

# The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

February 2007

## DCAS begins 40th year with forest health talk

How do invasive tree and plant species affect forests?

That will be the subject of a Kentucky Division of Forestry presentation at the February meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society. The chapter will meet at 7 p.m. Feb. 12 at First Christian Church, Seventh Street and J.R. Miller Blvd.

Green River District Chief Forester Pamela Waggoner and Chuck Porter, Daviess County forester, will discuss forest health and what we can do to fight invasive species.

Waggoner said she has been with KDF for about three months, and Porter for about 10 years. Both parlayed a love of nature, forests and ecosystems into forestry degrees from the University of Kentucky.

The meeting marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Daviess County chapter. A meeting between John Frances, Audubon director for Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee and Kentucky, and Bert Powell led to the formation of the Daviess County chapter, which first met Feb. 14, 1967, at the Owensboro Science Museum on Sycamore Street. Frank Abrams was elected president.

## Museum to house supplies

The Owensboro Area Museum of Science and History has agreed to store DCAS supplies. These items were removed from the Joe Ford Nature Center Jan. 29.

At the February meeting, President Carolyn Williams will discuss other potential partnership opportunities with the museum.

## Raptor center set to soar

The exhilaration and frustration of working with raptors were shared with Daviess County Audubon Society members Jan. 8 when Eric Miller and Don Boarman returned with their hawks.

For members of western Kentucky's birding community, nothing could be more exhilarating than news of Western Kentucky Raptor Center Inc.'s progress.

The WKRC recently got its federal permit and by the end of the month, had secured a lease from Daviess Fiscal Court for space at Yellow Creek Park for a raptor hospital.

Miller noted that for many years, individuals such as Boarman and Steve Hahus had tried to take on the challenge of rehabilitation ... a challenge too great to do as individuals.

Inspired by a visit to the Carolina Raptor Center, Miller worked with his falconry and rehab friends to lay the groundwork for a center here.

"There isn't anything like this within 200 miles," he said.

Their initial efforts to save injured birds have been mixed.

"We've really had some serious injuries that we were not able to save the bird. But, we've had others that we've had success with. We had a screech owl that we're getting ready (to release) and another Cooper's," Miller said.



*Aurora has won Eric Miller's heart.*

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## Showing the way to go home

One little screech owl got a second chance at life, thanks to the work of the Western Kentucky Raptor Center.

Don Boarman had cared for the owl for six weeks, and Daviess County Audubon Society member Rose Ann Radzelovage was delighted to accompany Boarman on the bird's journey back to White Plains, near Madisonville, where the owl had been struck by a car in front of City Hall.

After hearing about the owl, Radzelovage offered to

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# Raptor

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Boarman noted that there are strict requirements on what birds they can keep. Birds that are blind or have only one wing or one leg must be destroyed. A chest injury felled a great horned owl. Efforts to save another bird through hand-feeding also fell short.

Along with rehabilitation, the center's educational component is also essential, so people can realize that raptors have a key role in the environment. He was invigorated by the wide-eyed excitement of students who saw birds at the Halloween Happenings. The hospital will have some permanent residents for visitors to learn about.

Falconry techniques will be key in working with the birds. Miller, a general falconer, used the meeting to reflect on the difficulties in becoming a falconer. Only one of three local candidates was able to pass the test to become an apprentice for the next three years, then work up the ladder to become a general falconer and master falconer.

He also discussed the four aspects of falconry.

Trapping can require simple traps to snag a smaller bird to larger mist nets or Swedish goshawk traps, often used by those who raise pigeons.

"We live in this ocean of air, and among us are these sharks, these predators, as they're going through," he said.

Training is all about building a relationship with the bird. The red-tailed hawk he brought, Aurora, was a good learner, able to free fly in a month after being trapped after a power dive for a pigeon. Once that psychological breakthrough is made, they build on those skills.

Aurora is his fifth red-tailed hawk and holds a special place in his heart.

Man doesn't teach birds to hunt. His or her role is to build a bird's confidence in those abilities. Aurora is a squirrel hunter, so she wears chaps to protect her from her prey. She deftly downed squirrel meat during the meeting.



