

# The Goldfinch

March  
2011

Davless County Audubon Society, [www.davlessaudubon.net](http://www.davlessaudubon.net)

## Expert to share secret lives of beavers at March meeting

*KWC's Mott's work gets international attention*

A noted expert on the early lives of beavers will share his insights during the March 1 meeting of the Davless County Audubon Society.

According to the Messenger-



Inquirer, Cy Mott, a visiting assistant professor of biology at Kentucky Wesleyan College, was a co-author of a paper published in Mammalian Biology which details the study of 1,500 hours of videotape obtained by researchers of beavers inside lodges. The work has since garnered attraction by the BBC and international media. The use of probe cameras helped Mott and his Southern Illinois University colleagues learn about the habits of kits and adult parenting techniques. For a sneak peak, watch the video at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/earth/hi/earth\\_news/newsid\\_9283000/9283367.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/em/fr/-/earth/hi/earth_news/newsid_9283000/9283367.stm)

Mott will speak at 7 p.m. at First Christian Church, 7th Street and J.R. Miller Blvd.

### March calendar

\*Meeting, 7 p.m. March 1, First Christian Church, Seventh and J.R. Miller Blvd.

\*Urban Girls/Urban Birds program, 4 p.m. March 3 and 17, Girls Inc., Rolling Heights addition

\*Field trip to Goose Pond Wildlife Management Area, 8 a.m. March 5. Meet at Moonlite.

\*Board meeting, 11:30 a.m. March 14, home of Judy Adams, 2245 Canonero Loop Drive.

\*Field trip to Daviess Fish and Wildlife Game Area. TBA.



Winnie Lin led a program about the Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 18 at Owensboro Catholic Elementary's 4-6 Campus. (Photo courtesy of Winnie Lin.)

## Spreading the word

*Members conduct GBBC programs across city*

Daviess County Audubon members did their best to spread the gospel of the Great Backyard Bird Count during Presidents Day weekend, conducting several how-to programs across the city.

Up at Girls Inc.'s Rolling Heights campus, Bill and Brenda Little

stopped by Feb. 18 to work with five of the girls from the Urban Birds/Urban Girls program.

Brenda Little said the girls were given binoculars for use in helping them identify birds that came to the feeders set up by the "bird bait" team of Kenny Lin and Mike Henshaw in Janu-

ary. She said the feeders have been "unbelievably successful in bringing large numbers of birds AND SQUIRRELS to the area just outside the windows" of their programming area.

"The girls reacted with the same delight that our environmental education

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# U of E exercising power to restore

## *Vectren park project ties importance of habitat, creatures*

**T**he University of Evansville's efforts to restore 1,100 acres near the Wabash River is a matter of increasing diversity of plant, insects and birds, two professors told Daviess County Audubon members at its Feb. 1 meeting.

The Vectren Conservation Park -- supported by Vectren Energy -- is a mix of bottomland forest, wetlands and prairie lands. Until 10 years ago, it was primarily used for agriculture, which has lessened its diversity of plant and animal life, noted professor Dr. Chris Hochwender.

Wetland re-establishment has economic and aesthetic benefits, he said.

"By having areas that flood, you can control other areas of downstream flooding," he said.

It also helps erosion control and water purification, through brown water recharge.

Their efforts have faced challenges. It floods frequently, once for weeks at a five-foot depth, enabling Hochwender and a colleague to canoe on it. It's lost a lot of woodland -- and with it, animal species. They have to grapple with invasive species like johnsongrass and deer who are attracted by the large amount of edge on the property.

Their research has a three-pronged approach. A colleague is studying the pollutants in the



*University of Evansville professors Dr. Chris Hochwender, left, and Dr. Don Batema discussed the Vectren Conservation Park at the Feb. 1 meeting. (Photo by Winny Lin)*

Wabash River as it moves into the VCP. Focus includes agricultural and pharmaceutical pollutants and their effect on animal husbandry and mercury pollution linked to coal-fired power plants.

