

The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

April 2007

Keeping a legacy ever green *Earth Day planting to honor Julian Wilson*

A true steward of the Earth – the late Julian Wilson – will be the focus of Earth Day activities for the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Preparations are under way to plant a tree in his honor at the outdoor classroom pond at Owensboro Community and Technical College. The ceremony will be 2 p.m. Sunday, April 22, and will be followed by a bird hike around the campus.

Wilson died Feb. 19 after a long illness. At the March meeting, with wife Donna present, members agreed to contact OCTC about a memorial. Brenda Little was given to go-ahead to pursue it, and Charles and Laura Morris worked with Integrity Nursery to select a native



species at a discount price. They recommended a yellowwood, a slow-growing tree which likes moist soil.

Morris notes that the tree will need plenty of water for the first year, and volunteers will probably be needed to keep it moist as it takes root. They hope to put a memorial plaque with a rock from the Wilson family farm.

Little notes Wilson's efforts on behalf of the club are immeasurable. The lone second-generation DCAS member inherited the Audubon mantle from his parents, Elinor and L.E. Wilson, who were among the early leaders of the club.

However, as an adult, he became a driving force, serving as a director for several years during the late 1990s. He was the newsletter editor after Bert Powell and created the goldfinch logo which remains the club's visual identity. He also was one of the designers of the first Web site for the DCAS.

But the environment on the OCTC campus was a big passion for Wilson. He served as an ear for Dr. Kit Gallagher, who fretted the land would be paved away if the community didn't take an interest in the natural setting.

"Julian asked the club to organize a monthly bird census which he chaired for a while and then he and Charles Morris co-chaired for a total time of two years plus. I think those Sunday bird walks were great for our club as a group and as individuals," Little recalled. "I remember vividly watching the yellow-billed cuckoo out on the island one afternoon, the afternoon we worked for many, many minutes to identify a female black-throated blue warbler, the sandhill cranes grazing over in the cornfield, the kingfisher we knew so well that became almost one of us, the spotted sandpiper that stood so still for us as if to say, 'I know some of you are neophyte birders and need lots of time to zero-in on me,' and the two green herons who flew in formation like ballet dancers doing a pas de deux over the pond and around the gazebo."

The club would eventually record more than 100 species on the campus. Wilson's memory will greet future feathered newcomers to the campus.

Anyone interested in donating money to the Wilson memorial may contact Charles Morris at 926-8803.

Let's bug out

Apollo teacher and wildlife photographer Steve Hahus will be the portal into the wonderful world of insects at the April 9 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Hahus estimated during the past three years, he has taken pictures of 240 of about 2,000 insect species in Daviess County. He will share some of his pictures, plus discuss beneficial insects and those considered pests.

Hahus has wowed DCAS audiences with his wild flower photography. He notes insects provide their own set of challenges.

"I'll take 30 pictures before I get one or two good ones out of it," he said, noting their inability to stay still and lighting issues can complicate his mission. He'll select his subjects while traversing through thicket and field, as well as capture them with lighted traps and sweep and aerial nets.

His favorite bug shot was that of a Hercules beetle, one of only two he's seen in Daviess County.

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

Batema: Wetlands vital to nature, man

University of Evansville professor Dr. Donald Batema explored America's disappearing wetlands at the March 12 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Although the rate of elimination has slowed, Batema noted that 81% of Kentucky's original wetlands have been lost, from more than 1.5 million acres to about 300,000. Much of these are bottomland forests, swamps and marshes associated with rivers and lakes.

Nationally, by the end of the 20th century, the United States has squandered more than half of its 220 million acres of wetlands, often considered wasteland and drained for other purposes.

Much of his presentation challenged members to determine what is or is not a wetland. The same question dogs regulators and scientists, because of the many forms a wetland can take. Generally, legal and scientific definitions agree on three things: they must have the presence of water at the surface or just below, have vegetation that is adapted to wet conditions and have soil that alternates between wet and dry and varying levels of oxygen.

What isn't in dispute is the role wetlands play in human lives and in the ecosystem. He pointed to New Orleans as a prime example of its role as "sponges of the watershed." Scientists have blamed the lack of barrier wetlands for flooding which damaged much of the Crescent City. That quality also replenishes streams and groundwater after rainfall.

