



The Goldfinch

Daviess County
Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.net

THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE LETTER

“V”

Valentine's Day is only one of the “V” program themes this month, so is virility, vermin, vernal, vegetation, and it is time to draw the line before we get to vasopressin which takes us to a point of more than we probably want to know. The **Big V** in the program topic for February 7th is the **Prairie Vole**.

Voles' social monogamy has been the subject of many studies. Why? because it's possible that what goes on in the genes, brains, and nests of prairie voles

resembles what goes on in the genes, brains, and bedrooms of human beings. Now you see why this is the perfect mammal for us to study in the month of romance.

February's Program: **VOLES**

Voles are only into social monogamy and not sexual monogamy. That is about as far as Dr. Michael Stokes, PhD of WKU is going to go in his presentation about prairie voles' monogamy.



Visit with Mike and his wife Cheryl at the Moonlite at 5:30 at Supper with the Speaker and you will have a chance to hear about his research in Africa with buffalo, baboons, bush pigs and elephants. While here in Kentucky it is the Prairie Vole that is the topic of his research, a mammal that is vital to the food chain.

Valiantly trying against the odds due to the time of year when they are not plentiful, Dr. Stokes is out in the field doing his best to capture a live specimen of the Prairie Vole to bring for a display with his program.

February's Calendar:

Feb. 7th- DCAC meeting: 7 p.m., Owensboro Christian Church
(- Don't forget-- at 5:30 p.m., "Moonlite supper with the speaker" where that evening's speaker, guests and audubon members meet at the Moonlite to eat, talk, and eat some more.)

Feb. 13- DCAC Board Meeting, 11:30, Judy's House

Feb. 18- "field trip to see sandhill cranes" We'll meet at 8:00 A.M. in the south parking lot of OCC.

THE PIGEON— SNOW WHITE WINGS

The role of the pigeon as ace communicator and celebrant was examined at the Jan. 3 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society. Gail Evans, co-owner of On Snow White Wings, an area dove release company, offered a fascinating look into the lives of trained pigeons.

Her homing pigeons generally work within a 60-mile range and greet their assignments with unbridled enthusiasm. How in the world do they find their way home? Part of it is their ability to learn landmarks and other visual clues during months of training. Part of it is using the Earth's magnetic field. Last year's devastating Japanese earthquake was so powerful, it threw off the magnetic field, causing many owners to lose birds.

She noted that pigeons were used during World War I and II as key ways to get messages from the front lines to headquarters. Her birds have different roles, adding special touches for all types of occasions. She talked about teaching nervous brides-to-be how to handle the birds for release, as well as the comfort a dove release brought to grieving family members during a funeral.

Cold weather doesn't bother them, but she discussed the task of keeping the birds healthy and safe from natural predators, including hawks and weasels. This business is only a part-time job, but it takes real dedication to care for them while balancing demands of her full-time job.

For some, pigeons are true athletes. She described the spectacle of pigeon racing, where birds are timed as they go for their individual lofts. Even over hundreds of miles, the difference between first and second often comes down to seconds.

Because of darkness, birds weren't released, but she brought several birds for members to view, including homing pigeons and breeds just used for display purposes, the white ring-necked doves and fan-tailed pigeons. The latter are bred to have a peacock-like display.



KY GOES TO COSTA RICA



#1 Violaceous Trogon.

#2 Chestnut-mandibled Toucan. Both were spotted at the La Selva Biological Station which is a haven for birdwatchers. On their Christmas bird count, they spotted 365 different species on one day! In one hour, with the help from our guide, we found more than 30.



Amazing Birding Trip to Costa Rica---DCAS first one Overseas!

by Winny Lin

Yes, we made it with lots of planning! Thanks to our president, Judy Adams, that 10 of us took our very first overseas birding trip to the haven of birdwatch enthusiasts---Costa Rica! Only 6 hours of traveling time and no time difference--totally doable!

As to this point, we have confirmed 146 species. On the very first guided birding outing at San Gerardo de Dota, our guide Raoul, in one hour and half, showed us 46 different species--including a mama hummingbird hatching eggs in her tiny nest, through his spotting scope. On 2 different occasions, 9 of our group got to see the beautiful quetzals . Brenda, Tony, Janet, and Donna even got interviewed by Japanese TV crew. Don't be surprised if one day you see them on Japanese TV channel or internet, and hear Brenda mention that they represent Daviess County Audubon Society.

