

November 2011



The Goldfinch

Daviess County
Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.net

November's Program:

PARADISE IN OUR BACKYARD

Only about a 45 minute drive from Owensboro there is a wonderland for anyone who wants to see such things as up to 30,000 geese and 10,000 ducks in the winter, American widgeon, green-winged teal, American avocet, common snipe as well as many other shorebirds and waterfowl, swans, swamp rabbit, squirrel, deer, quail, raccoon, beaver, coyote, doves, Kentucky's largest Great Blue Heron rookery, nesting bald eagles, prothonotary warbler, waterfowl, copper belly water snakes, bird voiced tree frogs, red-eared sliders, and butterflies. There are observation platforms that make excellent elevated places for using binoculars and spotting scopes.



The area habitat is mostly wetland: open land 28%, forest 27%, wetland 44%, open water 1% with alternating ridges and *sloughs*, moist soil *management* units, woodlands, brush, and open crop fields are found here. **It is a paradise for nature lovers, birders, and its principal purpose, for sportsmen.**

You probably know that this wonderland has been used by our members many, many times for field studies. It is Kentucky's first Important Bird Area located near Henderson, KY called "The Sloughs".

This wonderland did not just come to be all by itself. After man had destroyed the wetlands that Mother Nature originally provided, it was brought back as closely as possible to the way it was before farming and timber harvesting stripped it of its riches. **Leroy "Scott" Harp**, Wildlife Program Coordinator for Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources will speak to our chapter on November 1st about the history of this regional treasure, about what it took to restore it, and about the role that sportsmen have played in financing the bulk of the cost involved in this restoration.

GOT YOUR PASSPORT?

Get ready to take off for DCAS's first ever international birding trip! Eight, maybe even twelve, of us are planning a trip to Costa Rica in January. Our plan is to fly out of Evansville on January 8th and stay two nights each in Alajuela, San Gerardo de Dota, Arenal and Sarapiquí. These locations will provide us with the opportunity to experience cloud forest, lowland rainforest and Caribbean lowlands. We hope to add a variety of hummingbirds, the resplendent quetzal and maybe even the three-wattled bell bird to our life lists! The cost is relatively low for such a "trip of a lifetime" and the opportunity to experience it with friends is just too good to pass up. If you think you might like to join us, contact Judy Adams at jadams11_2008@yahoo.com

BIRDING AND LUNCH AT THE EADEN'S

Our November 5th field trip will be close to home. Tony and Brenda Eaden have invited us for a morning of birding and lunch at their home near Carpenter and Kingfisher Lakes. They

will provide hot dogs and mild chili. You can sign up at the meeting or let the Eaden's know whether you plan to bring salad, dessert or

Monthly Field Trip:

a beverage by calling 264-8439. They live at 7701 Saur Road. From US 60 E, take US 144 to US 405 past Wright's Landing Rd. Turn left on Saur Rd., just past the 2 mile marker. Their blacktop driveway is marked with a "Garden of Eaden" sign. Plan to arrive about 8:30 A.M. A big thank you to Tony and Brenda for welcoming us!

This Month's Calendar: November

Nov. 1st- DCAC meeting 7 p.m.
Nov. 5th -Birding and lunch at the Eaden's
Nov 14- DCAC Board Meeting, 11:30
Judy's House

MOVIE HAS GONE² TO THE BIRDS

Movie Brings Back Wonderful Memories

by Brenda Little

Over 20 DCAS members got together for a night at the movies just before *The Big Year* ended its one-week run at the Malco Theatre this week. As the movie's setting darted all over America from coast to coast and border to border boldly noting the locations and clicking off the birds being so desperately sought by competitors trying to outdo each other with their Big Year Lists, my mind connected with the less intense, but just as exciting adventures my husband, Bill, and I have had together as a couple and with other of our Audubon friends the many times we've gone birding during the past decade and a half.

Hearing the actor birders give each other tips about where a bird had been sighted, and then watching as they scrambled en masse to see it, sometimes to barely miss seeing the one that got away, was exactly the way it was the first time we birded at Crane Creek near Toledo, Ohio. There on the boardwalk someone would say, "Did you see the Woodcock?" for example, and then would point a gang of us who clambered down the wooden walk where, sure enough, there it was! And I remember when about two dozen of us circled around what somebody said was a Kirtland's warbler hopping around on the sandy beach of Lake Erie. Couldn't prove it by me? I was new to this birding thing. But I was having the time of my life.

And I remember the day a friendly lady tipped us off to some "frivolous" ducks!

