A Fatal Frontier: The Passing of the Passenger Pigeon into Western Nostalgia

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> What man now in his old age who witnessed in youth that spring or fall festival and migration of the passenger pigeons would not hail it as one of the gladdest hours of his life if he could be permitted to witness it once more? It was such a spectacle of bounty, of joyous, copious animal life, of fertility in the air and in the wilderness, as to make the heart glad.
> —John Burroughs[1]

MARTHA

Last of her species, died at 1 p.m.,
1 September 1914, age 29, in the
Cincinnati Zoological Garden.
EXTINCT
—original display-case label for Martha at the Smithsonian[2]

Nostalgia for the "frontier"—for an American West and Midwest where cowboy and settler met the Native and the wild—is ultimately the consciousness that one is now beyond that past, a modernist point of view that includes both an implicit hubris in having transcended such things and a yearning for, an ongoing mourning for the loss of, said past. This specific nostalgia, from the colonizers' stance, also necessarily involves the liminality of borders, the fear of and fascination with the sheer difference between "us" and "them": of the Western Self versus the indigenous Other, of the "civilized" human versus the incredible alterity of the New World environment itself. And I am here to remind you, above all, that the Others that the settlers encountered in this new land were both human and non-human, those feather-wearing Indians and those even more alien beings born with feathers . . . oh, for instance, the Western Meadowlark.

Imagine for a moment, if you will, Lewis and Clark's, or even Willa Cather's, first audition of the meadowlark's primordial prairie song. (Indeed, descendents of this very bird are just outside of town right now, evoking more "frontier nostalgia" as I speak.) At last, indigenous bird species in general can be veritably viewed as unconquered Native tribes that have escaped, by and large, the imposed borders of Western colonization, and that serve as seminal reminders of our "frontier" heritage, as it were. The calls today of migrating Canada honkers and Sandhill Cranes *should* evoke from us that jolt of

electricity up the spine that speaks of a time before Western rationalism turned us into cogitating primates out of touch with important parts of our primal selves.

I said "escaped, by and large" a moment ago, since many Native bird species have actually had their ranges and populations radically altered by the incursions of Western Civilization; and the European propensity to introduce Old World birds into North America, as a sad emblem of Western colonization itself, is a tale that I've told elsewhere.[3] But the negative effects of European expansionism are most tellingly manifest in the various instances of actual species extinction. And it is the Passenger Pigeon that has become epitome and template, in the American psyche, for abrupt and wholesale extinction:

> More interest is evidenced in the history of the Passenger Pigeon and its fate than in that of any other North American bird. Once the most abundant species, in its flights and on its nesting grounds, ever known in any country, ranging over the greater part of the continent of North America in innumerable *hordes*, the *race* seems[!] to have disappeared during the nineteenth century, leaving no trace.[4]

In this 1917 utterance, the terms "hordes" and "race" might be said to encapsulate centuries of Euro-American pathological objectification of both the New World avian and indigene. It is no surprise, then, that several bird species and many human Native tribes have met the same fate at the hands of European expansionism—extinction—and that the remaining Native tribes, like the buffalo, have just barely avoided a similar end.[5] At the same time that the Native American was making a forced retreat to near extinction, the Passenger Pigeon, whose numbers just two centuries ago made it "perhaps the most numerous of all birds,"[6] became the New World Dodo in the span of a century. Even before the later-acknowledged trauma of the near-extinction of the buffalo and American indigenous peoples, this ending was an undeniable certainty for Euro-American culture, perhaps the first major wake-up call to an awareness that the colonizing enterprise was as much about death and injustice as it was about life and justice. At last, this bird's murder—uh, extirpation—stands as an Ur-reminder of the colonial ideology that would *imagine* a frontier and wilderness, that would then breach that frontier and destroy said wilderness, and that would ultimately create a recuperative sense of nostalgia about the whole happy enterprise.[7]

According to A. W. Schorger's definitive *post mortem* study (1955), "[n]o other species of bird, to the best of our knowledge, ever approached the passenger pigeon in numbers." Schorger estimates the total population—"at the time of the discovery of America"—to be between three to five billion, that is, an amazing 25 to 40 percent of the entire U.S. bird population.[8] Indeed, the numbers were mythic in proportion, "vast enough to create a legend in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century America."[9]

Alexander Wilson, circa 1806, estimated that one huge flock of pigeons was 240 miles long and over a mile wide—numbering over two *billion* birds; and as Christopher Cokinos has calculated, stretched in a "beak to tail" single line, that's over half a million miles of feathers.[10]

But, even by 1663, the English voyager John Josselyn noted that the astonishing flocks of Passenger Pigeons in the American colonies were "much diminished, the English taking them with Nets."[11] Already the slaughter had started that would transform a mythos of New World abundance and fertility to the reality of a retreating frontier, of vanishing tribes and species—and to a new mythos of guilt and anxiety, to a death culture more obsessed with endings, not beginnings. To leap ahead in time, to the end of the frontier and of once vast natural "resources," we are now in an ecological crisis in which American culture seems to be absorbed by a general death-wish, for ourselves and the planet. As Linda Hogan contends, "we have taken on the story of endings, assumed the story of extinction"[12]—a story that, I would argue, has its first page engraved with a photo of the last Passenger Pigeon. (And so my telling of this tale will be more of a circle than a straight line, in an effort to combat the discourse of teleological "endings.")

A return to the early 19th century, and the most famous American ornithologist of them all, is illuminating. Audubon, then, likewise reports, circa 1813, that the "multitudes of Wild Pigeons in our woods are astonishing," leaving everyone "struck with amazement"; and, "when the woods are filled" with them, "they are killed in immense numbers, although no apparent diminution ensues." As for the fear "that such dreadful havock [that is, hunting] would soon put an end to the species," Audubon has blithely reassured himself "by long observation, that nothing but the gradual diminution of our forests can accomplish their decrease, as they not unfrequently quadruple their numbers yearly."[13] So much for the dramatic ironies of one great naturalist's foresight.

But Audubon did serve as a fairly outraged witness to the 19th-century extermination of the Passenger Pigeon: he "narrated their slaughter in uncounted numbers with all the horrifying particulars his practiced eye could gather," including a "communal butchering near the Green River in Kentucky that lasted a day and a night, when thousands and thousands of birds were knocked down with poles"; most stunningly, he "recorded that a man in Pennsylvania took more than 500 in a net one day."[14] But we must remember that this is, after all, the same gun-toting fellow who writes in one of his journals, "I call birds few when I shoot less than 100 per day."[15] Audubon apologists, however, inevitably quote one passage about our pigeon as an example of the ornithologist's poetic soul, as it were: "When an individual [Passenger Pigeon] is seen gliding through the woods and close to the observer, it passes like

a thought, and on trying to see it again, the eye searches in vain; the bird is gone."[16] But today, Audubon's finale, "the bird is gone," echoes as a haunting and ironic—or all too à propos—refrain.