Don Boarman has had a love-hate relationship with his sharp-shinned hawk.

On rainy days, the fourth aspect, leatherworking with hoods, is tackled.

With Squirt, Boarman was able to satisfy his desire to work with a female sharp-shinned hawk.

The "schizophrenic" nature of accipters made it a challenge.

"I can tell you this, she won. I think she always wanted to try humans and decided she'd try that, and I'd try a sharp-shinned, and I think she's won," he said. "One day, she'll be great, and the next day, she's an absolute idiot." He admires her hunting intensity, but he acknowledged her inconsistency made her an ineffective hunter. She will be released soon.

The close-up look at the immature "sharpie" allowed members to note the main physical difference between it and a Cooper's hawk -- its square tail. Her speed makes her effective against birds.

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drive the bird back to his old haunt, thinking he might fare better in familiar territory. "Let's give the little guy a chance," she said. Boarman agreed.

So, Jan. 18, they traveled west, toting the owl in a pet carrier. At first, they drove through town, expecting a much larger town. The City Hall was nothing more than a metal building. Radzelovage's heart fell. Where could the bird be released? Then they saw them ... two old trees.

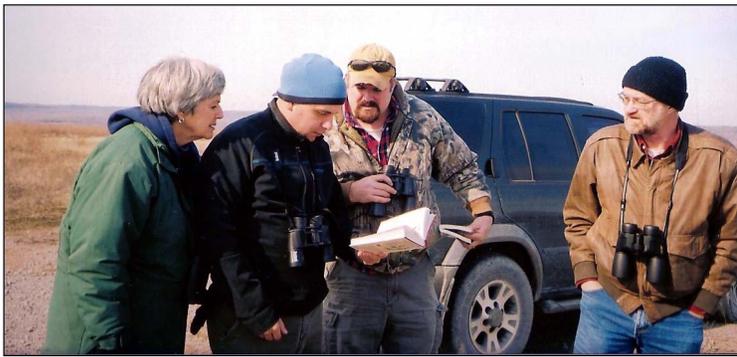
So, as dusk was beginning to settle, she was handed the bird for release and instructed to give him a gentle toss. The bird at first was motionless in her hands.

"Then, he turned his head around and looks at me," she said. Realizing he was free, he flew ... straight to the second tree, where they saw holes in the back. He raised his ear tufts at them.

"We said, 'he's home.' It was a good feeling," she said.

## Bluebird box makeovers loom

Bluebird boxes along the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park are being inventoried by club members. Steve Anderson and Charles Morris will take the east end, and Mike and Sherry Henshaw are taking the west end. Members will see which boxes can be salvageable and which need to be relocated for a greater bluebird breeding success.



From left, Carolyn Williams, Thad Bishop, Eric Williams and Tony Eaden confirm their finding in a guide.

## Bald eagles highlight trip to Peabody WMA

A pair of bald eagles delighted birders at Peabody Wildlife Management Area during their field trip Jan. 20.

The eagles -- an adult and an immature judged to be about 2 years old -- soared together during the morning near South Lake.

However, the rest of the day proved a little disappointing. Twenty-nine species were spotted, but only a handful of waterfowl and no short-eared owls.

"With the snow coming in, I thought the birds would be going crazy," admitted trip leader Eric Williams. Actually, the expected snows didn't materialize, proving the birds' meteorological skills.

The trip near Central City gave a large group a chance to explore a wide variety of habitats from a rugged loblolly pine stand (where a yellow-rumped warbler greeted the group) to grassy reclaimed mines.

Attending were: Thad Bishop, Bill and Brenda Little, Rob Rold, Steve Anderson, Eric and Katie Williams, Mary Kissel, Carolyn Williams, Tony Eaden and Charles Morris.

Other species spotted included: great-blue heron, pied-billed grebe, Canada geese, gadwall, ring-necked duck, mallard, several northern harriers, swamp sparrow, eastern bluebird, downy woodpecker, American goldfinch, Carolina chickadee, northern mockingbird, turkey vulture, red-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, robin, crow, blue jay, starling, eastern meadowlark, song sparrow, Carolina wren, white-crowned sparrow, American coot, kestrel and mourning dove.