I couldn't wait until after the movie to ask Janet Howard to remember with us the day way down in south Texas when we toasted her success at dinner and shared her joy after she added the 400th bird to her life list.

Remembering that same trip, Mike Kavolus took me back to the day we watched a brilliant orange Altamira Oriole weave its pendulous nest with hardly any regard for our peering eyes. And remember that GIANT snake, 8 ft? 10 ft? 12 ft? HUGE!

I raced out to the lobby of the movie theatre to ask Marilee Thompson about the way the movie depicted birding at the farthest tip of Alaska, an island called Attu. Marilee described it as miserable and ugly but marvelous for birders. She says that the movie, though not filmed on location in Attu, did manage to capture the way the barracks and barren island remains in her memory, right down to the RATS!

Seeing the actors madly racing their rental cars reminded me of the time our rent car company substituted a compact car for our week on the Birding Trail in Texas. They gave us a purple Dodge Neon without cruise control. Poor Bill had to hold his foot steady

with a cramping ankle for over 900 miles as we burned up the highways looking for Whooping Cranes, Green Jays and Great Kiskadees.

The Hollywood version of the quest to see the Himalayan Snowcock with a helicopter recklessly careening wildly around the jagged mountains in Nevada was similar to our experience of birding there on horseback with Wendell and Marilee Thompson. Our quest held a different kind of excitement with gunfire directed at an innocent rattlesnake, hornets attacking the last horse and rider in our bedraggled caravan, and descending a mountain on horseback in the dark! All I ever saw of the Himalayan Snowcock were the green vegetation filled droppings of that stupid bird, but Marilee rode her horse up that mountain and back down at least 3 times until she saw the bird and added it to her life list.

As we quizzed Marilee about how unbelievable it was that a movie character could be so obsessed about adding birds to his Big Year List that he neglected his loving wife and bailed out on their agreement to go through fertility treatments in starting a family, she said she's witnessed just such obsession and more, more than once. The movie made it clear that if you have enough money, and enough time, almost anyone can make it into the big leagues of birding.

What made the movie so enjoyable for me is that its closeness to reality brought back so many really wonderful memories. Having the people with us who have shared many of those birding quests made our night at the movies all the more special.

And our group is not done with this movie yet. I heard many saying that they plan to rent it when it comes out on DVD so they can hit "Pause" and examine the bird photos with their field guides and once again go racing down memory lane.



DINNER AND A MOVIE

By Judy Adams

It was a fun, enjoyable evening with birders laughing at themselves. On October 19th, thirteen of us had dinner at the Olive Garden. We were later joined by seven more avid birders at the Owensboro Malco to watch Steve Martin, Jack Black and Owen Wilson take a year off to indulge in a year of competitive birding. The movie, featured in this month's AUDUBON magazine, was produced with the blessing of the National Audubon Society. It opened nationwide on October 14th. If *The Big Year* is still showing when you read this, don't miss it. We chuckled and laughed out loud while recognizing birds, locations and ourselves in this light-hearted comedy.



MONTHLY BIRDING FIELD TRIP AT LINCOLN STATE PARK

by Winny Lin

On a glorious fall day, Sunday afternoon, Oct. 9, several DCAS members traveled all the way to Lincoln State Park for birding! Led by the park naturalist, David Ayer, members were able to spot 18 different species including several black vultures: eastern phoebe, chipping sparrow, bluebird, turkey vulture, American crow, Northern flicker, robin, blue jay, Carolina chickadee, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, tufted titmouse, yellow-rumped warbler, Carolina wren, pileated woodpecker, sharp-shinned hawk, white-breasted nuthatch. In the photo (from left to right) are Tony Eaden, David Ayer, Bob Adams, Judy Adams (president of DCAS), Mary Kissel, Brenda Eaden, Fran Tichenor, Roseanne Radzelovage with Tichenor's dog, (Mandy). Lynn Tichenor is not in the photo.

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Thank you, everyone, for your going-out-of office gift of wind chimes. As you may know, my life lately has not allowed me the free time to hang them where they can chime for me. However, I have the ideal location in mind just outside my office window and I look forward to listening to their music for years to come.

Yours, Brenda Little

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CRABBY MOM

One day, while driving down our dirt road, I spied a sandhill crane standing on the edge of the road. As I got closer, she moved away from the edge of the road. The grass there was about a foot high, but it was sparse in places. By the time I arrived at where she had been standing and came to a stop, she was now eight or nine feet off the road standing in the grass. She stood there like statue and calmly watched me. I wondered what she was doing when all of a sudden she started to holler. A sandhill crane's voice from that proximity was deafening and I couldn't figure out why she was upset.

