



Daviess County
Audubon Society

The Goldfinch

www.daviessaudubon.net

READY TO FIND YOUR WAY BACK HOME?

Gail Evans, owner of On Snow White Wings, will be the guest speaker at the Jan. 3 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Her trained white homing pigeons provide a special touch to occasions in the Owensboro area before returning to their home several miles away.

What kind of doves can be trained? What kinds are used only for display? Evans will discuss the ins and outs of her part-time business and passion.

The club will meet at 7 p.m. at First Christian Church, J.R. Miller Blvd. and Seventh Street.

January's Program:

January's Calendar:

Jan. 3rd- DCAC meeting: 7 p.m., Owensboro Christian Church

(- Don't forget- at 5:30 p.m., "Moonlite supper with the speaker" where that evening's speaker, guests and audubon members meet at the Moonlite to eat, talk, and eat some more.)

Jan 1- 8:00 a.m. KOS Christmas Bird count at Janet Howard's, 3534 West Parrish avenue.

Jan. 6 - DCAC Board Meeting, 11:30, Judy's House

Jan 22- Owl Prowl Field Trip, leaving from the Moonlite BBQ back parking lot 1 p.m. . (2:30 p.m., Audubon State Park "shuttling van-tour".)

Jan 24- Henderson Outreach meeting, Audubon StatePark, 7 p.m.

TWO PROGRAMS IN JANUARY ARE DEVOTED TO OUR EXPANDED TERRITORY IN HENDERSON AND UNION COUNTY

Sunday afternoon January 22nd, Julie McDonald, Naturalist at Audubon State Park will take us out for an Owl Prowl. We will meet at the Park's parking lot at 2:30 to load-up in a van that will shuttle us to the site or sites where we will listen for calling owls. Departure for those who wish to carpool or car caravan from Owensboro will be from the back of the MoonLite parking lot at 1 PM.



Anyone who wishes to have a personal roadside viewing/tour of the two tracts of land that were recently purchased for Audubon State Park should meet Bill and Brenda Little at the Park Entrance at 2 PM. These tracts are where we have watched the Great Blue Heron rookery and the Bald Eagles' nest in the past few years.

Then at 7 PM on Tuesday night January 24th, Daviess County Audubon Society will host a meeting at the Audubon Museum at Audubon State Park. Mike and Connie Morton will present a program about Sloughs Wildlife Management Area, A Jewel Right in Our Backyard.

A second purpose of the meeting is to celebrate our newly added membership territory. We will be introducing ourselves and our chapter and hoping to make many long lasting friendships with people who live in the area of Henderson and who are now counted as members of our chapter.

Our members who travel to Henderson to host this meeting will have Supper with the Speakers before the meeting at 5:30 PM and a yet to be determined eatery in the area.

Mike Morton, far right, attempts to give directions to the Bald Eagles' nest out there somewhere in The Slough. We put about 30 miles on our cars searching without success, before we gave up. Photo by Bill Little.

AT LAST! AUDUBON STATE PARK HAS A SHOT AT LAND THEY HAVE LONGED TO OWN FOR 2 DECADES—KENTUCKY HERITAGE LAND CONSERVATION FUND

BOARD'S SITE INSPECTION

by G. Wm. "Bill" Little, Jr.

I'm coming up on a decade of service with the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board. It took me a good year to learn all the words in that name! I serve as Vice-Chairman of the Board and Treasurer for the Fund.

People know the Fund as "Nature License Plates" for which people pay a paltry extra \$10 to get an auto license tag with a graphic of Cumberland Falls, the Ruby-throated hummingbird, or the Dragon fly with "Nature's Finest" written across the bottom. The fact of the matter is that our funds come not only from "Nature Plates" but also from the unmined minerals tax and environmental fines levied on businesses for polluting.

What does the KHLCF Board do? When a site is nominated to be purchased by the Fund, a very specific set of guidelines must be followed. The Fund only purchases land that will be maintained in perpetuity by either a governmental or educational entity. The Fund's funds are used to buy land that is considered to be a place that should not be developed, that for some reason should be kept in its natural state.



