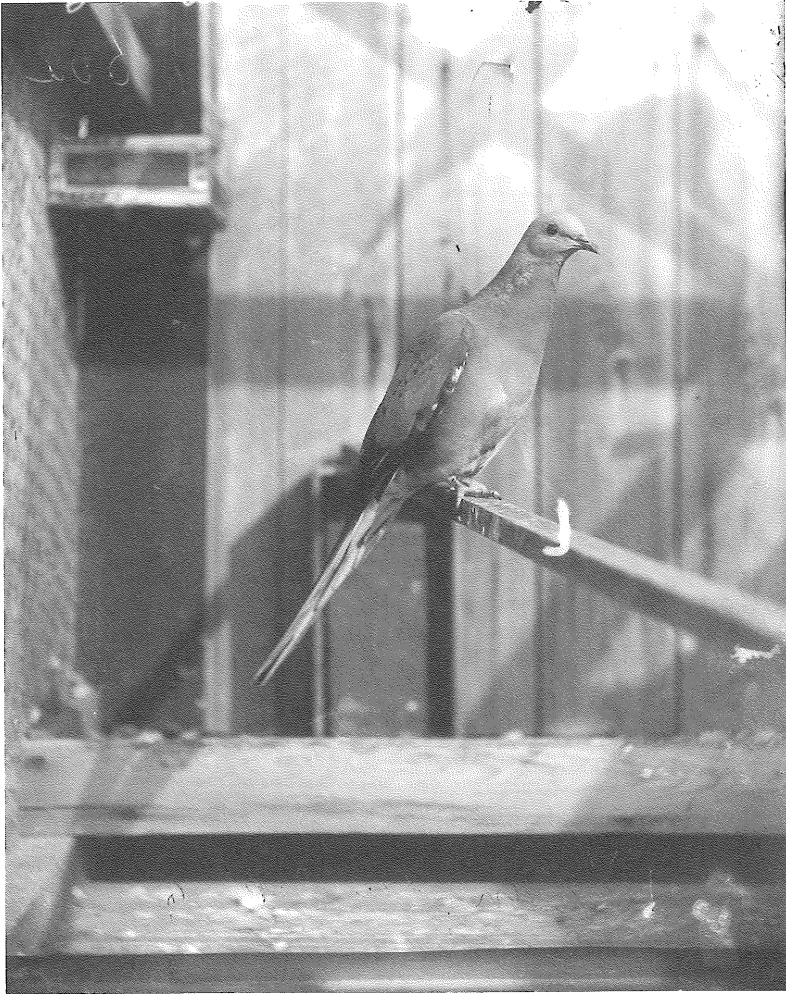


Figure 2. Adult male Passenger Pigeon in the aviary of C. O. Whitman at Woods Hole, Massachusetts. Although judged by Schorger (1973) to be the best quality photograph known, the white on the leading edge of the wing is atypical of the species. Negative number 29,449 of a photograph taken in 1898 by J. G. Hubbard. Courtesy of the Department of Library Services, American Museum of Natural History.

The flock that moved downriver established its roost nine miles below Bastrop where large numbers were killed by hunters during the second week in November. The pigeons remained at Bastrop for only 10–12 days before moving south to an area near Floresville in Wilson County. The birds were so numerous in this roost that the limbs of the “stoutest oaks” were broken by their weight. A local resident, riding through the swarms of frenzied pigeons, emerged from the roost to find about three dozen birds in the large pockets of his overcoat. Another citizen was said to have killed 475 birds with a stick.

The roost at Floresville was probably abandoned during late December and it is likely that these birds, as well as those from Burnet County, contributed to the immense roost then forming at the head of Frio Canyon in Real County (Lloyd 1887). This roost, which persisted until at least 1 February 1882, represents the westernmost roost in Texas. Here, along the banks of the Frio River and far from any major population center, the flocks were relatively free from harassment.

