

# SARA ANGELUCCI: AVIARY



Aviary (Barn Owl/endangered), 2013

## *Barn Owl (Tyto alba)*

The Barn Owl is easily identified by its whitish heart-shaped face, dark eyes, pale, lightly speckled under parts, and long legs. Changing agricultural practices including a shift from hay crops and pastures in favor of row crops, which reduced prey population, and the reduction in open barns and other outbuildings, which formerly were nest sites for Barn Owls in the upper Midwestern United States, is the most likely cause of drastic population declines occurring in the past twenty years.

## *Red-Headed Woodpecker (Melanerpes erythrocephalus)*

A vivid red head, neck, and breast make the Red-Headed Woodpecker easily recognizable. The Red-Headed Woodpecker population has declined by more than 60% in Ontario in the last twenty years because of habitat loss due to forestry and agricultural practices, as well as competition from European Starling for nest sites. Human removal of dead trees in which it nests is also believed to be a significant factor in its decline.



Aviary (Heath Hen/extinct), 2013

## *Heath Hen, subspecies of the Greater Prairie-Chicken (Tympnanuchus cupido)*

The Greater Prairie-Chicken is a large grouse found on the tallgrass prairie of central North America. The Heath Hen was the eastern race of this species. Both species are brown with light and dark barring and a short rounded tail. The Heath Hen was abundant in east coast scrub and barren lands from Maine to Virginia prior to European settlement. Extensive hunting of this relatively tame bird quickly decimated their number and by the mid-nineteenth century, the bird was extirpated from the mainland. A few hundred birds survived on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, but by 1932 the subspecies was gone.

## *Loggerhead Shrike (Lanis ludovicianus)*

The Loggerhead Shrike is a robin-sized songbird with a robust hooked bill, black face mask, white under parts, and black wings with a prominent white wing patch. Intensive farming practices, loss of hedgerows, natural plant succession, reforestation, and human development have all reduced the amount of habitat available for the Loggerhead Shrike. Unwary young Shrikes also have the unfortunate tendency to forage for dead insects on roads, where they may be killed by vehicles. Predation by cats and dogs may be an additional threat, especially in areas close to human habitation.

## *Sage Thrasher (Oreoscoptes montanus)*

The Sage Thrasher is a medium-sized songbird that has drab, brownish-gray upper parts with slightly darker centers forming indistinct streaking, especially on the crown. At the edge of this species' range in British Columbia, habitat loss to residential development, agricultural conversion, mowing, burning, herbicide and pesticide treatments, and heavy grazing by livestock are all reducing the quality of Thrasher habitat during breeding season.

## *Short-Eared Owl (Asio flammeus)*

The Short-Eared Owl is a medium-sized owl that lives in open areas such as grasslands, marshes, and tundra. On the Great Plains, the primary sources of habitat loss have been the conversion of native prairie to agricultural use and overgrazing of existing grasslands. Along coastal areas, which include many wintering sites, recreational use and land development have caused losses of nearshore marsh and oldfield habitats.



Aviary (Sage Thrasher/endangered), 2013

*Western Screech-Owl (Megascops kennicottii)*

The Western Screech-Owl is a small owl with either rusty brown or dark gray plumage and detailed streaks and bars on the under parts. It is found in a wide variety of woodland and forest habitats. The population face ongoing threats especially from the loss of mature trees needed for nesting and roost sites. The loss of these trees is associated with urban and agricultural development and degradation of riparian woodlands. Some regional accounts of this species include a litany of road deaths; this may related to its habit, at least in the Northwest, of foraging for earthworms on road surfaces during wet weather.

*Spotted Owl (Strix occidentalis)*

The Spotted Owl is chocolate brown to chestnut brown in coloration with round to elliptical or irregular white spots on the head, neck, back, and under parts. This owl requires old-growth forests for its survival and has suffered a catastrophic population decline over the past fifty years as habitat is lost and fragmented. With the severely depressed population, an additional threat is the recent arrival of the closely related Barred Owl as a breeding bird in British Columbia; this species competes with and hybridizes with the present species. All adults are old and near the end of their breeding age and there is no recruitment of young owls into the population.

*Bobolink (Dolichonyx oryzivorus)*

The bobolink is a small blackbird that lives in tall grass, hay fields, and meadow habitats. The species is threatened by incidental mortality from agricultural operations, habitat loss and fragmentation, pesticide exposure, and bird control at wintering roosts. Additionally, the species' survival is threatened by trapping, involvement in the caged bird market, and purposeful killing to reduce crop depredation.

*Eskimo Curlew (Numenius borealis)*

The Eskimo Curlew is now considered to be virtually extinct. During migration, birds would almost double their body weight, earning them the name "doughbirds," and, in the nineteenth century, market hunters took enormous numbers for sale as human food. The last Ontario sighting was reported by James Bay in 1976. This bird was particularly at risk from unregulated commercial hunting because of its tendency to congregate in huge flocks during migration. The loss of migrating flocks during ocean storms has been suggested as another factor in the species' decline, but the Curlew would almost certainly have rebounded from sporadic natural catastrophes had it not been for the enormous annual losses due to market hunting.

*Passenger Pigeon (Ectopistes igratorius)*

The Passenger Pigeon lived in huge flocks in deciduous forests and during migration. When naturalists first observed them, they "filled the skies." The last known individual died in the Cincinnati Zoo in 1914. The Passenger Pigeon declined in Ontario, and elsewhere, because of a combination of factors, which included loss of important food trees such as mature oaks, hunting, and disturbance of breeding sites. The extinction of the Passenger Pigeon serves as a warning of how habitat alteration can jeopardize even abundant species.



Aviary (Spotted Owl/endangered), 2013



Aviary (Winter Bobolink/endangered), 2013



Aviary (Female Passenger Pigeon/extinct), 2013