And so the occasional notes of protest and the intermittent pangs of conscience for another species, in a 19th-century American psyche obsessed with Manifest Destiny, human slavery, and the "Indian wars," were ultimately futile. Audubon's blindness—at last, his inability to truly *see* the bird—allowed it to be "gone" by the end of his century, for all practical purposes. Indeed, the cause was a mass cultural blindness, a general faith in the continuation of the status quo: "One belief about the pigeons mattered most of all: that they would abide."[17] Thus government legislation for their protection was non-existent or useless in its tardiness, since the assumption was that they "'needed no protection.'"[18] The Ohio state legislature, in 1857, could declare that the bird was so "[w]onderfully prolific" that "[n]o ordinary destruction can lessen [. . .] the myriads that are yearly produced."[19] One spokesperson of such optimism is especially worthy of note, since he was a successful businessman in the pigeon trade. Not only would the Passenger Pigeon "never be extinguished so long as" its forests and food "remain," E. T. Martin claimed, but humankind's treatment of the birds was entirely warranted: "the pigeons are as much an article of commerce as wheat, corn, hogs, beeves, or sheep." Martin's rationale is at last the tried-and-true Christian one: "man is above the beasts, and the 'beasts of the field and the birds of the air' are given unto him for his benefit and profit."[20]

If the bird were to actually decline, even perish, due to human actions, many guilt-appeasing retrospective rationalizations were available, evidence of a continuing "blindness" to the fatal purport of our own all-too-human behavior. Perhaps the most insipid excuse later offered was a blaming of the *pigeon*—in particular, its "lack of foresight" in "laying white eggs"![21] In other words, the silly bird was too ignorant and maladaptive, presumably, to invoke the powers of natural camouflage in its nidification. But the most common, and seriously debated, excuse-of-an-explanation was the "cataclysm" theory, which proposed that the species was wiped out "at one blow" by "some cyclonic disturbance" or "cataclysmic agency" over a large body of water—usually the Gulf of Mexico.[22] But sheer common sense led others to remonstrate that "the pigeons did not become extinct in a day"; and ornithologist Robert Ridgway provided the severest rebuttal, to the Gulf of Mexico theory, at least, by noting that the Passenger Pigeon did not even migrate outside the continental U.S.[23]

Such denials of responsibility eventually were transformed into attempts to deny—against all evidence to the contrary—the bird's very extinction, as an avian mythos of incredible plenitude made its last-gasp stand against a mythos of nostalgia, absence, and loss, as sheer incredulity regarding their original numbers turned into sheer disbelief that they were all, suddenly, gone. There was, for instance,

the ludicrous notion that the Passenger Pigeons had all packed up, as it were, and moved for good to Australia. "Another theory was that, under persecution, the pigeons [had] migrated to Chile and Peru. As late as 1939, they were thought to have been seen in Bolivia."[24] Indeed, the bird was sighted "well into the twentieth century": however, most, if not all, such sightings were no doubt the mistaking of the Mourning Dove for its now extinct close relative.[25] And such mis-sightings were, ultimately, also symptomatic of a yearning for what had been, and a denial of what had been done. Schorger is oddly somewhat rosy in his commentary on such vain wishful thinking: "No better example of eternal hope, so characteristic of man, can be found than the search for a living wild passenger pigeon long after it had ceased to exist."[26] But Schorger's very statement is a fine example of homocentrism—"so characteristic of man"—which pats its own hubris-gilded guilt on the back while more and more species still continue to . . . "cease to exist."

An anticipatory nostalgia may well have colored 19th-century ornithologists' glowing descriptions of these birds as close comrades, as loving mates and parents, but the family portraits thus painted are undeniably touching, "human interest" tales all the more pathetic when juxtaposed with the realities of human brutality. One 19th-century report—which some later commentators find hard to believe—claims that a flight of Passenger Pigeons would try to support an individual suddenly wounded by gunfire with their wings[27]—probably not for very long, one would imagine. Likewise, the mating dyad was purportedly very close, as Audubon's description thereof indicates. During courtship, "they caress each other by billing"; and in the process of incubation, the "male supplies the female with food": at last, the "tenderness and affection displayed by these [male] birds towards their mates, are in the highest degree striking." According to Cokinos, "[a]morous males and females sometimes rushed together and put their wings across the other in a kind of hug. . . ." Now let us jump ahead in time again, as their numbers dwindled towards nothing. How pathetic it is, then, that, "in captivity," such behavior "terrorized pigeons of other species with whom [. . .] Passenger Pigeons sometimes tried to mate."[28] There are no words to describe such a desperate drive for survival.

Let's turn to the children—the *squabs*, whose fateful misfortune is implicit in the word's very etymology: "squab" is, after all, Swedish for "soft, fat body." The continuing story of these birds' care and attention for the extended family, as it were, is evidenced in eye-witness accounts that they adopted "all orphan squabs whose parents" were "killed" or "missing."[29] However, there is also the apparently firm culinary fact that, as Schorger assures us (still, in 1955), "[s]quabs that had been fed on beechnuts were especially fine eating"![30] Indeed, squabs were the age group most frequently taken by hunters, cherished for their high market value.[31] Regarding the unconscionable harvesting of these young,

Audubon's outrage is manifest: "As the young birds grow up, their enemies, armed with axes, reach the spot, to seize and destroy all they can. The trees are felled" so that "the young Pigeons [. . .] are violently hurried to the ground. In this manner [. . .] immense quantities are destroyed."[32] Just as the pigeons' communal nature ultimately worked against their survival, so was their very regard for the "tribe" used as an argument for killing such a stupid species. The pigeon trader referred to above, Mr. Martin, assures us, "[a]s proof of the pigeons feeding squabs indiscriminately[!] [. . .] that one of the men in my employ [. . .] shot and killed six hen pigeons that came to *feed* the *one squab* in the *same nest*."[33] Obviously, a species whose mothers cared so much for children who weren't even their own had no place in a Gilded Age for which nature was a social Darwinist survival-of-the-fittest based at last upon crass commercial interests.

Passenger Pigeons who did survive into adulthood could look forward to the possibility of serving as "stool" pigeons, live captive birds attached to a clever contraption of wood and rope, who acted as unwilling lures for the wild flocks. These birds were still allowed their flight pinions, for their fluttering wings played a major role in luring the others.[34] And so they were blinded to keep them "from leaving the stool"—in a horrible way, as Schorger tells us—"by thrusting a needle through the lower eyelid through the inside, bringing a thread from over the top of the head and through the lower lid on the opposite side." *Oh*. And I'm not even sure how to deal with the statement that "[s]ome birds became so tame that it was not necessary to blind them."[35]

But the fate of most adult birds was a sudden, cruel death. Birds who were netted or knocked to the ground with poles were then killed by a quick wringing of their necks, often to the point of decapitation, or with "a pair of blacksmith's pincers," which caused "the blood to burst from the eyes and trickle down the beak of the helpless captive, which slowly fluttered its life away. . . ."[36] Such rapacious means were defended by our good Mr. Martin as follows: "let me say that killing the pigeons by pincers is an instantaneous and painless death, the neck being broken by a single movement, and the fluttering spoken of being the same seen in any bird shot through the head, or with the head cut off[!]."[37] Other killing methods included simply "crush[ing] the skull between the thumb and forefinger"—or even between the teeth. *(Crunch.)* As for the gun, and given the birds' incredible social nature: "Shooting at the roosts was sheer murder."[38]

As I have indicated already, the intersection of the Passenger Pigeon and indigenous people is a crucial part of this 19th-century plot-line. In contrast, for instance, to Euro-American practice, "the Indians of Canada would not molest the pigeons in their breeding places until the young were able to fly"—which in part explains Forbush's contention that the Passenger Pigeon suffered no great reduction

of numbers until the "white man" appeared on the continent.[39] White observers apparently could only regard such human(e)ness in sparing the young birds—and even the nesting adults—with a callous skepticism. The ornithologist Pehr Kalm writes in 1911 that, during the pigeons' nesting, "the savages or Indians in North America are in the habit of never shooting or killing them, nor of allowing others to do so, pretending[!] that it would be a great pity on their young, which in that case would have to starve to death."[40] However economically, even ecologically, pragmatic the Natives were, finally, in such a practice, the naturalist's word *pretending* is symptomatic, of an anthropocentric ideology that could not imagine young pigeons as something other than harvestable "soft, fat bodies" fit for a good table.

