

The Goldfinch

April 2011

Davless County Audubon Society, www.davlessaudubon.net

Geotagging focus of April meeting

The merging of digital photography and nature takes center stage April 5 when University of Southern Indiana professor Chuck Price presents a program on geotagging at the 7 p.m. meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

For the past five years, Price has explored the use of geotagging — embedding geographic data — into digital imagery. Price said this process is “used extensively by nature photographers working in undeveloped areas throughout the world --- even in the United States. Whether working in the Florida Everglades, Rocky Mountains, desert West, or even at a local nature preserve, the photographer often wants to document the exact location of an invasive or rare plant, geologic structure or sighting of an endangered animal.”

At the meeting, he will demonstrate how a GPS



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April calendar

*Spring break at the Owensboro Area Museum of Science and History, noon April 5.

*Meeting, 7 p.m. April 5, First Christian Church, Seventh Street and J.R. Miller Blvd.

*Urban Girls/Urban Birds program, 4 p.m. April 7 and 21, Girls Inc., Rolling Heights addition

*Board meeting, 11:30 a.m. April 11, home of Judy Adams, 2245 Canonero Loop Drive.

*Ohio Valley Festival field trip to Henderson and Evansville. Meet at 3:15 p.m. April 30 at Moonlite.



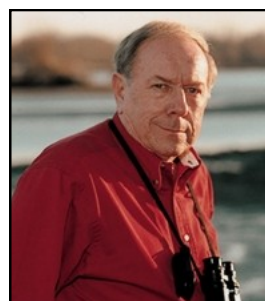
Visitors on last year's bluebird walk peek inside a box. (Photo courtesy of Judy Adams)

Birding doubleheader

Festival trips spotlight bluebirds, journalist

Daviess County bird enthusiasts will have a doubleheader of aviary information April 30, when Audubon members travel to Henderson and Evansville for two sessions of the Ohio Valley Birding Festival.

The afternoon will begin at 4 p.m. at John James Audubon State Park with “A Walk with Bluebirds,” presented by Bob and Judy Peak, perhaps bluebirds’ biggest



Eldon Greij

champions in the tri-state. During the walk, you’ll discover the lives and nesting habits of eastern

bluebirds and other cavity nesters. The Peaks will introduce visitors to their ongoing nesting research conducted at numerous parks including Audubon State Park. Attendees may have an opportunity to see eggs and nestlings inside nesting boxes.

The day will be capped off with a 7 p.m. presentation, “A Birding Moment,” by festival keynote speaker Eldon

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Mott shares secrets of beavers' lives

A large crowd got a glimpse into the secret lives of beavers at the March 6 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society. Kentucky Wesleyan assistant professor and behaviorist Dr. Cy Mott shared his work, which has received international acclaim.

Why should two-footed creatures be interested in beaver behavior? He called them “ecosystem engineers,” since they’re able to modify their environment to fit their needs, which may conflict with human needs.

They also are a keystone species, because even a limited number of species can have a large effect on many others. One dam by a small number of beavers can open the way for fish and birds and plants to enter that environment. Their complex social structure is similar to that of humans about a century ago, since up to three generations can live together. They also are a game species, so learning about them can help species management.

Earlier attempts to study beavers were problematic, because tactics affected their normal behavior. Since most of the study surrounded activity outside of the den, the Southern Illinois University researchers wondered if beavers’ behavior was drastically different inside.

There were several reasons to believe this would be the case: the structure is stable, well-insulated and sturdy with a stable temperature of 40-45 degrees in the winter. It’s also safe, since predators would have to swim under a dam to invade. They also have a well-stocked cache of food. They’re also cut off from



More than 30 people watched Kentucky Wesleyan College assistant professor Cy Mott present his program on beaver behavior. (Photo by Winny Lin)

day and night patterns, since they’re away from the light.

Thanks to remote videography, they used a lightweight camera, sliding it into a PVC pipe into the den to film behavior. They explored daily patterns, aggression, beaver life from birth into adulthood, change during the year, and male and female behavior patterns.

