

THE GOLDFINCH



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

November 2008



These photos by Gary Funk show purple martin fledglings live and on TV.

I want my (P)MTV!

Funks to share tips on attracting and observing purple martins

Perhaps the most envied bird lovers are the ones who have been able to attract purple martins to their yards. Gary and Sandy Funk now watch their martins up close, thanks to a nestbox cam they installed last year. They will share purple martin tips at the 7 p.m. Nov. 10 meeting at First Christian Church, J.R. Miller Blvd. and Seventh Street.

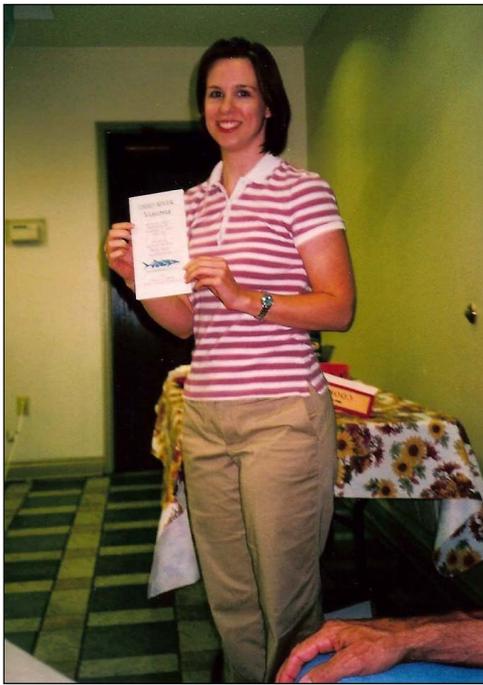
Gary Funk said his love for purple martins developed early. When he was 8, he and his father built a 12-cavity bird box. For the past 10 years, the Funks have been caring for purple martins. At their Stonegate subdivision home (off Kentucky 54), they provide 44 nesting cavities: 32 modified supergourds and 12 custom wooden nesting boxes. The cavities have 80 to 100 square inches of nesting area. All are equipped with external porches. The supergourds are fitted with internal porches and raised floors.

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Henshaw agrees to take over chapter presidency

Mike Henshaw has agreed to serve as president of the Daviess County Audubon Society for the rest of the year, succeeding Steve Anderson, who had to step aside because of work duties.

It's a familiar place for Henshaw, who has had a hand in most of the accomplishments of the DCAS for years. Currently field trip chairman, Henshaw was a driving force behind the designation of the Sloughs Wildlife Management Area as an Important Bird Area. He also organizes and hosts the annual southern Daviess County Christmas Bird Count in mid-to-late December.



Jill Flachskam, left, and Henry Conner discussed the mission of the Ohio River Valley Water Quality Sanitation Commission at the Oct. 6 meeting.

Mission possible: Visions of a cleaner Ohio River DCAS members invited to water quality sessions, school cruises

Envisioning a cleaner present and future for the Ohio River is the mission of the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission. Two Owensboro activists of that mission offered insight about the commission and its efforts to spotlight that mission in Owensboro in November.

Henry Conner noted that during early part of the 20th century, river pollution posed a risk to those who lived along it. Visiting an aunt as a child, he was warned: "Don't get your head under water, or you'll die." It was not necessarily an idle threat. There were occasional cases of typhoid fever transmitted by the river during the 1930s and 1940s.

But Conner could see with his own eyes that industry needed a check, discussing discharge at the Colgate-Palmolive plant in Clarksville, Ind.

"The whole river was a bubble bath for a mile or two."

The problem? There was no legal authority for a city or state along the river to make another entity do anything about pollution. Enter the commission, a coalition of states along the river or its tributaries: New York, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, West Virginia, Illinois, Pennsylvania and Virginia. Since 1948, state representatives serve as a "policeman" for the river, developing regulations and programs to improve water quality and coordinate emergency response activities along the waterways. They moved from tackling primary industrial sources for pollution to developing water treatment facilities, Conner said. Today, many efforts are also directed at nonpoint sources, such as tactics for addressing agriculture runoff and improper use of pesticides. Among the many tests for water quality is fish tissue sampling to see what type of pesticides is affecting the river. Over the years, there's also been a shift toward a biological focus on water quality, with fish population growing in importance.

Part of the water quality mission is tied to community education, from sponsoring the Ohio River Sweep to a traveling aquarium to give others a close-up look at some of the 150 species of fish which call the river home. In the River Watch program, certified students do sampling five times a year.

Thanks to collaboration among several community agencies, this educational mission will take center stage in November in Owensboro.

Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission Educational Foundation's P.A. Denny Education Center, a floating classroom, will be in Owensboro during the week of Nov. 10. Jill Flachskam said primarily fifth-graders will take four-hour

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Jackie Crowley and Mousetrapp, dressed as the Owl and the Pussycat.

Owl meeting highlights field trip

The indoor setting of John James Audubon State Park proved to be more exciting than the outdoor ones for those attending the Oct. 25 field trip. Outside the museum gift shop, group members met Mousetrapp, a resident one-eyed barred owl who teaches kids about owls.