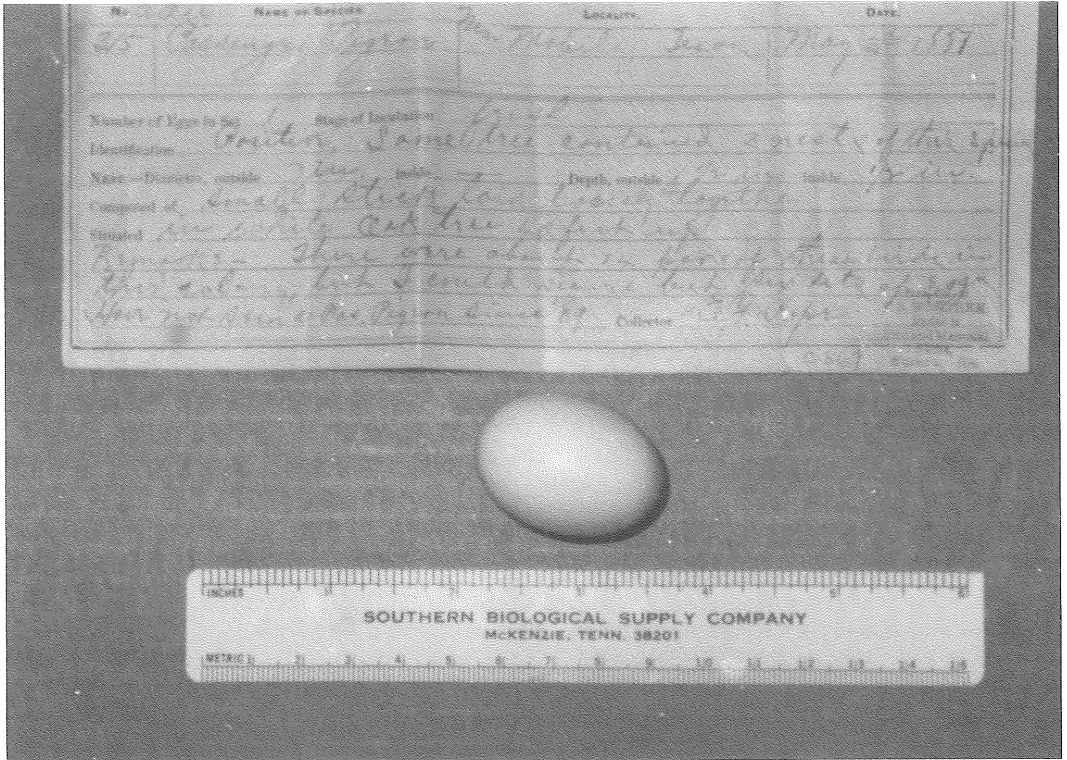


Figure 3. Egg of Passenger Pigeon taken near Mobile, Texas, on 3 May 1887 by E. F. Pope. The accompanying data card includes Pope's recollection that the last pigeons were seen in his locality during 1889. Photograph courtesy of William E. Cook, Curator, Avian Egg and Nest Collection, Institute of Natural History, Columbia-Greene Community College.

IMPACT ON SWINE PRODUCTION

Swine in early Texas were usually not confined to pens but were instead allowed to roam freely over the countryside. In the fall, they were gathered for slaughter or, occasionally, brought together in large herds of several hundred and driven to a distant location for fattening or shipment (Anon. 1876a, Garrison 1995). In addition to domesticated hogs, many parts of the state were populated by the feral descendants of those animals brought to Texas during its early colonization (Taylor 1997).

Numerous references (e.g. Anon. 1868, 1883, Garrison 1995) allude to the importance of acorns in fattening hogs and to the competition between wild pigeons and pigs for this resource (Table 1). Upon their arrival the immense flocks of pigeons quickly decimated the food available to hogs, as well as to squirrels, turkeys, deer and other species that also fed on mast. Given this consequence, the arrival of the first pigeons generated considerable anxiety. In November 1877, after seeing small flocks of 'scouts', the editor of the Leon County newspaper predicted that it would not be long before there would be "millions of [pigeons] sweeping through the forests, eating all the acorns and causing a wail of despair to ascend from the throats of our beautiful razorbacks."

Large numbers of swine were present in early Texas. The 1834 census of the Nacogdoches settlement recorded 60,000 hogs (Weniger 1984). Statewide numbers as shown in the federal censuses, increased from around 700,000 to nearly 2 million in the thirty years between 1850 and 1880. As the numbers of pigs increased, so did concern that the vast numbers of foraging pigeons would seriously impact the industry. In 1872 it was reported that pigeons were destroying the mast in Cherokee and Madison counties. During 1874 Marion, Grayson, Houston, Smith and Titus counties were adversely affected. Depletion of the mast was so great in Anderson and Jasper counties during 1875 that it threatened the food supply for hogs. Concern for the mast crop was reported during 1881 from Houston,

Nacogdoches, Van Zandt, Bastrop, Burnet and Smith counties (Table 1). Although they were often killed in great numbers at their roosts, pigeons generally remained in an area until forced to relocate by a scarcity of food.

PIGEONS AND TRAP SHOOTING

Competitive shooting contests became popular in Texas during the early 1870s. Gun clubs were formed in several cities and live birds, released from traps, were commonly used as targets. A variety of wild birds, including wild pigeons, were probably used in these early shooting matches.

The desire for a higher level of competition led to the organization of the Texas State Sportsmen's Association in 1878. The Association, a coalition of local gun clubs, met each summer to conduct its annual competition which, in later years, was referred to as the "State Shoot" or "State Pigeon Tournament."

Enormous numbers of wild pigeons were used in the annual shoot (Table 1). Five thousand pigeons obtained from Chicago were slaughtered at the 1880 shoot in Dallas. The tournament of 1882 featured 5,000 pigeons obtained from the rookery near Sparta, Wisconsin. The competition in Lampasas in 1883 used 4,000 pigeons, as well as glass balls and clay targets. The last known use of pigeons was in 1891 at the meet held in San Antonio. Passenger Pigeons were difficult to obtain by this time and it is not known if the 6,000 "pigeons" used were Rock Doves or wild pigeons obtained from out-of-state. Protests against the use of live birds eventually led the Association to discontinue the practice in 1906.

