

THE GOLDFINCH



Daviess County Audubon Society

December 2005

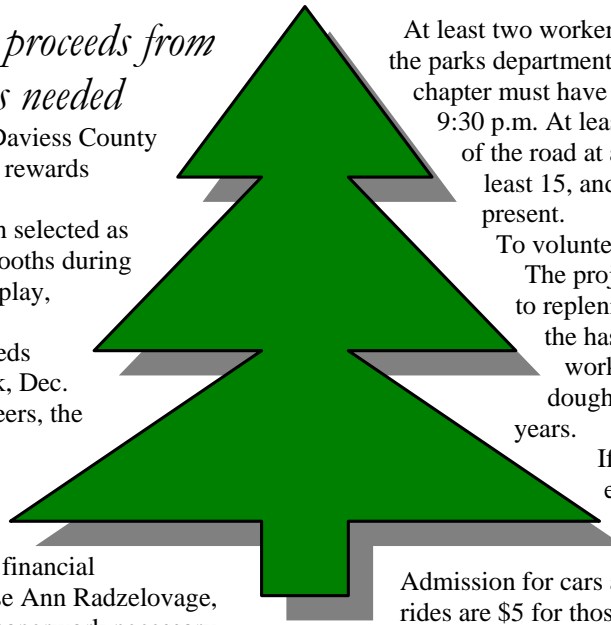
Give greatest gift of all – time

*DCAS chosen to share proceeds from
light display; volunteers needed*

The luck of the draw has given the Daviess County Audubon Society a chance to reap great rewards during the holiday season.

The club recently learned it had been selected as one of five local organizations to man booths during the Christmas at Panther Creek light display, presented by Daviess County Parks and Recreation. The chapter will split proceeds with Daviess Fiscal Court for their week, Dec. 23-29. On nights without DCAS volunteers, the chapter will receive no portion of the proceeds.

Because of potential scheduling conflicts, that week was the chapter's least-preferred, but it offers the greatest financial opportunity, notes project chairman Rose Ann Radzelovage, who took the initiative to complete the paperwork necessary to qualify for a chance at the money.



At least two workers are needed each night, although the parks department encourages shift rotations. The chapter must have a presence from 5:15 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. At least one person must be on the side of the road at all times. Workers must be at least 15, and one adult over 21 must be present.

To volunteer, call Radzelovage at 683-5972.

The project presents a golden opportunity to replenish the chapter's treasury without the hassles of begging friends and co-workers for donations or keeping doughnuts in your freezer for two years.

If you can't work, at least encourage friends and co-workers to take the magical light tour during the holiday week.

Admission for cars are \$3; admission for carriage rides are \$5 for those aged 16 and over, \$3 for ages 6-15 and free for those five and under.

Can we count on you to count birds?

A holiday tradition – and important scientific data gathering – resumes this month as the Daviess County Audubon Society participates in the 106th annual Christmas Bird Count.

Area birders will have the opportunity to count birds on two dates. The western Daviess County count, which takes birders along the Ohio River and into West Louisville and Sorgho will begin at 8 a.m. Dec. 17. Jan Howard, 3553 W. Parrish Ave., will serve as host.

If you'd like to end the year with the twittering of songbirds, the southern Daviess County count will begin at the home of Mike Henshaw, 11201 Fields Road South, Utica, at 8 a.m. Dec. 31. The southern Daviess County count normally includes Camp Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp and Diamond Lake.

Both events include lunch breaks and opportunities to resume birding in the afternoon.

Bird watchers of all levels are needed to provide an accurate count.

"Having fun while birding can identify important results that help shape the direction of bird conservation," says Geoff LeBaron, National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count director. "Audubon and our partners at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and the Boreal Species Initiative are analyzing data from the overall CBC database and using the results they

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Boarman, falcons on program

The Daviess County Audubon Society will meet at 7 p.m. Dec. 12 at First Christian Church, Seventh Street and J.R. Miller Blvd.

Don Boarman, retired curator at John James Audubon State Park museum, and former DCAS chapter president, will discuss his recent work with falcons, bringing two of his feathered friends along.

Seyler: Cheap energy has high cost

What is the cost of cheap energy? University of Southern Indiana professor Jeff Seyler provided some numbers to mull over at the Nov. 14 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Seyler's look at the health effects of pollution focused primarily on air pollution, noting the rise of coal-fired power plants in the area.

Seyler's group, Ohio Valley Common Ground, compiled data about medical rates, using the Fort Wayne, Ind., area as a point of comparison. He stopped short of blaming health issues strictly on pollution but noted they were a major contributor.

He focused on hospitalization rates for asthma and bronchitis and cancers. In 1998, the national average hospitalization rate for asthma and bronchitis was 24/10,000, according to the Partnership for Health Care Information, a USI-based group. In Owensboro, that rises to 34.

