June 2010 www.daviessaudubon.net



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Celebrating the occasion, from left, front row, were: Daviess County Audubon Society members Winny Lin, Brenda Little, Rose Ann Radzelovage, Brenda Eaden and Tony Eaden; back row: DCAS members Bill Little, Kenny Lin, the Rev. Larry Hostetter, Brescia president; Mike Henshaw, Charles Morris, Stratton, Mary Kissel, Judy Adams, Carolyn Williams, Grace Ford, Joe Ford and Lynn Tichenor. (Photo courtesy of Winny Lin)

DCAS, Brescia celebrate sculpture

he beauty of birds of prey and community collaboration were celebrated May 5, when David Stratton's redtailed hawk sculpture was dedicated at the base of the Horse Fork Creek Trail.

A nice crowd dominated by

and Daviess County Audubon Society attended.

"The Birds of the Greenbelt series demonstrates Brescia's interest and emphasis on education and is at the heart of public information programs such as this," Stratton said.

Brescia's Arts in Service to co-sponsors Brescia University the Community is designed to

work with community organizations to design, build and install public art that promotes lifelong learning, he noted.

Stratton described his stoneware piece of two redtailed hawk as "wabi," a Japanese term for organic, flawed

See Sculpture, Page 3

Picnic, e-birding session conclude club year

An old-fashioned picnic and new-fangled birding tools are on the menu for the final meeting of the 2009-2010 Daviess County Audubon Society year.

The annual picnic will be held at 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 1, 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.

A program on e-birding will be presented by Scott Harp of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife.

How can you turn your iPod into a tweet machine? Come and find out! Along with personal use, he noted

that electronic tools can be used to bring birds in closer for educational programs. The DCAS is contemplating purchasing electronic equipment for club use.

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

Club meetings resume in September.

Ecologist braces for white-nose syndrome

Thomas calls disease 'unprecedented' in nature

he devastation of white-nose syndrome took center stage at the May 4 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society,

the National Park Service's Cumberland Piedmont Inventory and Monitoring Network, called the disease "unprecedented" in the annals of North American wildlife. because of the speed in which it has traveled and killed.

The disease kills at least 90% of those cave-dwelling bats affected with the tell-tale white fungus around the muzzle, wings, ears or tail membrane.

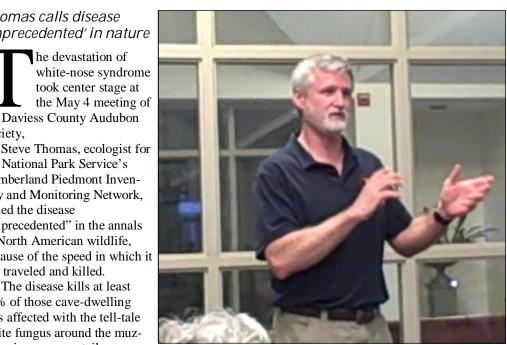
"They're like a hunk of cheese with mold growing on them," he said.

They use up their energy grooming and flying about, because their hibernation is interrupted from the irritation. Their lowered state of immunity during hibernation makes them vulnerable. Those which survive the winter are left with scars and have more difficulty flying.

More than 1 million bats have died from the disease from New Hampshire to Missouri, as well as parts of Canada. No one is completely sure where it came from, although it may have been accidentally introduced from someone in a European cave.

"It may be just a matter of time before it arrives," he said, acknowledging its presence in nearby states. Although bats were tested in Mammoth Cave, results were negative.

What are the signs? Bats flying outside during the day;



Steve Thomas discusses bats of Mammoth Cave at the May meeting.

shifting locations in a cave; dead bats near caves or structures, he said. Members were asked to report suspected cases to state or federal fish and wildlife officials.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has issued a voluntary recreational cave moratorium in affected states. The risk is considered low at large tourist caves like Mammoth Cave. But there are wild cave tours offered by the park, in which there is climbing and crawling, so they are testing measures of prevention, such as having coveralls for people to wear which stay in the park, disinfecting boots before and after tours and providing other equipment, such as lights and helmets. Visitors who have been in a cave in the Central or Eastern time zone in the past five years are asked to have footwear disinfected or to refrain from wearing worn caving items.

Thomas concedes humans' role in transmitting the disease is disputed. Scientists are monitoring Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico. Because bats' migration distance is limited, if it shows up there, that would be a good sign that the disease can be transmitted by humans.

