

THE GOLDFINCH



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

October 2008

Rolling on the river

Oct. 6 program to focus on river quality conference, cruises

November events highlighting the health of the Ohio River – and how it affects its communities – are the focus of the 7 p.m. Oct. 6 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Jill Flachskam and Henry Conner, part of the organizing team for Ohio River Visions, will discuss the program at the meeting. Ohio River Visions is a one-day conference, set for 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 15, that aims to bring together different stakeholders in the river: boaters, fishermen, tourist advocates, industrial users and ordinary citizens concerned with the health and safety of the water supply.

They will examine how the river contributes to the culture, environment and economy of the region.

The RiverPark Center session will feature an address by Rick Dove, director of WaterKeeper Alliance, who is a former marine and former commercial fisherman. Participants will take part in a special workshop, Using the Clean Water Act, by the Kentucky Waterways Alliance.

The cost of the conference is only \$10, and 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.

During the week of Nov. 10, Owensboro will host the P.A. Denny Education Center, a historic paddlewheel riverboat converted into a floating classroom by the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission Educational Foundation. During the week, local fifth-graders will take two-hour educational cruises to learn about the river and its importance to everyday lives. On board, students test water quality and get an up-close look at the organisms that inhabit the river's waters. An open house will be 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15, at English Park Boat Dock. Flachskam said volunteering opportunities will be discussed at the meeting at First Christian Church, J.R. Miller Blvd. and Seventh Street.

Leadership, membership issues key for 2008-09

The need for new membership -- and new leadership – took center stage at the September planning meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

With treasurer Charles Morris still recuperating from his broken leg, the brunt of completing the tardy annual report fell to Carolyn Williams. In helping her complete the report, the meeting was spent trying to complete the nonfinancial part, with Williams going to various financial institutions to track down financial records. The exercise emphasized the need for better recordkeeping throughout the year, vice president Steve Hahus said.

What are the top goals for the year?

Fill vacant leadership positions. With a new night shift, Steve Anderson has had to scuttle plans for remaining club president, because he won't be able to attend club meetings for six months. Vice president Steve



Winnie Lin, seated next to Carolyn Williams, will be the DCAS membership chairman.

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Scarecrow Festival

After an unwelcome delay by Hurricane Ike, the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden was held Sept. 21. DCAS members Ken Hurm, top left, and Mary Kissel, right, distributed bird tattoos to about 50 kids (and a few adults) and shared club materials with those visiting the booth. Joe Ford, above, delighted all with help from a snake at the pond, and longtime WKBG supporter (and Audubon member) Madeline Oetinger worked with kids' games.

Ben Hawes' birds, trees change with season 21 species spotted during mid-September hike at state park

Early fall migrants and summer residents greeted a trio of members on a Sept. 13 hike to Ben Hawes State Park.

Steve Hahus, Carolyn Williams and Mary Kissel saw 21 species during the morning walk.

The summer's dry conditions have taken its toll on the park's wild flowers. A Friday shower did provide enough moisture for a towhee to bathe in the precious drops in front of the hikers. They also noticed that nut trees were filled for fall harvests.

Birds spotted included: American redstart, yellow-shafted flicker, eastern towhee, indigo bunting, eastern pewee, Carolina chickadee, grackle, several white-eyed vireos and another unidentified vireo (likely a yellow-throated vireo), chimney swift, downy woodpecker, eastern phoebe and tufted titmouse, robin, American goldfinch, red-bellied woodpecker, cowbird, blue jay, blue-gray gnatcatcher, Carolina wren and cardinal.

This month, a trip to Eagle Slough, north of Ellis Park in Henderson, has been tentatively set for Oct. 25.

Cool Owensboro debuts 'Go Green' Web site

As part of Owensboro's Cool Cities initiative, the city has launched a "Go Green" Web site, <http://www.owensboro.org/green/>. Along with information about the city's "green" efforts, including its Toyota hybrid car, the page features links to information on the national Cool Cities Initiative, the U.S. Green Building Council, individual and commercial global warming tips from the Sierra Club and other environmental Web sites.