What they discovered among 1,500+ hours of beaver behavior data was fascinating. Ninety-five percent of it could be summed up succinctly: “Sleep, groom, eat, repeat,” he said.

He was probably most curious to learn how the crowded conditions affected beaver behavior. Noting that violent crime rises in crowded cities, he wondered if the crowded conditions

would lead to increased aggression.

He was most amazed by the lack of aggression in the confined space.

“There were times where there were 10 beavers packed into an area the size of this table, yet there wasn’t any aggression,” he said.

In sharing his work with the Discovery Channel, a network staffer called it a “beaver Utopia.” Males and females’ roles in caring for the lodge, grooming needs and child care are almost identical. Why? Babies are very high maintenance and require attention.

Yet, kits are quick to become independent. They begin relying on vegetation only a week after being born.

After three years, males are kicked out of the lodge. Females are more willing to leave, because of the desire to reproduce. The gestation period is five to six months, with births taking place in late February or early March. They raise up to four kits, so a lodge could have as many as 12 beavers, with multiple generations exhibiting helping behavior.

They did see seasonal patterns. In spring and summer, they use the habitat more, which requires additional grooming and less sleep. As early as May or June, they already stock up food for the winter.

Once the lodge is built, it basically stays the same. However, the dam system can expand.

Sleep cycle is established.

DC GBBC counters tally 38 species

With the final checklist submitted, 38 species and 1,727 were seen by Daviess County participants in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

Daviess County totals included: Canada goose, 22; mallard, 2; Cooper's hawk, 3; red-tailed hawk, 5; sandhill crane, 4; killdeer, 5; Eurasian collared dove, 4; mourning dove, 35; red-bellied woodpecker, 6; yellow-bellied sapsucker, 2; downy woodpecker, 17; hairy woodpecker, 1; northern flicker, 4; blue jay, 14; American crow, 3; Carolina chickadee, 17; tufted titmouse, 18; white-breasted nuthatch, 7; Carolina wren, 9; American robin, 60; northern mockingbird, 5; European starling, 1,060; yellow-rumped warbler, 4; eastern towhee, 8; tree sparrow, 20; song sparrow, 22; white-throated sparrow, 14; dark-eyed junco, 39; northern cardinal, 72; red-winged blackbird, 9; common grackle, 106; brown-headed cowbird, 8; purple finch, 4; house finch, 29; American goldfinch, 42; and house sparrow, 45; turkey vulture, 2.

Twenty-three of those species were spotted by Mike Henshaw in Utica, and Judy Adams helped Girls Inc. participants record their Feb. 18 sightings.

In Hartford, counters – including president Brenda Little – found 24 species and 302 individuals, including wild turkey, 8; Eurasian collared dove, 2; mourning dove, 27; red-bellied woodpecker, 6; downy woodpecker, 11; blue jay, 12; Carolina chickadee, 12; tufted titmouse, 9; brown creeper, 1; Carolina wren, 5; eastern bluebird, 8; American robin, 32; northern mockingbird, 3; eastern towhee, 18; white-throated sparrow, 6; white-crowned sparrow, 3; dark-eyed junco, 34; northern cardinal, 32; red-winged blackbird, 7; common grackle, 16; brown-headed cowbird, 3; house finch, 17; American goldfinch, 16; and house sparrow, 14. Little also tallied the bald eagle found on the Sloughs field trip.

Despite efforts in local schools, board members were disappointed in the participation and will continue to explore ways to boost it next year.

In Kentucky, 114 species and more than 110,700 birds were tallied.

Pick up trash for big cash

Help the Daviess County Audubon Society raise money for programming by participating in the "Trash for Cash" program April 9. By tackling five miles of road in southwestern Daviess County, the club will be able to raise \$500.

It will begin at 9 a.m. from Southern Oaks Elementary. The group will pick up Burns and Ashbyburg roads, the same roads it tackled last fall.

Please wear appropriate footwear for retrieving trash from deep ditches or farmland.

Lunch will be provided.

The rain date will be 1 p.m. April 10.



