

The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

June 2008

DCAS explores travel possibilities

Could the Daviess County Audubon Society become the go-to place for ecotourism in the Ohio Valley?

Interested birders from around the area began to unravel the answers May 12 when Chuck Mills discussed travel possibilities at a pre-meeting session at the Daviess County Public Library.

The retired teacher has plunged into travel headlong, going everywhere from Kenya to south Texas in the past year. He wants to work with the club to organize an international trip and a United States trip each year.

"You can see exotic locations and birds at the same time," he said. To stoke the fires, he brought slides of some of the

species viewed during travel to Trinidad and Panama, such as coquettes and black-beaked

toucans. Panama was presented as an ideal location to give inexperienced travelers a taste of the Tropics. Mills is using his vast knowledge of suitable lodging and local guides to bring the cost of such a 12-day trip to about \$3,000. Puerto Rico is another possibility, with several species that birders can't find anywhere else.

Stateside, Brenda Little pushed for southern Texas. In addressing immigration issues, there are fears that Sable Palm Nature Preserve near Brownsville will be cut off from the mainland by border fences. Mills also expressed desire to go to Duluth, Minn., this winter to view birds coming south from the Arctic. On his last trip there, he stopped counting great gray owls at 35, a



Chuck Mills shares images of trips.

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Officer openings to be addressed at picnic

The annual year-end picnic will be held at 5 p.m. Monday, June 9 at Panther Creek Park in western Daviess County. The club will provide the meat, and members are to bring side dishes or desserts.

The club also will discuss open officer positions. The presidency remains in flux, and new VP/program and education chairmen will be selected.

To RSVP, call Carolyn Williams at 683-5863 or e-mail her at cs.williams@omuonline.net.

Educators help kids discover nature's spring wonders

The Youth Education Services team ended the school year on a high note, with programs at Western Kentucky Botanical Garden, Yellow Creek Park and Tamarack Elementary.

Even with a rain-interrupted WKBG schedule, Charles Morris, Carolyn Williams, Jan Howard, Ken Hurm, Grace Ford and Mary Kissel still worked with more than 600 kids this school year, Morris reported.

Poor weather conditions actually enhanced the program by the end of the year. The group was moved inside the gazebo, where kids had a better look at visitors to the garden and a tree line, where they spotted a gray-cheeked thrush. Up in the rafters of the gazebo, they could watch barn swallows setting up housekeeping in the eaves.

When concerns about noise level moved the bird station out of the gazebo, it was moved closer to bird feeders and a stump which was converted into a natural sunflower seed feeding tray. Instead of looking for fake birds, kids spent most of their nonscope time looking at goldfinches, house finches, colorful cardinals, dazzling red-winged blackbirds and spunky chickadees.

The team will return in mid-June for the youth camp and then take part in the Big Bugs program when kids return to classes in August. Morris is excited about future plans for Audubon at the garden, including use of the educational center under construction.

Across the county, Bill and Brenda Little and Mary Kissel presented a bird program for Whitesville first-graders at Yellow Creek Park. Conditions were less-than-favorable for birding that day, but the kids did spot a warbler and a pewee on the Little-led hikes, and a veery gave one group a very quick peek by the bridge. They participated in Kissel's "birds and beaks" program. One child even was among the handful of "barn swallows" to ever catch a "fly" with her beak, albeit the back of her beak!

Probably the real star of the morning was Scott Harp, who brought a truckload of critters for kids to "ooh" and "ahh" over, including a big box of brightly colored turtles. Not everything of interest was alive ... he brought a road kill copperhead along to give the kids a chance to compare its coloration with a northern water snake.

Morris and Kissel also represented the club at Tamarack Elementary's Go Green celebration, presenting a bird program for students in groups of at least 60. That made for a lively morning, but even kindergarten kids were able to find birds in the guides by being encouraged to match colors.



Scott Harp shows off a frog to Whitesville students.



Left: Sutton Elementary students try out binoculars.

Above: a Whitesville "mallard" gets a snack.



Steve Hahus snapped photos of a goldfinch and white-eyed vireo on the trip.

Migratory friends wing it to Hoosier National Forest

The Hoosier National Forest near Leopold, Ind., welcomed a quartet of Audubon members May 4.

Steve Hahus, Mary Kissel, Jill Flachskam and Henry Conner were on the prowl for migratory warblers, and a few showed their faces during the mid-migration period. Blue-winged, prairie, black-and-white, northern parula and common yellowthroat and a cheeky yellow-breasted chat were among sightings. The sometimes-elusive Louisiana waterthrush put himself on display, to the delight of the group.

Keen ears also picked up an ovenbird. When Hahus went into the woods in hot pursuit, a pair of barred owls were flushed.

In the woodlands, they were surprised to find a solitary sandpiper on a mud flat.

The rest of the day found: Canada geese, mallard, grackle, killdeer, eastern meadowlark, red-winged blackbird, red-tailed hawk, wild turkey, rough-winged swallow, crow, tufted titmouse, American kestrel, eastern bluebird, American robin, barn swallow, purple martin, orchard oriole, Carolina wren, brown thrasher, chipping sparrow, white-eyed vireo, goldfinch, indigo bunting, catbird, eastern phoebe, field sparrow, cowbird, red-shouldered hawk, cardinal, great blue heron, blue-gray gnatcatcher, red-bellied woodpecker, yellow-billed cuckoo, rusty blackbird, eastern towhee, white-crowned sparrow, yellow-shafted flicker, tree swallow, Swainson's thrush, scarlet tanager, red-eyed vireo, blue jay, yellow-throated vireo and eastern kingbird.