"I would say that's pretty significant," he said.

For more vulnerable residents – kids – less likely to be affected by lifestyle choices such as tobacco and years of poor eating habits, the number of hospitalizations range to five times as high, as compared to Allen County kids.

Vanderburgh County's cancer rates also soar past state and national rates. While national cancer rates fell to 56.8/100,000 in 2000, Vanderburgh's rate was 68.6, and climbing, and Kentucky's was holding steady at 77.8. Studies of the numbers of patients to St. Jude's Children's Hospital also spiked in the Evansville-Newburgh-Henderson-Owensboro area.

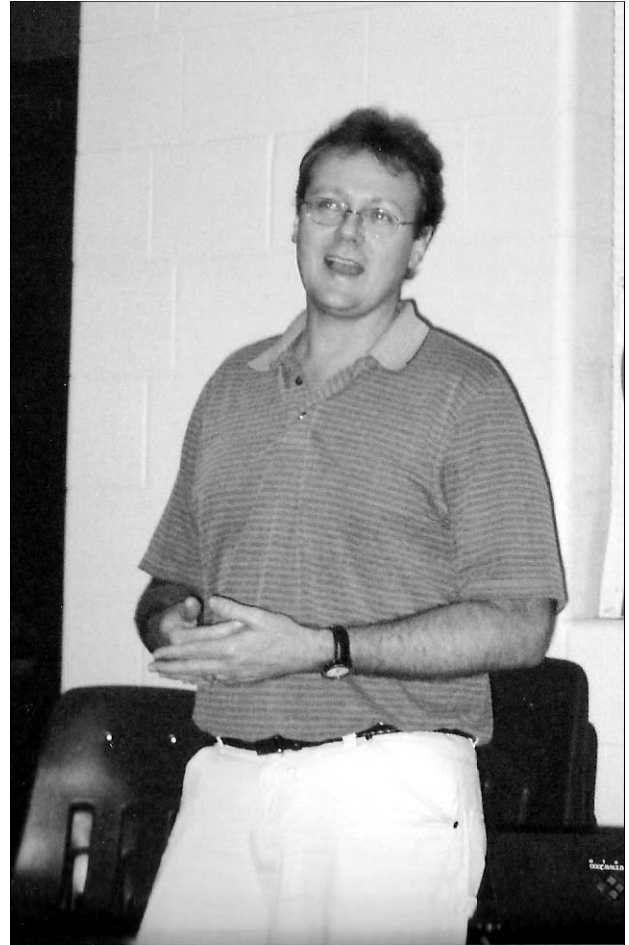
With these rates under 1% of the population, that may not raise enough eyebrows among those not directly affected.

"We've got to convince people that those are alarming numbers and things need to be done," he said.

What pollutants are most prevalent? Benzene -- still part of the industrial process, although it's been eliminated from gasoline -- PCBs, nitrous oxide and other counties. Counties along the Ohio have higher emissions of nitrogen oxide because of the large number of coal-fired power plants in Indiana and Kentucky. Most of the energy from these plants is being used elsewhere in the nation.

Across the country, coal is 56% of America's energy source, but that number skyrockets to 96% and 98% in Kentucky and Indiana, respectively. Substances created by the burning of coal weld themselves into particulate matter and can coat lungs.

"A lot of this particulate matter are charcoal-like substances. It's absorbing all of this stuff that's being put out by other sources. You breathe it in; this stuff gets stuck in your lungs and your throat and is carrying in this highly carcinogenic substance. You're just continually embedding and embedding your lungs with that stuff," he said.



Jeff Seyler discusses air pollution.

Efforts have been made to clean power plants. Although coal-powered electricity has nearly tripled, the amount of emissions have fallen by a third. It's not enough.

"If you're burning coal, it's not clean," he said.

"The state's making money off of it, but what they're not factoring in ... how much money are they losing in health costs, health insurance, health benefits, all of the kids who have to go in the hospital for asthma." However, the bounty of cheap coal in Indiana and Kentucky makes it difficult for others to buy low-sulfur out-of-state coal.

Indiana is fifth in the nation in the amount of manufacturing emissions for toxic and cancerous chemicals: nearly 115 million pounds a year.

He called for more research into alternative energy sources, such as using corn-based energy and harnessing the power of waves.

Other contributors to pollution include transportation and

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Count

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find to develop Audubon's 'State of the Birds' report. These important results will be reflected in 2006 in our 'State of the Birds' waterbirds report and inform the Audubon WatchList, which is used to prioritize Audubon's bird conservation activities."

Some of the data is being used to chart the expansion of various species, including Eurasian collared-doves, which have gravitated toward Daviess County in recent years.

