

# The Goldfinch

November  
2010

Daviess County Audubon Society, [www.daviessaudubon.net](http://www.daviessaudubon.net)

## Water, water everywhere

*Meier to explore Gulf's troubled past, present and future*

**D**id the Gulf of Mexico's environmental troubles begin with the explosion of a British Petroleum rig?

No, contends Western Kentucky University biologist Albert Meier. He returns to the Daviess County Audubon Society at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 2, at First Christian Church, Seventh Street and J.R. Miller Blvd. He will share his and wife

Ouida's reflections on the disaster and other environmental issues which faced the Gulf before and after the explosion. WKU biologist Ouida Meier is a marine biologist who grew up in Louisiana.

Daviess County Audubon Society president Brenda Little said the program is in response to the national organization's directive after the explosion. More than 35,000 volunteers



signed up for duty to help in the wake of the disaster, but conservation education on the local level was urged, too, particularly in those areas along major flyways heading to the Gulf Coast.

The recovery effort remains in its infancy, and the true impact may not be felt for years. In October, the National

*See Gulf, Page 2*

## Innovative wetland target of Campbellsville trip

**E**fforts to clean water can be found in Kentucky, and the Daviess County Audubon Society will be traveling to Campbellsville Nov. 6 to view an innovative program to use a man-made wetland to treat wastewater.

Clay Hill Memorial Forest and the Joan White Howell Environmental Education Center are under the direction of Campbellsville University's Dr. Richard Kessler's environmental education program.

According to CU's website, the school has avoided contamination of groundwater by treating it using natural processes. As

water passes through rubber-lined, gravel-filled beds, plants such as cattails, rushes and irises remove bacteria and other microorganisms remove nutrients from the water and utilize them for their own growth. When the water reaches a sump pump, it is sent to a greenhouse with floating aquatic plants, which remove the remaining nutrients. From there, it goes to a large aquarium at the Joan White Howell Environmental Education Center as living proof to visitors that water is a recyclable resource.

*See Trip, Page 2*

## Volunteers needed for light display

**T**hanks to the luck of the draw, the Daviess County Audubon Society has the opportunity to make hundreds of

dollars for chapter programming this winter.



The chapter won the lottery to be one of the nonprofits working at Christmas at Panther Creek 2010. The organizations hosting the annual light show at the western Daviess County park, off Kentucky 81, will be among those splitting half the proceeds.

DCAS will be responsible for the week from Thursday, Dec. 3, through Dec. 9, the second week of the attraction. The club will need at least two people to work from 5:15 to 9:30 p.m. each day to collect the admission fee. The last time the club worked the event, it received nearly \$600.

The collection booth is heated, but volunteers are advised to wear warm clothes as they come out to greet visitors.

Signups will be conducted at the November meeting, or you may request a time by contacting Carolyn Williams, 683-5863, [cs.williams@att.net](mailto:cs.williams@att.net).

## November 2010 calendar

\*Meeting, 7 p.m. Nov. 2, First Christian Church, Seventh and J.R. Miller Blvd.

\*Field trip to Clay Hill Memorial Forest Campbellsville University Nov. 6. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at Owensboro Community & Technical College's back parking lot.



## Movie time

*Marjorie Klee, right, and Wilma Baird settle in for the showing of "Winged Migration," which was shown Oct. 6 at Brescia University's Taylor Hall. About 30 people enjoyed the stunning views of birds' grapple for survival against a sometimes-surreal international backdrop. Rural King provided popcorn for the event, which was presented by BU's Art Department and the Daviess County Audubon Society.*



*A Tamarack Elementary student explores a bird guide during the Oct. 21 birding class at the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden.*

## Trip

*From Page 1*

DCAS president Brenda Little calls Kessler one of the top biologists in Kentucky and said exposure to such a program can only help the chapter's mission to promote better environmental stewardship.

The club will leave from Owensboro Community & Technical College's back lot at 8:30 a.m. The chapter will eat lunch on the way before the 1 p.m. (EDT) program.

## Gulf

*From Page 1*

Audubon Society published "Oil and Birds: Too Close for Comfort," a report based on a weeklong late-September trip to the Gulf by several of the organization's scientists to determine how safe the region is for birds.

The scientists saw birds and they saw oil, sometimes in the same place. "The largest uncontrolled science experiment in our country is in many ways just beginning," the report reads. But the Audubon team also saw reasons for hope: Of the 10,000 birds they counted, only three were oiled, and the team saw large numbers of mature and juvenile pelicans. In the end, though, it's still a wait-and-see game. "I'm apprehensive," Melanie Driscoll, director of bird conservation for Audubon's Louisiana Coastal Initiative, states. "We saw birds' stunning resilience, but also their sobering blindness to the perils before them."