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Hahus' duties at Apollo keep him from taking on any additional responsibilities. No one has stepped in to be educational chairman.

Recruit 10 new members. New member Winny Lin has volunteered to serve as membership chairman and hopes to tap into her contacts in the education community. Members also hope to make better use of public relations opportunities, such as publicizing monthly meetings in Joe Ford's popular column in the Messenger-Inquirer's Community section.

To expand education by collaborating with other organizations. Mary Kissel hopes that once the Big Bugs program is done, the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden will have spring nature programs for classes. Members are invited to accompany the Joe Ford Nature Library's monthly programs with Girls Inc. For example, Jill Flachskam and Henry Conner accompanied their trip to the Sloughs in September.

With fuel costs crippling school districts, there needs to be a renewed emphasis on in-school programming. Lin noted that after-school programs, such as at North Hancock and Tamarack elementaries, present a real opportunity for the club.

To continue to conduct monthly field trips.

Members expressed interest in such sites as John James Audubon State Park, Angel Mounds near Newburgh, Ind., Eagle Slough north of Henderson and Hoosier National Forest.

Audubon report decries declines in world birds

A new international report entitled “State of the World’s Birds” reveals precipitous declines in populations of many of the world’s most familiar birds, broadening the alarm first sounded in the U.S. by Audubon’s 2007 Common Birds in Decline analysis.

“All the world’s governments have committed themselves to slowing or halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010,” says the new BirdLife International report launched last month at organization’s World Conference in Buenos Aires; “Reluctance to commit what are often trivial sums in terms of national budgets means that this target is almost certain to be missed.”

The BirdLife report highlights avian losses worldwide. A staggering 45% of common European birds are declining, and on the other side of the globe, Australian wading birds have seen population losses of 81% in just quarter of a century. In Latin America, the Yellow Cardinal -- once common in Argentina -- is now classified as globally endangered.

Citing the 2007 Audubon report, BirdLife’s State of the World’s Birds report states that populations of “20 North American common birds have more than halved in number in the last four decades.” The northern bobwhite fell most dramatically, by 82%. As documented in Audubon’s first State of the Birds report in 2004 and reinforced in this report, “Some of North America’s fastest declining birds are grassland species whose habitat has been damaged by agricultural expansion and intensification.”

“Direct habitat loss continues to be a leading cause for concern at home and abroad,” emphasized Audubon bird conservation director Dr. Greg Butcher. “As we found in 2007, this report points out the increasing impact of large-scale environmental problems such as global warming, along with the continuing toll from weak conservation policies at home.”

More than half of the bird species that breed in North America and winter in the neotropics show declining populations over the past 40 years. “This demonstrates the importance of working throughout the Western Hemisphere for bird conservation,” said Craig Lee, director of the Audubon International Alliance Program. “This sobering report must remind us that Americans can still play a vital role in protecting migratory birds.” Audubon’s International Alliances Program was founded in 2006 for just that purpose. It establishes connections that can make a difference across the Western Hemisphere. “If we hope to continuing sharing our North American communities with familiar avian visitors, we must ensure that birds find food, safety and shelter in all of their seasonal homes south of the border, and in the places in between.”

Audubon protects those “places in between,” including many wetlands and grasslands on the major flyways, by working with BirdLife to designate and protect Important Bird Areas, including Sloughs Wildlife Management Area in Henderson.



