

ROSS, . . .

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Elizabeth Ross, Interviewer.
September 25, 1937.

WILD PIGEONS.

Persons who recall incidents of the late seventies and early eighties of the last century give some interesting information about wild pigeons. These birds were very numerous at the periods mentioned. Often great flocks in countless numbers flew above prairies and woods, so that the sky was invisible at times. Often the pigeons flew so low that many were slain with shotguns, but the greater number were killed on the roosts.

At various points in the hill country beyond the Illinois River, as well as elsewhere, the pigeons after feeding during the day about the valleys and woodlands, flew to the roosting places. There the trees were covered to such an extent that large limbs were often broken by the weight of the thousands of birds and crashed to the ground. Men and boys with sticks knocked scores and hundreds of the pigeons from the low-hanging branches of the trees as torch lights were carried about the roosting places.

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In some instances nets were used in which to snare large numbers of pigeons in a short time. Those who netted the pigeons shipped most of them to buyers in the large cities at a distance and realized satisfactory returns.

From many of the people of the decades of the forties and fifties of the nineteenth century there have been preserved anecdotes relating to the numerous pigeons of the long bygone time. Their numbers were then larger than in later times. A sound as of the rumbling of distant thunder indicated the coming of vast flocks of pigeons before they became visible on the horizon, soon to sweep like a great cloud across the sky.

So numerous were the wild pigeons during portions of the Fall and winter seasons that the majority of the people believed that they would exist for ^{an} indefinite period of the future; but in course of time, before the close of the decade of the eighties, the birds became more scarce, and after passage of several more years

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none were to be seen. The flocks had so dwindled that the last pigeons seen in the hills were only a few dozen in number.

Various reasons have been assigned concerning the disappearance of the wild pigeons. It is possible that a great migration was made to the Republic of Colombia where wild pigeons exist in large numbers. But nevertheless, some strange opinions have been expressed. One of these is to the effect that the pigeons in one vast body started to fly across the Atlantic Ocean, became too weary to fly farther, and falling into the water were all drowned.

Old men of the Cherokee hills in speaking of years long past when wild game of various kinds was plentiful sometimes refer to the periods when the wild pigeons could be definitely expected each year. They also mention the places where once the pigeons had their roosting places in rugged valleys and on slopes of the wooded hills.

Some of the last few pigeons seen were in trees near

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the banks of the Barren Fork River near the present
village of Welling.

Authorities: S. W. Ross, Park Hill, Oklahoma.

Newspaper mention in past years..