

Warming up to birding delights

Waterfowl, rough conditions mark Ballard trip

A healthy contingent from the Daviess County Audubon Society took advantage of a rare break in the weather to travel to Ballard Wildlife Management Area west of Paducah Feb. 13.

The destination is desirable for waterfowl lovers because of their sheer numbers, and the misery of winter 2010 provided plenty to look at: 4,250 snow geese, 40 white-fronted geese, 520 Canada geese; 1,700 mallard; 255 gadwalls, 50 northern shovelers, 2 buffleheads, 4 wood ducks, 8 hooded mergansers, 50 ring-necked duck, 2 black ducks and 1 turkey vulture.

Another reason to travel is to check out the bald eagle population. This year, 10 were spotted.

The birding wasn't the only excitement. President Brenda Little likened the bus trip to an episode of "Survivor."

From the photograph, "you would not believe the bus ride we had just taken on flooded roads with bus wheels spraying water as high as 10 feet in the air, over rocks (boulders?), short stretches off road with those of us above and behind the back wheels of the bus leaving our seats many times up to a height of 18 to 20 inches while clutching the backs of seats for dear life. The eagles were not the only airborne beings at Ballard that



From left, are: Tony Eaden, Brenda Little, Henry Connor, Pat Augenstein, Jill Flachskam, Bill Little, Mary Ann Freels, Kathy Radomsky, Samantha Radomsky, Abbey Radomsky, Andy Radomsky, Mike Henshaw, Charlie Morris and Bill Freels. (Photo courtesy of Tony Eaden)

Saturday," Little commented.

Other species spotted included: turkey vulture, 1; red-tailed hawk, 10; red-shouldered hawk, 2; barred owl, 1; American kestrel, 1; Cooper's hawk, 1; great blue heron, 4; killdeer, 2; hairy woodpecker, 1; northern flicker, 6; wild turkey, 20; morning dove, 107; gull species, 10; American crow, 18; common grackle, 1,500; European starling, 150; brown-headed cowbird, 25; red-winged blackbird, 12; northern cardinal, 17; eastern bluebird, 4; Carolina chickadee, 1; white-throated sparrow, 4; northern mockingbird, 1; Carolina wren, 1; blue jay, 2; eastern meadowlark, 24; dark-eyed junco, 1; tufted titmouse, 2; and horned lark, 12.

The DCAS contingent of Tony Eaden, Brenda Little, Bill Little, Henry Connor, Pat Augenstein, Jill Flachskam, Mike Henshaw and Charles Morris was greeted by Jackson Purchase Audubon members Mary Ann and Bill Freels; Andy Radomsky, who works as a private lands biologist with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service stationed at Land Between the Lakes, and his wife Kathy and daughters Samantha and Abbey.

Bill Freels is best known to DC Audubon members as the father of the bluebird nest cam project at Wayland Alexander Elementary School.

For the past three years,

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WKU biology professors to speak

Two of western Kentucky's driving forces for conservation will be the guest speakers at the March 2 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Ouida Meier and Albert Meier, biology professors at the Western Kentucky University, will speak about their work at 7 p.m. at First Christian Church, J.R. Miller and Seventh Street.

The duo, along with fellow WKU staffer Scott Grubbs, was recently honored in Frankfort with the first Heritage Land Stewardship

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March Calendar:

* DCAS regular meeting, 7 p.m. March 2, First Christian Church, J.R. Miller and Seventh Street.

* Field trip to Upper Green River Nature Preserve, 8 a.m. March 27. Meet at OCTC lot.

Harrell: Resilient forests can reheal

Will western Kentucky ever recover from the great ice storm of 2009? The devastation and resiliency of the state's woodlands was the focus of the Daviess County Audubon Society's February program, led by Rick Harrell, Kentucky Division of Forestry, Madisonville office.

As bad as it was in Daviess County, neighbors to the south fared worse.

"I was on some of the forests down in Webster County, and it was like pop-sicle sticks sticking up; there's hardly any limbs on those trees," he said.

In many cases, it was the weakest links that were obliterated. In pine stands, where the trees are planted so close together, one toppled tree could lead to many others, leaving huge V's in strands..

