



The Goldfinch

June 2011

Davless County Audubon Society, www.davlessaudubon.net

Explore life in the trees on field trip to Bernheim Forest

One of Kentucky's top natural settings will be the destination for a June 11 field trip. The chapter will travel two hours to Bernheim Forest, near Louisville.

The Bernheim landscape has changed dramatically since the chapter last visited. It now features a large visitor's center, which offers information about the forest's history and present. The trip will begin at the visitor's center.

Members will go to the canopy treewalk for birding and photography at a bird's-eye view. More than 250 varieties of birds have been recorded.

The chapter hopes to benefit from the knowledge of guide Kathy Dennis and her husband, Dick. Dennis won raves after she led last fall's trip to Falls of the Ohio.

Members will meet at 8 a.m. at Owensboro Community & Technical College. Eating arrangements will be discussed at the picnic. They plan to be back in Owensboro between 3 and 4 p.m.

Picnic to wrap up DCAS year

Let's celebrate the end of another successful Audubon year by gathering together for the annual picnic.

It's set for 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 7, at the Kuegel Korner shelterhouse at Panther Creek Park, just inside the main entrance of the park.

Meat and drinks will be furnished by the club. Members are asked to bring side dishes or a dessert.

There may be a short presentation on Bernheim Forest. Officers are scheduled to be elected.

To provide head cook Mike Henshaw with a head count, contact him at 275-4250 or mikesherry@vci.net.



Nesting barn swallows are a big attraction at the garden.

Growing new birders

Hundreds of students learn birding techniques

Hundreds of kids made their way through the floral paths of the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden during May as part of their "Budding Biotech" program. The program is designed to encourage young people to explore careers in health-related fields.

But the inclusion of beginning birding sessions in about two-thirds of the sessions, is helping generate an interest in bird watching. This year's crop of third-graders appeared to be no different.

By keeping feeders filled, a healthy population of backyard birds greeted the visitors. Even mundane birds like common grackles and starlings provide teachable moments, because they provide interesting color variations and speckle patterns. However, one class of Cravens Elementary students was treated to the sighting of a rose-breasted grosbeak, whose presence in previous years had been relegated to paper form.

It was also interesting to note how the gazebo's barn swallows' behavior changed during the course of the month. At the beginning of the "term," the birds were inquisitive, perching on iron works, practically posing for the kids. As Memorial Day approached, they spent most of the time on the nest.

Spring classes also benefited from witnessing the huge purple martin colony well established at the garden. A musical brown thrasher also had mini concerts for several of the classes. Colorful goldfinches clung to thistle-filled sock feeders for some of the classes. A turkey vulture also made an appearance. A class from Sutton Elementary also witnessed mobbing techniques when a group of

This month's calendar

*Picnic, 5 p.m. June 7, Panther Creek Park.

* Trip to Bernheim Forest, Clermont, June 11. Leave from OCTC parking lot at 8 a.m.

See Birders, Page 3

Krzton-Presson explores Kentucky's shell game

Native turtles are reviewed

One of Kentucky's rising stars in conservation was the guest speaker for the May 2 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Murray State grad student Amy Krzton-Presson gave a presentation on Kentucky turtles.

There are only four species of turtles that have been documented in Daviess County.

The most common is the red-eared slider.

"It's the turtle you see basking on logs, on the edges of lakes and ditches. They like to lay in the sun. They're called sliders, because as you approach them, they slide off logs into the water."

The red stripe along the side of the head is not always present ... sometimes it's yellow. As they age, they can develop melanism, which darkens the skin until no stripe is visible. They can grow up to 12 inches and live up to 30 years in the wild.

She brought some live specimens — to the particularly delight of younger audience members.

The second is called a musk turtle, called "stinkpots," because they can give off an odor as a defensive mechanism.

They're more aquatic, loving slow-moving creeks and ponds with muddy bottoms.

The common snapping turtle prefers shallow lakes, ponds and streams and are marked by light ridges on their shell.



