

February 2010

www.daviessaudubon.net



DAVIESS COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE GOLDFINCH



Mantle Rock left Audubon members awestruck. (Tony Eaden photo)

Mantle Rock fills members with awe

“Going to see Mantle Rock is more than a look at a unique geological formation. It is an emotional and physical experience.”

Tony Eaden’s words sum up the impact of the January 23 for many of those

See Mantle, Page 5



From left: Brenda Little, Pat Augenstein, Ginger Bailey, Rose Ann Radzelovage, Jill Flachskam, Mike Henshaw, Kenny Lin, Tony Eaden and Ken Hurm. (photo courtesy of Kenny Lin)

Meeting will discuss ice impact

Is the ice storm of 2009 just a distant memory?

Not to those who spent much of the year cleaning debris from their property.

And not to Kentucky’s woodlands and those who might have lost habitat.

Tim Arnold of Kentucky Division of Forestry

will present a program about the storm’s lasting impact on the environment at the 7 p.m. Feb. 2 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society at First Christian Church, 7th and J.R. Miller Blvd.

There will be no pre-meeting dinner.

February Calendar:

DCAS regular meeting, 7 p.m. Feb. 2, First Christian Church, J.R. Miller and Seventh Street.

Great Backyard Bird Count event at Girls Inc., 9:30 a.m. Feb. 15, Rolling Heights.

Field trip to Ballard Wildlife Management Area, 8 a.m. Feb. 13. Meet at Moonlite’s back parking lot.

Griffith unveils feeder birds' secrets

Even the most common backyard bird can hold surprises for the most veteran birder.

Tim Griffith, co-owner of the Wild Birds Unlimited store in Evansville, explored some of these secrets during the Jan. 5 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society at First Christian Church.

"We believe that the only difference we're going to make in this world is if we educate people," he said.

As he speaks with groups armed with information from a lifetime of birding, he tries to share information that will stay with people, triggering the notion of "I didn't know that!" among the most jaded.

"The minute you do that, the next time to see that bird, you'll remember it, and you will appreciate that bird so much more," he said.

His technique worked to a charm.

Some of these traits include:

*Northern cardinal: Why the name? There are seven different kinds of cardinals in the Americas. He noted that in John James Audubon's time, the bird's range was no farther north than south-central Indiana or west of the Mississippi River. It moved north and west as the settlers did. Want to tell a juvenile and female apart? Look at the bill -- the female's is orange.

*Eastern bluebird. Eastern blackbird, he corrected, noting there's not a true blue feather on the bird -- it's all in the way it reflects light. He credits man-made boxes for boosting its population. In the past six years, the Warrick County CBC bluebird count has risen from 11 to more than 200. He notes they can be trained -- "Billy and Betty" -- their yard birds --



Tim Griffith delighted members with feeder bird facts.

come at a bell to dine on mealworms.

*Ruby-throated hummingbird — Protein is much more important to the summer bird. A female's diet can go up to 80% insects during the breeding season. The rise of the rufous in the tri-state is credited to those people who have learned to keep their feeders up well into fall.

He also noted that hummingbird bills are distinctive by length (female's are longer) and rings, which help identify bird age. Female tails are rounded, and males' are pointed.

Still photography helped the members see the impressive forked tongue 2½ times the bird's body length. Birds don't sip nectar, they lap it up like a dog. It can go into a flower 10-14 times a second.

*American goldfinch: They love to feed in flocks and can turn thistle into mash to feed

their young. He tells customers to put all of their thistle feeders together in their yard, away from the rest of the feeding stations.

"They have a flocking mentality, so someone's always watching their back," he said,

White-breasted nuthatch, Carolina chickadees and titmice form a feeding guild. They eat as a unit, and they recognize each others' call. Their hippocampus region of their brains enlarges in early winter, then subsides.

Wayne are considered Carolinas.

* Tufted titmouse: Underneath that perky façade lies the soul of a thief.

"He will follow a red-bellied woodpecker back to the hole where he's stored his food,

steal it and hide it in his cache," he said.

* White-breasted nuthatch: Along with chickadees and titmice, they form a feeding guild. They eat as a unit, and they recognize each others' call. Their hippocampus region of their brains enlarges in early winter, then subsides.

"They memorize where they hide everything single grain they eat," he said. Scientists also found they catalogue everything by quality and weight, with top-rated seed eaten first.