One of the greatest experts on the Passenger Pigeon in the 19th century just happened to be a Native American—Pottawattomie chief Simon Pokagon—who likewise asserted that, though the birds had been "always a great source of revenue [i.e., food] to" his tribe, the species "continued to increase" until the whites' rampant commercial netting thereof, in the years 1840-1878.[41] Pokagon is indeed one of the more fascinating figures in this tragic story. Joseph Kastner cites him as a "reliable authority" on the pigeon because, in part, he "had clearly studied the white man's way of writing about nature and adopted it with panache," becoming the "most eminent birder of his race."[42] But significantly, Pokagon's naturalist "panache" was never completely Western in perspective, for it included a particularly Native empathy for other species, including an impulse to understand their discourse; "'I tried to understand their strange language," he says, at one nesting site, "and why they all chatted in concert."[43] Contrast this attitude with Audubon's observations: despite his empathy, Audubon's stance is still the Western specular "eye/I" of objectification and distance; Pokagon's is an indigenous *ear*, if you will, more open to the possibilities of humankind's familial (and discursive) relationship with other species. Let me reserve the specifics of Native American tribal beliefs about the Passenger Pigeon as sacred and closely associated with the soul to an endnote,[44] but my general point can be succinctly made, that a cultural mythos that incorporates another species as part of life, not death, is more conducive to the *life* of both species.

Roughly contemporary to Chief Pokagon in the latter 19th century was the great literary naturalist John Burroughs, whose many loving prose paeans to the birds created more backyard birdwatchers, perhaps, than any other American naturalist. (*Pace*, Roger Tory Peterson.) Burroughs remembers "vast armies" from his childhood, and a "last great flock of them" in 1875. But the birds "never came back," he laments, because of the "greed and cupidity of man." But after that last flock, Burroughs, like Audubon, was still a gun-toting naturalist, and his final sighting of an individual bird becomes a painful moment of retrospective nostalgia:

> The last time that my eyes beheld a passenger pigeon was in the fall of 1876 when I was out for grouse. . . . I killed it, little dreaming that, so far as I was concerned, I was killing the last pigeon.[45]

Later birders have found puzzling Burroughs' "casual attitude towards conservation [as indicated in the passage just quoted] in a man to whom nature was all." Maybe it was an agrarian upbringing and attitude that regarded wild species as "plentiful and sometimes a nuisance," or some higher ecological faith in natural cycles and balance. Whatever the case, Burroughs "never entered the activist sphere of the conservation movement."[46] In fact, it is Burroughs' contemporary John Muir, instead, the founder of the Sierra Club, to whom contemporary bird lovers and animal-rights proponents must point as the most righteously outraged spokesperson against the Passenger Pigeon's murder. Muir was all too aware, above all, of the antiquated religious underpinnings that allowed such a slaughter: in response to the pigeon's extinction, Muir sardonically quoted the words of "'some smug practical old sinner' who flatly asserted that the birds 'were made to be killed and sent to us to eat.'"[47]

People began to notice a significant reduction in the Passenger Pigeon population circa 1850, a decline that became even more marked in the 1870's and 80's.[48] The end may have actually come sooner than later, given Schorger's bold claim that the number of birds killed in the 1870's "was so great that the species was [already] doomed."[49] The mere "small flocks" reported in the 1890's in the Old Northwest states of Michigan, Wisconsin, etc., were a more certain sign of the approaching end, and any belated human change of consciousness—er, legislation—was futile:

> By the 1890s, Americans counted pigeons by the thousands, by the hundreds, or by the tens, if they saw them at all. . . . So by the time the Michigan legislature declared in 1897 that "Pigeons will not be shot by any body, anywhere, any time," the lawmakers had made the perfect law. Everybody could obey it because the pigeons in Michigan were virtually gone.[50]

By the 1890's, individual Passenger Pigeons were sometimes seen in flocks of Mourning Doves or Rock (domestic) Pigeons[51]—eternally social birds still in search of some semblance of avian society.

In 1917, Edward Howe Forbush wrote the monograph—or epitaph?—on the Passenger Pigeon for the monumental ornithological tome Birds of America. The bird's "range" description is disturbing enough: "Now extinct, the last living specimen having died in the Cincinnati Zoological Garden, September 1, 1914." Indeed, the bird's inclusion in Birds of America is especially troublesome, then, for a book on bird *life*. Accompanied by a pathetic photo [Figure 2] of that last surviving member of an already extinct species, the text reads like a surreal obituary. (Forbush's claim that this species' "story reads like a romance" makes one wonder what tales of gothic cruelty made up *his* early reading.) After

several pages describing the birds' incredible numbers before 1850, Forbush has the nerve to write, "[i]t often is asked how it was possible for man to kill them all," and his subsequent ruminations on potential vulnerabilities due to the species' nesting habits, etc., hardly serve as a satisfactory answer. Forbush's conclusion is an incredibly muted aside about the bird's diet—much like an anthropologist's report on a now-defunct indigenous tribe—that renders the entire monograph all the more ironically poignant: "They were fond of currants, cranberries, and poke berries"; however, "[w]e know little of their food habits, for no scientific investigation of their food was ever made."[52]

R. W. Shufeldt, in 1921, also writes that this is "a story filled with romance"; but it is also a tale of "prodigality, cruelty and short-sightedness,"[53] a plot that transcends the economics of cranberries. And admittedly, Forbush himself does ultimately accuse humankind: because of market demand for the bird in the East, Forbush proffers the rhetorical question, "[n]eed we wonder why the Pigeons have vanished?" In sum, the bird "became extinct mainly through constant persecution by man. . . . We did our best to exterminate both old and young, and we succeeded."[54] There remains something of a controversy whether the actual hunting of the birds or the destruction of their habitat played the larger role in their extinction,[55] but either way, "[t]he year 1900 may be considered as marking the end" for a species once legendary in numbers.[56]

1900—March 12th, to be exact—marks the last slaying of a Passenger Pigeon in the wild, by a 14-year-old boy named Press Clay Southworth, on his Ohio farm. In a soon-to-be-familiar instance of simulation replacing reality in the discourse of the Passenger Pigeon, the amateur taxidermist replaced its eyes with shoe buttons, whereupon the bird was nicknamed "Buttons."[57] And here we meet an example, too, of the incorrigible indeterminacy regarding dates and times concerning the bird's final years on the planet. Not only did the subsequent plaque for the bird at the Ohio Historical Center get the date wrong (stating the 24th, not the 12th), but so does Schorger's "definitive" study, an error repeated on web pages to this day.[58] Poor Buttons' very gender, too, later becomes a triumph of myth over reality: a 1965 novel by Allan W. Eckert, Silent Sky, presents Buttons as a male, when in reality *she* was nothing of the kind; and Eckert's fiction that the boy shot Buttons with a Christmas BB gun—a 21-gauge shotgun was the ballistic reality—was "taken as genuine in various popular magazine articles."[59]

As an old man, Mr. Southworth was still proud of his hunting achievement, writing in 1968 that "[t]he trophy[!] is still well preserved" in an Ohio State museum.[60] "Trophy" is the telling word here, of course, sadly applied to a species that had already been extinct for over half a century. But this immoral reification of the bird pales in comparison to the misrepresentation of Buttons in media discourse, in a

1949 Ohio radio skit in which our "trophy" is given a speaking role.[61] As a most blatant example of recuperative nostalgia, "Buttons" says at the end of this pro-conservation morality play:

> See? I told you I was important and that I could tell quite a story. I'm back on my shelf at the museum now. And I like it very much. . . . I hope lots of children come here to the museum to see me because I like children and I know that when they look at me they think about conservation and all it means to our country.[62]

One can only conclude, in retrospect, that "conservation" hasn't meant *much*, if a bird can be *imagined* as saying that she prefers her taxidermic status, in furtherance of an inane discourse claiming that, environmentally speaking, all is going swimmingly.

While the Passenger Pigeon, in its heyday, was mainly a bird of the eastern U.S., it also originally ranged all the way to the Rockies, from Montana to Texas.[63] At last, the bird seems to have lingered the longest in the wild in the Old Northwest states of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Ohio; and no doubt the Dakotas and Nebraska were also among its last happy hunting grounds, integral parts of its last "frontier." Fascinating it was, then, to discover a new electronic archive at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln called Birds of Nebraska, a collection of newspaper articles and editorials involving the state's avifauna from the late 19th- and early 20th centuries. The several references to the Passenger Pigeon therein epitomize, in the space of a few years, Nebraskans' psychological progression from a blithe acceptance of the bird's presence to shock and guilt regarding its amazingly quick retreat into oblivion.