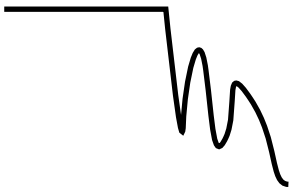
Our group included some serious birders, like Janet, watched and identified birds to the very last stop at the hotel in Alajuela. We also have novice birders, like Winny, begged a local to take her and Donna to go into the town La Futuna near the Arenal Volcano to feel the community or stopped at a farmers' market near San Jose for some oranges. Some of our members, like Edna, have become more interested in birding, although she also enjoyed the "Hanging Bridges" in Arenal and Zip-lining through the canopy with her husband Jeff and Bob Adams. Tony, Brenda, Janet, Merry also took a terrific trip by boat to Cano Negro Wildlife Refuge for more birding and saw all 3 kinds of monkeys--howler, white-faced, and spider monkeys. Of course, iguanas, iguanas, and more iguanas.....

It was a wonderful trip and we are in the process of making a PowerPoint to share the wonderful and exotic birds we spotted in Costa Rica for the March DCAS meeting on the 6th.

If you are curious, come and find out more..... and we could not wait to share with you!



#1 Our first overseas birding group--from left to right--Janet Howard, Brenda Eaden, Donna Wilson, Edna Murphey, Tony Eaden, guide Christian, Bob Adams, Merry Miller, Winny Lin, Jeff Murphey, and Judy Adams (president) at La Selva Biological Station, in Costa Rica



2 different kinds of hummingbirds found at San Gerardo de Dota right in front of the restaurant of our Savegre Mountain Hotel
Just stunning!



We had the honor to have Melvin Fernandez to guide us to Los Quetzales National Park which is 11,000 ft above the sea level. He is a seasoned birdwatcher and was acknowledged in the Bird Book of Costa Rica. Our own Tony Eaden is also mentioned in the acknowledgment of our Bird Book of Kentucky. Wow!



---It was amazing that we could spotted a mama hummingbird hatching her eggs in her tiny nest. It was even more amazing that our guide, Raoul, took this photo through his spotting scope.



Outreach to Henderson is the First in Our Expanded Membership Territory

Five of our members traveled to Henderson on January 24th to extend a welcome to people in the region who will now be added to our membership rolls when they join the National Audubon Society.

We got great media coverage and the meeting was promoted by Evansville Audubon Society, Friends of Audubon, and at the Evansville Birding Club's meeting the night prior. We should have checked the basketball schedule; we were up against UK!

Turnout was good, but not great. We counted 27 heads, take away our 5; leaves 22 and 17 people signed the attendance sheet. Brenda Little commented that, "It was a room full of people I'd like to get to know better, to bird with, to party with and to grow with."

The PowerPoint that The Sloughs' Connie Morton put together was riveting. Mike Morton is always engaging as he mixes data and facts with fascinating stories such as birds that don't follow set patterns and Eagle parents that year after year somehow manage to rescue and raise their chicks after their nest is blown out of their tree.

Mike's presentation held a blessed surprise that made us perhaps the very first to know about a new property in Union County that is loaded with potential for hiking, birding, and hunting. The almost 2500-acre property now being called Sturgis WMA is bounded on two sides by the Ohio and Tradewater Rivers. Mike and his crew are hoping that if they can get about 2 weeks of dry weather in February, they will be able to haul in gravel and make necessary road improvements in order to welcome us to come-see in mid April.



Valentine's Day 1967 Was When It All Began



To every one of our chapter leaders through the years, every office holder, every chairperson, everyone who baked cookies, built bonfires, hauled cars full of crowded bodies, led field trips, attended local governmental meetings, wrapped door prizes, planned programs, cranked out newsletters, wrote letters to elected officials,... You are priceless and you should give yourself a big pat on the back as we celebrate what you have accomplished.

Bert Powell told us the story many times about how sometime around 1951 a group of about 40 people got together for a “bird walk”. Most of the group was from the Henderson Audubon Society having come over to help our group get organized. They met at the site of the old Daviess County High School, now the Middle School, on the banks of the Ohio River. From there the group went out to Kingfisher Lake, now undergoing draining and dredging, for a hike around the banks.

For the next decade and a half, the “bird club” had get-togethers, bird walks, and picnics, but according to Joe Ford, the last living founder of the “bird club”, there was not an organization with regularly scheduled programs in those early years.
of the depth we have today.