* Red-headed woodpecker. That's the bird "that started it all" for Griffith at the age of 8. He mourns its dwindling numbers. He offered up comparisons to the more-populous red-bellied woodpecker. The red-headed's passive personality will cede nesting cavities to predator birds. Its diet also is more limited, and its beak is weaker, so it is not as adept as foraging in live hardwood trees.

Limited diets and limited habitats also have hindered yellow-bellied sapsucker populations and all but killed off ivory-billed woodpeckers, while pileateds and downy woodpeckers thrive.

Woodpeckers are fascinating to him, including their ability to hit a tree at 60 mph and tails which are strong enough to prop them up on a tree.

* Carolina wren: The only wren that mates for life, he loves watching the affection. "They will nuzzle, they will feed each other and they care for each other," he said.

Once, a female was in his garage, and the male kept going to the window to reassure her. As soon as she got out, he rushed to make sure she was all right, then grabbed mealworms for her to eat. The house wren, on the other hand, is monogamous "for 2½ seconds."

Tally up your backyard winter birds

During the course of the year, there are opportunities to explore hills, valleys and waterways in pursuit of birds. But in the midst of winter, there's no place like your place to enjoy winter birds.

The 13th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (co-sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited) will be held Feb. 12 to Feb. 15. You can take hours – or just 15 minutes a day – to record sightings that will be used by researchers at co-sponsors Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society. Last year more than 93,600 checklists were submitted online.

How does it work? Count the birds you see for as little as 15 minutes and report your findings, weather conditions and habitat to www.birdcount.org. At that site, you will be directed to a checklist of common Kentucky winter birds to mark off. You can count on one day, or all four, at the same or different locations. You will send a different checklist on each day.

The site is fascinating, because you can see results from any place in the United States. The club's excellent photographers are encouraged to submit photos for consideration to be posted on their online gallery. YouTube videos of your count experience also are encouraged.



Christine Haines of Washington state was an honorable mention winner with this photo of a red-breasted nuthatch.

In addition, the chapter will conduct a GBBC count/ bird watching program at

Girls Inc.'s Rolling Heights site at 9:30 a.m. Feb. 15. Anyone who would like to help Judy Adams or Mary Kissel may contact Kissel at mjkisselchirp45@bellsouth.net.

Materials are being sent to the chapter's Audubon Adventures classrooms.

On behalf of the Joe Ford Nature Library, Grace Ford will be working with Girls Inc. middle schoolers for a Feb. 12 count, hopes to encourage participation among her students at Heritage Christian School and has been promoting the event in the Nature Notes column for the Messenger-Inquirer.

Last year's top 10 list in the national count included: 1) Northern Cardinal, 2) Mourning Dove, 3) Dark-eyed Junco, 4) American Goldfinch, 5) Downy Woodpecker, 6) Blue Jay, 7) House Finch, 8) Tufted Titmouse, 9) American Crow and 10) Black-capped Chickadee.

Cornell organizers note 2009 GBBC data highlighted a huge southern invasion of Pine Siskins across much of the eastern United States.

Participants counted 279,469 Pine Siskins on 18,528 checklists, as compared to the previous high of 38,977 birds on 4,069 checklists in 2005. Failure of seed crops farther north caused the siskins to move south in search of food.

Volunteers needed to help with crafts for spring break museum workshops

The Daviess County Audubon Society has been invited to participate in spring break activities at the Owensboro Museum of Science and History. There will be sessions on hummingbirds on Tuesday, April 6, and nesting Thursday, April 8.

The days' events will begin with "make-and-take" activities at noon with younger students. There are tentative plans to make hummingbird feeders out of plastic water bottles and clay nests using natural and unnatural materials. Members who love crafts are needed to assist that day and also do prep work on the feeders. A video on



making feeders may be viewed at <http://www.activitytv.com/306-hummingbird-feeder>.

If you're willing to help, please contact Mary Kissel at mjkisselchirp45@bellsouth.net or 926-3321. You can also help by saving bottles and bits of grasses and twigs and bringing them to the March meeting.

DC Audubon membership dues

Name: _____

Address: _____

I have enclosed \$15 for local membership only _____

I have enclosed \$20 for national membership _____

Send to: treasurer Charles Morris,
1400 Woodbridge Trail, Owensboro,
KY 42303

West birds hunker down, but counters don't



A bundled-up Laura Morris scans for birds at Moreland Park.

2010 entered with frigid conditions, but warm feelings for birds during the western Daviess County Christmas bird count, centered Jan. 1 at Jan Howard's house.