Will Esche gets a "bird's eye view" of the Bald Eagles' nest from a pontoon boat that has been equipped to accommodate his wheel chair and is being used as a photography platform. Photo is by Robbie Williams who is grateful to Jim Tyler of Tyler Boats just north of Owensboro for his help in acquiring and setting-up the pontoon boat.

Before a decision is made to finance the purchase land, members of the Board do what is called a site inspection.

Representatives of the governmental or educational entity that have nominated the site are met and questioned about their plans for the land if the Fund purchases the land.

It was just such a site inspection that

I participated in on December 16th in Henderson, KY. You have probably read the news that 5 brave, charitable, and dedicated individuals attended an auction of wetlands tracts and were successful bidders acting on behalf of a group named the Friends of Audubon who committed to purchasing two tracts, a total of 649 acres on the banks of the Ohio River and just across a narrow road from Audubon State Park. Our chapter has gone birding there to study the Great Blue Heron rookery and watch the nesting Bald eagles.

At this site inspection meeting, I had the privilege of meeting two of the 5 men who committed to purchasing the land in the hopes that the KHLCF will agree to finance the purchase the land from them by Audubon State Park. Scott Keach is a farmer who accompanied us to the roadside tract of land with Bald cypress trees and tall hardwoods in the background that is partially under water from recent flooding. Then further down the road we saw where high water has receded from land that was farmed last summer and now has driftwood tree trunks left high and dry in the muddy field. Scott talked to us about hopes held by Friends of Audubon that a boardwalk and maybe a bird blind

can be part of the land "improvements" in order to make the site user friendly for people with handicaps and limited mobility.

At lunch following the site inspection, I met Robbie Williams who told me that one of the five buyers, Will Esche, was paralyzed in an auto accident when he was 15 years-old. Robbie explained that the 5 buyers took on the name Audubon Wetlands



Photo by Robbie Williams who generously gave us permission to use it in our newsletter and on our website.

and formed a corporation with that name for which he serves as Secretary-Treasurer. Robbie told us that it is his hope that the land under consideration for purchase by the KHLCF will be made accessible to everyone with a paved parking area and paving or a boardwalk that will allow the public to learn about wetlands, enjoy safely watching the birds and other wildlife, and will have educational material available to enrich the experience for everyone. I've saved for the end of my article the shot Robbie captured of the resident eagles at one of the two tracts purchased recently. The photo speaks loudly for the value of these tracts to Audubon State Park and their wonderful benefit to thousands of people who we hope will soon have a much better and safer place, out of the traffic on the busy road, to enjoy and learn about wetlands, their value to us all, and the wonder of the animals that inhabit them.

HOW MANY STAR-LINGS...50, 100, 1000?

By Judy Adams

The 112th Christmas Bird Count dawned sunny and clear as seven of the nine teams gathered at the Henshaw's for a morning of birding. Our circle is 15 miles in diameter and Mike divided it into eight areas. By the time all nine teams re-grouped for Sherry's marvelous lunch spread we had counted 69 species for a total of 12,076 birds! Of these, none were considered rare.

There were some highlights, though. One team spotted three meadowlarks high in a lone tree, another found lapland longspurs while searching for horned larks. Several of our regular birders were missed, including Mary Kissel (she birded the Greenbelt) and Charles and Laura Morris who were still in Florida with their son. Tony Eaden was felled by the flu, but Brenda teamed up with Mike Brown for a good day. A special thanks to Mike for organizing us and to Sherry for filling our bellies with such good eats!

*Thank you!!! to Sherry & Mike Henshaw.
You do the shopping, the cooking, the cleaning
before we arrive and after we depart.
The Christmas Bird Count is so great, so
much fun, so delicious because of you. Thank you,
thank you, thank you!!!*

SANDHILL CRANE WEEKEND

State park offering sandhill crane weekends AP – Tue, Dec 13
LUCAS, Ky. (AP) — Barren River Lake State Resort Park in south-central Kentucky is hosting two weekends for people who want to get a closer look at sandhill cranes as they make their annual stop.