Then, there are efforts to diversify plants. Vectren has helped by planting 100,000 trees and shrubs, many of which are sycamores.

"Those plant species are going to be the foundation species for all of the insects and birds and mammals that are going to come into the area," he said.

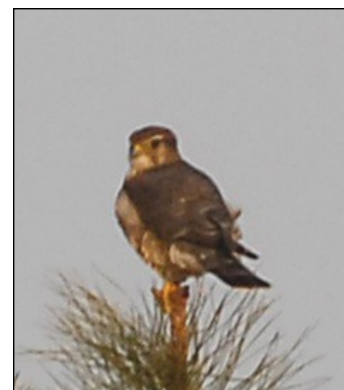
Although it's primarily bottomland forest, he's also working with prairie species, since it was historically there.

The park features 136 plant species. In the riparian forest, one finds a lot of silver maples, "probably my least favorite tree in all the world" and eastern cot-

tonwoods, southern hackberry and sweet gum. In the next decade, they want to introduce more native species, important conservation species, such as water locust, swamp cottonwood, cypress, sassafras and native oaks. They also want to develop understory like cane, button bush, and spider lilies. Maybe the best species is Dutchman's pipe, beloved by butterflies.

Plant diversity leads to greater diversity of insects and birds, he said.

Dr. Don Batema notes that the lack of plant diversity has hurt bird populations. For example, the amount of tall-grass prairie in Indiana has dwindled from 15% to less than 1%. In studies by groups such as Partners in Flight and the National Audubon Society, grassland birds are considered the most vulnerable species.



*Ken Hurm recently shot a photo of this merlin at Blue-grass Fish and Wildlife Area, one of southern Indiana's successful mine restoration projects.*

He finds hopes in strip mine reclamation throughout the tri-state region, where there's been success in assisting habitat. In areas east of Evansville, grassland populations of Henslow's sparrow have increased.

The 88 bird species that have been found on the property vary with the habitat. In fields, he's found dickcissels, indigo buntings, red-winged blackbirds, common yellowthroats and field sparrows. In tree-planted fields, he's picked up mourning doves, song sparrows, goldfinches, cardinals and yellow-billed cuckoos. In the riparian forest, he's seen Carolina wrens, tufted titmice, eastern pewees, Carolina chickadees, downy woodpeckers, red-bellied and pileated woodpeckers. In the wetland, it's a common blend of great blue heron, ring-billed gulls, killdeer, great

# Bluebird trail to be expanded to Deer Park

**T**he first few days of warmth can mean only one thing -- it's almost time for bluebirds to begin scouting for housing.

Thanks to the efforts of Deer Park Elementary students, those local options are going to be expanded. Kaye Fulkerson's classes -- and the school's Girl Scout Troop 1257 are establishing a bluebird trail on the New Hartford Road campus.

It's a follow-up activity from last year's Nature Day at neighboring Owensboro Community & Technical College. There, Daviess County Audubon Society members conducted a session on bluebirds and housing.

"We were given guidelines that the boxes needed to be placed about 300 feet apart, so the Girl Scout girls went with tape measures outdoors and actually measured all around the places we thought would work. They need bugs, grass to hide, and (be) away from any hands touching; therefore we decided to go out the intermediate hallway and away from the walking trails and the playground. We also wanted to place one where the students can view the box from the window," Fulkerson said.

Earlier in the winter, the school inherited boxes from the dismantled trail at Wayland Alexander Elementary School, which had been victimized by vandalized after delighting hundreds of students over the years. Under the watchful eyes of Brenda and Bill Little, Girl Scouts spent a meeting disinfesting the boxes and painting them. Working on the boxes were scouts Kate Alward, Courtney Carpenter, Katie Craig, Maddie Craig, Kennedy Crisp, Olivia Daniel, Madison



*From painting boxes (above) to posting them (below), Deer Park Elementary students have tackled the bluebird project with enthusiasm.*



Ellis, JaeLynn Franklin, Alayna Fonville, MaKayla Fulkerson, Holly Hagan, Kaitlyn Helton, Jade Humphrey, Sally Lott, Mya Martin, Shelby Martin, Kaylee Nacey, Morgan Nave, Mercedes Pierce, Morgan Stone, LeaAndra Thomas, Kelsey Trogalo.

