

Florida Field Nat. 25(4):141-142, 1997.

WHITE-CROWNED PIGEON NORTH OF ITS KNOWN RANGE

DONALD M. WARE

662 Fairway Avenue, Ft. Walton Beach, Florida 32547-1752

The White-crowned Pigeon (*Columba leucocephala*) is a sought-after Florida specialty that nests in colonies in the extreme southern peninsula and the Keys of Florida. The White-crowned Pigeon usually inhabits dense coastal forests where they feed on a variety of fruits and seeds, but they sometimes are found in residential areas. J. Ondrejko (in Paul 1988) reported several White-crowned Pigeons eating white millet from a feeder in Key West on 19 June 1988. Although a few overwinter in Florida, this species typically winters in the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispanola, and western Panama (Ehrlich et. al. 1988) and returns to Florida in April or May. There is one sight report of the White-crowned Pigeon outside Florida on 24 June and 2 July 1989 at Laguna Atascosa, Cameron County in extreme southern Texas (Lasley and Sexton 1989).

At 0700 on 16 April 1997, T. and B. Fleck saw a White-crowned Pigeon on a platform feeder in their back yard in Ft. Walton Beach, Okaloosa County, Florida. It was also seen for about 10 minutes that evening, and again at 0700 the next morning. At 0700 of 18 April I had a 10-minute unrestricted study of the bird with Zeiss 10 × 40B binoculars as it fed within 7 m of me. It appeared to be an adult male, all dark gray with a bright white crown and rows of greenish spots on the hind neck. It had a light iris, and the base of the bill was dull red, and the tip was white. The bird was apparently eating white millet from the mixed seed. Although wary of people, it aggressively chased away Common Grackles (*Quiscalus quiscula*), Blue Jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), and Mourning Doves (*Zenaidura macroura*). It was also seen sitting in large magnolia and pine trees near the back yard. Two other birders observed it at that feeder. The bird was later observed by C. and H. King at their feeder three blocks west. B. Fleck took a photograph of the bird on 22 April 1997 (TTRS p.591). It was last seen on 11 May at the King's feeder. By that time it had become far more tolerant of other birds at the feeder. This sighting was 290 km north of the northernmost sighting in St. Lucie County, Florida (Robertson and Woolfenden 1992).

Information from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Diagnostic Center indicates that during the six days prior to 16 April, strong (10-12 knots) low-level winds blew from the southeast between Cuba and the Keys. It is possible this bird was headed to the Keys from Cuba, missed its landfall, and had a longer-than-usual flight.

I suggest this sighting represents an accidental occurrence of a wild White-crowned Pigeon rather than an escaped bird. This sighting should be cause for birders all along the Gulf coast to look for this species in April or May.

I thank Robert A. Duncan for his comments on this note.

LITERATURE CITED

- EHRlich, P. R., D. S. DOBKIN, AND D. WHEYE. 1988. The Birder's Handbook. Simon & Schuster, Inc., New York.
- KALE, H. W., II, AND D. S. MAEHR. 1990. Florida's Birds: A Handbook and Reference. Pineapple Press, Sarasota.
- LASLEY, G. W., AND C. SEXTON. 1989. The nesting season, Texas Region, Amer. Birds 43: 1339-1340.
- PAUL, R. T. 1988. The nesting season: Florida region. Am. Birds 42:1278-81.

- ROBERTSON, W. B., JR., AND G. E. WOOLFENDEN. 1992. Florida Bird Species: An Annotated List. Florida Ornithol. Soc. Spec. Publ. No. 6, Gainesville
- STEVENSON, H. M., AND B. H. ANDERSON. 1994. The Birdlife of Florida. Univ. Presses of Florida, Gainesville.

FLORIDA ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

Species Index to Florida Bird Records in Audubon Field Notes and American Birds Volumes 1-30 1947-1976, by Margaret C. Bowman. 1978. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 1. Price \$4.00.

The Carolina Parakeet in Florida, by Daniel McKinley. 1985. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 2. Price \$6.00.

Status and Distribution of the Florida Scrub Jay, by Jeffrey A. Cox. 1987. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 3. Price \$8.00.

Florida Bird Records in American Birds and Audubon Field Notes 1947-1989, by Robert W. Loftin, Glen E. Woolfenden, and Janet A. Woolfenden. 1991. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 4. Price \$8.00.

West Indian Bird Records in American Birds and Audubon Field Notes (1947-1990): Species Index by Islands, by Robert W. Loftin. 1992. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 5. Price \$8.00.

Florida Bird Species: An Annotated List, by William B. Robertson, Jr. and Glen E. Woolfenden. 1992. Florida Ornithological Society, Special Publication No. 6. Price for FOS members \$14.95 (soft cover), \$19.95 (hard cover); nonmembers \$17.95 (soft cover), \$22.95 (hard cover).

Order prepaid from the Secretary; add \$1.00 handling and shipping for Special Publications No. 1-5; add \$2.00 handling and shipping for Special Publication No. 6. **Florida residents** add 7% sales tax to the total. Make checks payable to the Florida Ornithological Society.