The Kentucky Department of Parks says thousands of the birds stop at Barren River Lake each year.

The event will include an evening educational session with wildlife biologist Wayne Tamminga of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and a sunset or sunrise trip to view the birds led by naturalists from the Department of Parks.

The weekends are Jan. 20-21 and Feb. 17-18, and registration is \$30, including a boxed meal and T-shirt. Registration forms are available at <http://parks.ky.gov/calendar/details/nature-watch-weekend--sandhill-cranes/16254> or by contacting Jamie Avery at (800) 325-0057.

This program will be for our members to arrange, partner-up, and finance on your own. We can huddle at Supper with the Speaker and during Happy Half Hour before the meeting Jan 3rd.

IMPROMPTU OPERATION MIGRATION PRESENTATION AT AUDUBON STATE PARK

By Winny Lin

So the weather was bad--continuous rain, snow prediction, and the roads were bad on Monday, Dec. 5! Well, the gain for the bird and environment enthusiasts was the last minute email notice of SPECIAL OPERATION MIGRATION PRESENTATION at 6:00pm at Audubon State Park.

It was unbelievable that the meeting room downstairs was full. In response to the modern technology-email, people came from Henderson, Evansville, and Owensboro, including parents with their children for this rare opportunity to see and hear the lead pilot and co-founder, Joe Duff, of Operation Migration(OM) which leads young whooping cranes on their first migration by



ultralight airplanes. The crowd was so excited like the molecules bubbling in the boiling water!

One of the migration's stops was in Union County, Kentucky. OM arrived there on the previous weekend, and was grounded by the rainy weather, so Alan Gehret, the curator of Audubon Museum, invited Joe and his team for an impromptu presentation. Joe and his team of pilots, along with a ground crew of biologists, handlers, vets and drivers started their journey in September this year with a budget of \$650,000 to help the young whooping cranes to migrate 1,280 miles from Wisconsin through Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia to be eventually

released on the gulf coast of central Florida. Everyday they can only guide the birds in the morning to fly about 2-3 hours before the birds run out of steam. Since 2001, OM has led a cohort of captive-hatched and reared over 200 whooping cranes and their effort has been known as "the greatest species re-introduction in the history of conservation", considering just 15 birds remained and near extinction in the 1940's. Then in the next spring, the adult birds will initiate an unassisted return migration back to Wisconsin.

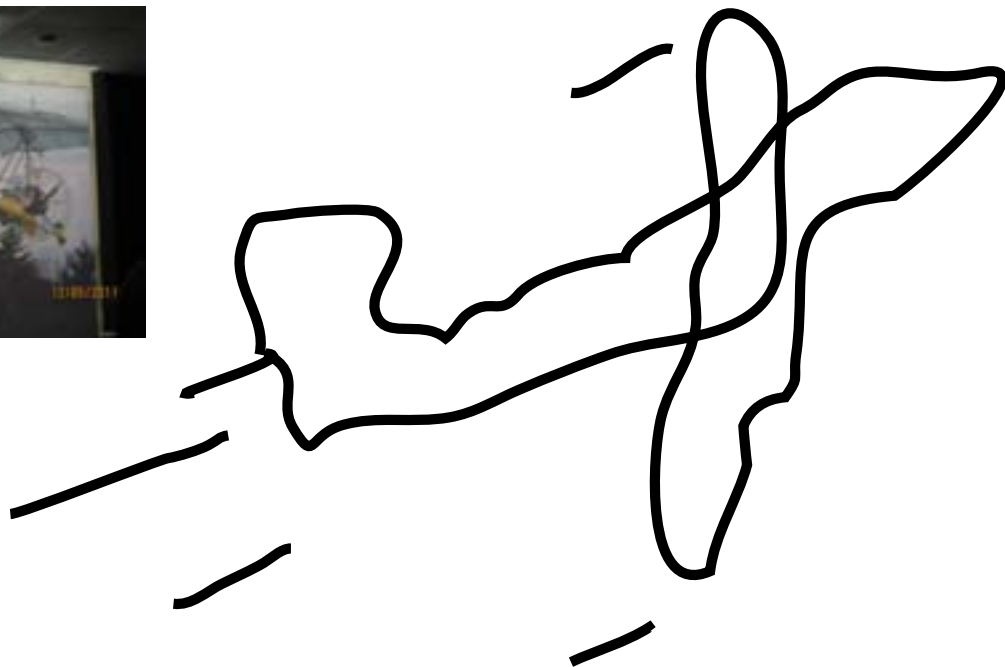
OM was founded in 1984 by Duff and Bill Lischman.