Sharing the adventure

President of Daviess County Audubon Society Brenda Little, left presented "Audubon Wildlife on the Move" to principal of Tamarack Elementary School, Allison Coomes. The Audubon Adventures education kit includes programs on migratory birds, monarch butterflies and whales and sea turtles. Every year Audubon Society donates a education kits to several local schools like Cravens and Seven Hills to use with their students and Joe Ford Nature Center. In the photo is also Winnie Lin, Audubon Society education chairman.

Secrets

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Their sleep period is from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., but there's never a time when they're all asleep. Kits sleep 95% of the time, then quickly adopt adult behaviors, taking care of the lodge shortly after birth.

Mott called their findings a first step. What's the next step? Because of their social ties, they wonder how behavior would be affected if half of a colony was removed because of nuisance behavior. They will be looking at an area where 50 percent of the beavers were moved shortly before their study began and compare the results. They'd also like to learn more about other species which manage to invade the den.

Garden dedication to mark Earth Day April 17

There will be an Earth Day event at First Christian Church on J.R. Miller Blvd. on Sunday, April 17, from 2 to 5. Local environmental organizations will have information tables at the event. The new community garden will be dedicated next to the church.

All ages are invited to enjoy an interactive program by Dick Shore, who will portray John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club. Muir also helped convince Teddy Roosevelt to begin the national park system and spent time in Kentucky exploring its beauty.

State ponders hunting season for sandhill cranes

400-bird limit established; activists worry about impact

State fish and wildlife officials are pondering a 30-day hunt period for sandhill cranes in Kentucky, beginning with the 2011-12 hunting season.

According to a proposal by Rocky Pritchert, migratory bird branch manager, totals within the Eastern population (the segment which migrates through western Kentucky, crane totals were boosted almost 300% from 1979 to 2009, up to nearly 60,000 in the 2009 fall census. Boosted numbers have increased a demand for hunting the birds. Since the early 1960s, crane hunting has been expanded in the western United States, with 17,800 harvested during the 2000s.

It was even promoted during the annual Marsh Madness in Linton, Ind. DCAS member Pat Augenstein said their guide touted the possibility of an Indiana hunting season, calling the birds “ ‘rime rib with wings.’ ”

KDFWR is proposing a 30-day season with a two bird daily bag and season limit from mid-December through mid-January. Permits will be limited to 400, and the number of birds harvested will be limited to 400. Public lands at Barren River Lake will serve as a sanctuary during that period when Kentucky’s sandhill crane season is open, recognizing its place as a major migration resting spot for the species and noting that the species is most abundant there in

late January and early February. Officials concede the season will limit crane viewing opportunities in late December or early January.

If approved, KDFWR will maintain this season format for three years as long as the Eastern Population remains above the minimum threshold of 30,000 birds specified by the management plan.

The thought of ending a century of protection for sandhill cranes has prompted a petition drive in both Kentucky and Tennessee, sponsored by OneMoreGeneration.org.

Organizers fear population of nontarget cranes, such as whooping cranes, will be depleted. Claims from Tennessee farmers that they’re a nuisance species is dismissed as greatly exaggerated. They also question the value of hunting as a tool to increase biodiversity, since individuals with the most desirable traits are the most inviting to hunters.

“All policies affecting wildlife should be soundly based upon science and scientific study, not enthusiasm for blood sports or other “ ‘economic interests,’ ” the petition states.

Because of the popularity of wildlife watching in both states, they endorse a “passive wildlife tourism” tax/fee to generate revenue instead of relying on hunting fees for departmental revenue.

Public comment on the proposal continues until a hearing on the proposal this summer.

Please send your remarks to: FW_Suggestions@ky.gov or Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife, attention: Commissioner Jon Gassett, 1 Sportsman’s Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601.

Festival

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Greij, founder of Birder’s World magazine, drawing on decades of birding experience to highlight those discoveries which triggered the most emotional responses. After selling the magazine in 1995, he continued as editor until 1999. He still contributes to the magazine through his column “Amazing Birds.”

He is currently president of Avian Enterprises, an ecotourism company. He also taught ornithology and ecology for 25 years at Hope College in Holland, Mich., and still teaches a four-week course, “Biology and Diversity of Birds.”

