

THE LOST BIRDS: DID YOU KNOW?



Although occasional reported sightings of the **Eskimo Curlew** continue into the 21st century (none with photos for verification), it is widely believed that the Eskimo Curlew is extinct. In addition to prairie habitat loss, another reason for its disappearance is the extinction of its principal food source, the Rocky Mountain grasshopper. The only photographs ever taken of the Eskimo Curlew in the wild anywhere in the world were taken on West Galveston Island in March 1962. **The Eskimo Curlew Memorial Sculpture was installed on March 24, 2020 in Galveston Island State Park in Galveston, Texas.**

Carolina Parakeets were colorful green parrots with bright yellow heads, red faces, and pale beaks who travelled noisily in flocks of 200-300. Once locally abundant, it was the only native North American parrot north of Mexico until destruction of their forested habitat reduced the population. In addition, they were killed by farmers who considered them pests, and hunted for their feathers for use in making ladies' hats. Another factor contributing to their decline was their tendency to return to, and flock around, their dead and dying, enabling even greater slaughter. The last known wild specimen was killed in Okeechobee County, Florida, in 1904. The last 2 captive birds were a mated pair, named Incas and Lady Jane. Incas outlasted his mate by about one year, dying at the Cincinnati Zoo on February 21, 1918. **The Carolina Parakeet Memorial Sculpture is in Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park in Okeechobee, Florida.**



Great Auks, looking something like penguins and standing 3 feet high with hooked beaks almost as large as their heads, were flightless birds who mated for life. Once widely distributed across the North Atlantic, Great Auks roosted at sea and came ashore only during breeding season where they could be found on a few islands from Newfoundland to Norway. The Great Auk was prized for its feathers, oil, fat, and eggs, but over-harvesting the birds for market led to its demise. Agile in the water, these birds were slow and awkward on land, making them easy prey for humans. The last two Great Auks, a mated pair, were clubbed to death on an island off Iceland in 1844. **The Great Auk Memorial Sculpture is on Joe Batt's Point in Fogo Island, Newfoundland.**

Heath Hens were extremely common in their coastal range between Virginia and New Hampshire. They had the reputation as “poor man’s food,” because it was inexpensive and plentiful, and there are theories that suggest the first Thanksgiving featured Heath Hens and not Wild Turkey. Hunting reduced its numbers so severely that by 1870, none remained on the mainland leaving only a small population on the island of Martha’s Vineyard. By 1929, only one Heath Hen remained, which the locals named Booming Ben. Ben was easily observed on his traditional mating grounds until March 11, 1932. After that date, he was never seen again. **The Heath Hen Memorial Sculpture is in the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest in Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts.**



The Labrador Duck was the first species among endemic North American birds to go extinct. Boldly displaying its striking black and white plumage, this bird was a sea duck that feasted in shallow water on shellfish and mollusks along the American coast of the North Atlantic. The Labrador Duck is considered the most enigmatic of all North American birds because of its extinction before ornithologists had much opportunity to study it. The last individual of this species was seen in 1878. **The Labrador Duck Memorial Sculpture is in Brand Park in Elmira, New York.**

Passenger Pigeons once numbered in the billions and made up 25 percent of the total U.S.

bird population, it is believed. It was easily the most abundant bird in North America and possibly the world. The bird was hunted into extinction, victimized by the belief that no creature of such abundance could ever be endangered. The last Passenger Pigeon, named Martha, died at the Cincinnati Zoo on September 1, 1914. **The Passenger Pigeon Memorial Sculpture is in the Grange Audubon Center in Columbus, Ohio.**

