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# DAILY NEWS

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## PASSENGER PIGEON SIGHTING

Yesterday, the US Fish and Wildlife Department confirmed sightings of passenger pigeons, a bird species previously believed to be extinct, in an area of northwest Texas known as the Texas Panhandle.

“It’s both exciting and a source of great concern,” announced US Fish and Wildlife Department spokesman Ima Wolf. “Of course everyone’s happy to know the passenger pigeon isn’t really extinct, but now we have to worry about the species’ chances for future survival.”

The first person believed to have seen passenger pigeons since the early 1900s is one Michael Ellis of Canyon, Texas. Ellis discovered a nest of the birds in a tree outside his home. He immediately contacted the American Ornithologist’s Union to collect the \$3,000 nest discovery reward it offered in 1910. The AOU refused to payout, citing “reasonableness of time” for claiming the reward period had passed. Ellis reportedly plans to sue.

Media coverage surrounding Ellis’ claim was enough to renew interest in the species, and the US Fish and Wildlife Department immediately entered the Texas



Panhandle to conduct an aviary / apiary study. According to spokesperson Wolf, the results of that study show that at least three nesting pairs of passenger pigeons are in the Texas Panhandle with a further two pairs in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

Wolf also noted, at the press conference announcing the result of the passenger pigeon study, a need to conduct fresh wildlife impact studies in Texas and Oklahoma for the placement of wind turbines.

“Wind turbines are known to pose a serious risk to wildlife, particularly birds and bats,” claimed Wolf. “Now we have a species previously believed to be extinct trying to make a comeback, in an area with increasing installation of individual wind turbines and

large scale wind farms.”

When asked if any wildlife impact studies have been performed for wind turbines in the Texas and Oklahoma Panhandles, Wolf replied that most studies are conducted by the companies installing the turbines, and the results are not released to the public.

The passenger pigeon is described as being approximately 40cm long. The feathers are predominately blueish gray, with the throat and breast feathers of males being an unusual and distinctive rose color. At its peak, the passenger pigeon population was estimated at 3 to 5 billion birds across the United States. Aggressive hunting of the species and loss of habitat through the 1800s lead to its decline. The last known passenger pigeon in captivity died in 1914.



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