Staffer Jackie Crowley said Mousetrapp came to the park in August 2007 after being struck by a car and rehabilitated in Louisville. At the time, he was considered to be at least 2 years old. Mousetrapp (named in a kids' contest) proved to be a natural on the education circuit. Kids insist the snuggling bird is showing affection, but Crowley maintains the bird is seeking security. "He thinks I'm a tree trunk," she said. Members were able to stroke his tail feathers as Crowley showed how his plumage's feathered edges allow owls to soar in silence.

Mousetrapp debunked the old myth that owls can turn their heads completely around, turning 260 degrees to watch Jill Flachskam sneaking around him.

Crowley is also working with a young yellow-billed cuckoo that was found at the park. He will be released when the cuckoos migrate through Kentucky next spring.

Along the trail to Wilderness Lake (and on the Audubon Parkway), Flachskam, Henry Conner, Mary Kissel, Kenny and Winny Lin and Bob Adams saw or heard robins, grackles, tufted titmice, northern cardinal, American goldfinch, blue jay, Carolina wren, downy woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, white-breasted nuthatch, house sparrow, red-tailed hawk and marveled at the majesty of a great blue heron.

On the way home, the group drove past the cypress slough north of the park, which was dry after limited rain this summer.

Visions

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educational cruises, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. On board, the students have hands-on lab activities that address such things as water quality, invertebrates and fish. Daviess County Audubon members have been invited to help students "play bingo" as they look for various forms of river life by using binoculars and play an indoor "Who Am I?" game during the rest of the cruise. If you're interested in helping, contact Mary Kissel at 926-3321 or mjkisselchirp45@bellsouth.net.

An open house will be 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15 at English Park Boat Dock.

For the adults, the Ohio River Visions conference will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 15 at the RiverPark Center, bringing together the "stakeholders" in the river. Representatives from such agencies as the Owensboro Riverport Authority, Army Corps of Engineers, Kentucky Watershed Alliance and Kentucky Division of Water – and sportsmen's groups -- will discuss river issues, and a workshop will address the Clean Water Act.

The keynote speaker is Rick Dove, director of the Waterkeeper Alliance and a former commercial fisherman. The day ends with a 4 p.m. panel discussion on the future of the Ohio River.

The cost of the conference is \$10. Lunch will be provided. To register, please contact the Owensboro Museum of Science & History at 687-2732 or visit the Web site at www.owensboromuseum.com/ohiorivervisions.

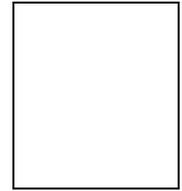
DCAS asked to collect at holiday light displays

Want to help the Daviess County Audubon Society keep giving the gift of nature to the community?

The chapter has been picked to collect money at the Trail of Light at Panther Creek Park from 5:15 to 9:30 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12, through Thursday, Dec. 18. County parks director Ross Leigh said the five collecting groups will split half of the gate for the holiday season. DCAS will **not** receive tickets for pre-sale.

To volunteer, please contact president Mike Henshaw or sign up at the November meeting. This year's event runs from Nov. 28 to Jan. 2, 2009.

The Goldfinch/November 2008
c/o Mary Kissel
3440 New Hartford Road, Apt. 1
Owensboro, KY 42303



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Whoopers coming to Union Co.

The annual Operation Migration ultralight route has been shifted across the state through Union County. The birds in the program are banned from human contact. Sometimes, however, the public may watch flyovers from a distance, and Charles Morris is contacting wildlife officials to see if that will be the case. Schedules change frequently with the weather conditions. If you are interested in catching a glimpse of the rare birds and would like to be put on a crane alert list, please contact Morris at wanderingtattler.yahoo.com or 926-8803.

Officers

Mike Henshaw, president, mikesherry@vci.net, 275-4250
Steve Hahus, vice president, 733-9342,
Hshahus.aol.com
Sherry Henshaw, secretary, mikesherry@vci.net, 275-4250
Charles Morris, treasurer, 926-8803,
wanderingtattler@yahoo.com
Mary Kissel, newsletter editor, 926-3321
Winnie Lin, membership chairman,
lin928276@bellsouth.net

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.

Corrections

The updated total from the August Trash to Treasure program was incorrect. The club received \$335.85 from participating in the event, plus \$5 from recycled products.

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Audubon Adventures teacher Linda Gillis now teaches at Estes Elementary.

Martins

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All have starling resistant entrance holes. For the beginner, he suggests using gourds with the starling-resistant entrance holes.

Last year, they opted to install a nestbox cam in one of the gourds.

"I guess the camera shows me far more detail about how the nest is constructed and maintained, and of course, the attention the young martins get. Plus, you get to see how they construct the nest and how the male starts the courting process," Funk stated.

Along with lodging, they also provide calcium in the form of eggshells and other supplemental food for the insect-eaters. They keep detailed records of their families. For the past two years, they have had 36 nesting pairs, with an average of four of five eggs making it to fledgling status from each brood. They've had as many as 136 birds fledge on their property.

Last year, Funk spotted the first male scout on March 13, so it's not too late to start planning for 2009!



Look here

From left, Winnie Lin, Bob Adams, Kenny Lin (obscured) Henry Conner and Jill Flachskam watch for action at the feeders behind the John James Audubon Museum in Henderson.