Thus an official state checklist of Nebraska birds, in 1887, smugly includes the following notes on a certain species: "Passenger Pigeon. Summer resident; irregular. Arrives in May and leaves in September."[64] Then, in 1893, four Passenger Pigeons were shot on the "Annual October Hunt of Omaha Gun Club": in other words, if the bird's already great scarcity in the 1890's had led to any sense of preserving these birds in Nebraska, such hunters gave nary a damn.[65]

In 1895, there were two different encounters, a reported sighting of a "flock of fifteen" in Omaha, and the actual shooting of one, near Papillion. This latter becomes significant when we recall that Buttons received her new pretty shoe-button eyes only five years later. Journalist (and later bird-lover) Sandy Griswold notes in his article—rather suddenly, as it were, given the shooting club's hunt just two years earlier—that the killing of the Passenger Pigeon is "a rare event, indeed, and with one exception is the only bird of this kind that has been bagged[!] in this section of the [local] country for ten years or more." Despite this startling confession, Griswold seems still rather unconcerned about the bird's near extinction, reporting that there "were from fifteen to twenty birds in the flock," but the hunter could only get off "one shot." And, oh, the description of the bird: it was "a handsome old cock, with beautiful long tail feathers and royal purple bronze breast."[66] Such a strange twist, to end by treating the

dead pigeon as some aesthetic object, of great beauty, even royalty. When the Passenger Pigeon actually became extinct, Griswold would change his tune; and his later naturist editorials would make him, one might easily claim, the John Burroughs of Nebraska.

In 1897, a "flock of six" was seen just south of Omaha. More wondrously, a "flock of from seventy-five to one hundred" was reported in Johnson County; and Griswold, in passing on the report, is nearly euphoric in his desperation: these are, he writes, "the first of these almost extinct birds seen in that [local] region for twenty years." Given the number of pigeons in the flock, a later commentator, five years later in 1902, is no doubt correct in asserting that "[o]ne can not but believe that these were mourning doves."[67] Again, some great nostalgic hope for the bird's survival shaped the human lens into a Rorschach projection of wish-fulfillment, just as the bird would live on in an all-too-human mythos of semi-sincere regret and a promise to change our environmental ways.

Mr. Griswold later became a spokesperson for conservation, even for "animal rights," if such a consciousness could be said to exist a hundred years ago. By 1922, we have Griswold's eloquent warning of the possibility of the extinction of bird life in general:

> The wild pigeon and the Labrador duck have long been known only in song and fable, and there are many others following rapidly, notwithstanding the improvement in general conditions, in their wake. [. . .] My reader can look around for himself. In [sic] he does so, will he see any of the wild pigeons, which used to obscure the very skies in their unnumbered billions? I hardly think so. And so it is. The birds disappear and when they do not come back, in our generous disappointment, we hastily look about for some one to lay the blame upon and consequently scold with commensurate vigor. And I am forced to say, as reluctant as I am, that it is high time for many so-called sportsmen to dodge and wince. The man with the gun must be prepared to bear almost unlimited abuse. [. . .]

After the extinction of the waterfowl and land game birds, it is curtains, too, for the rest of our feathered friends: "When the songsters and the gaily bedecked citizens of woods and copse and field are all gone - thousands of years hence, we hope, if ever - then all life, too, will likewise be gone."[68] This may seem pure hyperbole, unless one realizes that there is sound ecological science behind the old adage of the "canary in the coal mine": an ecosystem without birds—and I speak now of ecological factors beyond hunting—would most likely not be able to sustain human life, either.

In the same year, another long-forgotten Nebraskan journalist, Miles Greenleaf, wrote a paean to the Mourning Dove, as a protest against its (over-)hunting. Greenleaf's strongest argument is that this remaining wild dove is "the last suggestion we have in this territory to remind us of the murdered Passenger Pigeon"—in sum, treat its cousin more reverently, then. Anthropomorphic to the core is Greenleaf's appeal, but poignant it is, all the same: the living dove's "mourning" song is evidence "that these silky feathered bits of loveliness are carrying on, and raising their gentle families and pitying us

for our harsh worldliness as we lust for them with loaded gun, pausing only our trigger-finger because a wise government has warned us nay."[69] I can't say, in conclusion, from my current exposure to the hunting mentality of Nebraska and the Dakotas, that this plaintive note has registered to any great degree, except to the extent that state legislatures are smart enough now to set bag and season limits, so as not to hunt our so-called "game" birds into total extinction.

At last, the ostensible promise in my title of a local "Western" thesis has been an equivocation of sorts. But if the "western frontier," as we imagine it, has not been the central focus of this essay, my ultimate tact remains steadfast, that the geographical New-World "West" has been a centuries-long metaphorical *frontier* for Euro-American ideology, for a general colonizing vision of—blindness, and repression, and belatedly futile gestures of symbolic recuperation. I think immediately of the numerous roadside plaques in Nebraska and the Dakotas supposedly eulogizing some "noble"—but slaughtered—local Native chief or tribe, and—in contrast—of the (much more frequent) tourist-trap tributes to the peregrinations of Lewis and Clark. These explorers' fame lives on, one might say ironically, in the names of two birds they "discovered," Lewis's Woodpecker and Clark's Nutcracker, species lucky enough to be residents of habitats still relatively unfrequented by humankind. But their very names yet connote an ideological act of ownership, of imperialism, a fact occluded by the rationalizations of an objective scientific discourse. The passing of our pigeon was ostensibly an eye-opener to the consequences of such *object*ifications of the animal Other; however, we remain largely blind to the anthropocentric *grand récit* within which we live, and think, and see.

I turn, finally, to the last Passenger Pigeon, Martha, that bird whom we know died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. She was named after Martha Washington, just as her last male companion, George, was named after the first President. (First lady, last bird?—hmmm, the irony is dripping.) But George died in July, 1910, and so Martha survived over four years as the last of her species. Cokinos writes, "[p]robably she could not have missed George in what we'd call memory[?!], but who can say? Certainly she lived in the insistent aloneness of each moment after George's death." So how did she pass the time? "From time to time, Martha [. . .] stretched her wings, missing the flight she never really had. Mostly she sat. She ate at feeding time and stared beyond the metal mesh."[70]

At the Smithsonian, R. W. Shufeldt received a correspondence from Cincinnati: "From [the zoo's Director] Mr. [Sol] Stephan [. . .] I learn that 'our female passenger pigeon died September 1st [1914] at 1 P. M. of old age, being about twenty-nine years old.' It was almost immediately packed in ice and shipped to the national museum at Washington, D. C. . . . ."[71] Martha was now a national icon, apparently, to be treasured—or gawked at—in retrospect. Shufeldt was the ornithologist who

subsequently performed the anatomical *post mortem* on Martha's ice-preserved body. Regarding his efforts, which included published photos of Martha dissected, Schorger sardonically remarks later, "[t]he anatomical photographs do not even possess clarity to compensate for their gruesomeness[!]."[72] Given Shufeldt's obvious great interest in Martha in his later professional writings, as both individual and species, it is striking that his own discussion of the last photographs of Martha never *names* her; she is merely, always, the "specimen."[73] (And one of these famous photographs, as we shall see, was taken by Shufeldt himself.)