Once a cave is infected, it's infected. Scientists are trying to figure out how to clean a cave without killing off other organisms in a cave.

The disease plays havoc with the ecosystem. Through guano, bats import organic matter in caves, which are nutrientpoor areas for other creatures

It also threatens the economy, because they are farmers' front-line defense from nightflying insects. An average bat can eat 1.000 insects/hour. which could translate into a hike of billions of insects infesting crops.

Thomas also explored some of the bats which inhabit Mammoth Cave. Of the 15 bats known in the state, 13 can be found on the Mammoth Cave property. Nine use caves, four use trees and are seldom in caves.

The lineup includes Rafinesque's big-eared bats, a special concern species; federally endangered gray and Indiana bats, and eastern small-footed bat, which is state-endangered.

Indiana bats roost in the winter, clustering together. During the summer, the females have their young under the bark of trees. In the last year, species totals have dropped 17%.

Gray bats use caves yearround – a winter home and a summer home. Their numbers have been climbing - in two park caves alone, there are 450,000 gray bats.

The cave perhaps has the largest population of Rafinesque's big-eared bat in the country. One cave has about 900; normally, they have groups of 50. They are found in caves, trees or sometimes abandoned buildings.

Officials have less knowledge about the park's tree bats. Many migrate in the winter: such as Seminole and hoary bats, which are the state's largest (18-inch wingspan). The red bat hibernates on the forest floor, underneath litter or logs.

One reason for bats' scarcity is its breeding. Most bats only have one pup a year, which can fly within three or four weeks.

As nocturnal creatures, they navigate through echo location, high frequency calls which bounce back off an object, giving them an indication of where objects are.



Mike Henshaw puts another coat of whitewash on the bird blind, as Bill Little, Mary Kissel, Tony Eaden and Brenda Little await their next task. (Judy Adams photo)

Blind gets needed overcoat; rains undermine some work

udubon members and Mother Nature continue to do battle at Girl Scout Camp Pennyroyal following an April 28 work day at the Powell Bird Blind.

Mike Henshaw and Judy Adams powered a coat of whitewash over the adobe structure. Tony Eaden had cleared the easement, where wildflowers were planted. He continues to work on the rock and soil mixture at the threshold of the blind, where soil pushed up at the base was causing rot. He also repaired the blind door and drilled drainage holes in feeders.

Bill Little and Kenny Lin worked inside the blind, and they, Mary Kissel and Brenda Little worked on rebuilding the mulch trail to the frog



Mary Kissel, left, and Judy Adams re-cover the ramp leading into the blind area.

pond. A frog stump carved by David Stratton was moved to the frog pond, where both frogs received a covering of linseed oil for protection.

Unfortunately, the great Derby weekend rains did

wash out some of their seed plantings, although Brenda Little said the seeded area shows much thicker germination than the area that was

See Blind, Page 5

Sculpture

From Page 1

flawed artwork that interprets its subject. But flaws are what make us special and lead to friendships and collaborations that promote learning, he said.

"The birds aren't ideal out in the wild, so the flawed the better," he said.

To maximize its purpose as an information tool, Stratton tinkered with the mounting structure so the banners, which detail tidbits about birds' diet, habitat and physical features can be more wind-resistant. The "Red-Tailed Hawk" headline is clearly visible to drivers on the U.S. 60 bypass as they travel between the New Hartford Road and Frederica Street exits.

Brescia president the Rev. Larry Hostettler touted the work as a reflection of Brescia's mission and education and community service. Brescia officials also expressed gratitude to the City of Owensboro's streets, engineering, public works and parks departments for their assistance.

DCAS president Brenda Little used the occasion to tell the gathering that the Audubon Society is much more than a birding club.

"The Audubon Society is interested in the entire web of life. We love nature. We love the beauty, and we realize we live in a very, very busy world. This is a perfect place where people come to relax, and they look up in the sky and see the real birds circling."

She also stressed the organization's emphasis on positive action, recreation and education as weaponry against threats on the environment. The sculpture project goes hand-in-hand with that emphasis.

"We want to give to our community, every mom pushing a stroller down through here. We want this to speak to her and those little ones, to the people riding their bikes, jogging. We have a message, and it is: Slow down a little bit. Listen if you can."

She challenged other organizations to step up and sponsor pieces for the series. A goldfinch sculpture was placed on the trail's eastern end at Yewell Heritage Park, Brookhill subdivision.

