

The Goldfinch

October
2010

Daviess County Audubon Society, www.daviessaudubon.net

Get a bird's eye view of migration

Acclaimed film will be shown at Brescia for monthly meeting

One of the most acclaimed nature films in recent years will be the focus of the October meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society. The DCAS and the Brescia University Art Department will present a class on migration, using the Owensboro debut of "Winged Migration" at 7 p.m. Oct. 5 at Taylor Hall in the science building on the Brescia campus, 717 Frederica Street in Owensboro.

A 2002 Academy Award nominee for Best Documentary, Jacques Perron's film worked with imprinted birds to follow migrations through 40 countries and each of the seven continents. To get a bird's eye view of travel, transportation ranging from planes to balloons and various innovative cameras were used. The Sony Pictures Classics film also makes use of some CGI special effects. Fly along with birds ranging from sandhill cranes to Siberian cranes.

President Brenda Little has extended invitations to county students, noting the movie "provides the opportunity to grasp the magnitude of avian migration in comfort in the auditorium, in vivid dramatic color."

It's also great for geography buffs, for the birds are shown against some of the world's most famous backdrops, ranging from the Statue of Liberty to the Great Wall of China.



Audience members also will be provided information about the principles of migration, which is still in its early weeks after a long, hot summer. Refreshments will be provided. The event is free, but donations will be accepted.

The program will end at 8:45 p.m.

Let's hunt for fossils, birds at Falls of the Ohio

Prehistoric and current-day natural wonders will be on display when the Daviess County Audubon Society returns to Falls of the Ohio State Park in Clarksville, Ind., Oct. 9.

The club has arranged for a private tour leader, who will guide the group for a two-hour session that features birding and fossils.

The 390-million-year-old fossil beds are among the largest, naturally exposed, Devonian fossil beds in the world. The "Falls" was originally a series of rapids allowing the Ohio River to drop 26 feet over 2 1/2 miles. This was the only navigational hazard over the 981 mile-length river formed by rock outcrops. Today much of the original falls have been flooded behind the McAlpine Dam. Fall is a perfect time for exploring, for it's when the river is at its lowest.

The club will be there at the end of the shorebird migration period, but other fall migrants and hawks are possible. Please wear footwear for wading and bring spotting scopes to check out the visitors.

Please pack a lunch and snacks. After the session, the club will eat out before leaving the Louisville area and returning to Owensboro between 6 and 7 p.m.

Our program cost will be \$5 per person.

The group will leave from the back of Rural King/Kroger on U.S. 60 East at 9 a.m.

Our rain date for the trip is October 16.

October 2010 calendar

*Meeting, 7 p.m. Oct. 5, Taylor Hall, Science Building, Brescia University.

*Falls of the Ohio trip, leave at 9 a.m. from back parking lot at Rural King/Kroger, Oct. 9

*Western Kentucky Botanical Garden birding classes, Oct. 7, 19, 20, 22, 28.

*Grand opening Joe Ford Nature Center, 2 p.m. Oct. 10, beginning at GRADD.

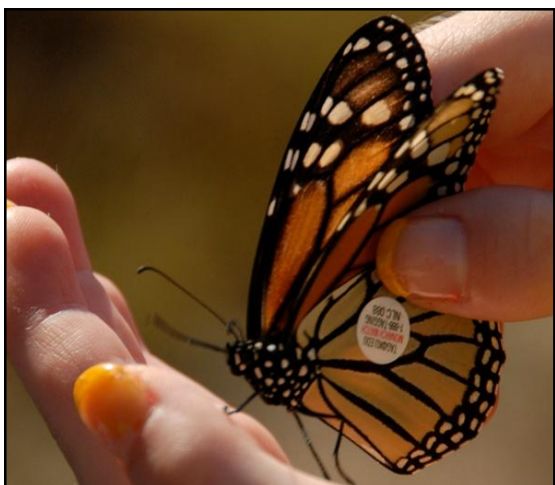
Winging their way south

DCAS members help monarch tagging efforts

Seven Daviess County Audubon members tackled butterfly snagging Sept. 12 as they traveled to Henderson County for the Monarch Watch program at John James Audubon State Park and the Sloughs Wildlife Management area.