Later, fifth-graders worked with Brenda Little and Lisa Leonard to begin placing the boxes around the school. The

students learned that keeping the opening away from a north wind was key to keeping the young birds alive during what can be a cold spring in northern Kentucky. One box was placed near the classroom window, so kids could watch the activity. Two others were placed on the eastern part of the campus. They are pondering where to place another in light of traffic. A total of five will be posted.

Hopes are high some nesting can occur. Micah Perkins has established a trail across the road at OCTC, and the landscapes are similar.

Fulkerson said the troop can receive two badges for its efforts: one for community service and one for nature protection.

"The badges are not the most important (thing)," she emphasized, "It's being involved with your school and your community. More importantly, it's working together as a team to protect God's creatures!!!!"

The DCAS may be asked to help with box maintenance. Fulkerson said paint is a necessity each year, and mulch must be placed around the box areas to protect them from mowers.

## Chapter will donate \$500 to monument

The DC Audubon Board has voted to donate \$500 out of the chapter's endowment fund for the John James Audubon monument in Frankfort.

The endowment fund, made of up memorial and other special gifts, is designated for one-time projects. Members felt that would allow the chapter to contribute an appropriate amount of about \$5/member without compromising its ability to funds its many educational programs under way.

This also allows the chapter to support the monument without conducting additional fundraising events.

## GBBC

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"The girls reacted with the same delight that our environmental education team sees repeated year in and year out when adults and children alike are introduced to the thrill of bird watching. They were able to recognize mourning doves by calls coming from over the hill and out of view. Some of the girls asked if the true name of the birds should not be "moaning" doves. At one time, around one feeder, 10 Northern cardinals jostled for territory in feasting on black oil sunflower seeds. There were the usual feeder birds for the girls to identify: the Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, mockingbird, house finch, European starling, and blue jay," Little said.

"As is the way of nature and the curves she throws us, we were presented by four species not included in our Urban Bird study: the white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco, purple finch, and two very entertaining downy woodpeckers. The girls exhibited an understanding of the lessons they'd been taught about where to look for birds by asking if they could seek out birds in a hedgerow at the end of the building, and by looking on utility wires in front of their club. They even tried to find some puddles that European starlings use for their grooming."

The new feeding area more than lived up to its promise, director Tish Correa-Osborne said.

"It really was so amazing to see the girls get so excited every time they saw another bird and remind each other to be quiet so as not to scare any of them away. There were 10 cardinals in the feeding area all at once! It was beautiful to see. The girls were so proud to be able to spot and then name so many birds-- including a woodpecker which they most definitely had not expected." she



*Sally Dickens, Emma, Elizabeth and Lisa Ladnier look at a large nest at the Joe Ford Nature Park.*

said.

"The girls felt like professionals with their binoculars on. Of course, Brenda and Bill were so good and patient and helped them spot so many things they may have missed were it not for their expertise and experience."

Brenda Little said the girls would be using the Girls Inc. computers to submit data before the March 1 deadline.

Meanwhile, in town, Winny Lin was spending the afternoon of Feb. 18 at the K4-6 campus of Owensboro Catholic Elementary School.

"Fourth graders in the after-school program at Owensboro 4-6 Campus learned to identify some common birds in Owensboro area. They studied photos of different birds, listened to bird calls, watched a short homemade film of backyard bird watching by Bob and Judy Adams, enjoyed a gummy worm, and had a great time on a Friday afternoon," she reported.

The students were given information about the GBBC so

they could conduct their own counts at home, she said.

Out at the Joe Ford Nature Center, Tony Eaden, Rose Ann Radzelovage, Mary Kissel and director Grace Ford conducting a community count on behalf of the JFNC, welcoming eight birders who learned about 12 backyard birds through photos, audio calls and shared experiences. For example, Radzelovage's 22-bird morning Feb. 19 featured downy and hairy woodpeckers sitting so close, she was able to explain the differences between the black-and-white woodpeckers.

