

The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

April 2008

Celebrate the Earth – any way you want

Volunteer, hiking opportunities abound for Audubon members

Anyone wanting to observe Earth Day in their own way April 19 will have three options to celebrate nature in the Ohio Valley.

You can welcome spring migrants by attending the field trip to the Hoosier National Forest in Perry County, Ind. This trip, led by Perry County native Steve Hahus, is a wonderful opportunity to see some of the colorful warblers, orioles and tanagers which will begin arriving in the Ohio Valley. Meeting times and locations will be announced at the April meeting.

For the nonhikers, the DCAS hopes to have a presence at the Earth Day celebration from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 19 at Kentucky Wesleyan College. Jill Flachskam reports that the event will be headlined by speakers Dr. Matthew Sleeth, author of “Serve God, Save the Planet,” and his daughter, Emma Sleeth, sophomore at Asbury College and author of a new book, “It’s Easy Being Green.”

Daviess Audubon hopes to be among agencies with a table, distributing updated DCAS pamphlets and other promotional items and administering bird tattoos.

According to Flachskam, there will be music, constant showing of energy and water films, children’s activities and more. It is co-sponsored by Sierra Club, Kentucky Wesleyan College, Environmental Stewardship Taskforce of First Christian Church, Water Sentinels and Watershed Watch.



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Abigail Tyson and Jasmine Allen are among the talented Junior Audubon members.

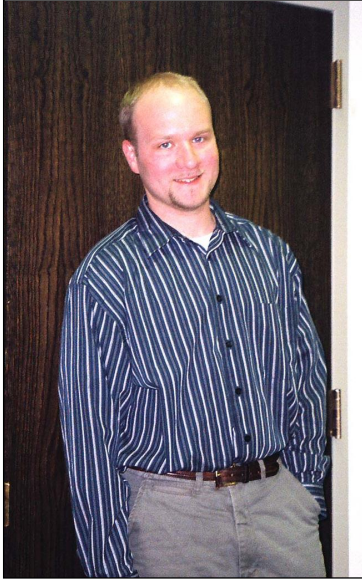
Meet ‘Generation Next’

Wayland Alexander Elementary’s Junior Audubon Society will take their show on the road, discussing the first-year program at the 7 p.m. April 14 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

The early months were dedicated to building up their birding skills and introduction to other nature concepts, climaxing with participation in the Christmas Bird Count. Spring brings an additional level of nature activities. According to co-sponsor Brenda Little, they also have placed one bluebird nest box at the Powell Bird Blind and plan to place four to six at the Ohio County Park’s Senior Center and at Dogwood Retreat, an assisted living facility in Hartford. They also have painted and cleaned the seven

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Rosemier shares beech tree study with DCAS



Dr. Justin Rosemier

Dr. Justin Rosemier, a professor with Kentucky Wesleyan College, shared part of his study of beech bark disease with the Daviess County Audubon Society members at its March 10 meeting.

Rosemier got his Ph.D. from Michigan Tech, and his dissertation was outgrowth of earlier collaboration studying mammal populations on islands off the Upper Peninsula. That led him to wonder how exotic species can affect an entire forest ecosystem.

The trials of the American beech in Michigan was a natural for such study. In the eastern part of the UP, beeches had been devastated by disease, triggered by sap-feeding beech scale insects. In the western part, younger, healthier beeches were more prevalent.

“Nesting birds seem to like it a lot. Insects like it for different reasons. Mammals like the seeds it produces. So, it is an important species ecologically,” he said. However, since other tree species are used more in the wood industry, its plight doesn’t garner as much attention.

He discussed his methodology, talking about trapping thousands of animals in an attempt to determine if they preferred beech seeds to sugar maple seeds. Dining on the seeds was a variety of small mammals, ranging from chipmunks to mice, to voles to ground squirrels. Even in areas with limited beech populations, he found they did prefer the beech seeds.

He also noted the peculiar seed production of the beech, often producing large amounts of seeds every 10 years. For those falling ill to beech bark disease, he noted they often produced a large amount of seeds before falling into decline.

He concluded the beech decline’s effect on small animals wasn’t as great as he feared. Because of the animals’ “generalist” nature, they are able to adapt to changing ecological conditions and find other food sources.

