

January 2010

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DAVIESS COUNTY AUDUBON SOCIETY

THE GOLDFINCH

52 species counted in south Daviess

Preliminary bird total tops 29,520

Fifty-two species and 29,526 birds were tallied in the south Daviess County Christmas Bird Count, the "official" count for the Daviess County Audubon Society.

CBC chairman Mike Henshaw praised the efforts of those who went out in the late December chill. The main count was centered from his Utica home on Dec. 28, but others opted to count from their homes during the three-day flex period before or after the main count.

As of presstime, the following birds had been counted:

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From left, front row: Tony Eaden; second row: Jan Howard, Jill Flachskam, Laura Morris, Brenda Eaden, Carol Williams, Cathy Rogier, Bill Little, Steve Anderson, Mike Henshaw, Ken Hurm, Winny Lin, Kenny Lin, Henry Connor, Judy Adams, Steve Rogier and Charles Morris. (Sherry Henshaw photo)



President Brenda Little explains membership discounts linked to the Audubon 2010 calendar.

Membership drive continues; discount options are available

The 2009-2010 membership campaign continues with different ways to pledge your support for the National Audubon Society's environmental efforts.

At the December meeting, Brenda Little noted that members could opt to join the national organization for an introductory price of \$20 (the fee goes

up to \$35 in the second year). The national dues entitle you to automatically be a member of the Daviess County Audubon Society and the Kentucky Audubon Council. National membership comes with a one-year subscription to Audubon magazine, with its breathtaking

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Learn how birds cure the winter blahs

There's nothing like the sight of a bright bird at the feeder on a drab winter day.

Tim Griffin, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited in Evansville, will present the January program, giving a light-hearted look at how birds can help you beat the winter blues.

Along with his business, Griffin has become a go-to guy around southern Indiana and western Kentucky for organizations wanting to know more about birds and bird feeding.

Wild Birds Unlimited is a national co-sponsor of the Great Backyard Bird Count.

The club will meet at 7 p.m. Jan. 5 at First Christian Church, J.R. Miller and 7th Street. Dine with Tim at 5:45 p.m. at Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn.

January Calendar:

DCAS western Christmas Bird Count, 8 a.m., Jan. 1, Janet Howard's residence, 3534 W. Parrish Ave.

DCAS regular meeting, 7 p.m. Jan. 5, First Christian Church, J.R. Miller and Seventh Street.

Mantle Rock field trip to Marion, 8 a.m. Jan. 23, OCTC parking lot.

CBC 101 explores history of counts

Henshaw provides identification tips

Birders prepped for the season's Christmas Bird Counts by attending "CBC 101," presented by longtime coordinator Mike Henshaw at the December meeting.

Henshaw gave a brief history of the international program, which began in 1900 and has grown to involve more than 59,000 participants in 2,100+ 15-mile circles in 2009. Together, they counted more than 65 million birds (not all of them grackles!)

Locally, the Daviess count gained "official" status in 2001, which entitled findings to be compiled in the national records. Prior to this year's count, 87 different species had been spotted in an area which stretches from the Philpot area to northern Ohio County, encompassing such favorite birding spots as Yellow Creek Park and Girl Scout Camp Pennyroyal.

Data for the national count did not become standardized until 1966, but it still gives scientists 40-plus years of data to track shifts in birding population. Henshaw noted that 208 species that have been counted have had their populations shifted northward because of climate change. The average shift has been 50 miles. An exception has been grassland species, but the CBCs have been useful in documenting their heart-breaking decline because of the demise of food source because of habitat changes.

He also discussed birds difficult to identify in winter, focusing on sparrows, which tend to pop up suddenly and disappear almost as quickly. Some sparrow-hunting tips included:

- Tree sparrow: Look for a dark spot on a plain breast. He's likely to be found in edges.
- Fox sparrow: It's the largest sparrow with a streaked breast.
- Field sparrow: He makes a call that sounds like a ping-pong ball bouncing off a table.
- House sparrows: A likely feeder visitor. The males have black markings around their bill.
- Savannah sparrow: Males have a yellow streak by the eye, and it has a streaked breast.
- Song sparrow: It has a dark spot on a streaked breast with a call that sounds like "maid, maid, maid, put on your tea kettle."



Mike Henshaw offered assistance for bird counters.

- Swamp sparrow: They have a red head and a dark eye streak and unstreaked breast.
- Chipping sparrow: Rusty cap with a mechanical trilling call. Brenda Little noted Bert Powell often compared it to the sound a child's telephone made.
- White-throated sparrow: Along with the distinctive white throat, also known for its call, "O Sweet Canada" or "Poor Sam Peabody"
- White-crowned sparrow: Look for distinctive black-and-white striped head.