His research of waterbirds included a 12-year study of the common moorhen. This study led to the publication of a chapter on the biology of this species in “Migratory Shorebird and Upland Game Bird Management in North America.”

His talk will be at 7 p.m. at University of Evansville Schroeder Family School of Business, Room SB170.

Greij also will lead a tri-state birding trip and present a seminar on climate change on April 29 and conduct a birdwatching basics workshop at 2 p.m. Saturday.

The rest of the festival is crammed with field trips across southern Indiana, including Gibson Lake, Goose Pond and Eagle Slough. Micah Perkins will lead a neotropical bird hike at Audubon State Park at 2:15 p.m. May 1, and David Ayer, superintendent of Lincoln State Park, will help visitors look for warblers – and perhaps nesting Mississippi kites and red-shouldered hawks at 7 a.m. April 29.

The schedule can be found on the festival’s website at <http://ohiovalleybirdingfestival.org/>

Augenstein witness to whoopers

Although the Marsh Madness trip was canceled, DCAS member Pat Augenstein opted to go to Goose Pond Wildlife Management Area near Linton, Ind., and was rewarded by seeing five whooping cranes, including one juvenile.

Despite the sighting, she was disappointed in the event. Opting for the bus tour, she said the guide’s emphasis was on telling hunters where and when they could hunt, rather than species. However, she did spot mallards, mergansers and hawks. Most of the sandhill cranes had already moved out with the warm weather, with about 100 left in the area.

Geotagging

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receiver or a GPS-enabled camera documents the latitude and longitude, time and elevation of photographs. He'll also show how Google websites store the information and makes the images and information via the Web.

A professor of science education at USI, Price came to the university in 1979. In his tenure, he has taught physics and a variety of courses in science education and technology education. He was named a distinguished professor by the faculty in 1990.

His environmental teaching has expanded beyond the classroom. Price coordinated the USI bluebird trail from 1995 through 2010. Through photography, he has produced thousands of images of flora, fauna and geologic structures found on the campus. Seventy prints of these images are in the university archives in the USI Rice Library and at <https://picasaweb.google.com/cprice77/USINaturalBeauty#>.

He also has been an invaluable resource to the DCAS, most recently in the chapter's efforts to expand digital photography in its education programming.

Join us for a pre-meeting dinner with Price at Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn at 5:30 p.m.

Bird walk proposed for bluegrass festival

A bird hike at Panther Creek Park will be offered as part of the River of Music Party festivities June 25. The club accepted Gabrielle Gray's invitation to be a part of the event, hoping to gain additional exposure for the chapter. It will be conducted at 8 a.m., before the musical lineup begins. Interested? Contact Carolyn Williams, 683-5863.

Museum event to highlight bird calls

Mary Kissel, Winny Lin and Lynn Tichenor will present a session on bird calls as part of spring break activities at the Owensboro Area Science and History Museum.

Kissel said the presentation will include a look at physical traits that make birds good singers. Kids will be introduced to a handful of backyard birds whose songs they probably have heard – without realizing it. It will be loaded with plenty of opportunities for audience participation, including a segment where kids will be asked to make up their own calls, using their names.

It will be held at noon April 5 at the museum.



Thanks to DCAS members, thousands have learned about birds through the WKBG program.

Volunteers needed to teach birding at WKBG

Volunteers are being sought for the spring session of the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden's Spring 2011 Budding Biotech Program. For several years, the Daviess County Audubon Society has worked with the WKBG to foster a love for science through beginning bird watching classes. Kids are taught how to use binoculars and introduced to backyard birds. Although fake birds are available, May welcomes interesting species to the garden, providing bird excitement for kid and adult alike.

Volunteers are needed for the following 9 a.m. third-grade classes. At least two people are needed for each of the following dates:

- * May 6, Friday -- Audubon Elementary
- * May 10, Tuesday -- East View Elementary
- * May 11, Wednesday -- Newton Parrish Elementary
- * May 12, Thursday -- Cravens Elementary
- * May 13, Friday -- Estes Elementary
- * May 17, Tuesday -- Meadow Lands Elementary
- * May 18, Wednesday -- Southern Oaks Elementary
- * May 19, Thursday -- Tamarack Elementary
- * May 20, Friday -- Foust Elementary
- * May 25, Wednesday -- Sutton Elementary

Interested? Please contact Mary Kissel, mjkisselchirp45@bellsouth.net, 926-3321.