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DCAS volunteers are also invited to help with a day of work and education with the Junior Audubon Society at the Powell Bird Blind at Camp Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp. Co-sponsor Brenda Little said they plan to divide the children into groups of three to five each and then to do rotations about every half hour between programs. They are planning to have each group do some work at the blind such as: window washing, sweeping, leaf removal, construction of 3 brush piles in view of the one-way glass windows, graveling of the walking paths, filling the feeders, planting of a memorial tree for Bert and Millie Powell, planting of some additional wildflowers in Millie’s memorial garden and putting a screech owl box at a site to be selected by Scott Harp.

Likely programs in rotation include: nature photography using one-use disposable 35mm cameras, nature journaling with both writing and sketching exercises included, spotting scope practice using decoys on the lake, placement of a wood duck box (or boxes) at a site(s) chosen by Scott Harp and hiking and trail clearing. Lunch will be provided, and the day will end with an award ceremony.

Other April events include the Earth Day April 20 service at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Sr. Michele Morek, Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph at Maple Mount, will present an environmental message. She is on the science advisory committee for Western Kentucky Water Sentinels and Watershed Watch.

On April 22, Dick Shore will present “An Evening with John Muir” at Kentucky Wesleyan College, Rogers Hall. Music will be by Debbie Tuggle. The event is free.

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boxes on Wayland’s campus, noting one bluebird nest already under construction, and are getting cameras up and running at Wayland and Southern and doing additional repainting and replacement of vandalized nest boxes at Southern.

They also plan to participate in Cornell University’s NestWatch program and hope to have an entry in the Hartford’s bicentennial parade to salute John James Audubon and his spirit which lives in the kids at Wayland.

Come share in that spirit April 14.

Taxidermy, old-time school entrance Neblett students

H.L. Neblett students enjoyed the sights of life preserved during a chilly, muddy Joe Ford Library trip March 15 to McLean County.

“Verlma Smith, taxidermist, delighted the students with the mountings of a copperhead snake, colorful turkeys, white-tail deer and the mount-in-progress that’s being done for Tamara Cain who bagged an eland while in Africa on a safari a few years ago,” Grace Ford reported.

She said the group tried to avoid the muddy fields at Faraway Farm, but the mud found them on the trip.

“Both vans from the center ended up spinning their wheels deeper and deeper. One mired up when he attempted to go off the beaten path to get ahead and the other when he attempted to push the first one out. In short order, we had a response to our plea for assistance. Jimmy Vanclave of Calhoun came to the rescue.

While all this was happening, several great blue herons put on a beautiful show for us, but the excitement of the unexpected seemed to take away from the interest in the beautiful birds.”

Students ate their lunch at Calhoun United Methodist Church, and Pastor Ken Berggren gave them a sanctuary tour. “They were curious to know where the choir and the deacons would sit, and the beautiful stained glass windows intrigued them,” Ford said. “I was personally impressed that when I asked them to take off their muddy shoes and place them on paper near the door, one boy commented that he didn’t feel good about coming into the church dirty!”

The day also included a presentation by Joe Ford at the one-room schoolhouse at Panther Creek Park.

Having had poor weather conditions for two of their first three trips, they hope for nice weather Saturday, April 5, for a fern dig at Whitehouse Farm in western Daviess County, followed by a program about life in the pond at Western Kentucky Botanical Garden. The year with the Neblett students concludes with a program about bees followed by a wrap-up in the Joe Ford Library.

“Working with the H.L. Neblett Center group has been rewarding. Hunter Hinter, recreation director, said they are eager each time to see more than what they usually do,” Grace Ford said.



Neblett students enjoyed learning about taxidermy.

Students head back to garden for bird lessons

It’s back to the garden for the Daviess County Audubon Society education team, which will be working with hundreds of third- and fourth-graders this spring to teach beginning bird identification skills at the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden.

Charles Morris will be recruiting volunteers at the April 14 meeting, hoping to use a mixture of WKBG and DCAS members to avoid burnout with such a hectic schedule.

All of these sessions last from about 9 to noon.

