

Minutes of the Sussex Bird Club
Sunday, January 10th, 2010

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Fintel with a reminder that 2010 dues are now due

Treasurer's Report:

- The treasurer's report was given by Lou Archdeacon:
- Opening balance of \$1,288.99. There were 4 single memberships and 7 family memberships paid (\$130.00) and expenses for honoraria, mailing and flyers for Coast Day (\$322.80) leaving a closing balance of \$1,096.19

Field Trips:

- There are 4 winter field trips scheduled – check website for details:
 - January 14th to Conowingo Dam for eagles – where 25 to 30 have been spotted! Will car pool from Prime Hook.
 - January 30th, Mispillion river and lakes
 - February 20th, Ocean City inlet to Indian River Inlet
 - Late March, Cape Henlopen Ferry

Miscellaneous:

- A lot of eagles have been spotted locally.
- Around Milford 10 to 20 eagles have been spotted.
- Anthony Gonzon reported 120 eagles spotted in the Delaware mid-winter survey.

Today's Program: Bill Fintel introduced today's speaker, Dave Weber who gave an excellent presentation on 'Extinct Regional Birds'. Dave's talk focused on four birds that perhaps 100 years ago might have been seen in Delaware, but sadly are now extinct.

Dave started with the Carolina Parakeet, a large (12 inch) Parakeet that was cold tolerant and lived in the eastern US from Ohio to the Gulf of Mexico and was seen as far north as New York. The Carolina Parakeet was a social bird that roamed far and wide in search of food. A beautiful bird, travelling in large flocks often raided orchards, contributing to its demise. As early as 1840, they were becoming noticeable infrequent and pressure from the hunting, the millinery trade, pet fanciers and collectors sealed their fate. The last Carolina parakeet died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1918.

The Passenger Pigeon a large 18 inch bird once filled the skies of eastern North America with huge flocks numbering in the billions and taking days to pass overhead as they moved in search of mast (acorns, nuts, berries, etc), their favored foods. Roosts of 2 billion birds and flocks measuring 1 mile wide and 240 miles long were reported. Passenger Pigeons were hunted and trapped relentlessly for food, sport and even pig food. A large market was supported – no one ever expected their numbers could be diminished. Sadly, over exploitation and diminishing numbers sealed their fate. The last Passenger Pigeon 'Martha' died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914.

The Labrador Duck was sea bird that nested in Labrador but wintered along the Mid-Atlantic coast feeding in the wash of the waves on mussels and other shellfish. A strikingly beautiful duck, little was known about its nesting and migratory habits. Even though its taste was considered terrible, it was hunted for the market and often left unsold. The last Labrador Duck was shot in New York 1878, the first North American Bird to go Extinct.

The Heath Hen lived along the Atlantic Coast from Virginia to Nova Scotia and derived its name from the barren habitat of the coastal dunes it inhabited. A close relative of the sage grouse it was valued for its meat by Indians and early settlers and though its numbers were numerous it was easily killed leading to its demise. The last Heath Hen died on Martha's Vineyard in 1932.

Dave's presentation was a great reminder of the loss of a part of this earth that can never be recaptured!

Respectfully submitted, Bob Edelen