It also serves as a filter to keep land nutrient-rich and serves as a valuable habitat for all sorts of wildlife and a nursery for fish.

For man, wetlands provide jobs for fishermen, those harvesting fur-bearers and the timber industry; food production, such as cranberries and recreation and tourism dollars from sportsmen.

Batema and Mike Henshaw of the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife expressed hope that conservation dollars can remain for wetlands in the next Farm Bill, although they are concerned that dollars diverted to the Iraq war may affect conservation efforts.



Dr. Donald Batema discusses wetlands.

Mammoth Cave neighbors greet DCAS bird watchers

The action at Mammoth Cave was above ground for Daviess County Audubon members who went on the March 31 field trip, getting a sneak peek into the heart of the spring wildlife season.

There was a little something for everyone.

For floral fans, spring wild flowers dotted the landscape in all colors. There were the fire engine red of fire pink, the bridesmaid pink and blue colors of bluebells and a hillside with bright yellow wood poppies. Wild flower expert Steve Hahus was thrilled to point out American columbo, which only blooms once every three summers.

The warblers heralded spring at 10:33 a.m., when a yellow-throated warbler was spotted near the Green River. Other early arrivals made their presence known, including northern parula, Louisiana waterthrush, black-and-white warbler and blue-gray gnatcatcher.

The rest of the day had highlights small – an electric green six-spotted tiger beetle and ring-necked snake – and large, a doe bidding the group farewell as it made its way back to the car.

Other bird species spotted included: pileated woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, tree swallow, turkey vultures (two of which roosted in front of the group on top of a spectacular Green River overlook), red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, tufted titmouse, goldfinch, Carolina chickadee,



See Cave, Page 4 Donna Hanley, Steve Anderson, Meg Odom and Charles and Laura Morris take a break.

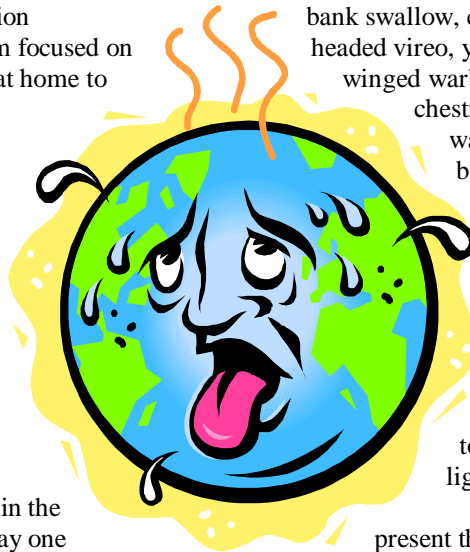
Effecting climate change for better

Education committee developing school program to change habits

The Daviess County Audubon education committee is developing a school program focused on global warming, and actions kids can do at home to curb energy use.

Education chairman Mary Kissel said she hopes schools will use the program during the last part of the school year and into the fall. It will include a demonstration about the greenhouse effect and talk about how global warming may affect Kentucky's bird population.

A report by Jeff Price, director of climate change impact studies for American Bird Conservancy, notes that pilot program shows that warbler ranges have shifted north by about 65 miles within the past 20 years. Some of the species that may one day exclude Kentucky during the summer include: Acadian flycatcher, willow flycatcher, least flycatcher, tree swallow,



bank swallow, cliff swallow, house wren, gray catbird, blue-headed vireo, yellow-throated vireo, warbling vireo, blue-winged warbler, golden-winged warbler, yellow warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, black-throated blue warbler, black-throated green warbler, blackburnian warbler, cerulean warbler, American redstart, ovenbird, Kentucky warbler, Canada warbler, scarlet tanager, pine siskin and American goldfinch.

However, committee members insisted that the focus should be what kids can do to change the planet, noting that lots of small actions can lead to the greatest action of all – preserving it for generations to come – actions from recycling to changing light bulbs to energy-saving fluorescent bulbs.

The committee also has been asked to present their annual Yellow Creek Park program for Whitesville Elementary K1 and first-grade students in late April or early May.