Live specimens were part of Amy Krzton-Presson's program on turtles. (Judy Adams photo)

"They're incredibly strong. If you've ever tried to pick one up, you know their legs and their neck are really strong," she said. The scavengers eat dead animals and can get up to 20 inches. Alligator snappers are very rare in western Kentucky and have a hooked beak and distinctive eyes and are much larger.

The eastern box turtle are terrestrial, so like wooded area where they can find worms near downed logs. Both it and the musk turtles have higher domes. They are marked by wildly varied patterns.

There are several conservation issues facing fresh-water turtles.

* For the aquatic species, a male bias. Sliders must lay eggs on land, so females abandon the water to raise young and can be struck by cars, wiping out a population. The problem is significant enough that Alabama began posting signs to encourage drivers to brake for turtles, and

wildlife passageways have been established in some parts of Florida. Some have opted to become surrogate parents. A colleague cut open a dead female turtle, removed the eggs and used Tupperware to hatch turtles.

* Harvesting of turtles. It's particularly a problem in China, because it's such a part of its culture. Having depleted their population, they're shipping them in from elsewhere — including the United States — to meet the demand. She encouraged people to call for export regulations. There are no harvesting limits in Kentucky.

* Invasive species. Red-eared sliders have become an invasive species around the world.

This spring, she was in Japan, and they were everywhere. Often abandoned as pets, they are so hardy, they can outcompete native turtle species.

She also shared her research on phragmites as a grad student

at Murray State. The invasive wetland grass is being treated with herbicides in an effort to re-establish native grasses. She is seeing how the grasses affect frog and turtle population. The state is particularly interested in species of concern.

She did trap for sirens, salamander-like species, and logged other species such as copper-bellied water snakes.

In the study, they found the grasses and the herbicide had no effect on frogs.

To study turtles, they used fish-baited funnel traps to trap the turtles, weigh and measure them, noted their sex and marked them by drilling holes in the very edge of their shells.

This allowed them to note the diversity of species and their numbers.

She was surprised to find the nonphragmited areas had lower diversity; a lot more snappers. Turtles were larger in non-phragmited areas.

"Different sizes of turtles are selecting for different habitats. I don't think the phragmites are restricting their growth, because they can move back and forth," she said.

Researchers are still wondering how the food web is being affected by the dominant phragmites, a question that won't really be answered until the native grasses are re-established. She has concluded that the herbicide hasn't hurt the turtle population.

Her research had been honored by the Kentucky chapter of The Wildlife Society.

Festival goers rewarded for extra effort

Greij's, Peaks' expertise applauded

Pat Augenstein and Winny and Kenny Lin braved conditions to enjoy parts of the Ohio Valley Birding Festival April 30 and May 1.

Augenstein soaked up the knowledge of Eldon Greij, founder of Birders' World magazine, first during a walk at Wesselman Woods in Evansville, then at his keynote address at the University of Evansville, where he distributed handouts for recognizing bird calls.

"The lectures were very good," she stated. She also attended sessions on hummingbirds and gourds.

Floods throughout the tri-state area played havoc with the schedule and sites for many of the walks. It also forced the chapter to scuttle plans for attend both the Greij talk and the bluebird walk on Saturday.

However, Augenstein really enjoyed Wesselman Woods. She was caught up in the enthusiasm of novice birders who were there and a young couple with their young children. At the viewing area, she saw four rose-breasted grosbeaks, six indigo buntings and four goldfinches, which were described by Greij. The two-way window glasses was perfect for those taking photos of the colorful spectacle.

"Best of all, everything was free so everyone could participate," she said.

The Lins went to John James Audubon State Park May 1 to learn about bluebirds from Bob and Judy Peak. Even in the rain, the Peaks showed off their bluebird houses. Bob Peak even handled one fledgling to give them a close-up look, Winny said.



Top and left: Bob Peak showed off a bluebird house to Kenny Lin and a fledgling. Winny Lin photos

Birders

Continued from Page 1

of small birds rushed a soaring red-tailed hawk. Another Sutton group saw a gray catbird.