He also noted that even with muted winter colors, male house finches are redder than their purple finch counterparts. Purple also are larger.

Horned larks are difficult because they blend in with fields and can't be found unless they flush. It's worth the trouble, because some of the "neater" sparrows hang out with them.

He also noted it's tough to tell hairy and downy woodpeckers apart. Perhaps the most notable difference is in the beaks, for the hairy's is more narrow and pointy.

DCAS to visit stark beauty of Mantle Rock

By Brenda Little

January's field trip invites all to visit one of Kentucky's most significant landmarks of the American Indian – Mantle Rock, in Marion — for a day of fascinating history and unique botany set amidst geological beauty and birding.

I tagged along with my husband, Bill, on what is called by the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board members a "site inspection" a couple of years ago. I had no official capacity, and therefore my mind was wandering, maybe I was dozing intermittently, when as I looked out the window of the Jeep that was transporting us, I heard someone say, "Right there is where the Trail of Tears passed by." I am a terrible student of history, and my interest was piqued. I had no idea that



Mantle Rock is visited by thousands of Cherokees each year. (Mantle Rock photo)

See Rock, Page 4

Turning damage into a work of art

Stratton turns blind's stump into cheeky frog

By Lisa Leonard

The first time I remember talking about the concept of a bird viewing blind with the Audubon Society, I was a Girl Scout troop leader for two troops, and I was a site team volunteer for Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp. There was a long time when the subject of building a bird blind fell by the wayside, but I just kept thinking, "This just has to happen."

I think I was newly hired as site manager for Camp Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp in 2000 when word came to me that a girl was planning to work with the Audubon Society in building a bird viewing blind in order to win her Gold Award. I was here at the camp from day one when the flooring went down, and when the project was taken over by the Audubon Society in August, I worked side-by-side with you all layering adobe on the walls. The week before the dedication of the blind in late October of 2001, I recruited a family member to install the one-way glass windows and the large double doors. The blind that is named for Bert and Millie Powell has been close to my heart even before construction began up until this day.

Now let's jump forward to January of this year when I sat in my house here at the



David Stratton, Brenda Little and Lisa Leonard are proud to introduce you to the newest addition to the Powell Bird Blind. (Photo by Bill Little)

camp with my daughter and her young son as we listened to trees falling all around outside. We knew we needed to move our cars before they were crushed, but we found the locks frozen and had to listen helplessly as we heard the crunching of metal and the thunder of falling limbs and trees.

The next morning by light of day, I had to use a chain saw to get out of my house. I learned in the coming days how lucky we were that the structural damage in the midst of what looked like a war zone was really minimal. When I saw all the limbs down

around the blind, I knew I could count on you all, the Audubon Society, to help. It was not long before I heard that you all were planning a work day which turned out to be two or three work days. I never worried that you would keep your word about taking care of the area around the blind, but I wondered how we would deal with the broken limbs dangling above the paths and too near the blind for comfort.

On a work day this fall, I remember Rose Ann Radzelovage coming with a wrinkled brow and wide eyes to let me know that extreme measures were under way in dealing with an oak tree that was threatening the approach to the blind. She feared that I would be upset, but I was delighted to have this task lifted from my shoulders. The first time I looked at the stump left by Tony Eaden's chain saw, I was impressed by his skill in dropping the very tall tree exactly where he planned, but I saw the stump as an eyesore.

David Stratton, a graphic arts professor at Brescia University, has picked up his chain saw where Tony Eaden left off and carved what he describes as "a man-eating frog" that is now waiting for spring when it will get its coat of preservative oil. David deliberately left bark on some areas of the frog for its warty appearance. You see me here on my knees planting the first kiss on our frog sculpture. The girls are going to love this.

The fable of a princess kissing a frog has already come true according to Brenda Little, president of the Audubon Society. She says that David Stratton is a real life prince who came to our rescue in a charming and imaginative way.

DCAS board votes to co-sponsor Greenbelt hawk sculpture

The beauty and birds and public art has been embraced by the Daviess County Audubon Society.

At its December meeting, the board voted to allocate up to \$200 for the creation of a red-tailed hawk sculpture by local artist and Brescia art professor David Stratton.

Stratton said the bird will be larger than life-size. He created clay prototypes of the bird with outstretch wings and seated.

It will be placed on a 12- to 15-foot pole at the southern end of the Horse Fork Creek trail of Higdon Road, so it will be visible from the U.S. 60 bypass and protected from vandals. A plaque noting the sponsors – the DCAS and Brescia — will accompany the piece.