Ken Hurm photographed the morning group, which reported good success in tagging butterflies. In the afternoon, Bill and Brenda Little, Carolyn Williams and granddaughter Anna Williams, Jill Flachskam, Henry Connor made up the afternoon DCAS contingent to capture butterflies for the experts to tag with a small adhesive tag which had such information as location

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Adhesive tags were put on monarchs before their re-release. (Ken Hurm photo)



Top, from left: Henry Connor, Carolyn Williams, Anna Williams and Jill Flachskam were on butterfly duty, as was Brenda Little (with net at left with Julie McDonald after catching one). (McDonald and Bill Little photos)

Perkins shares insights on monarchs' migration miracle

One of biology's greatest mysteries — the flight of the monarch butterfly — was discussed at the Sept. 7 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society. Micah Perkins, associate professor in biology for Owensboro Commu-

nity & Technical College, prepped the club for its participation in the Monarch Watch program.

After reviewing physical differences between monarch sexes and the viceroy look-alikes, Perkins turned his attention to migration.

The species' spread is a fascinating one. Originally from the Tropics, monarchs may have traveled to Europe and Australia in 1800s by hitching a ride on North American ships.

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Micah Perkins gave an informative talk on monarch butterflies at the September meeting. (Photos by Winny Lin)

Miracle

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‘The unique trip which winds up in the mountains west of Mexico City wasn’t even discovered until the mid-1970s. It’s also one taken only by tens of millions monarchs east of the Rocky Mountains. California is the migration destination for those in the West.

The shortened days trigger the migration process. How do they do it? Unlike birds, they have never made the trip before. He said butterflies are equipped with an “internal time-compensated compass” that points them toward Mexico. They can travel up to 80 miles during the day. For those who travel from Ontario — milkweed’s northern border — the trip can take up to two months. Floating on thermals can help them conserve energy. The peak of the migration can take place into November, although he wonders if the hot weather will affect the time clock.

What’s required is the perfect combination of elevation and temperature (between 45 and 58 degrees). Mexico’s roosting area is a little less than 2 hectares, or about five acres, where tens of millions of butterflies gather on firs and enter into a torpor, so they won’t use up energy and starve to death.

Overwintering butterflies live up to 5 months longer than those which are born in the summer. Those who overwinter can make it another 750 miles in the spring. He said as many as four or five generations could be found in Kentucky.

But it’s a hard time for the delicate creatures. Scientists estimate that 195 million died in 2002, although their numbers have rebounded. Deforestation is a concern. So are pesticides, because they can lead to a loss of roadside habitat.

Milkweed is undesirable for cattlemen, so that’s lost as a food source. A single female can

lay 500 eggs singularly on milkweed plants. Unfortunately, they only have a 1% survival rate. The chemical in milkweed also is a deterrent to some predators anxious

to eat a juicy caterpillar – but not all. The black-headed grosbeak is one species immune from its effects.

Climate change may extend its range into Canada, where they could be threatened by cool temperatures.

Many people have commented on the large number of population of butterflies this long, hot summer.

Researching this question, he

found contrasting information. An English study noted that dry, hot weather can speed butterfly development. However, another showed that during cool, wet springs, butterflies have fewer eggs, but they are larger, so they have may face less competition for food once they emerge from the cocoon.

On their way to Mexico, butterflies can travel up to 80 miles a day. They rest at night.

Getting back to the (outside) classroom

Brownies build houses for owls, American kestrels

By Brenda Little

There was a beer commercial several years ago that summarized a perfect end-of-day by touting: It just doesn't get any better than this! It can truly be said that the class conducted for a group of Brownie Scouts at the Powell Bird Blind the last Saturday in September was absolutely as good as it gets.