But despite this belated, last-minute, obsession with Martha, the particulars of both her life and death are shrouded in a comedy of errors and misrepresentation, including her date of birth, and therefore age. Because the "history of the pigeons kept at the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens is hopelessly confused" itself,[74] so are Martha's origins; dates ranging from 1885 to 1902 have been proposed, largely because the "man who ran the zoo" kept changing his "stories." Schorger's sexist comment that "Martha in consonance with her sex[?!] was of indefinite age at the time of her death" may not be very helpful, but what is clear is that no one knows today "if any one of the [proposed] ages ranging from 17 to 29 is correct."[75]

As for the time of death, we have the oft-repeated claim that this is the one and only species for which we know the *exact* time of extinction,[76] but even this is subject to great debate. Regarding even her last day, then, "[i]t would be difficult to find a more garbled history," as Schorger puts it.[77] The official and generally accepted time is 1 p.m., no doubt largely because of Sol Stephan's letter to Shufeldt quoted above, and yet Cokinos finds another correspondence from Sol giving *2* p.m., and Sol's own son Joseph Stephan (who succeeded Sol as Director) later claimed 5 p.m. as the time of death.[78] Subsequent romanticizations of Martha's death combine the 5:00 time with the belief that she died "'surrounded by a hushed group of distinguished ornithologists,'" but this is a notion that Schorger deems "sheer romance."[79]

Errol Fuller cuts to the chase: "the moment of truth found Martha alone!"[80] Found dead at the bottom of her cage, the bird had no notion of acting engagements on radio shows, or offering her stuffed body to the Smithsonian as the site of so many American discourses: historical curiosity, emblem of the "wild," morality tale of extinction and Manifest-Destiny colonialism. Contrary to the belief of many, the stuffed Martha is no longer displayed at the Smithsonian, because of—well—preservation concerns. One can accept this explanation at its face value easily enough, and yet still surmise that this removal of such an icon from public view corresponds to a symptomatic cultural repression. Why air our dirty laundry when, after all, the exhibit's possible power to change our environmental ways has been a

blatant failure? Cokinos addresses this issue in finding in Martha's after-death iconography "a certain symbolic power: Martha represented the finality of extinction and the consequences of the failure to conserve our natural resources." Moreover, "Martha's death [. . .] remains a kind of ready-made lesson, a parable for other possible conservation strategies." But not only did this exercise in eco-ethics fail, but such a discursive venture also allowed us to forget Martha herself: "Ironically, this attention to generalities, to 'meanings' about Martha, also helped create subtle obstacles to understanding the *details* of her life and her species."[81] In sum, and once again—Martha died alone.

Then we have the various photographs of Martha, ostensibly closer to the bird's reality than her imagined words in a radio skit or humankind's wishful thinking that the rest of her kind still thrive happily in Bolivia. The species itself, indeed, was a favorite subject for 19th-century visual artists well before such representations became, in retrospect, ironic effigies. "[F]ew birds," Shufeldt tells us in 1921, "exceeded the Passenger Pigeon [. . .] as a subject for artists and engravers." However, such efforts consist of "a great variety of grades of excellence, of caricature, of faithfulness, and of grotesqueness"—including "fanciful pictures reproduced from drawings made by those who knew nothing of the wild pigeon . . . ." The almost chance vagaries of realism and caricature produced another irony, for not only was the artistic copying ("piracy") of older pictures and plates of the bird a 19th-century commonplace, but, "[i]n a few instances, the pirated picture appears to be truer to nature than the one from which it was copied"![82]

Three particular photographs of Martha are most notable, as contrasts: Enno Meyer's photo of her alive, in the zoo [Figure 1]; Shufeldt's own photo of the bird, fresh from being stuffed, at the Smithsonian [Figure 2]; and a 1990's Smithsonian photo of the bird, now by far the most reproduced and widely known [Figure 3].[83] What strikes one about the first two, much earlier, photographs is that, especially given the grainy nature of the photographic reproductions, one might be hard pressed to distinguish between the stuffed Martha of Shufeldt and Meyer's live one. Indeed, Schorger deems the earliest—and only *live*—photograph of the three to be "without character,"[84] as if Martha alive had been too insipid to pose with photogenic propriety. The apparently detached gaze of Martha's left eye in profile certainly seems less interesting—and interested—than Shufeldt's subsequent taxonomical pose: with the more frontal stance, and the cock of the neck that directs her eye towards us, this second Martha seems much more "alive," even pertly aware of our human notice. (And she has also been placed upon a more "interesting"—but no doubt completely contrived—wooden perch, besides.) Thus she may have sat—or I at least imagine her sitting—in the Smithsonian for years, not with a look of "What have you done to me?" but of "It's *all* good. And aren't I the cutest wittle thing?"

The much more recent Smithsonian photograph is another story. With Martha's removal from public display, this photo now serves as the U.S. government's surrogate simulation for her actual corpse, and the sole iconographic exposure most living Americans have to the bird. Here any attempt at some anthropomorphic pertness is cast aside—a laudable gesture, of course—and in spite of the color and much greater photographic resolution, Martha seems returned to the cold distance of Meyer's live photograph. But the eye, above all—obviously glass—seems even more cold and detached, as if a metaphor for the distance in which the Passenger Pigeon has receded in our collective memory.

Intermittent gestures of guilty nostalgia continue through the 20th century, as in the Wisconsin monument to the Passenger Pigeon in 1947:

Dedicated
To The Last Wisconsin
Passenger Pigeon
Shot At Babcock, Sept. 1899

This Species Became Extinct
Through The Avarice And
Thoughtlessness Of Man[85]

This monument (if not the bird) was itself memorialized in Aldo Leopold's words upon the dedication of the monument: "We have erected a monument to commemorate the funeral of a species. It symbolizes our sorrow." Underlying the great naturalist's praise are reservations, however: "There will always be pigeons in books and in museums, but these are effigies and images, dead to all hardships and to all delights." And so this monument, too, is just such an ineffectual effigy. Sure, it's a nice spectacle and gesture, Leopold says: "But no pigeons will pass, for there are no pigeons, save only this flightless one, graven in bronze on this rock. Tourists will read this inscription, but their thoughts will not take wing." (The same must be said for Smithsonian postcard-photos, to be sure.) As a scientist deeply concerned about the preservation of the "wild," Leopold takes this opportunity to cut at the heart of the whole enterprise of Western colonization and industrialism: "Perhaps we now grieve because we are not sure, in our hearts, that we have gained from [our] exchange" of civilization for the wilderness.[86] And isn't that the crux of the matter, that whatever concern humankind has expressed for the various native species and habitats that have succumbed to our advancing colonialism is really our own self-doubt in this venture of civilization, and our angst in the vague consciousness of feeling rootless in a land that we have uprooted?