DCAS educators had worked with the WKBG education committee to adjust the program to mesh with state science standards, and Charles Morris made sure the kids knew the difference between migration and hibernation before launching into optics discussions. He and Ken Hurm shared their knowledge of spotting scopes with the kids, and Jan Howard, Carolyn Williams and Mary Kissel pointed out birds around the garden. By equating bird watching to hunting, Howard was able to emphasize the importance of quiet during the non-gun-toting hunt for birds.

Invariably, kids asked where they could pick up binoculars for themselves, and they were encouraged to ask for them as birthday or Christmas presents. One bird lover from Tamarack made plans to use a gift card to buy a foldout bird guide after enjoying the session.

Schools which participated in bird programs included: Cravens, Eastview, Tamarack, Audubon Elementary, Deer Park, Sutton and Owensboro Catholic. The garden and the DCAS continued their close working arrangement by sharing the costs of replacing 10 bird guides.

Chapter gets \$500 trash pickup check

The club has received a check of \$500 from their "Trash for Cash" efforts. The club picked up 5 miles along Burns and Ashbyburg roads before it was completely submerged by the spring flood.

Ex-member Moodey dies in Pennsylvania

Longtime DCAS member Joyce Moodey, 75, died May 7 in Erie, Pa., after a long battle with cancer.

Before moving to Pennsylvania four years ago, Moodey was a fixture at club meetings, handling hospitality duties, and on field trips, particularly club efforts to document species at Owensboro Community & Technical College.

Family members said Moodey continued bird watching at a nearby lake after leaving Owensboro. Included in a display of photos was one which showed her happily watching geese.

Memorial contributions may be made to American Cancer Society, 2115 W. 38th St., Erie, PA 16508. Online messages of condolence may be made at www.haleymcginis.com

Migrants brave tough conditions to delight Daviess County bird watchers

With incessant bad weather during the heart of the Ohio Valley spring birding season, Daviess County Audubon members had to take advantage of any time they could get to see the migrants who contended with flooded conditions.

What did they see?

Steve Hahus took photos of an osprey at a pond near Lewisport and black-necked stilts in a field along U.S. 431 at Browns Valley.

Mary Kissel was pleased with the warbler count along the Horse Fork Creek, which spilled into the lower third of the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park. Seventeen different warbler species were tallied, including her first hooded warbler since Shade-wood Terrace subdivision changed the area's landscape and her first Blackburnian warbler on the trail.

It was a bountiful spring for rose-breasted grosbeaks.

"A first for me," reported Mary Lou Lebold-For, who saw



Steve Hahus took photos of black-necked stilts and osprey.



both male and female rosies and described what seems to be a Baltimore oriole.

Judy Adams and Carolyn Williams both had grosbeaks at their feeders for several days; Adams, a male and female. A pair of grosbeaks also visited Ova Hookey's yard.

At Mike and Sherry Henshaws, the grosbeaks were joined by a group of cedar waxwings that hung around for a few days as well as several rose-breasted grosbeaks. The Henshaws also were the first members to report the arrival of ruby-throated hummingbirds.

"We had two male scarlet tanagers pass through, a yellow-billed cuckoo show up and a late Blackpoll warbler," said Cathy Rogier.

"This afternoon I counted 18 species in the wooded area behind the house," Bill Little said. "The only one I consider unusual is a great crested flycatcher. I don't recall ever seeing one of them here."

Madeline Oetinger delighted in a pair of indigo buntings and noted that she had a juvenile and adult Cooper's hawks.

Over at Thruston, Marilee Thompson spotted a rusty black-

bird foraging with chipping sparrows near a wooded bog, noting it was in its nonbreeding plumage: a rusty breast and belly and distinctive gray rump. Other birds of note included: a nesting blue-gray gnatcatcher, eastern bluebird, northern parula, indigo bunting, eastern phoebe, white-crowned sparrow, hermit thrush, gray catbird and rose-breasted grosbeak.

At the Joe Ford Nature Center, Rose Ann Radzelovage heard the "teacher, teacher" call of the ovenbird, and cedar waxwings entertained at their yard sale by stripping a mulberry bush.