We had a teaching team of six working seamlessly, in harmony, having as much fun as the kids. Steve Hahus launched the session using visual aids of a taxidermied Eastern red phase screech owl, a Ray Harm painting of a gray phase screech owl, and a John James

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Lisa Leonard climbs to mount a nest box, left, after Tony Eaden, top right and other volunteers helped Brownies build housing for screech owls and American kestrels. Bottom right: Steve Hahus taught kids about birds of prey. Brenda Little is at left. (Bill Little photos)

Goldfinches shine at WKBG

A return to school meant a return to one of Owensboro's living, breathing classrooms — the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden for four September sessions. Mary Kissel, Charles Morris, Ken Hurm and Jan Howard led birding classes for fourth-graders at West Louisville, Newton Parrish, Sutton Elementary and Estes Elementary.

The group was stationed at the gazebo, which gave them the side gardens, a thistle feeder and the fence row as the primary birding habitats which complemented bird cutouts. The West Louisville students delighted as American goldfinches helped themselves to a cool drink at the stately fountain on the WKBG grounds.

For Newton Parrish students, ruby-throated hummingbirds flitted in and out of oak trees for some of the classes, although one perusing the pineapple sage on the WKBG grounds preferred his privacy. A mother and baby house wren — the first educators had seen at the garden — brought one day to a successful conclusion. Morris, Hurm and Howard's



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West Louisville Elementary students await instruction on how to use binoculars correctly.

Funding push, recordkeeping among DCAS goals

The first meeting of the year gave DCAS members a chance to take one look back at 2009-10 and set goals for the upcoming year. President Brenda Little reviewed the club's annual report for the members. Part of the report is to map out a course for the following year. Little noted the club hopes to improve maintenance of membership records. Updates are sent monthly from the national organization.

Carolyn Williams has volunteered to head up the next goal to maintain a cumulative record of volunteer hours and program attendance, all of which must be noted on annual reports.

The club also wants to apply for grants to fund activities. They also seek official status as a regional Audubon Society, which would direct members and funds from all counties which touch Daviess County.

They also are looking at ways to attract young people to programs and chapter membership and developing new chapter leaders for the next five years,

They also would like to follow-up ties with guests and visitors.

What were the top accomplishments? Increased participation in members and events were celebrated, praising efforts to use the Messenger-Inquirer and other media outlets to raise awareness of the chapter in the community. Little also noted the club's use of field trips as an education tool to emphasize subject matter introduced at club meetings.

Highlights included:

Busy, busy busy: Thirty-three members took part in at least one activity, totaling 1,015 hours. The attendance at chapter programs totaled 1,116. The 10 field trips attracted 122 participants. They took members to the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park in Owensboro, Mantle Rock near Marion, Peabody Wildlife Area Management Area, Ballard Area Management Area, Howell Wetlands in Evansville, John James Audubon State Park in Henderson and West Kentucky Biological Preserve near Munfordville.

The next generation: Education is at the heart of the Audubon mission. Last year, 691 youths were reached through chapter programming: 15 field trips for school kids and two classes at Owensboro Area Science and History Museum. Four classrooms received Audubon Adventures kits, and Wayland Alexander Elementary School had eight Junior Audubon sessions.

In the community: Community programs the club participated in included: two Christmas Bird Counts, the Great Backyard Bird Count, Ohio Valley Birding Festival, Earth Day celebration at First Christian Church and activities surrounding the John James Audubon bicentennial in Henderson.

These efforts were primarily financed through Trash for Cash, which brought in \$1,150.

Winging

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and butterfly sex.

They had some success. Connor captured two monarchs, and Flachskam netted one. Anna Williams didn't grab a monarch but netted a large tiger swallowtail.

"The little suckers were way smarter than me," Carolyn Williams said.

JJA naturalist Julie McDonald told the group that if the tagged butterflies are found in Texas or Mexico, the DCAS will be notified.

Brenda Little said the heat was challenging. Last year, McDonald warned that butterfly chasers had to wait until a butterfly is spotted resting or feeding on flowers before they can be snared.

That proved true, Little said.

"Sometimes they stay still for long periods, but last Saturday they were

playing hard to get and they stayed still only for a few seconds," she said. They also fly up, so the proper technique is to bring the net down over them and keep it way as you reach inside to take hold of them. Little said swinging the net side by side allowed three to escape.

The Sloughs' rugged terrain, with brambles and heavy plant material which sometimes reached above kids' heads, also required one to be in good physical condition to trigger reflexes to hunt the butterflies down.