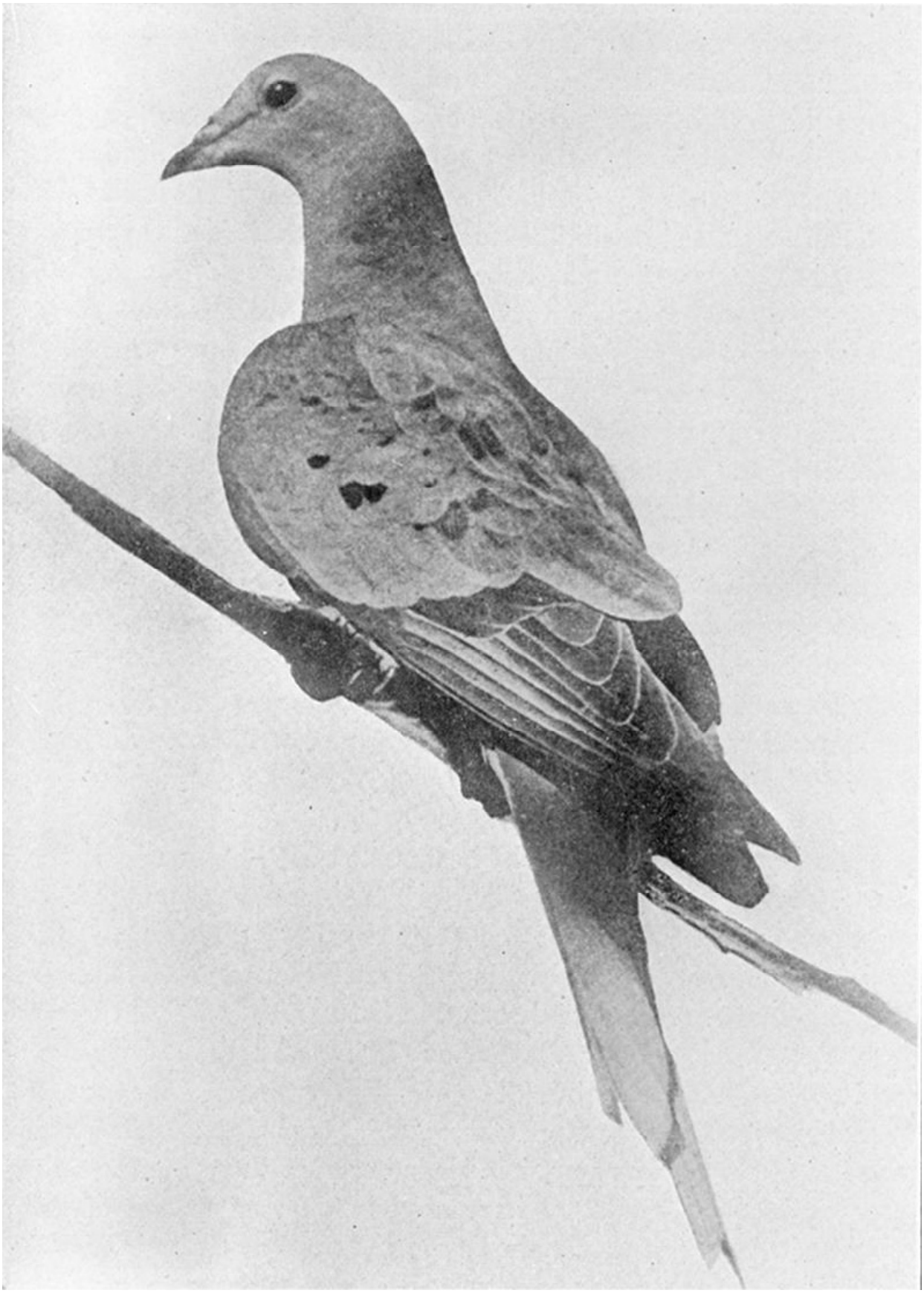
But Leopold himself has enough faith in science and Darwinism to still remain complacent in his own human superiority. "For one species to mourn the death of another"—why, that's a behavior worthy of applause for our species, "a new thing under the sun." (But again, I would question whether we are

even/ever veritably "mourning" this other species at all.) Leopold continues: "in this fact"—of altruistic mourning—"lies objective evidence of our superiority over the beasts."[87] Oh, the hubris! Don't tell me, then, that Martha's fate has helped spur some great leap in environmental ethics or ecological consciousness. As long as even our most esteemed "naturist" writers continue to assume the Western ideology that *homo sapiens* is Darwin's gift to the cosmos, any authentic regard for the intrinsic worth of other species is still light years away.

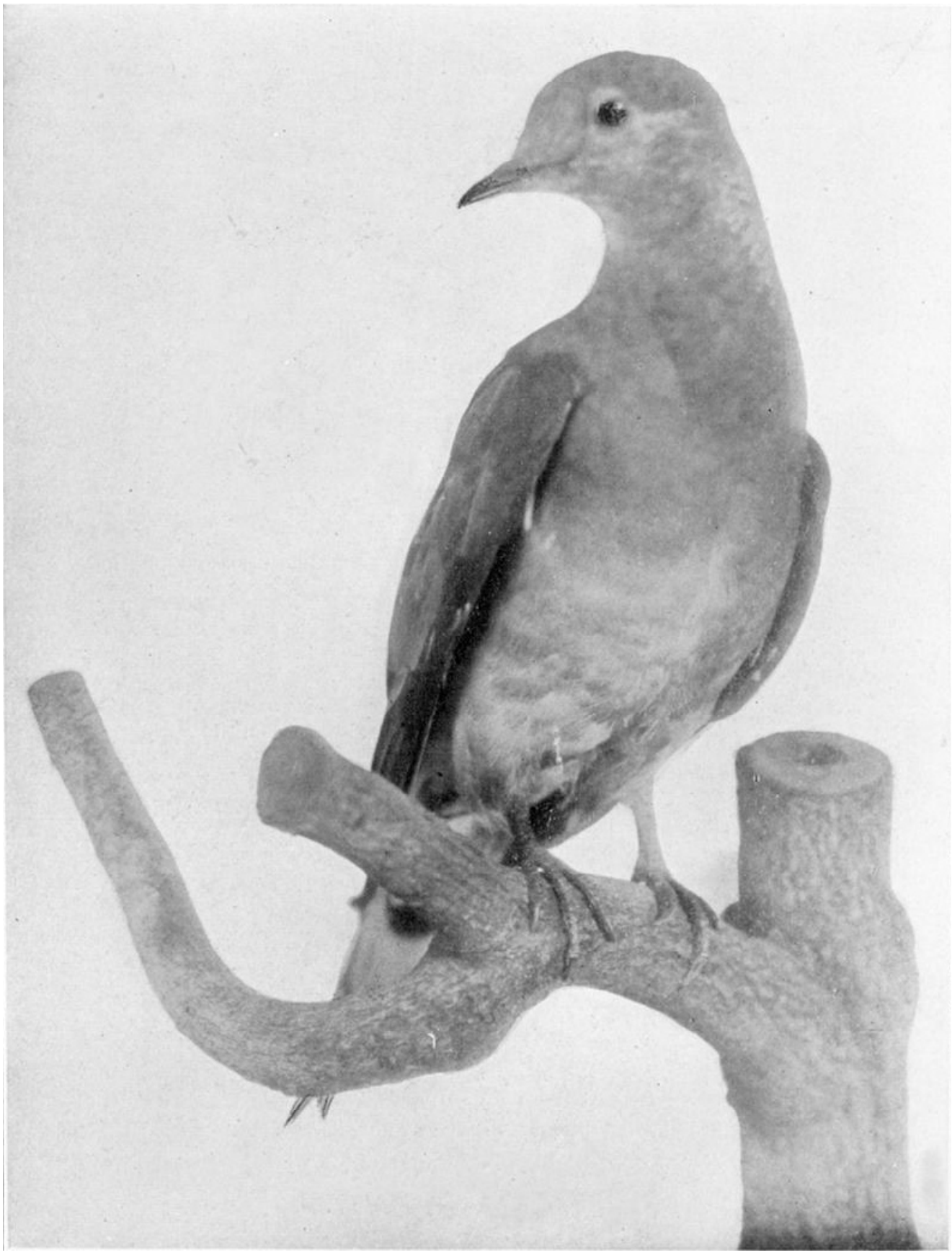
What have we really *learned*, then? When will we stop patting ourselves on the back about our newfound eco-sophistication, when the reality remains that we are still stuck in a mainstream anthropocentric worldview that overrides any little cutesy "animal-rights" gestures that we make? Unlike the amazing rediscovery of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker this year in Arkansas,[88] no sighting of another individual Passenger Pigeon can be expected. We are left instead to ponder, with postmodern ironic smirks, Audubon's early-19th-century appeal:

> Oh Walter Scot where art thou? wilt thou not come to my Country? Wrestle with Mankind and Stop their Increasing ravages on Nature & describe her Now for the Sake of Future Ages—neither this Little Stream—this Swamp, this Grand Sheet of Flowing Watter nor these Mountains will be seen in a century hence, as I see them now.—Nature will have been rob[bed] of her brilliant Charms [. . .] the Hills will be levelled with the Swamp [. . .] Fishes will no longer bask upon this surface. the Eagle scarce ever alight, and these Millions of Songsters will be drove away by Man—Oh Walter Scot come, Come to America![89]

Audubon's 1826 appeal to an icon of British Romanticism strikes one now as almost ludicrous, but the sentiment is certainly laudable. No, not merely laudable: it is *grand*. But the naturalist's ideology must finally appeal to those birds most esteemed by humans (and "Americans"): to the eagle, and to songbirds. We have no similar laudatory discourse regarding those pleasingly plump birds designated as "fowl," which still includes pigeons. If we had—if somehow the Passenger Pigeon had been deemed our "national" bird, or had achieved a level of domestic love on the level of the robin, or had not struck a "chord" with the human palate, I suppose—well, then I might not have any subject to write about now, the subject of extinction, and of genocide. Compare John Burroughs' merely nostalgic remarks on his shooting of his "last" Passenger Pigeon, quoted earlier, to the following: "what would it profit me could I find and plunder my eagle's nest, or strip his skin from his dead carcass? Should I know him better? I do not want to know him that way."[90] No, not *our* noble raptor: but a good billion of Marthas were *known* that way, and have gone the way of history, into "nostalgic" shame, and guilt—and repression. We feel today (or should feel) a great guilt and shame in the memory of many indigenous tribes of *homo sapiens* whose last bones are now in museums. We should feel at least as much for the murder of another, entire, species of being.