## Seasons, birding change for botanical garden classes

"This is bird heaven," one student said as he scanned the northern fringes of the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden. The education team has concluded its fall segment with the Budding Biotech program.

It was fascinating to see how the birding experience changed throughout the course of the fall — and sometimes during the course of a single morning. September classes had scanned for hummingbirds; late October classes welcomed the return of white-throated and white-crowned sparrows. But summer was reluctant to let go — two Tamarack Elementary classes were introduced to a palm warbler who had landed in the tree beside the gazebo — the first DCAS members had seen at the garden.

"We made history!" a boy shouted.

In all, more than 800 students visited the garden this fall, including the first appearance by Owensboro Catholic students and a group of migrant students who were quick to identify backyard birds.

Team members included: Charles Morris, Ken Hurm, Judy Adams, Mary Kissel and Jan Howard.



# Stellar guide enhances Falls of the Ohio trip

By Brenda Little

When we booked our field trip to the Falls of the Ohio, the Interpretive Center staff told us that they were going to try to sign up Kathy Dennis to lead our group. “She is great,” they told us. And they did not exaggerate. About half of the group of nine who traveled to Clarksville, Ind., Oct. 9 had been to the Falls before. Our last chapter outing there took place the Saturday after the 9/11 attacks, and there was abnormal quiet in the skies above us as air traffic was still being curtailed.

When we have been to the Falls as individual travelers and as a group, we did not have a guide assigned to help us with our observations of either birds or fossils. We watched the video in the Interpretive Center; we pondered over the display cases trying to memorize different fossil names, and then we headed down to the river to see how much we could remember.

This year Kathy met us on the porch overlooking the Falls where she had a spotting scope set-up for our use. She gathered us all around her for a brief introduction before going with us down to the fossil beds. One of the things she explained is that “The Falls” is a misnomer. The shallow riverbed is actually cascades.

Kathy uses a paperback book-sized photo album as her visual aid in explaining the rich history behind this stretch of river. Beginning with the glaciers that advanced down from the far north forming what she calls a “young river,” the Ohio, to George Rogers Clark and John James Audubon to the Corps of Engineers, she explained how the pioneers navigated the treacherous water and how the McAlpine Dam changed the river to its present state today. When we reached the fossil bed, Kathy pointed us to the best area for finding and identifying fossils, near the shore where high water deposits silt less often than out farther in the river.

Common Devonian fossils found in Kentucky include sponges (Porifera), corals (Cnidaria), bryozoans, brachiopods, trilo-



From left: Bill Little, Tony Eaden, Brenda Eaden, Henry Connor, Jill Flachskam, Nancy Connor, Ken Hurm, Brenda Little and Charles Morris. (Kathy Dennis photo)



Kathy Dennis (Ken Hurm photo)

bites, snails (gastropods), clams (pelecypods), squid-like animals (cephalopods), crinoids (Echinoderms), and microscopic animals like ostracodes and

conodonts. Kathy used her photos and illustrations as she simplified descriptions and guided us to look for “Cheerios and soda straws” e.g. And then when we found the easily identifiable imprints in the rock, she showed us sketches of what the animal looked like before its remains became embedded in the muck at the bottom of the shallow ocean that covered what is now the middle of North America hundreds of millions of years ago.

Birds were scarce with our count for the day being about 20 species. As we hiked along the shore into a wooded area, Kathy told us that she is a member of the Beckham Bird Club and one of the dozens of volunteers at the Interpretive Center who call themselves “Naturalists At Heart.” When the volunteer guides take their required training courses, Kathy teaches the section about birds. The training the volunteers take is intense and broad in scope. It is that training plus Kathy’s marvelous ability to adapt her presentation to the interest level and abilities of her group and the delight she has in her naturalist heart for the wonders of nature that make her a great guide. The moment we saw her hat, we knew we were in for a lot of fun and learning.

# Deer Park kids catch bluebird fever

**A**utumn's chill may have been setting in Oct. 22, but all thoughts were turning to spring as 80 kids from Deer Park Elementary caught bluebird fever during the annual Nature Day program at Owensboro Community & Technical College.

A team of Bill and Brenda Little, Lisa Leonard and Judy Adams discussed cavity dwellers and laid the foundation for a bluebird trail at Deer Park.