At the September meeting, guest speaker Micah Perkins noted that the chapter could consider having a netting expedition in Owensboro next fall. That might make the activity more accessible at a butterfly haven like Owensboro Community & Technical College's outdoor classroom.

If her schedule permits, McDonald said she would be willing to come and help with the project. Little said the cost would be about \$100 for tags and a few nets.

WKBG

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role in the Sutton session was particularly meaningful, since representatives of Impact 100 were on-site to determine if the garden would receive a grant to build a conservatory on the property.

The Estes Elementary session brought home the importance of introducing audio and visual lessons of birding. One student was visually impaired, and her face lit up when she heard the cheerful "purty, purty, purty" call of a cardinal from a bird call book.

October will have several more birding sessions: Southern Oaks on Oct. 7, Catholic students on Oct. 19, Tamarack on Oct. 20, Highland Elementary on Oct. 22 and East View on Oct. 28. All classes run from 9 a.m. to about 1 p.m., with volunteers asked to report by 8:30 a.m. Interested in helping? Contact Charles Morris at 926-8803.

Band it

A Carolina chickadee gets used to a new leg band at a recent session at John James Audubon State Park. (Ken Hurm photo)



Houses

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Audubon rendition of 3 American kestrels. He used a CD to teach the calls of the two small birds of prey. A green snake that just happened to be in the wrong place as the wrong time got nabbed by Steve and delighted the girls at the end of Steve's presentation.

Because of Thriftway Home Center's generosity, we had enough cedar planking and hardware to be able to divide the girls into two groups for the construction of nest boxes that at the end of class were placed, one in the forest near the blind for screech owls, and one adjacent to the parking lot's open area where it is hoped kestrels will take up residence.

The girls had the chance to hike on the grounds using binoculars to seek out natural openings in mature trees where cavity nesters might build nests. They also hiked to gather pine needles for placing in the bottom of the boxes they so proudly constructed. The one-way glass windows of the blind allowed the girls to get close-up views of chickadees, nuthatches, cardinals, wrens and tufted titmice.

The teaching team of Steve Hahus, Brenda and Tony Eaden, Bill Little, Lisa Leonard and myself, as well as the Girl Scout organizers commented that we have never had a better behaved nor more cooperative group of children in all our years of conducting environmental education classes. The girls worked hard, waited patiently for their turn at attaching the pieces of the nest boxes, and helped each other when the screws jammed and would not budge. One young lady observed that the construction would go a lot faster if she had her dad's battery-powered drill.

At the end of the day, each girl was given a Bird Watching badge and was asked to complete an evaluation of the birding program. Outbursts of "Great!" and "Awesome!" delighted all the adults who planned and produced the class.

Ford Center will have grand opening Oct. 10; bird area work begins

After months of hard work, the new Joe Ford Nature Center will have its grand opening from 2 to 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 10.

The festivities will begin with a ceremony to salute volunteers at the Green River Area Development District office. Then, take a three-minute walk to the relocated Joe Ford Library at the nature center.

Tours will be conducted, the Owensboro Community Band will perform and refreshments will be available.

It's the formal opening for the center, but it has welcomed more than 240 visitors since reopening this summer.

The first of the bird feeders – a wooden fly-through covered tray feeder built by a patron – was installed by Tony Eaden and Rose Ann Radzelovage, and the duo are busy scouting out other locations for feeders and bird houses.

Away from the center, Grace Ford said Joe Ford will join other Daviess County ghostly storytellers for a night of tales of the "mysterious and macabre" at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 26 at Wesleyan Heights Methodist Church, 1215 Scherm Road. The cost is free, but donations will be accepted.



Rose Ann Radzelovage and Tony Eaden stand near the center's new feeder. (Photo provided by Tony Eaden)

Board adds 3 members

At the September meeting, three new board members were elected: Brescia University art and graphic design professor David Stratton, Kentucky Wesleyan College instructor Donna Hanley and Lisa Leonard, ranger at Girl Scout Camp Pennyroyal, will join the board of directors.

Brenda Little remains president, Mike Henshaw, vice president-programming and Judy Adams, secretary. With Charles Morris opting not to return as treasurer, those duties are being split by the board.