In February, the club will bird watch in the new section of Ben Hawes State Park, off Overstreet Road. The date will be announced at the February meeting.

## Head to the yards, parks for Cornell bird count

Want to help bird study but don't want to venture far from home?

For the 10<sup>th</sup> year, the Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, will be tallying birds for a mid-winter study.

During February 16-19, people of all ages, from beginners to experts, are invited to join this event which spans all of the United States and Canada. Participants can take part wherever they are -- at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or wildlife refuges. Observers simply count the highest number of each species they see during an outing or a sitting, and enter their tally on the Great Backyard Bird Count Web site at [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc).

Don't have a computer at home? Feel free to record your entries in the computer lab at the Daviess County Public Library.

Visitors to the Web site can also compare their sightings with results from other participants, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. Together, these counts offer a real-time snapshot of the numbers and kinds of birds that people are finding.

Last year, participants submitted more than 60,000 checklists -- and reported 7.5 million birds overall and 623 different species. The count helped chronicle the early spring migratory routes of sandhill cranes, noted larger numbers of orange-crowned warblers, brown creepers and tree swallows, revealed the ongoing range expansion of introduced Eurasian Collared-Doves and recorded declining numbers of American crows.

One hundred thirteen species were recorded in Kentucky. The state also was cited as one with a large increase in the number of robins, which increased fivefold from the 2005 count, to more than 7,900.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the GBBC.

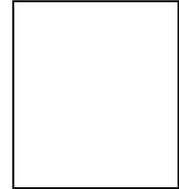
## Light show successful

Two nature-related organizations reaped the benefits from the holiday spirit.

Christmas at Panther Creek participants Joe Ford Nature Library and Western Kentucky Raptor Center received \$910 shares from the pool of proceeds from light-gazers at the western Daviess County park.

Joe Ford Nature Library received an extra \$118 in tips, according to Grace Ford. Tips and aggressive ticket sales brought the WKRC total to \$1,400, which secured insurance and a go-ahead for the raptor hospital, Eric Miller said. Thanks to all Audubon Society members who gave time or money to help these worthy organizations!

The Goldfinch/February 2007  
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



## Hats on!

Hats are a key element to bird watching. They help keep the sun out of your eyes, protect the top of your head from sunburn and keep ticks from burrowing into your scalp.

For a mini-fundraiser, embroidered DCAS hats are being sold for \$10 each. These khaki-colored hats fit all sizes and feature the club's handsome goldfinch logo.

Contact Steve Anderson, [stevoanderson@people.pc](mailto:stevoanderson@people.pc) or 273-9747 for orders

## February events

Meeting, 7 p.m. Feb. 12, First Christian Church, Seventh and J.R. Miller.

Field trip, Ben Hawes State Park, time and date to be announced.

Great Backyard Bird Count, Feb. 16-19.

Goldfinch illustrations by Kirsten Munson;

## Heritage Christian students explore Indian sites

Heritage Christian students continued their exploration of the early tri-state area Jan. 6 with a trip to Indian burial sites and present-day nature hotspots.

The trip, organized by the Joe Ford Nature Library, began with a trip to Angel Mounds near Evansville. There, Joe Ford spoke about the Mississippian Indians. Off Indiana 121, they visited a second site, where Ford spoke about the Archaic Indians.

Following lunch, the group traveled back to Thruston, where students learned about plants and animals indigenous to Yellow Creek Park.

Students were to take notes on what they learned for follow-up reports.

The students' next trip will be Feb. 3 to taxidermist Velma Smith, Far Away Farm in McLean County and Panther Creek Park, where they will hike and visit one-room Pleasant Grove School.

The library also conducted its first hike of 2007, led by Obbie Todd on Jan. 20 at Ben Hawes State Park. About 15 people attended. The next Ben Haws hike is Feb. 17.

The library also will play host to students from Dr. Randy Nichols' class at Brescia University at 7:30 p.m. Feb. 19. The education class visit is part of his ongoing exploration about nature's benefits for physical fitness.

## For news, dues

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## Oops!

Last month's east CBC count story should have included two yellow-bellied sapsuckers and an individual count of 13,385.