

Band-tailed Pigeon - First State Record for Mississippi

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At 0810 on 2 December 1978, we discovered a Band-tailed Pigeon (Columba fasciata) near the east end of Petit Bois Island, Jackson Co., Mississippi. Cooley first sighted the pigeon flying low toward the only stand of trees on the island, where we were camped. The bird made several passes around the group of trees and twice attempted to land in a pine within 30 feet of us. The bird was under constant observation for approximately 5 minutes. It then flew back toward the west. At 0857 Cooley again spotted the bird flying at a height of about 30 feet toward the east end of the island. This time the bird flew directly over us and continued east.

At the time of the sighting, the sky was clear. Wind was from the southeast at approximately 10 mph. The temperature was 65°F. A moderately strong cold front moved through the area the night of 30 November-1 December and brought winds and rain from the northwest. December 1 had been unsettled and when we arrived on the island we had noted considerable bird activity near our campsite. The morning of the sighting was the first clear day for 3 days and we again noted intense activity, as normally occurs after a front moves through an area and the weather clears.

Lighting conditions were excellent and as the bird made several turns around our campsite, we were able to observe it from all angles. The following field marks were recorded: flapping flight somewhat reminiscent of a Common Nighthawk (Chordeiles minor). Body heavier than that of a Mourning Dove (Zenaida macroura). The tail was spread quite often and revealed a broad grayish band on a somewhat square tail. There were no concentrated areas of white or black in the plumage as is characteristic of the Rock Dove (Columba livia). Basic plumage color was similar to that of the Mourning Dove. There was a definite two-toned effect to the wings, giving them a dark look, especially at the distal end, grading into the body color at the junction of the wing and body. There was a slight interruption in the basic color in the nape region but no definite pattern could be detected. Although we did not see the characteristic white crescent at the nape, experience of Cooley and Jackson in California and Arizona has shown that this characteristic is not always readily observable. Goodwin (1977) remarks that this characteristic is not always seen.

The Band-tailed Pigeon normally ranges through the western United States to parts of Central America (A.O.U. 1957). Although this sighting represents the first for Mississippi, the Band-tailed Pigeon is a

notorious wanderer and has been seen in surrounding states. In Alabama (Imhof 1976) it was sighted 23 October 1971 on Dauphin Island, only 10 miles east of Petit Bois Island, and as a result is on that state's hypothetical list. On 9 April 1974 one spent 30 minutes at a feeder near Nashville, Tennessee for that state's first and only record (Imhof 1974). There are 2 records for Florida. Letson (1968) reported 2 near Sarasota but Stevenson (1976) believes they were escaped captive birds. In view of the restlessness of this species and the numerous sightings in surrounding states, it is at least possible that these 2 Florida birds were not escapees. The second Florida record of 25-27 September 1974 at Sugarloaf Key was one studied at a feeder (Edscorn 1974). In Louisiana there are 5 records, 4 of these specimens (Lowery 1974). One of these was a bird seen 7 miles south of Lake Pontchartrain.

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