

# The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

November 2006

## North to Alaska!

*November meeting to focus on Hanley's life in Last Frontier*

The beauty of Alaska – and its people – will be the focus for the Nov. 13 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society. New member Donna Hanley, an instructor at Kentucky



Wesleyan College, will share slides of Alaska, focusing on her former residence of Bethel and the Eskimo way of life.

Hanley's love of nature was formed far from the Last Frontier.

"I was raised on a small lake in a somewhat remote area of northern Indiana called Riding Lake. Riding Lake is near Pierceton, Ind., and Warsaw, Ind. Growing up, I spent every spare moment outdoors until I went to college (Indiana University)," she explained.

When she returned from Peace Corps in 1993, she decided to make a lateral move from teaching in schools and colleges to teaching about the

environment. She worked as a visitor services staff member with a conservancy in southern Florida and with the National Park Service near Flagstaff, Ariz. Then, she became a full-time natural interpreter with the Sequoia National Forest Service and at Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument.

Then, in 1999, Alaska called.

"Two things really called me to Alaska: the desire to continue a more remote living adventure and a different cultural experience, plus it was one way to stay employed!" She accepted an environmental education specialist position with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Yukon Delta Refuge in Bethel, Alaska.

What was the biggest misconception she had about Alaska?

"Amazingly, I thought that Alaska was mostly white year-round. Come to find out as I drove up to Alaska on the Alaskan highway in September '99, then flew into Bethel, that not only is it not white, it was breathtakingly beautiful with all the fall colors, vast mountain ranges, expansive valley views where you could literally see for a hundred miles, and, of course, Alaska is brimming with pioneer spirited people."

The remote town of Bethel (population 5,000) is made up of 60 percent Native Eskimo. She said she was profoundly changed by living among these people. Among those 40 and older, the Native ways of hunting and fishing remain intact.

She also was amazed by the breadth of wildlife: moose, wolves, lynx, grizzly, caribou, musk ox, five species of Pacific salmon and thousands of birds in summer.

The remoteness of this life near the Bering Sea coast was ultimately a drawback for



Steve Hahus took this picture of purple gerardia.

## Birders find treasures near old trash site

In the pursuit of birds, Daviess County Audubon Society members travel around the region ... and even around the globe. Oct. 14's field trip to the old landfill and Jerry Anderson's (Steve's father) property served as a reminder about the joys of birding around the county.

Traveling to the Masonville area on a picture-perfect day were: Charles and Laura Morris, Steve Anderson, Ken Hurm, Steve Hahus and Rose Ann Radzelovage.

Morris and Anderson raved about the displays put on by raptors in the area. Morris said they got a nice look at a Cooper's hawk, and there were five to six large hawks feeding in a large field. Radzelovage

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*See Trash, Page 2*

# Marcus, students chart butterfly genetic map

What makes up the spectacular patterns of butterflies? That's the work of Dr. Jeffrey Marcus of Western Kentucky University, who discussed his studies during the Oct. 9 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Primarily a geneticist, much of his work surrounded study of the buckeye butterfly.

The species is prevalent in North and South American in a variety of forms. The differences, he acknowledged, "are sort of murky." Two forms co-exist in Florida, depending on the habitat. For the past 2½ years, he and students collected samples from state parks in Florida, comparing the distribution of the various forms.

"What I have is that I have never been anywhere where I find either the mangrove or tropical butterfly by themselves," he said.

They sequenced the DNA so they could determine its lineage.

Although their populations exist mostly in two separate groups, they found evidence that some mitochondria are being exchanged. They ponder the signals sent to produce variances in rings around eyespots, background patterns.

"We're slowly beginning to piece together the genetic circuit that ultimately determines where different colors are being laid in," he said. What these genetic signals are remain a mystery, however.

Tapping into the work ethic of WKU's undergraduates, he said this study is designed to help them build a genetic map for the buckeye butterfly.

For the study, they opted to do some genetic modification of buckeye butterflies. A solution containing piggyback transposons was injected into butterflies. This enhanced yellow fluorescent protein is a marker that would tell them if specific genetic traits were passed on to their progeny.

He emphasized that these insects were contained so they could not escape and disrupt natural populations.

He also talked briefly about the Kentucky Society of Lepidopterists. With the help of its members, Marcus' group has discovered 1,000 species of moths and 60 species of butterflies in Mammoth Cave National Park. He estimates the park holds 1,500 species of moths and about 100 species of butterflies. Information about the society may be found on the Web at <http://bioweb.wku.edu/faculty/Marcus/KYLeps.html>, a site filled with good information about butterflies, stunning photography and a growing database about specimens and where they are found in Kentucky.



*Dr. Jeffrey Marcus discussed butterfly genetics during the October meeting.*

## Trash

*From Page 1*

said it was her first chance to see a common snipe and swamp sparrow. Late-blooming wild flowers also were enjoyed.

Other species viewed included: Canada geese, mourning dove, eastern meadowlark, European starling, house sparrow, crow, red-bellied woodpecker, northern mockingbird, eastern towhee, northern cardinal, field sparrow, robin, chimney swift, red-tailed hawk, northern harrier, tree swallow, killdeer, turkey vulture, American goldfinch, Carolina chickadee, downy woodpecker, tufted titmouse, white-throated sparrow, bobwhite, common snipe.