The division offers to prepare a forest stewardship plan on your property, indicating your top priority for your property. For most people, that's wildlife and aesthetics, rather than timber.

For most, the sheer scope of the property hinders their ability to shape aesthetics. If it's not lying on the ground, you can get most of the value out of the wood – although timber prices have been depressed.

The first 16 feet of a tree is priority for timber, but even with regrowth, resulting knots can devalue the timber, he said.

The most important thing is try to work on tree tops to limit the amount of damage from decay, work he concedes is "back-breaking." This can be dangerous if you encounter the snap-back from a bent young tree or "widow makers" that will be hanging in trees for years. When it's windy, Harrell hesitates before going in the woods.

You also can cut back a tree to encourage growth of a stump sprout, which can benefit from existing roots.

The quest for sunlight caused trees to lean toward roads. However, the region was lucky ice didn't occur later in the winter, when the sap was starting to rise. Bark would have peeled away and caused even more damage. A wet summer decreased the amount of post-storm damage.

When evaluating top damage, foresters look for several factors.

If more than 30 percent of the top of an oak or hickory is damaged, its chance for survival is dim. There's more leeway with softer hardwoods, such as red maples, yellow poplars or sweet gums, which can sustain 50 percent loss.

Unlike people, trees don't heal, the wounds are merely covered up, although in a healthy tree, the wood can stay sound even after the tree is damaged.

However, he also recalled some bald cypress trees that were bent to the ground off Kentucky 81. The ground absorbed the impact, and they eventually returned to their original shape.

Between the wounds and litter, there's no telling how much insects and disease will follow. He noted that there are many more invasive species, such as emerald ash borer. Purple traps have done little to ease the threat.

He also fears what would happen if people resort to burning off damage, although the fire threat is less here than in eastern Kentucky.

If you would like help on managing your woodlands, contact the Green River District Kentucky Division of Forestry, P.O. Box 465 Madisonville, KY 42431, or by phone: 270-824-7527



Rick Harrell offered tips to salvaging woodlands at the February meeting.

Audubon members asked to voice concern about factory farm bill

Members of Kentucky's environmental community are being asked to contact their legislators about Kentucky Senate Bill 105, which would take away local control of standards for factory farms.

In the Kentucky Conservation Committee's "Blackberry Patch" blog, legislative liaison Bruce Williams discusses the bill's impact.

"Being a veteran of the "chicken" and "pig" wars of the 1990s, I think I know a "stinker" when I see one. This bill, which boasts 19 co-sponsors, looks like a good thing on the surface. I mean, who wouldn't want to see some basic standards of care imposed on the large confined animal feeding operations that are cropping up like fetid blisters in the western part of the state. Seeing pork production facilities where the animal never sees the light of day, or sets foot on anything other than cold concrete or

chicken houses that pack 100,000 chickens or more in cages with barely room to turn their heads will test the conscience of the most dedicated carnivore. Surely standards of care are needed. What is not needed in SB 105 is the prohibition put on local governments from setting standards of care for the people who have to endure these operations near their churches, schools and neighborhoods. Local communities had protected themselves and their citizens from the worst abuses of stench, insects, noise and dust by passing nuisance ordinances requiring setbacks and other accommodations from the operators. This bill would declare any such ordinances unenforceable and prohibit the enactment of new ones.

"I remember a representative of a large farm group back in the Nineties telling a sympathetic agriculture committee that these 'factory' farms were no different than any

other farm. 'Farmers are the original environmentalists,' he said. I got up to the table and asked for a show of hands of anyone who believed that 200 pigs on 200 acres was the same thing as 20,000 pigs on 200 acres. Not a hand went up. It's ironic when I look at the names on this bill that so many of them have long been champions of the 'home rule' concept, endorsing the power of local governments over the tyranny of big state and federal bureaucracies. I guess the message here is that home rule is O.K. for people but stops at pigs and chickens. Contact our legislator and tell them not to take the power of local rule away from the citizens and defeat SB 105."