You can find more information about Operation Migration at www.operationmigration.org and make contribution if interested.

In the photo are (left to right) Alan Gehret (curator of Audubon Museum), Joe Duff, Linda Boyd and David Boyd (Operation Migration team members) and Judy Adams. Other DCAS members attended the presentation but not in the photo are Bill and Brenda Little, and Winny Lin.



The Operation Migration plane..



The costa-rica bird-plane is getting closer..

SCOTT HARP'S "BOOT CAMP FOR BIRDERS PROGRAM" GETS RAVE REVIEWS

By Brenda Little

At the end of December's program, Scott Harp fretted, "I think I ran long." The truth is that our members kept asking questions and one thing led to another making Scott run over the end time he had planned.

Scott began the program by giving us the first ever evaluation of how we are doing since we began following the criteria for the Christmas Bird Count laid out by the National Audubon Society. Scott has experience with the guidelines that must be followed in order to have a 7-mile circle's diameter approved by NAS. He knows his stuff because he laid out a count circle for Ohio County a few years ago.

For a chapter that has been in the game for such a short time, I think this is the fifth year, Scott told us that we are doing pretty well. He projected a series of spreadsheet columns for us to study with species of common birds in the first column and with bright yellow highlighting marking each of the column's birds that we have identified and reported in our counts. The second column held the names of birds that are less common, third column even more uncommon until the last column held the species of birds that are very rare in our area.

It was fun to see the yellow highlighting in each column.

Then Scott began to help us see the big picture by telling us that in Kentucky this time of year there can

be found between 175 and 200 species of birds. He showed us a book, *Annotated Species*, delineating who saw what, when and where that helps to narrow down the 100 species of birds that we can expect to find as we head out to count birds for 2011. He

gave us tips for identifying specific birds that were fun. See a fat Kestrel? It is probably a Merlin. Janet Howard gave Scott credit for helping her team identify a hawk by his tips. "We saw a big bird, with a band, and we knew it was not an eagle, so Bingo, it's a Rough leg!"

Scott advised, when trying to identify a Downy Woodpecker, listen for a call that trills down. That tip can come in handy when a Downy hangs out on the side of a tree out of sight. Two birds that run up and down the trunks of trees are the White-breasted nuthatch and the Brown Creeper that look nothing alike and can be identified by their behavior and their colorations, white & black?, it's a nuthatch, brown? It's a creeper.

For those exasperating LBJ's [Little Brown Jobbers] some tips given were: pink beak & legs with a white eye ring? It's a Field sparrow. Spot on the breast with streaks? It's a Song sparrow. Spot on the breast, but no streaks? It's an American tree sparrow.

In the *Location, Location, Location* department, a sparrow that is hanging around at eye level and lower just might be a White-throated sparrow. See a hawk sailing 15 to 20 feet above the ground

round and round and up and down? It is likely a Northern harrier. See a bird circling high overhead too far up to identify? If the wings are held in a V shape, it's a Turkey Vulture.

At lunch on count day, Fran Tichenor sang Scott's praises as he spoke of how much his program prepared her for the Christmas Bird Count. And Janet Howard thinks we should make this program an annual event.



Photo by Robbie Williams and used with permission.