"I like it because of all of the animal life on the Greenbelt, I honestly believe that birds

are the hook. I think they are the most enjoyable," president Brenda Little said.

It's part of Brescia's Art in the Community program and has received the blessings of the city's parks department.

"I think it's an excellent way for us to support community education, to be partners with Brescia and the city and show ourselves as a community partner," DCAS secretary Judy Adams said.

Program recycles holiday lights

Don't want to throw your old incandescent Christmas lights in the trash?

DCAS member Donna Hunley suggests sending them to Holidayleds.com, which will recycle them for you and send you a coupon for 15% off of items at Holidayleds.com.

Sets will be taken to a third-party recycling facility in Jackson, Mich. The recycling company puts the lights through a commercial shredder, which chops the lights up into little pieces. The pieces are then further processed and sorted into the various components that make up the lights (PVC, glass, copper.) The materials are separated and transported to a region center for further processing. In some cases, the PVC cannot be recycled.

Send them to: Holidayleds.com
Attn: Recycling Program, 118 Rosehill Dr.
Suite 1, Jackson, MI 49202. Enclose your name and e-mail address. A 15% discount for items off at Holidayleds.com will be e-mailed to you.

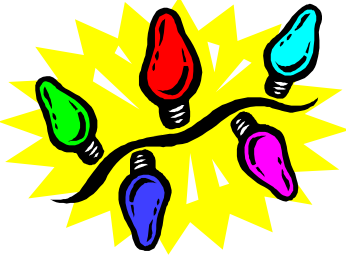
How should you package the lights?

Please DO NOT:

1. Include any packing material or anything other than the lights themselves
2. Send the lights in outer packaging such as retail boxes
3. Include any apparatus used to wind up or store the lights
4. Use any size box that is larger than what is needed to accommodate the lights.
5. Put your light sets in plastic bags or any other interior packaging.

Please DO:

1. Use cardboard boxes or other packaging that can easily be recycled.
2. Coordinate with your friends, neighbors, co-works, social groups, church groups, or other organizations when possible to collect lights and send in one bulk shipment (this reduces shipping costs for everyone and reduces environmental impact of shipping.)
3. Compact your light sets into the smallest space possible.



Rock

From Page 2

the Trail of Tears went through Kentucky.

Visiting Mantle Rock, a 30-foot high natural sandstone bridge spanning 188 feet, requires about a half hour of moderate to easy hiking during which the leader of our group told us the sad story of what took place during the winter of 1838. The Trail of Tears is a particularly tragic page in our state's history. Someone said that it is believed by American Indians that spirits speak to them as thousands come to walk and meditate through the hardwood forest that is sacred in their heritage.

So it is the rich history of the place that is the first reason I dreamed of our club someday coming to visit Mantle Rock. Then at the conclusion of our hike, I learned that there is a unique botanical site described as fragile sandstone glades among the surrounding upland forest that provides the best examples of this rare habitat community type in all of Kentucky. I am proposing that we visit the site in the dead of winter for two reasons. First it was December when the Cherokee people became stranded there without proper shelter or supplies. I think it needs to be cold in order for the impact of the historical event to be the greatest. And second, the site tends to be thickly populated by poisonous snakes which make warmer months less appealing for a field trip.

On Saturday Jan. 23, (rain date is Jan. 30) we will have two hours of travel with departure from the Owensboro Community and Technical College parking lot at 8 a.m. Expected arrival in Marion at the Mantle Rock Native Education and Cultural Center is 10 a.m. We plan for the field study to last 3 hours including lunch with approximate return time to Owensboro around 4 p.m. It is hoped that we might have some members of the local historical society and perhaps the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden join us for this field trip. Additional details will be posted to our Web site daviessaudubon.net in the coming weeks.

Drive

From Page 2

photography and insightful reports on conservation efforts.

A limited number of 2010 Audubon calendars are available at Books-A-Million and/or Towne Square Mall or online retailers for under \$15, but it comes with a half-price deal for national membership. Those taking advantage of the deal should indicate on their application they are affiliated with the Daviess County Audubon Society (code J52.)

For those opting for \$15 local-only membership, to ease recordkeeping, the membership year begins in January 2010. Anyone who signed up in the latter part of 2009, your local-only membership will extend through December 2010. If you want to upgrade your membership from local to national, please give the dues difference to treasurer Charles Morris, and your application will be forwarded to the national organization.

Spread the word about backyard count

The 2010 Great Backyard Bird Count poster/brochure is now available in PDF form on the GBBC Web site, <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/press/news-stories/2010-gbbc-poster>.