Bill Little, Kentucky Heritage

See Sculpture, Page 5

Bitterns amaze birders at Goose Pond

Bluebird walk also part of birding festival

The birding hotspot of south-central Indiana lived up to its hype during the Ohio Valley Birding Festival April 30 and May 1, delivering on some memorable moments for those venturing to the Goose Pond Wildlife Management Area near Linton.

Daviess County Audubon members Charles and Laura Morris, Carolyn Williams, and Bob and Judy Adams went on the May 1 trip, which was highlighted by a staredown for territory by a pair of American bitterns, who stood frozen in their poses for a staggering 45 minutes. Laura Morris noted she had never seen anything like that in her life – and the Morrises are veteran waterbird watchers.

The sight also left an impact on trip leader Lee Sterrenberg of Bloomington, Ind., for whom the property is a second home.

The crouched bittern did more bobbing or weaving and also did some advancing toward the erect bird."

In his report for Indiana Birding, he wrote: "One bird



A bluebird fusses at visitors at John James Audubon State Park. (Judy Adams photo)

did stretched neck, sky pointing behavior during most of the encounter, and the other bird mostly did crouching behavior. The crouched bittern did more bobbing or weaving and also did some advancing toward the erect bird."

But grassland species threatened by habitat change

also were represented. Charles Morris also was thrilled to have such a good look at a grasshopper sparrow, one of the top species of the National Audubon Society's "Birds of Decline" list.

Species spotted or heard Saturday included: barn swallow, red-winged blackbird,

Canada geese, starling, turkey vulture, American crow, great blue heron, American goldfinch, American kestrel, American robin, common grackle, mourning dove, tree swallow, house sparrow, eastern meadowlark, blue-winged teal, northern bobwhite, great egret, cattle egret, grasshopper sparrow, black-necked stilt, doublecrested cormorant, lesser yellowlegs, killdeer, solitary sandpiper, ring-billed gull, bald eagle, mallard, rough-winged swallow, American coot, redtailed hawk, northern harrier, purple martin, indigo bunting, green heron, wood duck, blackcrowned night heron, American bittern, common yellowthroat and great horned owl.

Bill and Brenda Little opted to go on the Friday morning trip, which she termed as "exhausting but unique." Although hampered by wind, they still managed to spot or hear more than 60 species among the mud flats and prairie grasses which make up the 8,000 acres.

"My favorite sighting of the

See Bitterns, Page 5

Birds, kids flock to garden

eginning birding classes for hundreds of local kids continued through May at the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden. Charles Morris, Mary Kissel, Judy Adams, Ken Hurm, Carolyn Williams and Kenny Lin engaged local third-graders using new fake birds purchased by the WKBG. The International Migratory Bird collection is life-sized, Kissel noted, which makes it easier for the kids to see and identify. Their weather-resistant status has been tested by windy conditions at the garden, which forced educators inside during Foust Elementary's classes.

The 12 birds also came with a teacher's guide loaded with fun facts about these common backyard birds, and Kissel delighted in demonstrating how American kestrels kick at their predators with their talons.

They also complement the real-life visitors to the property. Kids have

Judy Adams discusses kestrels at the Western Kentucky
Botanical Garden.

See Garden, Page 5





Sculptures salute red-tailed hawks and American gold-finches.

Sculpture

From Page 3

Land Conservation Fund Board treasurer, used the occasion to tout nature license plate sales as a conservation tool, noting that part of the Greenbelt was purchased with these funds.

The ceremony was followed by a short nature hike on the trail. Species spotted included: rubythroated hunmingbird, turkey vulture, American robin, black-andwhite warbler, killdeer, chimney swift, common grackle, starling, mourning dove, eastern meadowlark, eastern kingbird, northern parula, red-winged blackbird, redbellied woodpecker, northern cardinal, rose-breasted grosbeak, redtailed hawk, blue jay, American goldfinch, great blue heron, northern rough-winged swallow, eastern wood pewee, barn swallow and American goldfinch.

Blind

From Page 3

not seeded. Eaden said he went over there and planted about 10 pounds of sunflower seeds, mostly around the edge of the wildflowers and all the way up to the gravel road.

Since the work day, Little also noted a "widow maker" has fallen and taken down the clothesline that she and Bill used to suspend a thistle feeder in front of the viewing windows.