From the president's perch

I'm saying goodbye without going away

By Brenda Bailey Little

The past two years have gone quickly. I took the office of president knowing that it was an act of desperation that put my name before the membership for consideration. I want to thank those of you who asked me to take the position of leadership, desperate or not. I've really enjoyed the ride.

I want to thank Winny Lin for her dogged determination to get our chapter recognized via the Community Pages of our local paper. Thanks to Winny, I have probably been the most recognized leader of any or-

ganization in the city. Even though I enjoy hearing people tell me they recognize me as I'm standing in the checkout line at Kroger, what is really important is that our chapter is now much better known around the region for the many great things we do.

I want to thank Mary Kissel for seeing that our programs are written-up in the Messenger-Inquirer. We've seen visitors come to our meetings who would never have known about the wide variety of topics, the fascinating things we learn about, and the fun and exciting things we do, had it not been for area wide publicity about our programs.

I want to thank our dynamic directors for putting together two years of knock-your-socks-off programs and field study trips. The membership has no idea of how tolerant these directors really are. You see, I lack the ability to direct a meeting and keep it moving. Your directors have endured many meetings that lasted over 2 hours, and month after month, they have come back for more. They are hard-working and dedicated to the ideals of the Audubon Society and to the success and prosperity of our chapter in particular.

See Goodbye, Page 6

Celebrating mothers through bird study

Girls Inc. participants continue work on their nature notebooks

By Brenda Bailey Little

The Urban Birds study program at Girls Inc. was supposed to wrap up in May. However after our May session when we worked with nature sketching and composition, I made an executive decision that we needed at least a couple more sessions in order to get the most bang for our buck. We have invested a significant amount of money into 3-ring binders for the girls, and we have only devoted about an hour involving them in the program.

Our session in May came just prior to Mother's Day. The lesson plan for May featured journaling and was supposed to get the girls started on how to use sketching for pleasure and learning. Also included in the goal for that session was nature writing. We decided to use the upcoming holiday to motivate the girls to make an intense effort to express themselves using Urban Birds as their graphics on Mother's Day cards.

We had so many girls in attendance that day that we had to divide into two groups with a half hour session for each group. To get started we used Sherry Henshaw's method of drawing an oval. "Birds come from eggs and eggs are oval" is how Sherry starts children drawing a bird's head. "Then we draw a larger oval for the body and after that we begin to add details, wings, tails and markings." The girls

used practice sheets which will stay in their nature notebooks, and then they got busy on the real thing, a half-fold piece of card stock.

After the chosen bird was sketched and colored on the cover of the Mother's Day card, we tackled mastering an expression of gratitude by placing ourselves into the character of a baby bird. We talked about all the work that it takes for parent birds to raise a clutch of chicks. We talked about how for every 10 eggs a mama bird lays, odds are that only one of those will make it to adulthood when it can repeat the process of mating, nest building, incubating, feeding and fledging chicks of its own.

From that point, it was easy for the girls to pour out their hearts in expressing their gratitude to the mothers in their lives. Their writing inside their cards was fast and furious as they shunned the overused "Happy Mother's Day" and launched into detailing their appreciation for all the work it takes from the moms in their lives. They wrote thank-you's: for feeding me, for giving me a home, for helping me with my homework, for taking me to school, for birthing me, for fixing my hair, and on and on without any coaching from the adults in the room. These will be Mother's Day cards their mothers will treasure for years.

When the first session ended and the group was ordered to a nearby room to finish their cards, one little girl named Sterling came slinking back to continue her work on her chosen bird. She inched her way close to the Feeder Birds poster we were using as our guide for putting details on the bird of choice.

For another half an hour, she diligently drew the intricate spotting on her European starling.



This is Haley's practice sheet showing her repeated efforts to get her bird's beak just right.



Note the detail on Sterling's Starling, created by carefully drawing a series of tiny circles for most of an hour, and the stubby tail that helps her to identify the bird in the field.

Goodbye

Continued from
Page 4

I want to thank Carolyn Williams for keeping a running record of volunteer hours, names of volunteers plus program and field trip attendance. It is our hope that this year when we tabulate our past year's data to report to the National Audubon Society, we won't have to suffer brain strain trying to remember what we did and how many of us participated for the past 12 months.