They also spotted a yellow box turtle.

Junior Audubon Club fledges its first brood

By Brenda Little

It was with mixed emotions that we bid farewell to a half dozen sixth-graders from the Junior Audubon Society at Hartford's Wayland Elementary last week. We feel pride and happiness knowing that the young birders (actually they are more than birders, they are excited environmentalists) will take with them the ideas and ideals of the Audubon Society to their next step up the educational ladder, middle school.

The club ended its year with a program by Scott Harp, one of the group's adult mentors, who entertained and educated with his Critters in the Classroom gig. Starla Cravens noticed that when the intercom call came announcing the beginning of the meeting, students were sprinting down the hallways to get a front row seat. After months of pleading, the club members were rewarded with a hands-on visit with a rat snake and a safely boxed, totally fearless Northern water

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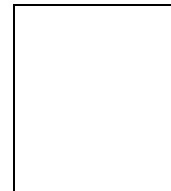
Travel

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bohemian waxwing and two kinds of redpolls.

How realistic are the trips? It will be up to the board of directors to decide if they want the DCAS to be a sponsoring agency for the trips. All money would pass through the DCAS as it books trips and pays for airfare. Working through a travel agent, the group would have travel insurance. Whether or not trips are taken, Little said the club needs general liability insurance to cover themselves in case of a mishap with a student at a school program.

Mills envisions a small group of eight to 10 people, enough to travel by van within the United States. However, enough interest would have to be shown for a trip before planners could work with such entities as Wild Birds Unlimited, John James Audubon State Park and Wesselman Park to advertise the trips.



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Turn back the clock 200 years at Bernheim Forest

Bernheim Forest and the Louisville Audubon Society will continue their celebration of the bicentennial of the birth of John James Audubon with the following activities:

Walking in the Woods with Audubon

Thursday, June 12, and Friday, June 13

"Audubon" and "Leyman" will explore the wilds of Bernheim in search of the elusive Water Thrush, to study its habits and portray its likeness in paint. Bernheim can arrange for small groups to meet with the explorers at specific times and locations along their two-day journey. The explorers will assist participants in making their own field drawings and observation notes. For small groups by prior arrangement only. Contact Bernheim (955-8512) for details, costs and times.

Morning Birding with Audubon

Saturday, June 14, and Sunday, June 15, 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.

Don't miss this opportunity to go birding with "Audubon" and "Leyman" around Bernheim's Lake Nevin. Beginning birders welcome. Meets at Garden Pavilion. Fee: \$10 for nonmembers. Registration required (502-955-8512) each day.

Audubon Bicentennial Festival

Saturday, June 14, noon-4 p.m., Sunday, June 15, noon-3 p.m.

Meet up with "Audubon" and "Leyman" at their Bernheim base camp. Try your hand at illustrating, learn about the explorations of these historical figures and visit with local environmental and natural history organizations. This fun-packed day will provide you a better understanding of our rich natural heritage. Free with regular entrance fee.

Art Lessons with Audubon

Saturday, June 14, 9:30 a.m.-11 a.m.

Always admired the sketches of naturalist illustrators? Learn easy techniques from "Audubon" for sketching animals, plants and landscapes, using natural materials for inks and colors. Bring a blank book if you like, to start your own field journal. Meets at Magruder Meadow. Fee: \$15 for LAS and Bernheim members; \$20 for nonmembers. Limited seating. Call 955-8512 to register.

Dinner with Audubon

Saturday, June 14, 6 to 8 p.m.

Enjoy a period dinner of roasted quail, root vegetables and wild-foods side dishes prepared by "Audubon" and "Leyman." Then enjoy after-dinner stories around the fire pit, music and dance. Fee: \$75 nonmembers. Limited seating. Register by calling 955-8512.

Brood

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snake, a snake with ATTITUDE!

It has been a wonderful year for young and not-so-young alike in this first-year venture. We have learned a lot about nature and about what works and what does not work with elementary students in an after-school program. We began the year with the hope of having a dozen members. We were overwhelmed by interest and begging to be admitted which resulted in a maximum enrollment of 16. Attrition took our number back down to a dozen by year's end.

The club's sponsors are in the process of preparing our fiscal year end's report for our parent organization, DCAS. More than \$1,200 has been invested in the 11 months of launching an organization that we hope will thrive well into the future. We are going into next year with a decent bank account balance. An indication that there is a lot of interest in the club

, we were asked to present Beginning Birding to 80-some 3rd graders this spring, and we've already been invited for classroom presentations next year. The roster is full, and we are starting a waiting list of names of 3rd through 6th graders who hope to be members of the 2008-2009 year beginning in August.

Don't forget May Day!

Celebrate the arrival of summer at a May Day celebration May 31 at Yellow Creek Park. The event is being organized by the Joe Ford Nature Library and Daviess County Parks.

Morning activities for the whole family begin at 11 a.m. Bring a picnic and enjoy the games and many floral-related and nature activities.