As a temporary fix, she's suspending the thistle tube from the 3-tube feeder that hangs closest to one of the front viewing windows. It will ultimately be attached to a tree

Adams and Kissel attached roofing tiles to the wheelchair ramp. Its slick surface had toppled more than one child or adult visitor to the blind, and the new surface seems to provide needed traction.

Brenda Little and park ranger Lisa Leonard are exploring ways to decrease erosion into the frog pond. After the heavy rains, she could see neither the tadpoles nor the mosquito fish that had been put there last year from Carpenter's Lake. Judy Adams has suggested some type of wooden descent in the muddiest area next to the blind.

They still need to remove some of the drippage from the overcoat and find a way to enhance the relief covered by the overcoat

Bitterns

From Page 4

was a first-year bald eagle doing practice runs at trying, without success, to fish for his lunch. I could have stayed and watched him for an hour. His colors were gorgeous, and a mature eagle sat nearby looking bored as all get out while he tried in vain to catch a fish. We also watched a mature eagle (a la the Lord helps them that helps themselves) snatch a fish away from a juvenile," Little reported.

They also saw a swimming muskrat and a mama skunk carrying a kit across the road in her mouth.

Sterrenberg reported that the day was highlighted by three Wilson's Phalarope

and a black-crowned night heron.

The trips also reconnected DCAS members with several Evansville-area birders. They also met Steve Gifford, a Haubstadt, Ind., resident who is a stellar nature photographer. He accepted the group's invitation to attend the sculpture ceremony the following week and lunched with members, offering heartfelt advice on advancing the Daviess County Audubon Society mission. His pictures from the festival may be found at http://www.flickr.com/photos/steve_gifford/page2/

The Adamses and Williams also attended the bluebird program at John James Audubon State Park that morning, which featured Bob and Judy Peak, who have set up bluebird trails at Land Between the Lakes and other parts of the tri-state.

Garden

From Page 4

peeked at the barn swallow and robin nests in the garden's gazebo. Education team members also were happily surprised by a nice population of birds at the resident feeders, even in poor weather conditions. Kids love seeing the bright patches on the red-winged blackbirds, and the sight of a male cardinal at the feeder prompted one Cravens student to urge all to "make a wish on the redbird." During the second week, brown thrashers were of note.

This spring has seen an uptick in the Eurasian collared dove at the garden, and DCAS team members were pleased to be able to point out the differences between the larger, paler invasive species and mourning doves.

Perhaps the best birding moment at the garden, alas, occurred before Cravens kids arrived one morning. A group of grackles teamed up to mob a soaring red-tailed hawk.

Schools participating in May were: Foust Elementary, Newton Parrish; Cravens Elementary, Deer Park Elementary; Sorgho Elementary; Tamarack Elementary and Eastview Elementary.



Mike Henshaw and Bob Adams prepare for Trash for Cash May 22.

Chapter turns trash into cash

Five miles of southwestern Daviess County are a bit cleaner – and the club a lot richer -- thanks to Trash for Cash efforts May 21 and 22.

Because of the manpower, they were able to complete the four-mile Saturday session by early afternoon. Club directors opted to try five miles, because the county's reward/mile had been slashed in half. The weekend's work netted the club \$500 before recyclables were turned in.

Bill and Brenda Little spearheaded Team Bailey efforts on Friday, picking up mile-long Ashbyburg Road. The next day, David Stratton, Bob Adams, Judy Adams, Mike Henshaw, Henry Connor, Pat Augenstein, Mary Kissel, Carolyn Williams and driver Charles Morris tackled Burns Road. Its segments stretch from U.S. 431 to Windy Hollow Restaurant on Kentucky 81. Grabbers and stick and ski poles helped fish items out of the rain-filled ditches flanked by tall grass and cornfields. All agreed the amount of trash was down from previous pickups, particularly noting the lack of Styrofoam containers. Aluminum cans were set aside for recycling.

The effort was boosted by a barbecue lunch provided by Jan Howard of Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn, topped by Williams' sweet breads.

Brenda Little noted the event is considered part of Keep America Beautiful's Great American Cleanup. The nation's largest community improvement program takes place annually from March 1 through May 31, involving an estimated 3 million volunteers and attendees. Volunteers donated more than 5.2 million hours in 2009 to clean, beautify and improve more than 32,000 communities during more than 30,000 events in all 50 states and beyond.