In preparing for the program, Kissel was fascinated to learn that the black and white and tan morphs of white-throated sparrows were most attracted by their opposite morphs of the opposite sex, and the black-and-white morphs are the best singers of the species.

One of the younger participants -- Bronson Miller, an aspiring bird photographer, perfectly explained the coloration differences between the cardinals for

the rest of the group.

Hampered by a windy day, the groups found 16 species at the park from early afternoon through the end of the event. Regrettably, the best bird of the day arrived just before the guests came -- a yellow-bellied sapsucker who attacked a sap-running tree in the birding area. There was enough feeder action to give visitors a nice look at the assorted juncos, goldfinches, downies on the property.

Lisa Ladnier and daughters Elizabeth and Emma and Sally Dickens spotted a large nest made of branches, which will be monitored for raptors this spring. Overall, totals at individual counts were probably hampered by the mild, windy weather, particularly along Horse Fork Creek, where totals -- no more than 23 species -- seemed particularly down. Kissel and Radzelovage were particularly struck by the lack of white-throated sparrows this year.

Because the deadline for GBBC submission is March 1, a full recap of area totals will be in the April Goldfinch. As of 8 a.m. Feb. 23, the following 35 species had been spotted in 10 Ohio and Daviess county reports: Canada goose, mallard, Cooper's hawk, red-tailed hawk, killdeer, Eurasian collared-dove, mourning dove, red-bellied woodpecker, yellow-bellied sapsucker, downy woodpecker, brown creeper, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, blue jay, American crow, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, American robin, northern mockingbird, European starling, yellow-rumped warbler, eastern towhee, song sparrow, dark-eyed junco, northern cardinal, red-winged blackbird, common grackle, house finch, American goldfinch, house sparrow and white-throated sparrow, turkey vulture and purple finch.

One-hundred ten species had been found in Kentucky.

## Go crane crazy at Goose Pond

### DCAS to attend festival

A different kind of “Hoosier hysteria” will take place March 5 when birders all over the Midwest flock to Linton, Ind., for the second annual Marsh Madness at Goose Pond Wildlife Management Area.

It's the second day of the three-day event, and the Daviess County Audubon Society will be traveling, leaving Moonlite BBQ Inn at 8 a.m.

The centerpiece of the event is the activity at the wetlands, accessible by self-guided tours and 90-minute bus tours. The event comes at the height of the spring migration of sandhill cranes.

There will be plenty of other bird-related fun available in Linton, featuring top names from southern Indiana birding circles. Scheduled speakers include: 9 a.m. Sandra Miles, wildlife gardens; 10 a.m. Travis Stoeling, backyard habitat; 11 a.m. Lee Sterrenberg, migration patterns of Goose Pond birds; 1 p.m. Sharon Sorenson, Sandhill Cranes: A Species Profile; and a 2 p.m. session on the National Audubon Society Important Bird Area programs.

There will also be kids' activities, Hardy Lake Rehab birds and bird banding demonstrations and photography workshops.

There's also some talk of going to Daviess Fish and Wildlife property in eastern Daviess County later in the month to view early wild flowers. Final arrangements had not been made as of deadline.



Josiah Leonard prepares to release his black duck at the Sloughs, with help from mom Lisa, who uses a spotting scope with Bob Adams (below).

(Judy Adams photos)

## Birders enjoy wingding at Sloughs

By Judy Adams

On Saturday morning, 11 DCAS members met at the Sloughs WMA in Henderson. for a morning of birding. The Green Wing Day program (sponsored by Ducks Unlimited) provided an opportunity for kids and adults alike to observe the banding of mallards and black ducks. Each child was able to hold and set free his “own” duck. Wonderful photo ops for all! Lisa Leonard's son Josiah brought out the parent or grandparent in all of us. Ken Hurm was “chief photographer” as the rest of us watched or clicked our autofocus digitals.