During the next 3 months I will continue working with the directors as we prepare our annual report, get our legally mandated registrations in good order, put together a slate of officers for next year, and outline a series of programs and field trips for 2011-2012. After we take our summer break during July and August, I will continue to serve on the board of directors and I will do my best to assist and support our new president.

Thank you, all of you, for making the past two years fun and exciting. I've loved it!

Frankfort panel examining monument plans

The Kentucky Historic Properties Advisory Commission has received its first look at a proposal for a Capitol Monument Park monument saluting John James Audubon.

A quorum was not present at the May 26 meeting, so no vote was taken. Another meeting is expected this summer.

The presentation – enhanced by a design by DCAS board member David Stratton – spells out the Kentucky Audubon Council's hopes for the monument. Highlights include:

- A sandstone monument to extend 7.4 feet above the ground;

- A 20-inch bronze sculpture of Audubon's iconic wild turkey portrait;
- Lettering to salute Audubon's contribution as an artist, naturalist and inspiration for the National Audubon Society;

The proposal also includes landscaping around the monument, which includes a sweet gum tree, three bottlebrush buckeye shrubs, daylilies and holly bushes.

The 15-page proposal may be viewed at <http://www.kentuckyaudubon.org/monumentproposal.pdf>.

The cost of the proposal now exceeds \$7,000. The KAC will contribute up to \$5,000; other state conservation groups are going to be asked for contributions.

State of the Birds report focuses on public lands

This year's State of the Birds report spotlighted the role of public lands on conserving America's birds.

The report noted that publicly owned habitats support at least half of the more than 300 U.S. bird species.

The report concludes that America's public lands and waters, ranging from national wildlife refuges to national parks to national forests, offer significant opportunities to halt or reverse the decline of many species. More than 1,000 bird species inhabit the U.S., 251 of which are federally threatened, endangered or of conservation concern. The report provides a scientific tool to help public agencies identify the most significant conservation opportunities in each habitat.

Can management techniques be effective? The federal government touts its success in wetlands protection. On the whole, 39 species of hunted waterfowl have increased by more than 100 percent during the past 40 years as nearly 30 million acres of wetlands have been acquired and management practices have restored bird populations.

It found:

Aridland: Thirty-nine percent of aridland bird species are of conservation concern, and more than 75 percent of species are declining.

Oceans: At least 39 percent of U.S. bird species restricted to ocean habitats are declining, and almost half are of conservation concern, indicating severe stress in these ecosystems.

Forests: It noted that public lands can preserve some of the largest unfragmented blocks of forest, which are crucial for the long-term health of many bird species, including the endangered Kirtland's warbler, which has 97 percent of its U.S. distribution on public lands.

Arctic and Alpine: Ninety percent of boreal forest, alpine and arctic breeding bird species in Alaska rely on public lands for habitat, including 34 breeding shorebird species of high conservation concern. There are more public lands in Alaska than in the rest of the U.S. combined, offering huge potential to manage lands for conservation.

Islands: More birds are in danger of extinction in Hawaii than anywhere else in the U.S. Public lands in Hawaii support 73 percent of the distribution of declining forest birds. Among declining Hawaiian forest birds on Kauai, about 78 percent rely on state land. Four endangered species in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands are entirely dependent on federal lands.

Grasslands: Grassland birds are among our nation's fastest declining species, yet only a small amount – 13 percent -- of grassland is publicly owned and managed primarily for conservation. Forty-eight percent of grassland-breeding bird species are of conservation concern, including four with endangered populations. Most of these public grasslands are open to energy development, grazing, and other activities that may degrade habitat for birds.

The 2011 State of the Birds report is a collaborative effort as part of the U.S. North American Bird Conservation Initiative, involving federal and state wildlife agencies, and scientific and conservation organizations and boosted by citizen science data. These include the American Bird Conservancy, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, the Bureau of Land Management, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Department of Defense, the National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, the National Park Service, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. The full report is available at www.stateofthebirds.org.