Anderson expressed his appreciation for the city manager's office, Owensboro Police Chief John Kazlauskas and Sgt. Chris Castlen for allowing the club to be on firing range property and taking steps to ensure members' safety. He is hopeful the club can return in the spring.

## Alaska

*From Page 1*

for Hanley. Her 82-year-old mother lives in Florida, a plane trip of 1½ days. The move to Owensboro brings her closer and allows her to return to college teaching. At Kentucky Wesleyan College, she is teaching developmental reading and study skills.

"I am thrilled to be here in Owensboro. Not only is my job incredibly rewarding daily, the people here in Owensboro, and Kentucky for that matter, are the most kind and thoughtful folks I have ever met," she said.

She does miss the long periods of summer daylight in Alaska, 20 to 24 hours, but encourages tourists to come north for the winter so they can witness the full glory of the Northern Lights, which she calls "a life-altering experience."

"There are no words to describe the experience of seeing the entire sky dancing with curtains of reds, greens, yellows and greens. "Take oxygen because it does take your breath away," she said.





*Clockwise from top:  
Students look for birds at  
Western Kentucky  
Botanical Garden; Bill  
Little and Carolyn  
Williams introduce the  
bird blind; Charles Morris  
poses with his new  
feeder birds at the  
museum; and Ken Hurm  
offers pointers for using a  
spotting scope.*



## Mother Nature teaches area youngsters inside and out

Hundreds of students got in touch with nature during October with three different education programs around Daviess County.

At Girl Scout Camp Pennyroyal in southern Daviess County, Deer Park students were able to get a close-up look at favorite feeder birds, including tufted titmice, chickadees, cardinals and a downy woodpecker, with the instruction of Bill Little and Carolyn Williams. Kids were amazed at the large size of a passing crow. The early October date also invited a straggling black-and-white warbler to visit the blind between sessions.

Other students tested their spotting and binocular skills looking at artificial birds, with the help of Ken Hurm and Mary Kissel.

But the feathered forms of nature were joined by others. Recent rains triggered the growth of spectacular fungi of every size and color, even deep red, which were viewed on walks with Brenda Little.

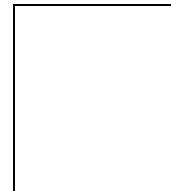
The best view of the day came when sharp-eyed students discovered a pair of eyeglasses lost by a fellow student.

Learning was taken indoors Oct. 13, when Morris and Kissel presented a program on backyard bird feeding at the Owensboro Area Museum of Science & History. About 25 kids of all ages listened attentively as Morris led them in a game of Mystery Bird, as they tried to match the descriptions with pictures of feeder birds. They also got a chance to look at several different types of seed that birds enjoy, from the popular black-oil sunflower seed to safflower and suet mixtures.

The kids (and the handful of parents in attendance) also were assigned different birds and "flew" to different forms of feeders discussed, from upside-down goldfinch feeders to tray feeders covered with screens to eliminate pesky squirrels and larger birds.

A busy month concluded Oct. 20 with about 175 students from Burns and Tamarack elementary schools during Owensboro Community and Technical College's Nature Day at Western Kentucky Botanical Garden.

In the past, the event was held at the college. However, the garden proved to be a surprisingly good area for the young birders. Morris showed the students the power of magnification through spotting scope and binoculars. With the help of Kissel, students also had a chance to use binoculars to practice identifying fake birds but quickly abandoned that to look at the real ones around the brushline and trees near the back pond. Morris was thrilled to see northern harrier and Cooper's hawks in the area. Other birds sighted during and between sessions included: red-tailed hawk, cardinal, blue jay, Carolina chickadee, Carolina wren, downy woodpecker, common grackle, white-crowned sparrow, white-throated sparrow and Canada geese.



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Vandals strike, cleaners needed

Sometime during the week of Oct. 20, the Joe Ford Nature Center was vandalized. Apparently, the vandals were more interested in ransacking the place than taking the materials inside, a mix of educational materials and paperwork from the past.

Rose Ann Radzelovage and Mary Kissel cleaned up the broken glass, then opted to use the incident as a way to clear out two of the storage areas in the center. However, the one with most of the DCAS materials is still full. Options for cleaning and storage will be explored at the November meeting.

## November events

Field trip to Sloughs, Nov. 4.  
November meeting, 7 p.m. Nov.  
13, First Christian Church, Seventh  
and J.R. Miller Blvd.

## On The Web

Miss a meeting? Minutes from each month can be found at the Daviess County Audubon Society's Web site, [www.daviessaudubon.org](http://www.daviessaudubon.org). Click on "events," and go to the previous month.

Goldfinch illustrations by Kirsten Munson; Eskimo illustration from Microsoft

## Join the fun at the Sloughs

The Daviess County Audubon Society will join nearly 30 Heritage Christian students for a Nov. 4 trip to the Sloughs Wildlife Management Area. The students will be there as part of a continuing program with the Joe Ford Nature Library. Members are to meet at the West Parrish Avenue Kroger at 9 a.m. for carpooling.

## For news and dues

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## Welcome Sutton!

Linda Gillis' fourth-grade classroom at Sutton Elementary has signed up to be a 2006-2007 Audubon Adventures classroom, tapping into resources provided.

Sr. Amelia Stenger has opted not to order any new materials for Mount St. Joseph, so money is still available for another school to have a classroom kit. If you know of anyone who's interested, contact Mary Kissel.