"Students and their teachers took to the outdoor learning opportunity with great enthusiasm," Brenda Little said. "Students were gathering pieces of nature's fallout from feathers to seed pods, to nut casings and bringing their finds to us wanting to know more: animal/vegetable/or mineral? Kids were attentive, inquisitive and excited about what they were learning about cavity nesters with emphasis on the eastern bluebird."

Mike Henshaw had taken an aerial photo of the Deer Park campus, to give the students an idea of where the boxes could be placed.

"They are looking forward to being able to observe nesting and to gather data



*Lisa Leonard discusses cavity dwellers with Deer Park students. (Bill Little photo)*

from three to five boxes that DCAS will help in placing on their school grounds," Little said.

OCTC's trail was used as a model to

*See Bluebird, Page 6*

From the President's Perch

# Dynamic new directors make their presence felt

**By Brenda Little**

**S**ince we welcomed three new directors to our board only a month or so ago, each of them has stacked up an impressive amount and variety of contributions to our organization.

David Stratton's role in our efforts began even before he was asked to sit on our board. He was innocently sitting with us at the Moonlite before one of our program meetings last year in his role of working with community outreach from his position in the

Art Department at Brescia University. David thought he was joining us to discuss his idea of placing bird sculptures and text about avian life along the Greenbelt Park. He never expected that he would be asked for a referral to a chain saw artist who might be commissioned to do something with the tree stump situation we had at the Powell Bird Blind. Once asked about the chain saw artist, David volunteered, "I might be able to help with that. It is something I've never done before, but....", and indeed a very large frog

emerged from the blade of David's chain saw. The process of placing bird sculptures with text banners on the Greenbelt is well under way. Two or three more bird sculptures have been spoken for that will be placed along the path that rings the city. At this time David has a couple of ideas bouncing around in his head with plans to involve Audubon in making Owensboro a better place environmentally, but those ideas are

*See Directors, Page 6*



# Hundreds attend Ford Nature Center reopening

**T**he Joe Ford Nature Center celebrated its reopening in grand style Oct. 10, welcoming about 250 people to a celebration at the GRADD office and nature center off U.S. 60.

People were lined out the door at GRADD for an opening ceremony which took a look back at the path the center took for its renaissance while looking forward to instilling a love of nature in multiple generations.

Allen Kirtley praised Brescia University for serving as an “incubator” for the Joe Ford Nature Library in its formative years.

Twenty-four years after its original construction, the vision is finally being realized. Having the library at the center is key, Joe Ford said, because it offers a place for “boys and girls of all ages” to observe nature. He challenged the audience to learn about nature – even if it’s only one aspect of it.

The transfer west came at a dizzying pace this summer, thanks to 30-plus local volunteers who have overwhelmed Grace Ford.

“Once we unpacked our belongings, ideas evolved. Volunteers talked to me about what they envisioned for our operation, and they didn’t stop with talk,” Grace Ford said..

Their mission is a critical one in an age where tech-savvy, over-scheduled kids and adults suffer from nature deficit disorder, a disconnect from the world around them, said Owensboro Community & Technical College assistant biology professor Micah Perkins. He noted that studies have shown nature study can help kids with attention span, maintaining a healthy weight and help lower blood pressure.

In science classes, there’s an emphasis on global environmental issues, such as climate change. It comes at the expense of learning in the backyard.

“Children can experience nature firsthand by using all of their senses,” he said, such as learning about growing food from planting, sipping the nectar out of a honeysuckle vine, capturing insects and butterflies.

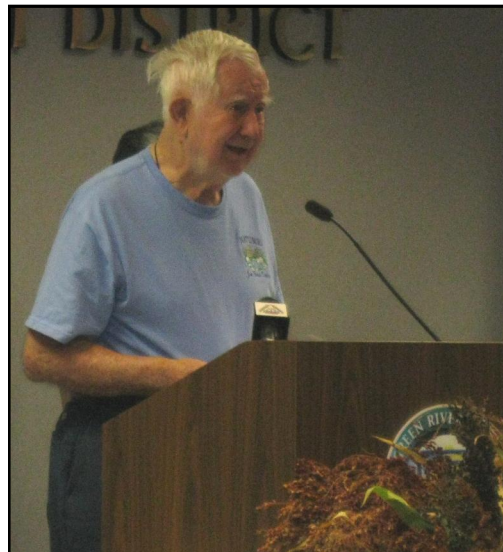
Such discoveries elicit numerous questions, which leads to learning – and respecting -- each creature’s role in the universe.