GONE WHOOPING

By Brenda Little



TO THE

For about a decade we have known that the ultralight planes that escort Whooping Cranes from Wisconsin, through Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia to the Gulf Coast of Florida pass-by very near here, landing for rest and feeding in Union County, but NOBODY would tell us when or where they were so near to us.

This year heavy rain grounded the human assisted migration in Union Co. for a few days and it was decided at the last minute that the project's co-founder Joe Duff would present a PowerPoint program detailing Operation Migration's story to the public **that very night!**

Four of our members were able to drop everything to travel to Audubon State Park for the free program. We learned that the idea behind humans leading the young birds is to re-establish a migration path that died out as the numbers of Whoopers dropped to only 15 birds in the 1940's. With the small flock that was saved migrating every year only to Texas came great risk to the survival of the species. Weather, predators, disease...many things could wipe out the species forever.

So with Operation Migration, eggs are gathered from breeding centers, incubated while being imprinted with ultralight aircraft sounds and after they are hatched the young birds are raised in **total isolation** from humans. The biologists and pilots wear baggy white costumes so that no human imprinting visual or aural can happen. They are fed by a puppet head that closely resembles what their parents look like.

Once the young birds fledge, by running in a fenced circle, they begin to be trained to fly along with the wings of the aircraft that they consider to be their parents.

This human led migration is done at much lower heights than what is natural for Whoopers riding updrafts that fly by sailing long distances at a time. The human led flight ranges from 0 to 200 miles a day, 50 miles is average, with the birds having to flap their wings except when they can maneuver into the back draft at the tips of the ultralights.

They land to rest and eat at prearranged locations where they are protected from almost all human sights and sounds. They have never seen a car or truck or human form. They

willingly run into pens that have been set-up for them by a ground crew because that is where they are fed and they are exhausted after many miles of having to flap their wings.

When they reach Florida's Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, they are housed and fed for the winter in



a fenced four-acre open topped pen. When spring comes, the birds are on their own for the flight back to Wisconsin where they were introduced to the ultralight planes. From this point on they migrate completely on their own to and from the Florida location of their flock.

Last year 20 young birds made the trip and this year there are 9. Hatching success rates vary.

And now you know why NOBODY will tell us when or where the Whoopers are in our neighborhood. Just last year 2 were shot and killed in Indiana and 1 in Georgia.

For more details about Operation Migration, you may visit the Field Journal at www.operationmigration.org.



FROM THE BACKYARD

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Your DCAS Board wishes you health, happiness and good birding in 2012! We finished 2011 with a great Christmas Bird Count at the Henshaw's and can start off 2012 with another at Janet Howard's at 8:00 A.M. on January 1st. Janet can be reached at 926-3795, so give her a call and plan to participate. This is also a good time to mark your calendars with a big DCAS on the first Tuesday of each month. In addition, the Great Backyard Bird Count is the weekend of February 17-19. This is an event that allows you to stay inside with a hot cup of coffee and still add to our knowledge of birds and their habits. For more information, check out www.birdsource.org/gbbc. There's even an instructional video.

Don't forget that DVDs of our monthly programs are available to borrow. They cover most of programs since mid-2009 and include Monarch Butterflies, Turkey Vultures, Turtles, Beavers, Bats & White Nose Syndrome and much more. Included is Scott Harp's terrific program on Birding by Ear from our December meeting. The DVD library "lives" at the Adams', but attends every DCAS meeting, so check them out!

As you know from reading the pages of the Goldfinch, we are reaching out to some counties to our west. National has expanded our "reach" and we want to involve as many birders, both experienced and novice, as possible. Everyone is welcome to join us at the J.J. Audubon Museum in Henderson on Tuesday evening, January 24th. Let's show these folks a Daviess county welcome.

By the time you read this, winter will have officially arrived on the calendar, although it's 50 degrees at this writing. The temperatures will plunge, the snow and ice will come, so prepare your backyard habitat now to ensure a safe and healthy winter for wildlife.

Remember to note the calendar box on the front page of every Goldfinch. All are welcome at our "supper with the speaker" at Moon-lite before our monthly program.

Again, Happy New Year!

—Judy Adams