The Kentucky Audubon Council recently joined the Kentucky Conservation Committee. Audubon members across the state are

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Birders set GBBC records

A snowy Presidents Day weekend kept birders dodging snow to view visitors and keep their feeders filled for the Great Backyard Bird Count, conducted by Cornell University and the National Audubon Society. They set a Daviess/Ohio County record of 32 checklists for the program.

As of Feb. 24, a healthy 52 species were recorded in Daviess County (Owensboro, Utica, Maple Mount and Philpot) and Ohio County – the 47 in Owensboro the most in GBBC history.

The weather kept many birds under cover during the four-day period. Rose Ann Radzelovage was perplexed at the lack of Carolina chickadees but was pleased when her brown creeper showed up as she was ending her count period.

Along Horse Fork Creek, Mary Kissel emerged from her Brushwood cocoon Monday after realizing that cat Phoebe had invested more energy watching starlings in her room than she had during the latter part

of the weekend. Her escape paid off – a black-and-white flash was quickly confirmed – the first red-headed woodpecker she had seen since before the 2009 ice storm.

Down at Maple Mount, Sister Eva Boone added two species no one else recorded: a black vulture, and six Lapland longspurs among her 22 species tallied.

The Daviess County checklists included: Northern bobwhite, 1; turkey vulture, 5; black vulture, 1; northern harrier, 1; Cooper's hawk, 3; red-tailed hawk, 17; American kestrel, 3; killdeer, 1; Eurasian collared-dove; 13; mourning dove, 106; eastern screech owl, 1; belted kingfisher, 1; red-headed woodpecker, 1; red-bellied woodpecker, 10; downy woodpecker, 34; hairy woodpecker, 6; pileated woodpecker, 1; northern flicker, 5; blue jay, 22; American crow, 1; horned lark, 140; Carolina chickadee, 35; tufted titmouse, 51; red-breasted nuthatch, 6; white-breasted nuthatch, 15; brown creeper,

1; Carolina wren, 20; eastern bluebird, 9; American robin, 171; northern mockingbird, 21; brown thrasher, 2; European starling, 948; yellow-rumped warbler, 2; eastern towhee, 18; American tree sparrow, 52; chipping sparrow, 1; field sparrow, 2; fox sparrow, 14; song sparrow, 45; white-throated sparrow, 71; white-crowned sparrow, 1; dark-eyed junco, 195; Lapland longspur, 6; northern cardinal, 196; red-winged blackbird, 23; rusty blackbird, 3; common grackle, 109; brown-headed cowbird, 118; purple finch, 20; house finch, 89; American goldfinch, 201; and house sparrow, 166.

From Hartford, the following species were tallied: Mourning dove, 29; red-bellied woodpecker, 3; downy woodpecker, 9; yellow-bellied sapsucker, 1; hairy woodpecker, 1; blue jay, 9; Carolina chickadee, 11; tufted titmouse, 14; white-breasted nuthatch, 7; Carolina wren, 2; northern mockingbird, 6; eastern towhee, 3; white-throated sparrow, 4; white-crowned sparrow, 4; dark-eyed junco, 29; northern cardinal, 79; red-winged blackbird, 7; common grackle, 8; house finch, 12; American goldfinch, 26.

Checklists can still be submitted through March 1 at the GBBC Web site, www.birdcount.org



Chance to be citizen scientists fires up girls

By Grace Ford

Excitement abounded when I approached the Girls Inc. Teen House on Friday, Feb 12. A few knocks on the window by girls anticipating the bird count were followed with big smiles and warm welcomes from the girls who were ready for their very first Great Backyard Bird Count. Our prep session a week earlier paid off. They had their bird checklists in hand along with the sheet of Owensboro birds whose numbers corresponded with the numbers we placed on the 42301 bird list obtained online through the GBBC program. It was obvious they had used the bird books I had left with them last week.

We headed for Seventh Street with lots of chatter, noting that robins might show up to eat the berries on the holly shrubs along the side of the church. Then when we neared our

first sighting, someone in the group hushed us so we could listen for the bird sounds. Sitting on a rooftop was an Eurasian collared dove, and starlings were flying here and there. Each sighting thrilled the girls! Then one girl spotted the Carolina chickadee high in a tree we neared. All of us gathered to see that.