A desire for that experience seems to be in demand, Grace Ford said, noting that the center already has a waiting list for its Junior Naturalist program. A science club has already reserved the library for research projects, she said.

Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, visitors were able to tour the center and the grounds, which are just starting to take shape. Much of that work won’t be fully realized until next year, when flower, butterfly and vegetable gardens spring to life.

However, the bird sanctuary has already been discovered by residents.

During October, species recorded within sight of the center’s front door included: Carolina chickadee, Carolina wren, red-breasted nuthatch, northern cardinal, blue jay, white-breasted nuthatch, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, Tennessee warbler, yellow-rumped



*More than 250 came to the Joe Ford Nature Center following a dedication ceremony featuring remarks by Joe Ford and others about their vision for the center.*

warbler, black-throated green warbler, tufted titmice, American robin, golden-crowned kinglet, yellow-bellied sapsucker, red-eyed vireo and downy woodpecker.

During the month, suet and thistle feeders were added to the sanctuary, as well as a bird bath for drinking and bathing.

Bird hikes at the center are scheduled twice a week through mid-December. Tony Eaden and Rose Ann Radzelovage will lead the “Birding with Birders” program from 2 to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays, and Mary Kissel will lead one from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Fridays. (Call 926-3321 if interested, because the time may be changing to noon).

Kissel said she is intrigued by the potential to serve older adults who may enjoy bird watching but can no longer endure rigors of hiking at parks.

In lieu of having a shower, the DCAS board is encouraging members to visit the center and drop off bags of bird seed for the sanctuary.



## On his perch

*This great egret was one of several birds Ken Hurm and Charles Morris saw on their recent trip to Reelfoot Lake. The trip was highlighted by the spotting of a loggerhead shrike. (Ken Hurm photo)*

## Museum event to salute Ohio River

The importance of the Ohio River – and a new exhibit celebrating its role in the history and future of Owensboro – will be acknowledged during River Heritage Day Oct. 30. It will be held at 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Owensboro Museum of Science and History, Second and Daviess streets.

Organizers note the largest tributary of the Mississippi River has played a crucial role in the development of the United States. It is of immeasurable importance in providing transportation, recreation, fish & wildlife habitat and drinking water all along its 981 miles. The event will include displays, hands-on activities, education and a river-themed costume contest. The Daviess County Audubon Society will have a display to note the river's interconnection with major migratory flyways and present birds that call the Ohio River home.

## Bluebird

*From Page 4*

teach students about the proper size and opening required to attract bluebirds, as well as the distance required for a success trail. Maintaining the trail also requires effort, but the enthusiasm of Deer Park teacher Kay Fulkerson was impressive, she said. The Girl Scout leader was already making plans about painting the houses.

Deer Park faculty and OCTC assistant professor Micah Perkins want to coordinate nest box monitoring and data sharing in their respective trails next spring and summer. And then come September, it is hoped that DCAS can offer a program to net monarchs at the college's flower gardens.

## Directors

*From Page 4*

not ready just yet for unveiling.

You've heard it said that if you want something done, assign it to the busiest person around, and it will get done. Lisa Leonard holds down a full-time job as site manager for Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp. At the same time she is filling the role of single parent as she raises a grandson. Such a heavy load on her shoulders did not deter us from asking Lisa to work with us on our board. We wanted her because of her years of experience working with AmeriCorps, planning programs for children in her role as a Scout leader and with the Girl Scout organization. At Lisa's very first directors' meeting, she volunteered to help with three discussed needs. She is working on writing a grant to the Kentucky Ornithological Society for the purchase of a camera and printing equipment to be used with small groups of children in learning nature photography as well as in capturing video of our outdoor programs to be used in promoting our club. She took like a duck to water in teaching a session for Nature Day for Deer Park Elementary School's fifth-graders. She agreed to help set up and man our booth at Ohio River Visions Expo at the Science Museum on Saturday Oct. 30. Surely she will have to skip the next directors' meeting just to catch her breath.

It was the same kind of can-do attitude that prompted Donna Hanley to tackle the many pages of paperwork needed to enter the lottery for Christmas at Panther Creek — with only two days' notice before the deadline. She also offered to help with the Audubon Society's booth design for Ohio River Visions Expo on Saturday Oct. 30<sup>th</sup> at the Science Museum. Using her access to laminating materials, she volunteered to augment a map of rivers so that we can display the illustration for the public. She also volunteered to help with manning our booth that day.

It is invigorating to have 3 new directors who have fallen right in step with our march into the new year.