Please take a moment to print one and e-mail the poster link to family and friends to remind them that the next count is taking place February 12-15, 2010. The poster includes simple instructions for taking part in the GBBC for anyone who is new to the count. Please consider asking local schools and businesses to post a copy as well!

Ho, Ho Hopenhagen

Several years ago while going through old files and records, we came upon a piece of paper that held our mission statement. I could not find that piece of paper again if my very life depended on it; however, a few of the first words have stayed with me through the years: ...*The Daviess County Audubon Society is a diverse group of individuals...* I had an A-ha! moment when I read our mission statement those many years ago because we are indeed diverse in many ways. We don't agree on everything, and our passions about causes, interests and the environment vary widely in degree.

One example of our members' diversity is in our beliefs about global warming. There are some in our club who think it is just another alarm that is, using the words in Shakespeare's play title, *Much Ado About Nothing*. Some of us jumped on the band wagon of believers just as soon as Al Gore's predecessors began sounding alarms. Others of us have been uncertain, not knowing whom to trust. And then as more and more scientists lined up with the global warming believers eventually reaching essentially 100%, some of us were won over and now believe that the world needs to do everything within reason to lessen man's impact on the delicate atmosphere that surrounds the earth.

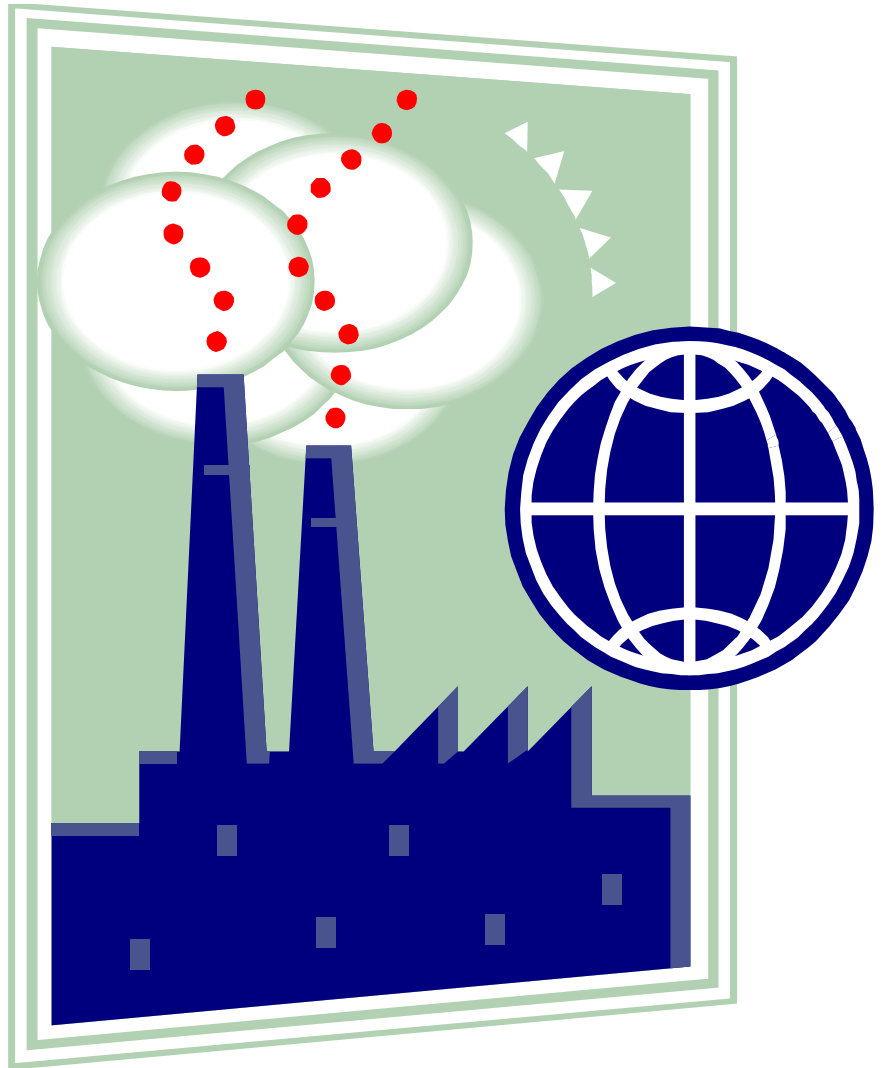
So where do we stand as a group in our feelings about global warming being the diverse group of individuals that we are? I think Bob Herbert's words in an editorial piece he wrote in The New York Times a few weeks ago say it best. I will not pretend to be even close to having Herbert's skill with words, but this is the gist of his reasoning:

What should the U.S., indeed the entire world, do in light of the conflicts that we've seen most recently in Copenhagen with protestors for both sides of the issue loudly demonstrating their passionate concerns? Let's just give the global warming doubters their due

and assume they are right that there is absolutely nothing to all this alarming news about polar bears drowning and starving while entire islands and coastal regions become swamped with several feet of sea water. What will be the outcome if the U.S. goes forward with such things as wind farms, solar energy expansion, nuclear energy use, electric cars, expanded mass transit and reworking the grid so that clean energy can be distributed efficiently as just a few examples of what global warming communications are proposing when it turns out there is nothing to global warming except a natural variation of the earth's temperature that has nothing to do with man and his polluting emissions?

The answer is that we will create hundreds of thousands of good jobs, we will regain our position as world leaders in innovation and technology, we will free ourselves from our dependence on foreign fuel, and we will have cleaner air and water to boot. Sounds like a win-win-win situation even if Al Gore is totally wrong.

We can be diverse and forward-thinking at the same time, and we should be able to enjoy the outcome of regaining America's place in leading the rest of the world in our lifetimes while the I-told-you-so'ers will have to ask their great-grandchildren to wag a finger for them. That part of our group might be right, but we all stand to win if we quit bickering in Washington and Copenhagen about who's right or wrong and get going with doing what we can. The world itself is diverse, and there has never been a time in history when so many countries are so connected and concerned. Diversity is a natural phenomenon locally and globally.



Counted

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Canada goose, 127; mallard, 12; wild turkey, 6; pied-billed grebe, 1; great blue heron, 3; turkey vulture, 8; northern harrier, 1; sharp-shinned hawk, 2; Cooper's hawk, 1; red-tailed hawk, 20; American kestrel, 70; killdeer, 3; rock dove, 5; mourning dove, 126; barred owl, 1; belted kingfisher, 2; red-bellied woodpecker, 30; yellow-bellied sapsucker, 2; downy woodpecker, 19; hairy woodpecker, 3; northern flicker, 14; blue jay, 83; American crow, 119; horned lark, 206; Carolina chickadee, 32; tufted titmouse, 77; red-breasted nuthatch, 2; white-breasted nuthatch, 11; brown creeper, 1; Carolina wren, 15; eastern bluebird, 115; American robin, 68; northern mockingbird, 27; European starling, 8,031; yellow-rumped warbler, 1; rufous-sided towhee, 4; chipping sparrow, 13; fox sparrow, 1; song sparrow, 43; white-throated sparrow, 10; white-crowned sparrow, 4; dark-eyed junco, 167; northern cardinal, 135; red-winged blackbird, 1,600; eastern meadowlark, 18; common grackle, 17,200; brown-headed cowbird, 870; purple finch, 3; house finch, 30; American goldfinch, 42; house sparrow, 140; and lesser scaup, 2.

Participants included: Janet Howard, Laura and Charles Morris, Bill Little, Brenda Little, Tony Eaden, Brenda Eaden, Ken Hurm, Mary Kissel, Kenny Lin, Winny Lin, Jill Flachskam, Steve Anderson, Henry Connor, Steve Rogier, Cathy Rogier, Kay Techenor, Lynn Techenor and Mike Henshaw. Sherry Henshaw co-hosted the event, providing lunch.

The western Daviess County count will be at 8 a.m. Friday, Jan. 1, beginning at Janet Howard's home, 3534 W. Parrish Ave.

Although not an official Audubon county, its data are valued by the Kentucky Ornithological Society, Jan Howard has coordinated the count for 20 years, inheriting it from the L.E. Wilson family, whose Sorgho property served as the count circle center.

Western county birds have been counted for 51 years.

Remembering Dorothy Thacker



For over a decade, attorney John Thacker has donated his services to our chapter as its registered agent. When John's mother, Dorothy, passed away last month, we planted a burr oak tree at Panther Creek Park in her honor. We extend our sympathy to John and his family for their loss.



From left, top photo, are: Bill Little, Winny Lin, Judy Adams and Brenda Little.

Left: County parks employees help Brenda Little plant the tree. (Photos by Winny Lin)

4 instructors receive Adventure kits

Four instructors have received Audubon Adventures kits for the 2009-2010 school year.

Lawanna Hoskins, Cravens Elementary's after-school science club; Starla Cravens, Wayland Alexander; Linda Gillis, Seven Hills; and Grace Ford with the Joe Ford Nature Library will use the materials for their programs.