Ford library moving to Ford center

The Joe Ford Nature Library is closed until later this summer, when it completes its move from Brescia University to the Joe Ford Nature Park behind the GRADD offices on U.S. 60 West this summer. Anyone who would like to help with the move may contact Grace Ford at gcarford@aol.com or 302-2755.



Polo shirts available

Interested in a Daviess County Audubon polo shirt, shown here worn by Judy Adams and Mary Kissel? Prices start at \$15, and they may be ordered with Sheryl Lott of Lotts of Stitches, lottsofstitches@yahoo.com (Bob Adams photo)

Take a hike, celebrate Trails Day

Kentucky will be taking part in National Trails Day on June 5 with events to recognize the miles of excellent trails in the state.

National Trails Day was launched by the American Hiking Society in 1993 to help promote exercise, trail development and the outdoors. It has grown to more than 1,100 events around the country.

"Kentucky's trail system is an incredible asset to our state that deserves to be recognized," said First Lady Jane Beshear in a news release. "Kentuckians should take advantage of the many wonderful hikes at our state parks to get active and enjoy our state's beautiful landscapes."

The Kentucky State Parks have nearly 300 miles of hiking trails and sponsor the Trail Shape program – a challenge to hike 16 trails in one year. For more information, visit www.parks.ky.gov

Kentucky has more than 2,500 miles of hiking trails. To find a trail in your area, visit www.getoutky.com

At John James Audubon State Park, Henderson, the day is highlighted by the Creatures of the Night Adventure Trek.

Visitors can venture out with the interpretation staff and discover the mysticism of nighttime creatures. Interested? Bring a flashlight and come to the Audubon Museum. The hike lasts from 6:30-9 p.m. Contact Julie McDonald at 270-826-2247 or juliea.mcdonald@ky.gov

At Pennyrile Forest State Park, Dawson Springs, guests can hike parts of the Lake Trail and Pennyroyal Trail. Hikers are encouraged to bring hand clippers to tidy up the trail. This event is open to adults and children ages 5 and up. All children ages 17 and under must be accompanied by an adult. This event is free and will run from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Call 800-325-1711.

From the President's Perch

Teamwork, good investments, fun mark year

elegating is typically easier said than done. That observation is coming from someone who takes "The Little Red Hen" concept to extremes. However with our chapter members, the past year has been smooth and synchronized as people stepped up to fill the roles where their talents served all of us well. No one person had to take on the voke of responsibility for an unfair share of the things it takes to make a successful year. Oftentimes during directors' meetings, I would hear someone say, "I can do that!", and it was said with enthusiasm, too. Not only did our people volunteer to do what needed doing, they followed through. We did not have a problem with broken promises.

We've spent a lot of money during the past nine months, but our expenditures have been carefully thought out and have helped our club to be able to present better programs and to have higher name recognition in our community. Following the unveiling of the first Greenbelt Birds, we invited professional photographer Steve Gifford, of Evansville Audubon Society to have lunch with us. We peppered Steve with excited chatter about the programs, field studies and projects we have sponsored this year. Steve replied that he had looked at our website and realized that we were really doing a lot of exciting things. And then he added, "You are doing a lot with very little in the way of funding."

The third observation I want to share about the year that is fast coming to an end is that we have had a lot of fun while accomplishing a lot. That is one thing that is so great about Audubon. Education is our major goal, but we do not take a sky-is-falling approach. Rather we concentrate on the positive, what can be done about the problems



Brenda Little, Mike Henshaw, Kenny Lin and Tony Eaden share lunch in the midst of a work day at the Powell Bird Blind.

that we learn about. And we have fun all the while, as we watch birds, hike, turn over rocks to see what we can find, we enjoy each other's company, diverse as we are. Problems and all, this really is a wonderful world.

I guess my final observation about the year almost ended is a strong feeling of pride. I am so very proud of us. Not of me, though I am happy about how well things have gone, it is us as a group of which I am proud.

I am proud of how hospitable we have been to our exciting new members, to our

visitors, to our speakers. Proud of how we have urged friends to attend our programs and field trips. Proud of how we set high goals and then set about reaching them. Proud of how we had courage to take our treasury lower than it has been in a few years knowing that we would roll up our sleeves and raise funds to replenish our bank account.

It has been a good year.

We have been very good to our community. We have learned a lot, and we have had a lot of fun!



Your next Goldfinch will come before the September meeting.

Have a great summer!