Audubon monument plans to be revised

Work continues on the John James Audubon monument in Frankfort. President Brenda Little said the Kentucky Audubon Council has been asked to cut the size of the rock for the monument, because of concerns by the Division of Historic Properties personnel that it's too large.

Wanted: Laptop for chapter programs

Looking to upgrade your computer? Think about donating your old, usable laptop to the DC Audubon chapter. A serviceable laptop is needed for presentations. Contact president Brenda Little, littleredhen1@wildblue.net for details.



Hikers enjoying harbingers of spring

By Brenda Bailey Little

The key to a top-notch field study is the person who leads the group. When he was asked to join our members for the first outing of the spring season 2011, David Ayer, a naturalist at Lincoln State Park near Rockport, Ind., had no idea that he was being tapped to be the field trip leader for our nature hike around the Daviess County Fish & Game Association's "Members Only" grounds near Maceo. Bill and I were lucky to have David on our team at the New Year's Day bird count this year, and we had hoped that we would have the chance to bird with him again someday soon. David's knowledge of plants and birds made our early spring hike on March 26 a great success.

Since we first went birding at the Fish & Game Farm with Bert Powell about a decade ago, I've wanted to return and to take some of our members along for a trip down Memory Lane. That December day when I first began birding, Bert told me how he enjoyed his time out there and how Millie loved to go looking for wildflowers in the woods on many spring days.

It was only about 5 minutes into our field trip after we checked in at the caretaker's cottage that David spotted a "different" bird perched on a wire alongside eastern bluebirds and tree swallows. It was a northern rough-winged swallow. I'm almost certain that in our hurry to get started finding parking spaces and hitting the trails, without David's pointing out the bird directly in front of our cars, we would not have noticed it. I enjoyed reading about the rough-winged swallow's nesting in dirt banks, cliffs and buildings in the field guide as we drove to the camping area near the lake.

The most numerous of the 21 species of birds we counted on our chilly hike were about 30 yellow-rumped warblers that flitted about in the trees around the lake. Another species that gave us unusually long periods of enjoyment as they traced barber pole paths around tree trunks were some brown creepers. A pair of golden-crowned kinglets teased us by hopping about in nearby pine needles above our heads before acting as if we'd had long enough to enjoy looking at their tiny



From left, Bill and Brenda Little, David Ayer, Mary Kissel, Lynn Tichenor and Fran Tichenor. (Photo by Judy Adams)



Trout lilies and mayapples were among the species spotted.

beings and flying away out of sight. Toward the end of our morning of birding, some song sparrows and chipping sparrows tried to outsize each other. They, too, gave us plenty of time to watch them at a close distance and to enjoy their springtime songs.

The wildflowers that stole the show were the Dutchman's breeches in full bloom that we found in a rather large patch along the trail in the forest. We found 16 wildflowers, many more than we expected to find so early in the season. We had a couple of tiny

blooms that stumped us, so we took photos, made notes and came back home to solve the mysteries. The Small-flowered *Corydalis* was one of the beauties that stumped us.

Toward the end of our hike, Lynn Tichenor asked if we considered the outing a success. My answer was that for a few years I worked as a public accountant and was shackled to a desk and a calculator until after April 15 when tax season finally ended. For

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Spring

From Page 6

those years in captivity, the early wildflowers that bloom in March and early April had already faded, for they are just as short-lived as they are subtly spectacular, before I could get out into the woods to take in the most wonderful season of all. So, yes, Lynn, for me the outing was most surely a success.

A deer tick that we sent to tick heaven tried to hitch a ride home with Lynn. She was glad that their canine sidekick, Mandy, who waited patiently in the car was not the one who picked up the tick. David identified it as the kind that carries Lyme disease.