Wednesday, April 16: third- and fourth-graders from Utica Elementary.

Friday, April 18: fourth-graders from Country Heights Elementary.

Wednesday, April 23: Whitesville Elementary fourth-graders.

Monday, May 5: third-graders from Estes and Foust elementaries.

Tuesday, May 6: Audubon Elementary fourth-graders.

Wednesday, May 7, Cravens Elementary third-graders.

Thursday, May 8: West Louisville fourth-graders.

Friday, May 9, Deer Park Elementary fourth-graders.

Monday, May 12, Sutton Elementary third-graders.

Wednesday, May 14: Newton Parrish third-graders.

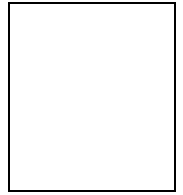
Morris is in the process of updating the laminated birds that are used for the program, exposing the kids to a new set for species native to this area. The WKBG generously paid for additional fold-out bird guides for students to use.

Morris said it was likely that DCAS educators would return to the garden this summer for a session during one of the Garden Camp days, set for June 9-12 for boys and girls ages 6-10.

Looming in the distance is the garden’s Big Bugs program, which will last from August to October, which could bring thousands of area kids to the garden. Education team members discussed how the role of insects as a food source could be incorporated into the bird identification program.

Education chairwoman Grace Ford is going to be contacting a handful of schools which have hosted DCAS spring programs in the past. This year’s theme for International Migratory Bird Day is on habitats, so if a school is interested in a program, activities using a habitat theme will be presented.

The Goldfinch/April 2008
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Spring arrivals greet L.B. Davison visitors

Spring was welcomed in earnest with a trip to L.B. Davison Wildlife Management Area in Ohio County Saturday, March 29. On the birding side, the trip was highlighted by a yellow-throated warbler. Steve Hahus noted it was a little early. It wasn't singing but eating a blossom off a tree.

Other species included: blue jay, red-bellied woodpecker, turkey vulture, Carolina wren, tufted titmouse, Carolina chickadee, great blue heron, red-headed woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, downy woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch, northern cardinal, red-shouldered hawk, eastern phoebe, northern flicker, white-throated sparrow, yellow-rumped warbler, American crow, eastern towhee, hermit thrush, brown thrasher and brown creeper.

But any early spring trip to Davison is as much about amphibians as it is about birds. They recorded eastern zigzag salamanders, northern slimy salamander and upland chorus frog and found spotted salamander eggs.

Early wildflowers in bloom included: cutleaf toothwort, spring beauty, yellow corydalis and purple dead-nettle.

Making the trip were: Jill Flachskam, Donna Hanley, Mike Henshaw, Steve Hahus, Brenda Eaden, Tony Eaden, Brenda Little, Bill Little, Eric Williams and Carolyn Williams.

Donations for Powell fund flow in

To date, \$585 has been donated to the Bert Powell memorial fund, according to Daviess County Audubon Society treasurer Charles Morris. At the March meeting, members voted to use the money to make improvements at the Powell Bird Blind at Camp Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp. Morris also announced that the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden will plant an American yellowwood at the blind. Morris also canvassed membership by e-mail, garnering support for the chapter to donate \$100 to the fund.

That's so cool!

Hats off to the City of Owensboro for signing the Cool Cities pledge to find ways to make the city more energy-efficient, a program unveiled at the January Daviess County Audubon Society meeting.

The city's early efforts are highlighted by the purchase of a hybrid vehicle, which got its public debut April 1.

Daviess Audubon April events

Meeting, 7 p.m. April 14: J.R. Miller Blvd. and Seventh Street.

Field trip to Hoosier National Forest, Perry County, Ind., April 19.

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Mary Kissel, newsletter editor, 926-3321

Local dues are \$15 a year. Please keep your local chapter dues current by mailing this page with your check to: Charles Morris, treasurer, 1400 Woodbridge Trail, Owensboro, KY 42303.

If you have a news item or Goldfinch question, contact editor Mary Kissel at 926-3321, or mjkisselchirp45@bellsouth.net.

Illustration by Kirsten Munson;
Justin Rosemier photo by Jill Flachskam;
Neblett photo by Grace Ford