Seventeen observers tallied 46 species and 10,291 individuals as they drove 253 miles and walked another 8½ miles from city parks to maybe the coldest spot in Daviess County – the Wilson farm.

The day's highlight was a flock of sandhill cranes that Howard and Pat Augenstein saw on their travels. Augenstein was fascinated by their flight pattern as they flew out by Panther.

"I just saw something up in the sky, and it wasn't in a V-shape, so we slowed down. They kept going round and round and round like they were looking for somewhere to land," Augenstein said.

Counters were pleased with the variety of woodpeckers seen, including yellow-bellied sapsuckers in the Lower River Road area and Diamond Lake, as well as hawks. Carolyn Williams and



Brenda and Tony Eaden enjoy a post-count lunch — and fellowship with fellow birders — at Jan Howard's home.

Charles Morris both noted their areas were filled with horned larks. Waterfowl was few and far between, but Lynn Tichenor noted that she and Frances Tichenor counted 19 Canada geese on the city's west side.

Species found included: Canada Goose, 69; Mallard, 58; Great Blue Heron, 2; Turkey Vulture, 7; Northern Harrier, 4; Sharp-shinned Hawk, 1; Red-tailed Hawk, 24; American Kestrel, 44; Sandhill Crane, 8; Killdeer, 32; Rock Pigeon, 356; Eurasian Collared-Dove, 17; Mourning Dove, 72; Great Horned Owl, 1; Red-bellied Woodpecker, 21; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, 2; Downy Wood-

pecker, 13; Hairy Woodpecker, 2; Northern Flicker, 4; Pileated Woodpecker, 1; Blue Jay, 30; American Crow, 5; Horned Lark, 366; Carolina Chickadee, 14; Tufted Titmouse, 6; White-breasted Nuthatch, 3; Carolina Wren, 17; Eastern Bluebird, 38; American Robin, 121; Northern Mockingbird, 91; European Starling, 4,623; Yellow-rumped Warbler, 1; Eastern Towhee, 2; Chipping Sparrow, 45; Field Sparrow, 1; Song Sparrow, 6; White-throated Sparrow, 10; Dark-eyed Junco, 253; Northern Cardinal, 56; Red-winged Blackbird, 16; Eastern Meadowlark, 20; Common Grackle, 3,462; Brown-headed Cowbird, 20; House



Lynn Tichenor tallies up her team's birds after the morning count.

Finch, 1; American Goldfinch, 53; and House Sparrow, 293.

Counters included: Patricia Augenstein, Henry Connor, Brenda Eaden, Tony Eaden, Jill Flachskam, Mike Henshaw, Janet Howard, Ken Hurm, Mary Kissel, Bill Little, Brenda Little, Charles Morris, Laura Morris, Marilee Thompson, Frances Tichenor, Lynn Tichenor and Carolyn Williams.

Data from this count have been sent to the Kentucky Ornithological Society for its records.

Mike Henshaw shared final totals from the southern Daviess count at the January meeting. Spotted were 54 species and 28,270 individuals, including the lesser scaup that Team Eaden saw which required additional documentation. Probably the figure that pleased him the most was 21 – the number of members who participated during 65 hours and about 280 miles. If you would like a hard copy of the National Audubon Society report, let Mike know at mikesherry@vci.net

For the western Daviess County count, 17 observers tallied 46 species and 10,291 individuals.

Mantle

From Page 1

who took the long trip to and from Marion to see the Kentucky's historically significant part of the Trail of Tears. During the winter of 1838-39, 3,000 Cherokees camped nearby while the river was frozen and impassable. Hundreds died from cold and disease, and Morris said folklore says hundreds are buried under the rock.

On her first Daviess County Audubon Society field trip, Brenda Little's sister-in-law, Ginger Bailey, said her head was spinning with questions.

"The things that went through my mind were about: what started it? How did that rock become the giant feature that I was standing there in awe observing? Was there water there ages ago? What made that huge rock so dramatic? I was emotionally touched by the realization of the human suffering on The Trail of Tears that took place exactly where I was standing," she wrote.

The group often traipses through woodlands and marshy areas, so scrambling on a large rock was a unique experience.

What do you give a woman who has everything for her birthday? How about a big rock?

"Mantel

Rock was awe-

some. I scaled Mantel Rock on my 67th birthday. I crawled on my hands and knees in several places, but I got up there," said Rose Ann Radzelovage.

"The picture doesn't do it justice," she added.

But the natural setting was more than about a big rock.