Birds found: American crow, belted kingfisher, brown creeper, Carolina chickadee, Carolina wren, chipping sparrow, downy woodpecker, eastern bluebird, eastern phoebe, golden-crowned kinglet, hairy woodpecker, northern cardinal, northern rough-winged swallow, pileated woodpecker, purple martin, red-bellied woodpecker, song sparrow, tree swallow, tufted titmouse, turkey vulture, yellow-rumped warbler,

Plants found: Christmas fern, common blue violet, cutleaf toothwort, Dutchman's breeches, harbinger of spring, henbit, Jack in the pulpit, lyre-leaved rock cress, mayapple, recurved trillium, sensitive fern, small-flowered corydalis, Solomon's seal, spicebush, trout lily/dogtooth violet, yellow violet.

The chapter may travel to Bernheim Forest near Louisville in April. Watch your e-mails for all details.

Educators take advantage of warm March weather

Work continued in March at both Girls Inc. and Deer Park Elementary.

Lisa Leonard installed the rest of the bluebird box trail at the school.

The educators took advantage of the warm spring weather to reinforce lessons about the urban birds by spotting birds outdoors. The girls also learned a hard lesson. Some feeders were damaged by recent wind and squirrel activity and were repaired by Mike Henshaw and Kenny Lin.

The chapter learned it will not receive a Cornell Celebrate Urban Birds mini-grant. However, that will not affect this year's program.

Site selection nears for native grasses plot

Site selection discussions continue for the chapter's native grasses project.

At the March board meeting, David Stratton said he would check with the city about the availability of property east of New Hartford Road for the plantings, since it was once the site for a native grasses plot.

Planting around bird sculptures on the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park also is a possibility. Raised beds for the grasses were considered, but maintenance requirements triggered concerns. To achieve similar results, Mike Henshaw wondered if establishing defined borders around the plantings could protect the grasses from mowing.

Brescia University had proposed putting native grasses at its athletic complex near Waymond Morris Park. However, the site does not qualify for the Audubon grant, because it is not public land. Doubts were expressed that grasses could be spared from mowing at the park itself.

Board members note that a selection will need to be made soon. The project must be completed by January, or the chapter must return the \$545 in collaborative funds grant money to the National Audubon Society.

Once a selection is made, Dropseed Nursery of Goshen will conduct a soil test to see what species can be planted. The board had already decided to use plugs instead of seeds to improve its chances for success.

The board has discussed pursuing an environmental grant from Toyota.

"They are interested in groups that are doing things that are conservation-minded. This is. With its aim to educate the public, this is. So, it is a good fit," president Brenda Little said.

This would make planting in a larger area more economically feasible but requires a minimum of 50 volunteers. This would be possible if the chapter could recruit students from Brescia and Kentucky Wesleyan, as well as involve Western Kentucky Botanical Garden members. It remains under discussion.

Learn about wildflowers at state park

Which native wildflower's root is rumored to have been used as body paint? Why are trillium plants dependent upon ants? Can a dogwood tree help people with asthma?

The answers to these and many other wondrous wildflower questions will be examined at John James Audubon State Park's Annual Wildflower Extravaganza on Saturday, April 2, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This annual event features programs for all ages including three wildflower walks, informative presentations and a children's scavenger hunt.

Evansville Courier and Press writer Sharon Sorenson will introduce visitors the art of birdscaping or landscaping to attract birds and wildlife. For more information about the day, visit <http://migration.kentucky.gov/Newsroom/parks/JJAWildflower2011.htm>.

Nature center to conduct wildflower hikes

The Joe Ford Nature Center will be sponsoring wildflower hikes at 10 a.m. April 16 at Ben Hawes Park and 10 a.m. April 23 at Yellow Creek Park. Learn from two of the area's best: naturalists Steve Hahus and Obbie Todd. The event is free. Donations will be accepted.

Children ages 8-12 are invited to join Jr. Naturalist Program. A parent can call to register at 316-1632 to begin on April 2 at JFNC. DCAS Education chairman Winny Lin will present a Junior Naturalist program on bird habitat at 3:30 p.m. April 9.