Their focus continued as we rounded the block coming through the new Germantown park across from the church where we began. They spotted more starlings on J.R. Miller Blvd and finalized their outing with a close examination of a tree near the Teen House where they spotted a nest but no birds.

Our bird talk continued inside, and they asked questions galore. The week before, only one girl present seemed somewhat familiar with birds because of her studies at Daviess County Middle School. What a dif-

ference one week made! All of the girls were into birds and indicated interest in doing more when the weather warms.

One of the girls completed the list of participant names for me and wrote beneath it: "Thank you for a wonderful time. We enjoyed it!!"

I want to go back there for sure!

Participants included: leader Celsey Chapman and nine girls: Raven Ball, Sarah Beyersdorfer, Hannah Brown, Cheyenne Johnson, DeAria Leachman, Michelle Linan, Stephanie Linan, Angel Phillabaum and Addy Stout

A special thank-you to Courtney Calhoun, campus manager/Girls Inc. for arranging GBBC presented by the Joe Ford Library.

A Feb. 15 DCAS GBBC presentation at the Rolling Heights headquarters was snowed out.



Birthday celebration

Friends and family of Joe Ford gathered at Ryan's Family Steakhouse Feb. 6 for a breakfast to honor Ford on his 85th birthday.

Photo courtesy of Grace Ford

Ballard

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wildlife officials have turned their attention to attracting the electric yellow prothonotary warbler.

The confluence of several active rivers and many old river channel lakes and man made lakes puts us right in the middle of areas that are prime habitat for prothonotary warblers," Bill Freels stated. He notes that Ballard WMA Robert Colvis has used mostly old bluebird nest boxes at Ballard. Across the Ohio, at Mermet Lake and Natural Area in Illinois, manager Chris McGinness has used open-top painted metal cans to mimic hollow tree snags.

They have opted not to put cameras in the nest boxes, because there's no suitable place for TV monitors close to the boxes. Colvis notes that the lack of manpower prevents them for doing any sort of data collecting.

Kathy Radomsky said she was pleased to have shared in birding fellowship and entered data to the Great Backyard Bird Count on behalf of the group.

Bring items for feeders, nests to meeting

Members are reminded to bring water bottles or nesting material to the March meeting. These items will be used in spring break activities at the Owensboro Museum of Science and History. There will be noon sessions on hummingbirds on Tuesday, April 6, and nesting Thursday, April 8.

The days' events will begin with "make-and-take" activities at noon with younger students. There are tentative plans to make hummingbird feeders out of plastic water bottles and clay nests using natural and unnatural materials. Members who love crafts are needed to assist that day and also do prep work on the feeders. A video on making feeders may be viewed at <http://www.activitytv.com/306-hummingbird-feeder>.

If you're willing to help, please contact Mary Kissel at mjkissel-chirp45@bellsouth.net or 926-3321.

Trash for Cash will begin again this spring

The Daviess County Audubon chapter has offered to participate in the county Trash for Cash program. They are eyeing two sessions – one May 22, one in the fall – for a total of 10 miles. The amount of money/mile has been reduced to \$100/mile.

New shirts coming!

Wear your Audubon pride on your sleeves!

Daviess County Audubon T-shirts are being ordered for members to purchase. Featuring a goldfinch logo, the grey shirts will be available from Sports Warehouse for \$8.50 at the March meeting.

There are also discussion under for ordering polo shirts, which are particularly useful for presentations to the community.

Work day looms at blind

Daviess Audubon members hope to plant wildflowers at the Powell Bird Blind in April, put a final whitewash coating on the blind and repair the roof, which has sprung a leak after being repaired last year.

Bill

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being encouraged to express concern about the loss of community control by contacting state Rep. Tom McKee, tom.mckee@lrc.ky.gov, chairman of the Agriculture and Small Business Committee, and local state lawmakers and request they oppose Senate Bill 105.