We then set off in three vehicles for the Muddy Pond observation area, gamely climbing a wooden tower weakened by its encounter with a truck. It was well worth it! We counted 83 tundra swans, 125 Canada geese and two coots. Four bald eagles soared overhead, and up to 50 red-winged blackbirds called raucously. We set up three spotting scopes so that everyone had an opportunity for a good look.

Although we wandered through the Jenny Hole Unit, we never did find the eagle nest that “you can see from the road.” Opting to



fill our stomachs, we headed out for lunch. Tony Eaden said, “You just can't beat a good trip to the Sloughs. I had so much fun looking that I forgot I had my camera with me until about the last. I always get a kick out of going with a group of friends. Also, it was funny when Jill realized she was the only person who did not qualify for the seniors' price at Golden Corral's buffet. Poor Jill for being so young.”

After lunch we proved the adage that when one tries to do something good for others, there is usually a great personal benefit derived from the effort. Fran and Lynn

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## Sloughs

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Tichenor had never seen the Bald Eagle nest at the heron rookery near John James Audubon State Park, so we decided to go en masse. Fran and Lynn commented that it was “a terrific bonus to the day ... The timing was perfect as the nest was occupied and the spotting scopes provided great views of a nesting Bald Eagle. All agreed it was a sight and site worth repeating!”

President Brenda Bailey Little noted that “the parent eagle that we watched sitting on the nest was magnificent. Knowing that an eagle flying at an altitude of 1,000 feet over open country can spot prey over an area of almost three square miles means that, as we zeroed-in on that nest with our spotting scopes, that parent bird was able to watch our every move with its naked eye. I am so glad that Fran and Lynn needed our help in finding the nest, because it was a marvelous end to a great day of birding.”

Lisa Leonard vowed that her first DCAS field trip won't be her last.

“What a great way to spend a winter-is-almost-over Saturday. I didn't need sunshine to see how beautiful it is at the Sloughs; more sun would have detracted from the landscape that day. It was wonderful to see programs like this offered to children, and even more so to see a property being conserved and managed like this. Seeing all the swans was a real treat; I'd only ever seen them in zoos before, and Josiah has been talking about “his” duck ever since; he wants to know if we can go back and see it again and see if it has built a nest or laid any eggs yet. I've not managed to go on any of your field trips before and have been encouraged to go out and buy myself a pair of binoculars so I can be ready the next time an opportunity comes along to do it again.”

## Chapter to participate in Trash for Cash program

The Daviess County Audubon board has voted to participate in Trash for Cash again this spring.

The time and place will be announced. The club has learned that because of the program's popularity, they will be restricted to only five miles at \$100/mile.



Back row: Winny Lin, Kenny Lin, Mike Henshaw, Bill Little, Judy Adams and Brenda Little celebrate the launch of the Urban Girls/Urban Birds program. Below, Brenda Little demonstrates the starling walk with a student. (Judy Adams photos).

## Girls Inc. program launched

By Winny Lin

The education program of “Urban Girls, Urban Birds” at Girls Inc. took off with a good start.

Our team of Brenda and Bill Little, Kenny and Winny Lin, Judy Adams, Carolyn

Williams and Mike Henshaw has taught the girls all 20 birds on the list of Cornell University in just two visits, Feb. 3 and Feb. 13.

Not only the girls showed interest, they also have demonstrated effective learning. The stories, the activities, the homemade short film of backyard bird watching by Bob Adams, the bird feeders that Mike and Kenny installed out in their backyard all got the girls excited about learning birds.

They wrote notes in their journals that Judy prepared like you wouldn't believe and answered questions from our education team.

Later on Friday, Feb. 18 Bill and Brenda went back and helped the girls count the birds for the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, and they will enter their data into the computer later.

What the team will teach next is to help the girls put their knowledge about birds into practice. They will look for birds and then identify them.



## Restore

From Page 2

egrets and Canada geese.