"Mantle Rock was my first field trip. I loved the nature part



Members explore under Mantle Rock. (Tony Eaden photo)

of being out in the forest. I was awed by the awareness of the big piece of stone just as I was by the vivid green moss, the ferns, and the beauty of the site," Bailey noted.

Radzelovage was spellbound by the high bush blueberries that grew on the top of the rock, a slow-growing fruit that could be 100 years old.

Even the most

enthusiastic conceded that the trip gave a new definition of "moderate" walking levels. Eaden was still exhilarated by the test to a "weak" knee.

"I have to put myself out there to best experience what makes the world and me tick," he noted.

Nothing makes the world tick like interaction with people, and



Although the weather was mild, the group did encounter muddy conditions to challenge them. (Tony Eaden photo)

guide Shelley Morris of The Nature Conservancy drew rave reviews.

"Our fabulous guide, Shelly Morris, took us to explore the 30-foot high natural sandstone bridge spanning 188 feet. Numerous bluffs, shelters and honeycomb formations embellish this area," wrote Kenny Lin.

"She was very informative

and very enthusiastic," Radzelovage said.

The feelings of admiration were mutual, Morris relayed.

"Nothing makes me happier than to be able to spend a day outdoors with people who are truly enthusiastic about nature. The more I talked with the group and realized how active they are,

See Mantle, Page 6



Even shelf fungi proved compelling at Mantle Rock. (Tony Eaden photo)



The view under Mantle Rock was worth exploring too. (Kenny Lin photo, left, Tony Eaden photo, right)

Mantle

From Page 5

the more I wished I lived closer to be able to take advantage of their activities!," Morris wrote.

"The highlight of the trip for me was when we scrambled up on top of Mantle Rock to visit the glade. Due to its fragile nature, this is an area that is generally closed to the public, although we do occasionally take small guided groups up there. For those not familiar with glades, these are areas with lots of exposed rock, thin soil, lots of sunlight and consequently, high temperatures and low moisture levels. Due to these conditions, certain types of plants that may not be commonly found in the surrounding closed canopy forest actually thrive here. Some examples are prickly pear cactus and blueberry bushes. Another spectacular sight is the abundant moss and lichen that grow on the exposed sandstone rock," she continued.

The group also met two Eagle Scouts who worked on the trail. Ken Hurm lauded their work.

"The Nature Conservancy and the local BSA Scout troop have made great progress clearing and maintaining trails and building a bridge for easier access," he stated.

Other aspects enhanced the



Lichen and other glade species make the area special, Shelly Morris said. (Tony Eaden photos)

trip. The March-like weather ("just perfect," Lin gushed); 30 species of birds, highlighted by a flock of 25 sandhill cranes on the drive home. Other species found on the trail and at Ken Hurm's home included: American crow, American kestrel, blue jay, Canada goose, Carolina chickadee, Carolina wren, eastern bluebird, eastern meadowlark, American goldfinch, great blue heron, house finch, house sparrow, junco, kingfisher, European starlings, common grackle, northern mockingbird, mourning dove, northern harrier, red-tailed hawk, ring-billed gull, rock dove, sharp-shinned hawk, tufted titmouse, turkey vulture, white-crowned sparrow, nine wild turkeys, downy woodpecker and red-bellied woodpeckers.

Other birders who went on this trip were: Mike Henshaw,

Jill Flachskam and Patricia Augenstein.

"I had great fun bird watching, taking photos and hiking through the mud. I met two Boy Scouts that had matured to men, one zoologists with an interest in people, two waitresses whose smiles warmed a frigid day and got to know myself just a little better," Eaden said.

"Didn't fall off Mantle Rock – that's good! Out in the forest with friends – that's good! Spotting lots of birds on the way – that's good! Eating with friends – that's good! What a good way to spend a Saturday!" Augenstein said.

They group topped off the day by eating in Salem on the way home.

Several expressed interest in a return trip this spring when the wild flowers are in bloom. Lin

said there are other attractions yet to be explored, including the Woodland Indians' site with petro glyphs and the Mineral Museum in Marion.

Bailey didn't wait to put the inspiration to work.

"On my way home I had trouble driving because I could not resist watching birds," she stated.

Of particular interest were two hawk nests spotted between the edge of Horse Fork Trail and just west of Veach Road. Little expressed hope that scope users will be able to monitor the nests before they're obscured by leaves. Augenstein thought she saw a parent at the nest.

The next trip will be Feb. 13 to Ballard Wildlife Management Area, if flooding there has receded. Meet at Moonlite's back parking lot at 8 a.m.