And then I saw them. Two little soft yellow fuzzballs with long legs were creeping around in the grass struggling to head to her side. As they passed through the no-grass areas, I could see them for a brief second. They were cute!

At that moment I heard a second crane start to cry out. For a second or two, I couldn't figure out where the noise was coming from, then I caught a movement in my rear-view mirror. There, standing behind the truck, was Poppa Sandhill. It seemed that the two adults were communicating to each other, and I'm sure that it was about me.

I looked back at Momma and she gave me what I am sure was a dirty look. She reached down into the grass and started yanking up beakfuls of grass. Then she tossed it into the air in my direction. Yank-toss,



yank-toss, yank-toss. I could tell she was really getting agitated. By now the chicks had already reached where she was at and they were heading into the deeper grass behind her.

Then I heard Poppa cry out again, only he had flown over the truck and was standing in front of me on the road. He stalked up to the truck with an air of surety, and then, as if leading me, turned around and started walking up the road. When he got about 15 feet away, he dropped one of his wings down to the ground and stared hollering again. I'll be darned, he was pulling the old broken-wing act! Down the road he went, drawing my attention away from those precious little fuzzballs in the grass.

I admit – I was distracted! So rather than keep on getting them all worked up, I obliged by starting to drive away slowly down the road towards Poppa. After I was well beyond where the Momma and

babies were at, the Poppa's wing suddenly got better and he flew off the road.

I had been able to witness one of nature's defense techniques first hand that day. It's a good thing that Poppa distracted me, because I am pretty sure that grass-throwing would not have worked.

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WOW !!! WHAT A SIGHTING!

By Charles Morris

Judy Adams, Janet Howard, Ken Hurm and Charles Morris were at the Western Kentucky botanical garden teaching the Cravens School 4th grade classes about birds and how to properly adjust and use binoculars.

Charles and Ken were outside sitting beside the spotting scope while the ladies were taking the class on a field trip around the garden to spot different birds with their own sets of binoculars



and field guides of the Birds of Kentucky.

Charles looked up and saw what he thought was a hawk. He said to Ken, "there's a hawk; Ken said "I think it's a vulture". Charles raised his binoculars to his eyes and did a slow double-take. "It's a Bald Eagle!" he exclaims.

He then called over to Judy and Jan "there's a Bald Eagle!" pointing to the bird above our heads. All the kids and adults raised their binoculars to get their own view. The kids were jumping with joy at such a good find! About ten to fifteen adults were there, working on scarecrows for the up-coming festival, and all eyes were glued on the Bald Eagle. He sure put on a show, soaring with the sun reflecting off his white head and tail feathers!

Dr. Bill Tyler of the WKBG said it was the first Bald Eagle ever seen at the garden. We told the class how fortunate they were to see our national bird and that it's a rare sight in Daviess County. To date, it is the best sighting ever at the WKBG.

FROM THE BACKYARD

It's been a busy fall and your Board has been working hard for you. We are in the process of expanding our reach beyond the immediate Daviess county zip codes, so if you know birders and environmentalists in Island, Fordsville, Hartford and beyond, be sure to spread the word about our chapter activities. Send their email information for the Goldfinch to david.stratton@brescia.edu.

National Audubon's promotion of the film "The Big Year" gives us yet another opportunity to talk up DCAS with our friends. If we can't get an "official" DCAS outing together, then organize your own "dinner and a movie" and share the fun in the next issue of the Goldfinch.

Nine people (and a dog) participated in our field trip to Lincoln State Park earlier this month. Mark your calendars for the next two outings...both of which involve food! Tony and Brenda Eaden have invited us for a morning of birding and lunch at their home near Kingfisher and Carpenter Lakes on November 5th. And the Christmas Bird count in December (date to be determined) always involves Sherry Henshaw's yummy food.

This month's program is another opportunity to introduce friends to DCAS. We welcome all who are concerned about nature and the environment and this includes our hunting friends. Many erroneously equate our pro-environment stance with anti-hunting. We should remember that many of our sloughs and wetlands are there for our birding enjoyment because of the work of hunters' organizations.

Thanks to Winny Lin, who first suggested an international birding trip to the board. Ever ready to think out of the box, we are in the process of finalizing a trip to Costa Rica in January! You'll find more information in the article in this issue of the Goldfinch.

Have you missed one of our programs? Wish you could see one again? No problem. All our programs are on DVD, from January 2009 through the present. Maybe by the next issue I'll have an alphabetical index done. Hope to see you November 1st!

—Judy Adams