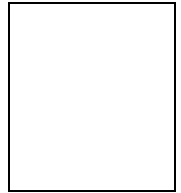
Join Girls Inc. for journey to Angel Mounds, Yellow Creek

By Grace Ford

The second trip with Girls Inc. is scheduled for Oct. 4 when we go to Angel Mounds at Newburgh, Ind. The visit to this site gives much insight into the lifestyle of the Middle Mississippian Indians. In the museum are replications of scenes common to the inhabitants at this location from 1100 to 1450. Outside the girls will see a reconstructed stockade, earthen mounds in the shape of truncated pyramids, which were platforms for buildings and not burial mounds. The elevated mounds demonstrated the importance of the buildings and the people on them. They will see the large flat area called the plaza where the people gathered for informal activities or met for ceremonies, games and other public activities including music and dance. This area was known as the Plaza. Cane along the slough is always of interest to those whom the Joe Ford Library takes, because their imaginations go wild when they are told how the people made arrows and spears from the stems of the bamboo, hollowed large stems to make blowguns and slit the stems to make knives. The women split and peeled the stems to weave mats, baskets for carrying heavy loads and to create small household containers. With cooperative weather, we should have a wonderful visit there followed with a nature hike at Yellow Creek Park where hints of fall colors should abound.

Leader Laura Harmon of Girls Inc. notes lessons from the JFL were exhibited during the girls’ Hurricane Ike community cleanup efforts. “Several of the girls who participated on Saturday were helping and would pick up branches, leaves, bugs, etc. and examine them and ‘save them’ – so next time they went with Mr. Joe – they could ask him what they were. They also cautioned everyone about the praying mantis – how it can bite.” With feedback like that, the JFL thinks our efforts are worthwhile. Teaching about nature is our thrust – our mission! Want to join the mission to Angel Mounds? To caravan with the girls, meet at First Christian Church to leave at 10 a.m. Admission fee is \$3.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children. Bring a lunch or buy one before the 1 p.m. hike at Yellow Creek Park. The event will end at 2 p.m. If you’d like to join, call Grace Ford at 316-1632 or e-mail her at gcarford@aol.com

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Migrating visitors surprise Scouts at Powell Bird Blind

Brenda Little worked with Girl Scouts Sept. 27 and was delighted with eight species: a male scarlet tanager, an American redstart, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina chickadee, downy and hairy woodpeckers, northern cardinal and tufted titmouse. It was the first time she had seen a tanager or a redstart at the blind. The up-close view also gave them a chance to note hoarding tendencies by the nuthatch.

"The bird repeatedly took black oil sunflower seeds and tucked them into cracks and crevices of the blind, often between the glass and the adobe walls where the girls could watch the stashing from about an inch away. A few times the bird came back, picked up a seed and moved it to a place for some unknown reason deemed to be preferable," she reported. She compared it to behavior exhibited by acorn woodpeckers.

The Audubon Society has been asked to participate in Brownie Adventure Day, 1:15 to 4 p.m. Nov. 2 at Camp Pennyroyal. Volunteers will be sought at the Oct. 6 meeting.

Share 'little green spaces' in Cornell competition

As part of the Celebrate Urban Birds! project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, bird lovers are asked to share their "little green places" with the big world.

Cornell is asking for photos, drawings or videos of a little green space that's good for birds. Have you noticed a spot that birds like because it provides shelter, food or water? It could be an ivy-covered wall, flowers next to the stoop, a window box, a container garden on a rooftop or balcony, your school garden, or the potted plants by your library entryway.

Send a photo, drawing or link to your video to urbanbirds@cornell.edu. They will send the first 50 entries a copy of the new "Celebrate Little Green Places" poster, and there will be other great prizes, including a \$100 gift certificate from Johnny's Selected Seeds. The deadline is Oct. 31. Information about the Little Green Places contest can be found on its Web site:

<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/temporary/little-green-places-photo-video-contest>.

Five schools join Audubon Adventures 2008-09 program

Five teachers have signed up for Audubon Adventures classroom kits. Lawanna Hodskins of Cravens Elementary, Lisa Newcom of Burns Middle School, Linda Gillis of Sutton Elementary, Lori Elder of Whitesville Elementary and Starla Cravens of Wayland Alexander will receive the "Nature's Feats" kits for the 2008-09 school year.

Mary Kissel and Joe Ford pictures by Ken Hurm

Pickup profitable for DCAS chapter

The final total from the August Trash to Treasure program was \$380, Carolyn Williams announced at the September meeting.