To locate your legislators' e-mail address, visit: <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/whoswho/email.htm#SM>. For more information, visit the Kentucky Conservation Committee's Web site, www.kyconservation.org.

From the President's Perch

To share the fun of long-distance birding, help share the fuel costs

By Brenda Little

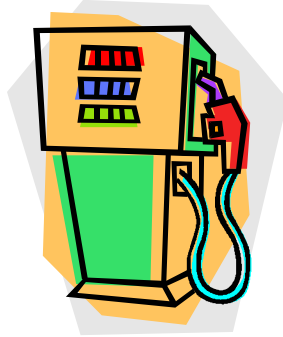
Our field trip attendance beginning in the fall of 2009 and now into 2010 is really going well. Everyone is pleased with the variety of offerings in the field studies these past few months. One of the differences in our field programs is that we have been venturing rather far afield. When we travel far distances, we do our best to ride share and drive in caravans rather than having individuals take their own vehicles. We're trying to limit air pollution, to enrich the sharing of experiences with each other and to simplify trying to keep numerous cars in sight of the others by choosing drivers with vehicles that can accommodate more riders than compact cars and standard sedans.

It quickly occurred to the chapter's directors that without reimbursement, our drivers for far distant destinations could be out \$35 to \$50 for gas, and we decided to devise a plan for sharing the cost of the gasoline. A vote was taken to take funds from the treasury to reimburse drivers for their costs earlier in the year.

Beginning in February we are proposing that before each distant trip, a calculation will be in put in place dividing the estimated cost of fuel between the riders on the trip. Drivers will not participate in the fuel cost sharing because they will be absorbing the cost for the wear and tear on their cars and trucks. We are hopeful that our attendance numbers will stay high because that cuts the per person cost for fuel to a minimum.

As the directors propose this cost sharing, there is a very important message we want to get to every member and visitor who travels with us for field studies. We never want limited funds to impede anyone from participating in any program or event that Daviess County Audubon Society provides. We do not ask that anyone ever feel a need to apologize, explain, or worst of all to stay home when we are taking a field trip because they feel that paying for a portion of the fuel would be a hardship. All we are asking is that the drivers let us know following each trip if they did not receive enough reimbursement to cover the cost of their fuel, and we will take money from the treasury to cover that shortfall. Our treasury is in better shape than I can remember, and we do not wish to hoard our funds.

It is very important to us that everyone, members and non-members alike, feel comfortable when they participate in programs and events that we provide. It is part of our mission as a nonprofit, 501(c) 3 organization, that we do our best to reach out into our community with education and recreation relating to our environment and the flora and fauna that share the world with us. To exclude anyone for any reason is something we want to avoid. As we propose this new plan for ride cost sharing, we hope with all sincerity that it will not dampen the rising numbers of people participating in our field study trips. Every one of you is important to the health and vitality of our organization.



DC Audubon dues

Name: _____

Address: _____

I have enclosed \$15 for local membership only

I have enclosed \$20 for national membership

Send to: treasurer Charles Morris, 1400 Woodbridge
Trail, Owensboro, KY 42303

WKU

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Award from the Kentucky Heritage Land Conservation Fund Board, according to the Western Kentucky University News Bureau. The trio is co-directors of the Upper Green River Biological Preserve, a 1,110-acre preserve in Hart County near Mammoth Cave National Park.

The basin is a stellar natural classroom, hosting 109 fish species and nearly 60 mussel species. The preserve lands surround several mussel beds, including one where five federally listed endangered mussels have been documented. It's also key habitat for migratory and resident songbirds.

Projects currently under way at the preserve include biological surveys of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, mussels, endangered species, plants, butterflies and other insects. Other projects in place include restoration of riparian corridors, bottomland hardwood forest, native grasslands and barrens, control of streambank erosion, mitigation of oil well impacts, release of native rehabilitated predatory birds and studies of wood rat and other mammal populations, according to the preserve Web site.

Ouida Meier has agreed to lead a field trip at the preserve on March 27. The club will be leaving Owensboro Community & Technical College at 8 a.m. and returning after lunch.

Come meet the couple prior to the meeting at Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn at 5:30 p.m.