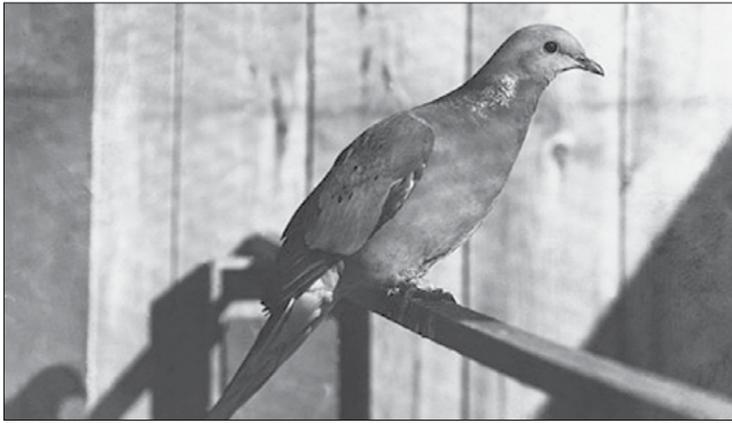


A TRIBUTE TO MARTHA: THE LAST PASSENGER PIGEON

BY SCOT BASTIAN

Lost in the turbulence of history, overshadowed by the beginning of the "Great War" known as World War I, was a momentous event in the chronicles of ecology: the extinction of the last known passenger pigeon, The last known individual of her kind, named Martha, died in the Cincinnati Zoo 100 years ago on September 1, 1914, exactly 100 years ago on the last day of this year's Burning Man.

Passenger pigeons were a force majeure in the Eastern landscape. Once numbering in the billions, they were quite possibly the most numerous bird



Passenger pigeons once comprised 25 to 40% of all birds in North America.

species in the world. When Europeans arrived in North America, population estimates ranged from 3 to 5 billion, approximately 25 to 40% of the total North American birds. They traveled in huge flocks, one of which was described as a mile wide and three hundred miles long, and taking 13 hours to pass overhead. The flocks were so dense in number that they were said to eclipse the sun.

Passenger pigeons were named for the French word *passenger*, which translates as "passing by." They were half again as large as their cousin the mourning dove, and resembled

its Western relative, the band-tailed pigeon.

The range of the passenger pigeon extended north into Canada and west to Eastern Texas and Eastern Montana. When these immense flocks roosted, hundreds of millions of birds would leave a swath of destruction, scouring the landscape for food and crushing trees with their collective weight. The largest recorded nesting colony was 850 square miles.

In spite of their enormous numbers they are gone. Gone forever. Why did they disappear? The basic problem was

that they were delicious. The young birds, called squabs, were particularly prized. Their undoing was the density of their flocks and their propensity for colony breeding. The density of the nesting communities made them easy prey—a discharge from a double-barreled shotgun blast could kill dozens of birds. They were collected by the thousands using nets.

The last confirmed wild passenger pigeon was observed in Indiana in 1902. Martha was named after the First Lady, Martha Washington. After the death of her cage companions (including George) a reward was offered for finding a potential mate—but none was ever found. Martha, the last of her kind, an endling, died of natural causes at the probable age of 29 years. Her remains are on display at the Smithsonian Museum.

Other than the fortuitous date marking the centenary since the extinction of passenger pigeons, what does this have to do with Burning Man? I think that Burners have a special appreciation for the transience of all things. Our "roost" on the Playa can be compared to the crowded passenger pigeons that are now gone. Many do not realize that, for most species, extinction is the norm. Nearly 99% of all the species that ever lived are believed to be extinct. Humans are the most prolific primates on the planet, but as evidenced by the passing of the passenger pigeon and the dinosaurs, being multitudinous provides no guarantee for survival. Burners, like passenger pigeons, live a bold, noisy existence, thriving in groups, and like Martha and her kin, Burning Man will vanish without a trace. Let's hope the same fate doesn't await the human race. 🐦

DAILY 12-STEP RECOVERING MEETINGS
at Anonymous Village.
Any "A" meetings at 12:00 noon & 6:00 pm,
located between 5:30 & 5:45 on Gold Street.

BRAINTEASERS by Durgy

L	E	S	P	L	A	N	A	D	E	E	S
A	R	A	H	A	D	N	A	K	V	O	P
Y	R	A	S	N	A	V	A	R	A	C	I
B	R	O	D	S	R	O	A	D	E	U	R
H	A	N	O	N	J	E	D	A	J	L	E
C	G	S	T	O	E	P	H	E	S	U	S
O	O	R	R	M	E	E	D	A	H	S	Y
I	L	U	Z	A	L	S	I	P	A	L	S
T	D	O	E	N	I	N	E	C	I	A	P
N	D	P	W	N	N	A	H	A	F	S	I
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E	S	N	E	C	N	I	K	N	A	R	F

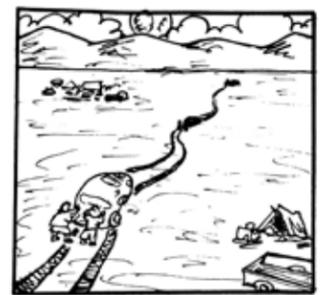
Find these words in the grid: ANTIOCH, BASRA, CARAVANSARY, CINNAMON, DARJEELING, DPW, EPHEBUS, ESPLANADE, FRANKINCENSE, GOLD, HAIFA, ICE NINE, ISFAHAN, JADE, KANDAHAR, LAPIS LAZULI, OASIS, OCULUS, OPEN, RODS ROAD, SHADE, SPIRES, TIPSY. The leftover letters spell out a popular Black Rock City phrase.