Audubon members asked to support local Step It Up efforts

The effects of global warming will take center stage during Step It Up 2007, a national day of climate action.

DCAS member Jill Flachskam is invited members to participate in the local event sponsored by the Sierra Club and Brescia University. Step it Up is a nationwide campaign comprising more than 1,000 events in 50 states rallying around the need for substantial and rapid action on the issue of global warming. Events are being held in every corner of the country, from Maine to Hawaii, and Seattle to Key West. The events are being held in major cities, iconic locations and small towns across America. Rallies have been organized by groups and individuals from all walks of life who agree on one thing: the time has come for our elected officials to take bold and immediate steps to combat global warming.

Nationally, Flachskam said, the main goal is to send a message to Congress requesting an 80 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

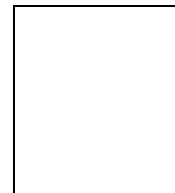
“The groundswell of support for this effort is incredible. This is truly a viral grass-roots movement, organized mainly through word of mouth, email outreach among friends, and the online community.” said Step it Up organizer Bill McKibben on the program’s Web site. “The enormous participation in today’s movement is a wake-up call to legislators from across the country. Their constituents are urgently demanding that America get on the path towards reducing carbon emissions before it is too late.”

Owensboro’s event begins at 9 a.m. April 14, with a family bike ride from English Park to Brescia University. The main event takes place at Brescia from 10 a.m. until noon. There, the main speaker will be Sr. Michele Morek of Brescia, one of the region’s most eloquent advocates for the environment. Other activities include other speakers, some short films and tables with information ranging from tips on energy conservation to information about local environmental organizations. Flachskam is seeking volunteers to man an Audubon table at the event.

“If we don’t act now, scientists tell us we’ll face an entirely different planet. From melting glaciers to unseasonable and erratic weather patterns, we are already feeling the impact of global warming. This is a global crisis that will affect all of us and requires immediate and bold action. But while global warming presents us with our most pressing challenge, it also presents our most inspiring opportunity,” McKibben added. “As Step It Up has shown, it is only by uniting across the lines that too often divide us -- geography, partisanship, economic and racial boundaries – that we will be able to address this crisis.”

Global warming’s impact will be felt greatest among the most vulnerable of the world’s population. The droughts and stronger and more frequent storms combined with rising sea levels caused by global warming will dramatically affect the already scarce resources relied upon by hundreds of millions for the basics of life, he added.

The Goldfinch/April 2007
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

April events

Meeting, 7 p.m. April 9, First Christian Church, Seventh and J.R. Miller.

Step It Up, 9 a.m., April 14, English Park and Brescia University.

Field trip to Perry County, Ind., Hoosier National Forest. Time and date TBA.

Julian Wilson memorial tree-planting ceremony, 2 p.m. April 22. Owensboro Community and Technical College outdoor classroom pond.

Cave

From Page 2

cardinal, robin, grackle, field sparrow, house sparrow, chipping sparrow, mockingbird, Canada geese, crow, kingfisher, Carolina wren, starling, white-throated sparrow, rock dove, mourning dove, red-winged blackbird, wild turkeys, killdeer and eastern phoebe.

Making the trip were Hahus, Steve Anderson, Meg Odom, Charles Morris, Laura Morris and Mary Kissel.

Powell plaque gets OK

A plaque honoring Bert and Millie Powell was approved at the March Daviess County Audubon Society meeting. A photo tile inserted in a rustic oak frame will be accompanied by a tile commending the couple for their environmental education efforts. Members were able to view the plaque during the meeting and selected one they felt was more weather- and vandal-resistant. Once the plaque is purchased, Girl Scout Camp Pennyroyal director Lisa Leonard will screw the plaque into the door.

For news, dues

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Flower power coming to Audubon park

A Wildflower Extravaganza and Park Beautification/Trail Work Day will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, April 14, at John James Audubon State Park. The event will include wildflower walks throughout the day, a discussion of emerald ash borer by Jeff Porter, University of Kentucky Extension educator; a session on invasive plants and a work session to remove garlic mustard and perform other park beautification projects. Activities also will be available for kids.

Goldfinch illustrations by Kirsten Munson;