Count results from 1900 to the present are available at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc. Included in those results is the last report of the ivory-billed woodpecker in the CBC database – two birds that were seen in the Singer Tract in Louisiana during the 38th CBC in 1937.

Data from the last three Daviess South counts are available for viewing online. Just taking a quick look from the last two years, one finds a surprising change: More than 1,100 red-winged blackbirds were reported two years ago, none last year.

Birders travel by car and foot within a 15-mile circle, so it's important for count leaders to be able to know how many teams will be available so they can divide up the area efficiently.

To participate, contact Howard at 926-3795 or Janbbq@aol.com, or Henshaw at 275-4250 or mikesherry@email.msn.com.



Sorgho Elementary students look for birds on a hike.

Sorgho students treated to nature

About 75 Sorgho Elementary third-graders got their Halloween treats a little early when they participated in a nature day Oct. 31 at Girl Scout Camp Pennyroyal.

Carolyn Williams instructed students in the bird blind, where they viewed crows, a Carolina wren, nuthatch, downy woodpecker and tufted titmice. The pond dug this summer by camp staff also prompted sips from a squirrel and woodpecker, demonstrating the oft-stated importance of providing both food and water at a feeding site.

Michael Kinney of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife discussed the power of magnified viewing. When one boy noted he could see the fake birds with his eyes, a classmate answered. "They want us to use technology," he laughed, noting the response was dead-on.

Except for a turkey vulture, the birds on the trail north of the shelter house opted to stay hidden. However, the kids peered into a hollow tree and inspected a leaf-filled nest with their binoculars. Mary Kissel and Rose Ann Radzelovage were impressed by the students' knowledge of nature, including wooly worm folklore and the tactic of using moss to determine direction. They also used the time to discuss the effect of wind on bird viewing and discussed the birds of western Daviess County and how the farm habitat attracts horned larks and Lapland longspurs not prevalent in Owensboro's city limits.



Most students got to see wildlife visiting feeders and the pond.

The Goldfinch/December 2005
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Cost

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chemicals and equipment used in farming.

He encouraged DCAS members to get involved by knowing the stands their lawmakers take on environmental issues and reviewing policies and permits before they take effect. Energy conservation also was noted, saying that most people survived briefly cutting back on car usage when gas prices rose to \$3/gallon. Turn lights off when not in use and limit the amount of chemicals on lawns, he advised.

Some of the group's efforts to prompt change have been rebuffed by lawmakers who point to lifestyle choices for the cause of poor health.

"We smoke more here; we eat more fast food, things like that. There is some truth to that," he said.

He added that better diets and less tobacco intake can help you fight off the effects of carcinogens.

Rufous hummingbird surprise visitor

Jan Howard had an unexpected visitor for Thanksgiving weekend – a rufous hummingbird that took advantage of her feeders to take a few days' respite from his migration.

Normally bound for Mexico, rufous hummingbirds are unusual sightings for this part of Kentucky, particularly after frost, although three were banded in Kentucky during the end of November. Howard said Brainard Palmer-Ball attempted to band the visitor, but it had been banded Nov. 15 in Princeton, Ind. It was gone as of Nov. 28.

Meanwhile, members of the Daviess County Audubon Society joined members of the Sierra Club to welcome migrating waterfowl back to the Sloughs National Wildlife Refuge Area Nov. 5.

Wind – 12 hours ahead of an F3 tornado that hit the tri-state – hampered some of the viewing, but the day brought in a first for master birder Steve Hahus – greater white-fronted geese. Other birds in the Sauerheber unit included: northern shoveler, gadwall, northern pintail, black duck, mallard, a handful of snow geese, horned lark, American wigeon, northern cardinal, wood duck, downy woodpecker, northern harrier, red-tailed hawk, tufted titmouse, Carolina chickadee, eastern bluebird, great blue heron, crow, red-bellied woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch and hairy woodpecker.

The group also discovered some persimmon trees at Jenny Hole unit, and Carolyn Williams used them in persimmon bread for the Nov. 14 meeting.

December Events

Dec. 12: 7 p.m. Meeting. Don Boarman, speaker.

Dec. 17: Christmas Bird Count for western Daviess County.

Dec. 23-29: Christmas at Panther Creek fundraiser.

Dec. 31: Christmas Bird Count for southern Daviess County.

Audubon Elementary joins Audubon Adventures

Audubon Elementary School is now an Audubon Adventure school.

Choosing an option to create their own kit, teachers voted to use a kit on the Earth's biomes and selected posters about coral reef, migratory birds and Arctic tundra.

Tom Hicks is serving as the school sponsor, donating money for their supplies.

Goldfinch illustration by Kirsten Munson

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Catching Up 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. Click on "events," and go to the previous month.