THE BRUISED HOLE by Ren

At Juplaya we noticed the parking break wasn't engaged on Blushy's car..



then proceeded to push it out into deep playa



High Price to Go Home

BY MITCH

Burning Man really sold out this year—not in an existential way (well, maybe, that's for you to decide) but ticket prices remained strong right into opening Sunday.

Since 2012, it's been a foregone conclusion that all available tickets would be spoken for. Still, in the past two years, secondary-market prices collapsed in the final weeks before Black Rock City's opening as last-minute plans changed. Not so in 2014.

Few tickets seemed left for sale by Sunday. Most hopeful buyers on local public bulletin boards for major cities were offering \$400 or so, sticking to \$380 face value plus costs, with about 25 percent willing to go higher, usually to the \$800 area.

Since June, tickets on commercial websites with asked and auction prices were running about \$900. Auction

prices turned higher in the final week, topping \$1,000.

Some sellers on the bulletin boards stuck to the rules over the summer, offering tickets in the \$400 range to recoup their actual costs, while others aimed for \$900 or so, occasionally providing amusing rationales. A New Yorker didn't want to name a price above face value but said to pick among bidders there would have to be some added inducement, "not necessarily in dollar terms" to allow a selection among "different people looking to buy." A Chicago crew seeking \$860 was "using profit to cover our other costs for trip."

Buyers for the most part and especially in Los Angeles stuck to the face-value rules, with some amusing exceptions. One Angeleno offered \$400 and a "magical favor," which turned out to be an act like covering one of the seller's favorite shoes in Playa dust or placing a photo on the Man. A San Francisco artist proposed \$450 plus the seller's choice from among a selection of her paintings.

The best-written rant came from a New Yorker looking for a friend: "Is there somebody in NYC who isn't an illegal bonerwad who thinks they can sell Burning Man tickets for above their face value?" He opined that the only good thing about paying a seller \$1,000 would be to keep "your horrible personality of moral turpitude off the Playa."

Sadly, that buyer failed to get the extra ticket, an update to the ad showed: "GIVING UP. I've been emailed by nothing but scamming scumbags."

That posting and several others made reference to scams involving buyers who refused to meet and take cash, insisting on hard-to-trace electronic funds trans-

fers. Will Call tickets seemed especially difficult to transfer, requiring buyer and seller to meet over a computer to change the name on the reservation.

Buyers seeking a fair shake should use ePlaya on the Burning Man site, where the face value plus costs policy is enforced. The mismatch between buyers and sellers is evident: on Sunday afternoon there were 766 threads posted in the 2014 tickets wanted section versus 168 in the for-sale area.

Parking passes were another matter entirely in secondary sales, thrown in with tickets at little extra cost or offered on their own at or near face value. Either people did not understand the rules or a lot fewer than 35,000 participant vehicles will make it this year.

Assuming all tickets and vehicle passes were sold by the Burning Man Organization, the take this year was \$25.4 million, up 9 percent from 2013. That reflects 2,000 more tickets and the extra income from the vehicle passes.

Incidentally, the Beacon has discovered that Burning Man does better on the bottom line than previously suspected. While we knew that the Bureau of Land Management gets 3 percent of adjusted income, we didn't know how much of an adjustment there was. A government spokesman said the figure is sales minus costs, including such items as materials used in building the city and travel expenses. He would not divulge the exact deductions but did say the number can vary significantly from year to year.

This revelation means the 3 percent charge is on a number between sales and net income, reducing the take for the government and leaving more for Bmorg. 🐿

On Sunday afternoon there were 766 threads posted in the 2014 tickets wanted section versus 168 in the for-sale area.



ALMANAC

Tuesday • August 26

Sunset : 7:40 A.M.
Moonset : 8:02 P.M.
Twilight Ends : 8:09 P.M.

Wednesday • August 27

First light: 5:50 A.M.
Sunrise: 6:18 A.M.
Sunset: 7:39 P.M.
Twilight ends: 8:07 P.M.

The Moon, in the sky at sunset, sets at 8:31 P.M.

Thursday • August 28

First light: 5:51 A.M.
Sunrise: 6:19 A.M.

Sun, Moon times courtesy of
www.SunriseSunset.com
Planets courtesy of Dominic Ford's
www.in-the-sky.org

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