Birds of concern that have spotted at VCP or just off the property include: least tern, Henslow's sparrow, prothonotary warbler, willow flycatcher, wood thrush, woodcock, bobwhite, grasshopper sparrows, Savannah and vesper sparrows, bobolinks and semipalmated sandpiper. Some rarer species they'd like to attract include: Swainson's warbler, rusty blackbird, king rail, white-rumped sandpipers, sedge wrens, loggerhead shrike, yellow-breasted chat and eastern meadowlark.

They are trying to develop quantitative research methods -- such as point counts and line transects -- to determine number of species, sex and age and better judge their success with restoration.

The DCAS hopes to travel to the VCP this summer.

## From the President's Perch

# Is the EPA on the endangered list?

I know Audubon Society members who speak highly of what the Environmental Protection Agency has done for our country, indeed for the planet, and others who believe that regulations imposed by the EPA are hindering businesses in being able to compete in the world marketplace. The Audubon Society is an apolitical organization that never tells people how to vote or which party to support. What we try to do is educate. So this past week, I attempted to educate myself about what is going on with the attempt to take power away from the EPA currently under way in Congress.

I used the Internet for my research and learned some things I did not know, and maybe some things our members don't know either.

You may remember that early in George W. Bush's presidency, he refused to take a stand on global warming by insisting that more research was needed. A couple of weeks ago a letter sent in 2008 to President Bush by Stephen Johnson, and then head of the EPA was released. Johnson told Bush that there was no longer any question about whether or not global warming was real. The results of a study of the work of thousands of other scientists ordered by the Bush administration beginning in 2001 showed that science has proved that carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gas" pollutants are a threat to human health and welfare.

Johnson used strong words in his letter like requires action and en-

dangerment as he told the President that it is not true that more research is needed. President Bush decided not to honor Johnson's findings; it is believed because of buckling under the influence of Vice President Dick Cheney, the Office of Management and Budget, the Transportation Department, and Exxon Mobil Corp.

And so now we have a new administration, and earlier this month, a hearing was held on a bill being proposed by Reps. Fred Upton (R-Mich.), chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Com-

mittee, Ed Whitfield (R-KY), chairman of the Energy and Power subcommittee. The bill is called the Energy Tax Prevention Act which in the words of Lisa Jackson, now head of the EPA, "is designed to delay, weaken or eliminate Clean Air Act protections." In essence the bill has Congress responding to the scientific facts about global warming by saying, "We don't think global warming exists, and we have the votes to prove it!" The bill actually uses the word repeal as if we can make global warming go away. As if we can just vote out scientific fact. The bill also overturns the Supreme Court's ruling that carbon dioxide is a pollutant under the Clean Air Act, and it repeals all of EPA's authority to limit this pollution (or to think about it any manner) in order to protect against climate disruption.

The bill's hearing has been described as a joke.

Upton and Whitfield did not do any research of their own to refute

the EPA's findings. They simply intend to eliminate Clean Air Act provisions that would allow the U.S. EPA to set common-sense standards to cut the pollution from large industrial polluters. Until I researched this topic, I did not know that the EPA is required to put in place only reasonable, currently available technologies for working to decrease air pollution.

I was impressed with Lisa Jackson's promise that "Although EPA has not yet published proposed standards, I intend to base them on commercially available technologies with proven track records. The standards will reflect careful consideration of costs and incorporate as much compliance flexibility as possible."

She further promises to do her best to use her power to protect the part of our society that suffers the most from air pollution, children, the poor, and the elderly, those particularly susceptible to environmental and health threats. In addressing these and other issues, she has promised all stakeholders a place at the decision-making table. She says that over the period from 1990 through 2020, the benefits of implementing the Clean Air Act are projected to exceed the costs by a factor of more than 30 to 1.

I remember the time in the '70s when smog was horrible in California. Without the EPA, it is certain that southern California would be uninhabitable today.

So who are we going to believe? EPA scientists who have carefully reviewed thousands of scientific studies, or Upton and Whitfield, who are using their party's majority power to try to disregard the facts and without any proof claim that we cannot afford to do the right thing?

