

August 5, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mister President:

We rarely know the exact date an entire species goes extinct, but in one case we do. On September 1, 1914 Martha, the last known passenger pigeon, died alone in captivity at the Cincinnati Zoo. It was the first famous extinction, as Martha's last days and our collective powerlessness to prevent an American-caused wildlife tragedy captivated and perhaps shocked the public.

September 1, 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of this sad day in American history.

The passenger pigeon was once the most abundant bird in North America, perhaps even the world, numbering 3 to 5 billion. Passenger pigeons were once so common that passing flocks would literally darken the skies for hours and even days at a time. Yet the passenger pigeon was driven to extinction in just a few decades in the late 19th century. It was caused primarily by unregulated market hunting – even on the nesting grounds – and enabled by seemingly benign technologies including the telegraph, which gave hunters advanced notice of flock locations, and railroads, which enabled box cars of pigeon carcasses to be shipped to eastern cities.

For something so common and prolific to be gone in such a short span of time is a valuable lesson in the importance of preserving our nation's magnificent wildlife and natural heritage. The story is unique in the annals of American history.

The extinction of the passenger pigeon helped to catalyze the 20th Century American conservation movement. Today, the centenary of that momentous event is a powerful reminder of how precious – and at times how fragile – is the web of life that sustains us all. It is also a reminder of how far we've come in preventing future tragedies thanks to landmark conservation achievements such as the Endangered Species Act.

Project Passenger Pigeon, a voluntary partnership of over 160 institutions, scientists, conservationists, educators, artists, musicians, filmmakers and others throughout the nation is using the centenary of the species extinction to tell the story of the passenger pigeon and to help our fellow citizens reflect on the importance of preserving the natural world. The Smithsonian Institution has recognized the centenary as a significant enough event to feature Martha, now a preserved specimen, as the centerpiece of *Once There Were Billions: Vanished Birds of North America*, an exhibition of vanished birds of North America currently at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.

The undersigned organizations participating in Project Passenger Pigeon as well as other organizations listed here therefore respectfully request that you issue a presidential proclamation commemorating the centenary of the extinction of the passenger pigeon and reminding Americans of the need to be continued good stewards of wildlife and nature. Thank you for your consideration.

Most Respectfully,

Alabama Ornithological Society
Alaska Wild Animal Recovery Effort
Alaska Wilderness League
Aldo Leopold Foundation
Allamakee County Protectors
American Bird Conservancy
American Ornithologists' Union
Anne Arundel Bird Club
Arkansas Audubon Society
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Audubon Chicago Region
Audubon Naturalist Society
Audubon Outdoor Club of Corpus Christi, TX
Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania
Bexar Audubon Society
Bird Conservation Network
Bird Studies Canada
Black Swamp Bird Observatory
Brookfield Zoo/Chicago Zoological Society
Born Free USA
Californians for Western Wilderness
Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Center for Biological Diversity
Chadwick School Environmental Community Service Group
Chesapeake Wildlife Heritage
Chicago Ornithological Society
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden
Coal Point Trading Company
Colorado State University
Conservation Council for Hawai'i
Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology
Coulee Region Audubon Society
Council for Environmental Education
Crescent Bird Club
Defenders of Wildlife
Department of Biology, University of Louisiana@Lafayette
Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International
Dimijian Images

Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society
Endangered Species Coalition
Endangered Habitats League
Environmental Defense Fund
Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center
Fauna & Flora International
Forests Forever
Friends of Allegheny Wilderness
Friends of Blackwater
Friends of the Clearwater
Friends of the Wild Whoopers
George Miksch Sutton Avian Research Center
Golden Gate Audubon Society
Grand Valley State University, Michigan
Great Birding Projects, Maryland
Gulf Coast Bird Observatory
Hawk Migration Association of North America
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association
Howard County Bird Club
Idaho Conservation League
Indiana State Museum
Illinois State Museum
Institute for Applied Ecology
International Elephant Foundation
International Fund for Animal Welfare
International Rhino Foundation
John Burroughs' Woodchuck Lodge
John James Audubon Museum
Kestrel Land Trust
Kirkland Bird Club
Klamath Forest Alliance
Lane County Audubon Society
Lehigh Gap Nature Center
Lincoln Park Zoo
Los Angeles Audubon
Louisiana Ornithological Society
Mahoning Valley Audubon Society
Maine Audubon
Manistee Audubon Society
Massachusetts Audubon
Maryland Ornithological Society
Mecklenburg County Conservation Science Office
M.L. Bean Life Science Museum, Brigham Young University, Utah
Mobile Bay Audubon Society
Mount Shasta Bioregional Ecology Center
National Audubon Society
National Eagle Center
Natural Resources Defense Council

Nature Tours
New Hampshire Audubon
New Jersey Audubon
Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society
Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge
Openlands
Orleans Audubon Society
Payne County Audubon Society
Pioneer Alaskan Fisheries Inc
Pfeiffer Nature Center, New York
Pomona Valley Audubon
Quad City Audubon Society
Rainier Audubon Society
RESTORE: The North Woods
Riverwalk Bird Club
Rocky Mountain Wild
Robert Cooper Audubon Society
Rogue Valley Audubon Society
Salem Audubon Society
San Juan Islands Audubon
Sand County Foundation
Sangre de Cristo Audubon Society
Saving Maine
Sea and Sage Audubon Society
Sea Ducks Unlimited
Sea Turtle Conservancy
Sierra Club
Soda Mountain Wilderness Council
Songbirds of Northern Indiana, Inc.
Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory
Southern Maryland Audubon Society
Southwestern New Mexico Audubon Society
Stockbridge Audubon Society
Sullivan County NY Audubon Society
Tennessee Ornithological Society
The Bonobo Conservation Initiative
The Bermuda Audubon Society
The Chicago Academy of Sciences and its Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum
The Empty Bell
The Field Museum of Natural History
The Friends of Dyke Marsh
The Grove National Historic Landmark
The Humane Society of the United States
The Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites
The Institute for Bird Populations
The Trumpeter Swan Society
The Urban Wildlands Group
The Wildlands Network.

University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas
Warioto Chapter of Audubon
Western Watersheds Project
Wild Earth Guardians
Wisconsin Society for Ornithology