[FIGURE 1]



[FIGURE 2]

[FIGURE 3]

Notes

1. John Burroughs, The Birds of John Burroughs: Keeping a Sharp Lookout, ed. Jack Kligerman (New York: Hawthorn, 1976), 94-95.

2. Smithsonian Institution, "The Passenger Pigeon," Encyclopedia Smithsonian, March 2001, http://www.si.edu/resource/faq/nmnh/passpig.htm (accessed Aug. 11, 2005).

3. "Of Avians & Indigenes: Preliminary Notes on the Orientalization of the New World Native & Natured Others," Literature Compass, Summer 2004, http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2004.00054.x (accessed Sept. 22, 2005).

The several connections I make between the Passenger Pigeon and the Native American in this essay receive their most vehement corroboration in the words of Mick Wicks: "Perhaps this is why the Smithsonian Institution keeps so many of our ancestors tucked away in boxes - someday they hope to mount and display the last Indian and give him a cute name like they did 'Martha' [the last Passenger Pigeon]. And, no doubt, they will feel a certain pride in having the last one before we became extinct - just like they do with 'Martha'" (qtd. in Carter Camp, "Hiding Genocide: the National Museum of the American Indian," American Indian Cultural Support, 1999, http://www.aics.org/natlmuseum.html [accessed Aug. 17, 2005]).

4. Edward Howe Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in *Birds of America*, ed. Gilbert T. Pearson et al. (1917; reprint, Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1936), 2.40 (emphases added).

5. This conflation of bird and Indian is even evident in the early name for bird reserves: "Reservations" (Gilbert T. Pearson, Introduction, in Birds of America, ed. Gilbert T. Pearson et al., 1.xiv, xvi-xvii). As for the Passenger Pigeon per se, it was commonly known as the "Wild Pigeon" in the 19th century (A. W. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon: Its Natural History and Extinction [Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1955], 251, 253); and the Indian ornithologist Simon Pokagon wrote pointedly: "they [the whites] naturally called it a wild pigeon, as they called us wild men" ("The Wild Pigeon of North America," in The Passenger Pigeon, ed. W. B. Mershon [New York: Outing, 1907], 48)! The French translation thereof—"*Pigeon Sauvage*" (Schorger 253)—is an even more blatant reminder of the connection between human and non-human "savages," both creatures of the "wild."

6. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.39.

7 . My appeal to a recuperative "nostalgia," invokes, of course, a wide range of cultural criticism, especially recent colonial discourse theory. As for my own critical "school," ecocriticism, I would invoke Lawrence Buell, and his summary of Leo Marx and Raymond Williams regarding "nostalgia": both of these pioneers of eco-theory emphasized "the seductiveness and the mendacity of the nostalgia for rurality: how it characteristically expressed itself in the form of wishful prettifying palliatives that disguised the irresistible transformation of landscape wrought by economic power and/or class interest" (The Future of Environmental Criticism [Oxford: Blackwell, 2005], 14). The eco-"colonization" of New World other-species, I will argue, partakes in just such "wishful prettifying palliatives."

8. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 199, 204-205.

9. Felton Gibbons and Deborah Strom, Neighbors to the Birds: A History of Birdwatching in America (New York: Norton, 1988), 72.

10. Alexander Wilson, "The Passenger Pigeon," in Mershon 17; Christopher Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers: A Personal Chronicle of Vanished Birds (New York: Tarcher, 2000), 197. For more on 19th-century ornithologists' commentary on the immense numbers of this species, see John Burroughs, Birds and Poets with other Papers (Boston: Houghton, 1903), 77-78; Forbush 2.40; Gibbons and Strom

36, 38, 72-73, 85, 100; Mershon ix-x; Pokagon, in Mershon 49-50. Finally, for several passages from James Fenimore Cooper's fiction describing their numbers (and slaughter), see Mershon 41-47.

11. Qtd. in Mershon, The Passenger Pigeon, 217. For a detailed description of the various netting methods, see Schorger 170-186.

12. Linda Hogan, Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World (New York: Simon, 1996), 94. Later Hogan refers to the tragedy of Ishi, "the last Yana Indian"—living his last years alone and among an alien race, like the last Passenger Pigeon—as a "story" that "speaks of loss and of emptiness that will never again be filled, of whole cultures disappeared, of species made extinct" (110-111).

13. John James Audubon, John James Audubon: Writings and Drawings, ed. Christoph Irmscher (New York: Library of America, 1999), 262, 265, 267.

14. Gibbons and Strom, Neighbors to the Birds, 72. The gruesome particulars can be found in Audubon 265-267.

15. Qtd. in Joseph Kastner, A World of Watchers (New York: Knopf, 1986), 70. For a discussion of the controversy surrounding Audubon's "gun-toting" naturalism, see Christoph Irmscher, The Poetics of Natural History, from John Bartram to William James (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1999), 214-216. In contrast to such superfluous slaughter are Luther Standing Bear's words: "Killing for sport was unknown to the Lakota. His attitude toward living creatures would not permit him to slaughter a species until it was exterminated" (Land of the Spotted Eagle [1933; reprint, Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1978], 69; see also 165).

In the later 19th-century debate among ornithologists regarding bird study via the gun, another Indian/bird parallel arose when a certain Garret Newkirk recoiled at the belief that "'the only good bird is a dead bird'"; he demonstrated how sadly apt this expression was as an analogue of "the saying that the only good Indian is a dead Indian" via a telling anecdote: "'The late Major [and famous ornithologist] Bendire,' he declared, 'hunted Indians and birds in the same country and killed both with equal lack of compunction when the blood of murdered settlers cried out for vengeance or the authorities at the National Museum wanted positive identification'" (Kastner 106-107).

16. Audubon, John James Audubon, 260.

17. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 208.

18. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.44.

19. Qtd. in Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 208 (see also Schorger 225, Kastner 72-73).

20. E. T. Martin, "The Pigeon Butcher's Defense," in Mershon 103-104. I would argue, by the way—in an attempt to step outside the bounds of anthropocentrism—that this attitude is, in fact, closely related to the theocratic ideology of colonization that drove U.S. policy regarding indigenous Americans: as a godless heathen no better than an animal, the only good Indian was either a dead one, or one assimilated into mainstream God-fearing Christian culture.

21. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 212-213.

22. Mershon, The Passenger Pigeon, x; C. H. Ames and Robert Ridgway, "A Novel Theory of Extinction," in Mershon 176. See also Schorger 211.

23. Mershon, The Passenger Pigeon, 11; Ames and Ridgway, "A Novel Theory of Extinction," in Mershon 177-178. For further rebuttals, see George E. Atkinson, "The Pigeon in Manitoba," in Mershon 190; Cokinos 225; Errol Fuller, Extinct Birds, rev.ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2001), 193. Another

theory involved a natural catastrophe over Lake Michigan, which Forbush declared to be also unfounded (2.42-43).

24. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 225; Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 211.

25. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 224-225; Mershon, The Passenger Pigeon, 179; see also F. W. Rightmire, Sandy Griswold, and R. H. Wolcott, "Wild Pigeons in Nebraska" [1897, 1902], Birds of Nebraska: Newspaper Accounts, 1854-1923, ed. James E. Ducey and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, 2004, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00978.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005). Even John Burroughs likely engaged in wishful thinking in his faith in others' sightings of these birds in New York as late as 1906 ("News from John Burroughs," in Mershon 179-185).

26. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 223.

27. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 196.

28. Audubon, John James Audubon, 268; Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 204.

29. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 140; Pokagon, "The Wild Pigeon of North America," in Mershon 52-53.

30. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 140.

31. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.44; see also Schorger 217.

32. Audubon, John James Audubon, 268.

33. Martin, "The Pigeon Butcher's Defense," in Mershon 102.

34. For descriptions of the specific contraptions by which such birds were used as lures, see H. B. Roney, "Efforts to Check the Slaughter," in Mershon 80; Schorger 177-179; Cokinos 212-213.

35. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 177. I'm reminded here of Native scouts or translators who were allowed to live free and could still be trusted to be traitors to their race—but I realize that this particular Indian analogy is (perhaps) a silly one.

36. Roney, "Efforts to Check the Slaughter," in Mershon 84-86; Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 213, 217.

37. Martin, "The Pigeon Butcher's Defense," in Mershon 96.

38. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 184, 193. One of the more unusual capture methods was soaking wheat in alcohol, which made the soon drunken birds easy to capture (Schorger 52, 168). In describing this same practice, Pokagon is not unaware of the connection between Natives and pigeons in their encounters with the colonizers' demon alcohol (57-58).

39. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.41; see also Cokinos 207, Schorger 137. Cokinos notes that "[s]ome tribes would not kill nesting adults at all and threatened white settlers who did" (207).

40. Qtd. in Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 177.

41. Pokagon, "The Wild Pigeon of North America," in Mershon 54; see also Schorger 137.

42. Kastner, A World of Watchers, 36, 35.

43. Pokagon, "The Wild Pigeon of North America," in Mershon 51.

44. For example, the Hurons "believed the souls of the dead came back as pigeons, and the Seneca offered gifts of tobacco to the adult birds before taking any squabs" (Cokinos 208; see also Schorger 135). The Seneca, moreover, had a "'sacred pigeon dance,'" which was "'based upon the flight of their sacred bird'" (Schorger 136).

45. Burroughs, The Birds of John Burroughs, 93-94.

46. Gibbons and Strom, Neighbors to the Birds, 85.

47. Gibbons and Strom, Neighbors to the Birds, 100.

48. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.40; Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 222.

49. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 207; see also Fuller 193.

50. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.43; Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 222. See also Schorger 229: "This law came much too late"!

51. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 26, 292.

52. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.39, 2.40, 2.44, 2.46. Admittedly, Forbush's expertise in the economic impact of birds certainly steered him to this apparently untoward final emphasis on the Passenger Pigeon's "Economic Status" (Kastner 122).

53. R. W. Shufeldt, "Published Figures and Plates of the Extinct Passenger Pigeon," The Scientific Monthly 12 (May 1921), 458.

54. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.42-2.44; see also Schorger 214, Fuller 193. Mershon, too, is "satisfied"—by 1907—"that the destruction of the pigeons was wrought to gratify the avarice [. . .] of a few[?!] men who slaughtered them until they were virtually exterminated" (163).

55. According to biologist David Kirk, "'The clearance of forests by Europeans reached a peak in 1880 [. . .] and this coincided almost exactly with the sudden increased rate of decline in the Passenger Pigeon'" (qtd. in Cokinos 226). Schorger, in contrast, relatively downplays the role of deforestation (212), emphasizing instead humans' direct slaughter.

56. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 222.

57. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 228-229. As if to contribute further to the ironies of the pigeon/Native American parallel, Southworth was born and raised in Nebraska, where he actually made the acquaintance of the retired Buffalo Bill Cody (Cokinos 239-241)!

58. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 228; Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 286. Worse yet, some web sites even give the incorrect year (1901)!

59. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 230-231.

60. Qtd. in Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 244.

61. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 256-257.

62. Qtd. in Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 257.

63. Forbush, "Passenger Pigeon," in Pearson et al. 2.39; Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 256-257; Fuller, Extinct Birds, 193. For a visual representation of the bird's range, see "Distribution: Passenger Pigeon," Ontario's Biodiversity, http://www.rom.on.ca/ontario/risk.php?doc_type=map&id=116 (accessed Sept. 20, 2005).

64. W. Edgar Taylor, "A Catalogue of Nebraska Birds Arranged According to the Check List of the American Ornithological Union" [1888], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00144.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005).

65. "Annual October Hunt of Omaha Gun Club - Count for Game and Birds of Prey" [1893], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00022.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005).

66. "The Birds of Omaha" [1899], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00099.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005); Sandy Griswold, "Wild Pigeon Killed from Flock Near Papillion" [1895], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00977.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005).

67. Frank H. Shoemaker, "The Birds of Childs' Point Region" [1897], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00086.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005); Rightmire, Griswold, and Wolcott, "Wild Pigeons in Nebraska."

68. Sandy Griswold, "Will the Time Come When the Birds Are Gone?" [1922], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00980.html (both accessed Aug. 20, 2005).

69. Miles Greenleaf, "Cheerful Mourning" [1922], Birds of Nebraska, http://libr.unl.edu:2000/birds_of_nebraska/DJ.00160.html (accessed Aug. 20, 2005).

70. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 28-29; Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 259, 261, 262-263.

71. R. W. Shufeldt, "Anatomical and Other Notes on the Passenger Pigeon (*Ectopistes Migratorius*) Lately Living in the Cincinnati Zoölogical Gardens," The Auk 32.1 (1915), 30. (The bracketed date—"[1914]"—in the quoted text is Shufeldt's.)

72. Shufeldt, "Anatomical and Other Notes," 29-41; Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 301.

73. Shufeldt, "Published Figures and Plates," 365, 369.

74. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 27.

75 Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 259-260; Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 30.

76. E,g., Fuller: "This may be the only instance in which virtually[!] the exact time of the extinction of a species is known . . . ." (194).

77. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 29; see also Fuller 193-194.

78. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 266; Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 29.

79. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 29. Other proffered times of death included 2 p.m.—August 29th!—and 1:00, September 1st—in the *morning* (Schorger 29). Finally, my surfing of various "amateur" web sites devoted to Martha also uncovered the alternative times of 12:30 and 4:00 in the afternoon of September 1st.

80. Errol Fuller, Extinct Birds, 194.

81. Cokinos, Hope Is a Thing with Feathers, 271.

82. Shufeldt, "Published Figures," 458, 461. The posed awkwardness of Audubon's famous painting of the Passenger Pigeon has been commonly noted. Likewise, Alexander Wilson's early effort, "[a]s an artistic picture, [. . .] is excellent; but as a correct figure of the species it purports to represent, it is a failure. The model was evidently a skin" (475).

83. Shufeldt, "Published Figures," 466, 467; Victor E. Krantz, Passenger Pigeon [photograph], 1993 [1991?], Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. (available online at http://www.aics.org/natlmuseum.html). These photos are labelled as Figures 1, 2, and 3, respectively, and reproduced as "appendices" before this essay's endnotes.

84. Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 302.

85. Qtd. in Schorger, The Passenger Pigeon, 230.

86. Aldo Leopold, A Sand County Almanac [1949] (New York: Oxford UP, 1966), 116, 118.

87. Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, 117.

88. Dan Vergano, "Bird enthusiasts hail rediscovery of woodpecker," USA Today April 29, 2005, 3A.

89. Audubon, John James Audubon, 186-187.

90. Burroughs, The Birds of John Burroughs, 142.