COMMERCE IN MEAT, SKINS AND EGGS OF PIGEONS

There is no evidence of an organized commerce in live birds or in the flesh of the Passenger Pigeon in Texas. Foraging flocks generally remained in an area for only a short period thus limiting the time available to organize a systematic harvest. The relatively small numbers of birds taken by individual hunters were probably sold directly to local meat markets, hotels and restaurants or peddled door-to-door. During the invasion of 1872, wild pigeons were featured in the restaurants of Austin. In November 1881 the birds taken at the roost near Bastrop were sold in the community for 50 cents a dozen.

Traditional roosts such as the one on Wolf Creek, 20 miles north of Palestine, provided an opportunity for an organized harvest. "Cartloads" of birds taken from this roost were sold in Palestine during 1876. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the birds were shipped from Palestine to locations outside Anderson County.

Persons who collected and sold pigeons were known as "pigeoners" (Mershon 1906). One pigeoneer made his living during the winters of 1869 and 1870 selling birds taken from the roost on Pigeon Roost Creek in southwestern Bandera County (Oberholser 1974). Given the season and irregular occurrence of the pigeons, it is unlikely that their harvest provided more than a supplement to the income of a small number of people. Some Texans did, however, attempt to profit from the pigeons. Individuals from Texas, working as pigeoners, are known to have been present at the great nesting near Petrosky, Michigan, during the spring of 1878 (Mershon 1906).

There are two records of commercial collectors offering skins and eggs for sale. During the 1890s, Frank Armstrong of Brownsville advertised pigeon skins at prices ranging from \$1.50 to \$3.00 depending on quality (Armstrong n.d.). Around 1899 Edwin Davis of Gainesville offered sets of eggs at 40 cents per set (Davis n.d.).

The origin of the specimens offered by Armstrong and Davis is unknown. Armstrong collected in Orange County during 1887, and it is possible that his skins were from birds taken in eastern Texas. Davis traded widely with other oologists, and his eggs may have been from caged birds or from localities far removed from Texas. The possibility remains, however, that Davis, an active collector from about 1885 through 1899, may have obtained eggs from the pigeons reported to nest in Henderson and Tyler counties.

RETURN OF THE WILD PIGEONS

The Passenger Pigeon was extirpated from Texas around 1900 (Oberholser 1974). However, remembering its sporadic and irregular occurrence during the 1870s and 1880s, many Texans continued to believe that the species was alive and well, perhaps sojourning in Mexico or Central America and, would at any time, reappear in its former numbers. This naive scenario, compounded by the difficulty in distinguishing the Passenger Pigeon from the Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) and White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*), led to two erroneous reports of the return of the species to southern Texas.

On the morning of 21 October 1907 a flock of several hundred 'wild pigeons' was reported to have passed over San Antonio flying south. Although accepted by many residents of the city, Oscar Guessaz, editor of *Texas Field and Sportsman*, declared that there was absolutely not a "shadow of truth" in the report (Guessaz 1907).

A second case of mistaken identity occurred during August and September 1911 when thousands of birds believed to be wild pigeons were seen in Bexar and Guadalupe counties. A local sportsman, wanting to know if the birds were protected, reported their presence to the sheriff of Bexar County. The sheriff considered the inquiry to be a joke, since there were obviously no laws protecting a species already extinct. Further investigations produced conflicting opinions regarding the identity of the birds in question. It now seems obvious that they were White-winged Doves, a species not normally found in large numbers as far north as Bexar and Guadalupe counties. Oscar Guessaz (1911) once again set the record straight with his declaration that the "wild pigeons have not returned to Texas, save in the imagination of some ignoramus . . ." Exterminated more than a decade earlier, the once multitudinous wild pigeon was now only a figment of the imagination of those Texans who still remembered its former abundance.

POSTSCRIPT

Legend holds that Pigeon Roost Prairie near Kountze in Hardin County is so-named because of an enormous roost once found in the area. The guano and destructive habits of the pigeons killed the forest according to one account whereas a second version holds that the settlers simply cut down the trees to discourage the birds from using the area as a roost (Anon. 1996, Fullingim 1966). A second "Pigeon Roost Prairie" located 4–5 miles southeast of Grand Saline in Van Zandt County is also named for a long-used roost in the surrounding forest of post oaks (Manning 1919).

Pigeon Roost Creek in southwestern Bandera County is named for a large roost found along its banks during the winters of 1869 and 1870 (Oberholser 1974). Without explanation as to the origin of its name, an elevation in Rusk County is known simply as "Pigeon Hill" (Winfrey 1961). Once an awesome force of nature, the Passenger Pigeon is now remembered only by four obscure place names that commemorate its role in the history of the Lone Star State.

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