Our club’s big day happened on Valentine’s Day in 1967 when we met for the first time as The Daviess County Audubon Society, a local chapter of the National Audubon Society. We’ve come a long way, Baby, and there will be much celebrating of **our 45th Birthday** when we meet on February 7th.

We are in the process of contacting every person who has served as President of our club asking them to save the date and to make every effort to attend the February 7th meeting so that we can get a photograph to record for posterity some of the leaders who contributed so much to the success of our organization.

HE'S IN THE ARMS OF THE ANGELS... FOR THE SECOND TIME

Maudie and Marvin Ray and their family were stalwarts in the Daviess County Audubon Society from the beginning of our chapter. They lived just down the road from Bert and Millie Powell in Maceo. Maudie was a homemaker and Marvin was active in the community, most memorably as one of the top guns in the volunteer fire department which had its station a couple of doors away from the Ray home.

It was sometime around 1958 when Maudie took her perfectly healthy baby boy, Shelby, to the pediatrician to get some of the series of vaccinations given to millions of babies routinely. Almost immediately after Shelby was inoculated, Maudie knew something was terribly wrong. Her little boy changed in demeanor and in his development. She was frantic as she took the child back time and again to be examined by the doctor to see what was wrong.

Shelby was one of the fractions of children who have a bad reaction to vaccinations. He was permanently handicapped by the shots. Maudie fought with the drug companies valiantly. They were like Goliath and she was even smaller than David. But she was relentless. Every time she lost a round with the pharmaceutical companies, she bared her teeth and jumped right back to bite them in the butt.

Finally after years of bout after bout, loss after loss, Maudie beat them. She got a settlement, a very large settlement, and she socked the money away planning for Shelby to be cared for after she and Marvin were no longer able to do so.

The Rays gave Shelby a life they and he loved. They took him fishing, not just on the shore, but out in their boat. They watched birds from the windows and

decks of their country home and outside wherever they could transport him in his wheelchair. They hardly ever missed our fall picnic as a threesome at the Wilson's farm.

Every year the Ray's hosted our chapter for the KOS winter bird count. Maudie would cook-up a huge pot of vegetable soup and Shelby was excited beyond belief as one-by-one the birders showed up at the Ray's home every year.

Maudie and Marvin's plan for Shelby to be cared for by subsequent generations of their family did not work out after they both passed away. Shelby lived out his last years at the Wendell Foster Center where he passed away earlier this month at the age of 54. Never did any child have a more devoted and loving family than Shelby Ray, the family that can now wrap him in their loving arms again.

FROM THE BACKYARD

What a busy month! Home from Costa Rica...and back to reality! We found the birding brotherhood to be alive and well in Costa Rica, connecting with birders and Audubon members from Grand Junction, Colorado and Boston. Our ten travelers returned filled with excitement and can't wait to share their bird photos and experiences with you at the March 6th meeting. We will present a power point with a sampling of the 146 species we identified.

We've had a few changes in our board this month. Brenda Little resigned her dual role of secretary/treasurer and those offices are being filled by Lisa Leonard and Mike Henshaw respectively. Thank you Brenda, for your continued dedication to DCAS. Lisa and Mike are already on the board and graciously volunteered to serve.

At this writing, Mike is in the process of setting up a field trip to Barren River Lake State Park to see the sandhill cranes on February 18th. We'll meet in the south parking lot at OCC. Check the calendar box for the exact time. For our March field trip we plan to check out the changes at Ben Hawes (March 24th). By that time we should be able to see both birds and spring wildflowers.

Don't forget to participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This is easy and can be complete in as little as 15 minutes. The dates are Feb. 17-20. Check it out at www.birdcount.org.

And while you have your calendars out, mark April 21-22 and 25-29 for the Ohio Valley Birding Festival. This annual event offers a variety of free programs and hikes in the Henderson/Evansville area. The website is [www.ohiovalleybirding festival.org](http://www.ohiovalleybirdingfestival.org).

Welcome to the folks who came to hear Mike Morton at our outreach meeting in Henderson! It was exciting to see so many current and former Audubon members. Mike talked about The Sloughs and also shared the planned opening of a new WMA near Sturgis. This area should be available for birding by the beginning of April (weather permitting).

I must say that I was afraid that our LBJ's (little brown jobs) would be boring after the colorful birds of Costa Rica but our cardinals and house finches were happy to have the feeders full again and are bringing a smile to my face.

Judy
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