



The Goldfinch

Daviess County
Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.net

February's Program: Bluebirds

COUPLE DEVOTES 23 YEARS TO EASTERN BLUEBIRDS IN KENTUCKY

Join us for our February 5th program, presented by Bob and Judy Peak. For the past 23 years, they have monitored and maintained Eastern Bluebird trails in Western Kentucky at Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area and Lake Barkley State Resort Park. Note: a bluebird "trail" is simply defined as a series of nest boxes located along a prescribed route. Since 2005, the Peaks have also managed a 20-box bluebird trail at John James Audubon State Park. As an additional part of their volunteer project, they set up a dozen Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes in the park (around Recreation Lake) in 2010.

During their tenure, over 27,000 baby bluebirds have fledged from the nest boxes on these combined bluebird trails. Additionally, seven other cavity-nesting species have produced over 1,700 baby birds that have fledged from the boxes. Those species include the Carolina Chickadee, Tufted Titmouse, Prothonotary Warbler, Tree Swallow, Carolina Wren, White-breasted Nuthatch and the House Wren.

Be sure to get the word out to members and friends and join us on Feb. 5th at First Christian Church, 700 J.R. Miller Blvd. at 7:00 P.M. And you're welcome to come to Moonlite BBQ for "supper with the speaker" at 5:30.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND...GET INVOLVED!

Spring is just around the corner and there are ample opportunities to get involved in one or more of our projects. These don't involve expertise, just a willingness to get out and spend some time in the community with other DCAS members. Judy would be happy to have some help at the Great Backyard Bird Count at Girls Inc. on 2/15 at 9:30 a.m. Mary would welcome some assistance at Spring Break at the Museum on 4/3 from 10-12. Classes for third graders (8:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.) will begin at the Western KY Botanical Garden at the end

of March (contact Thelma Newman oboro69@bellsouth.net if you'd like to be part of the team). Trash for Cash will have its second run on Saturday, 4/27. And we need someone to bring refreshments to our March, April and May meetings. Surely there's something there that fits your interests and your calendar!

February Calendar:

Feb.5 5:30 p.m.	<i>supper with the speaker at Moonlite</i>
7:00 p.m.	<i>chapter meeting at First Christian Church, 700 JR Miller Blvd</i>
Feb.15 9:30 a.m.	<i>GBYBC at Girls Inc (check with Judy)</i>
Feb 16 9:00 a.m.	<i>Field trip to Somerville, IN, meet at Moonlite</i>
Feb 17 2:30-3:30 p.m.	<i>GBYBC at Joe Ford Nature Center</i>
Feb 18 9:00 a.m.	<i>GBYBC at WKY Botanical Garden</i>



WINTER PICNIC AND OWL PROWL

WINTER PICNIC AND OWL PROWL A WINNING COMBINATION--Look for Owls, a Turkey.

Twenty-five members enjoyed clear weather, excellent food and camaraderie as Lisa Leonard hosted our February field trip at the Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp. Although she and Mike Brown did their best, the owls kept themselves hidden (until Mike was driving away from the camp, that is). We did spot a Wild Turkey roosting in a tree and the hike and grounds were chilly, but provided just the right motivation for the hot soups and chili that waited for us at Happening House. Some took the opportunity to view the Powell Bird Blind for the first time. And the stars were amazing. We saw and counted many of Jupiter's moons! It was especially nice to have time to socialize with our birding friends. If we offer ourselves for a workday, maybe Lisa will invite us again!



EMERSON DELIGHTS WITH JANUARY PROGRAM



New DCAS member and Visiting Professor at KWC, Sara Emerson, enthusiastically shared the basics of her research with an (almost) standing room only crowd at our January meeting. Emerson has applied the concepts of foraging ecology to learn about the evolutionary adaptations of mammals. Her research has taken her from urban Chicago to South Africa and back again. She may even be taking a look at the Gray Squirrels and Cottontails in our Owensboro yards! Both plants and animals have defensive adaptations (we know about teeth, but how about bits of rock in bird gizzards?). Plants develop tannins which decrease the ability of the animal to digest foods, or oxalic acid which results in a distinctively sour taste (rhubarb sans sugar, anyone?). And those squirrels at Legion Park behave differently than those with less access to humans. With a nod to our interest in birds, Emerson discussed the importance of reserve size in urban woodlands. It turns out that bigger is better. Using the Brown-headed Cowbird as an example, she pointed out that this species feeds on the fringes of the woodland. By nesting in the dense center, songbirds can protect their eggs from this parasite. Lots of food for thought!





Cerulean Warbler artwork below and white-capped sparrow photos above, by Mike Brown

HEY FELLOW BIRD LOVERS!!

How 'bout Short Eared Owls, Lapland Longspurs, Northern Harriers, possibly Snow Buntings and many other prairie grassland bird species!! They will be awaiting our arrival on February the 16th at the Somerville Mine Area near Oakland City, Indiana. I have been here before and saw more Short Eared Owls in one location than I ever saw anywhere else.

We are planning on meeting in the back parking lot of Moonlite Bar-B-Q on Parrish Ave at 9:00 A:M We will car pool to the Somerville Mine Area plus the Oakland City Wildlife Refuge Area (located very close to the area where the owls are so common at this time of the year). The best thing to do is to go to the Oakland City refuge first and see the many ducks, grebes, Bald Eagles, (last year I saw two Horned Grebes here!). This area also is a very good place to see Loggerhead Shrikes and possibly a Northern Shrike along with Merlins, Coopers, and Sharp Shinned Hawks. After a late lunch in Oakland City we can then go to the

Somerville Area because late in the day near sunset is when the Short Eared Owls start putting on a show. This will be primetime viewing and will give us all the best opportunity to see one real good and to me they are one of our coolest owls! If there are some folks who cannot schedule a full day, lunch in Oakland City will be a reasonable time to break off and head for home.

In March we are planning on a trip down to the Sloughs Wildlife

us. I encourage all who love birds to make both of these trips. There are so many possibilities of seeing something unique at either place. Last year the Le Conte's Sparrow was a treat for me and the first I had ever seen. It would be great if we all saw one at the Sloughs WMA come March.

Thanks to Judy, Mike, and all for asking me to be the Field Trip Coordinator. As you all know, I love all American birds with a passion

and it would thrill me beyond words if you all get to see a Cerulean Warbler up close and personal like I have. In May we will be going to Mammoth Cave National Park to try and do just that. The Cerulean Warbler is special among all birds because they are a reflection of the true health of what is left of our great old



Management Area either on the 16th or the 23rd. This area is an absolutely prime spot for shorebirds, ducks, and hopefully the Tundra Swans will still be there too on these dates. I know the area really well and it is one of the finest wetland locations we have for birds in western KY and really close to

growth bottomland forests. They are magical and a forest without their cool song ringing through the treetops is a dead forest to me. Looking forward to seeing all of you at Moonlite on the Feb 16th!! Dress warmly and bring your best binoculars and scopes. It will be a fun time for all...Mike Brown

WORTH THE TRIP

Brenda and I made a trip to the Wesselman Nature Center in Evansville on 1-22-13. We had been told that a Varied Thrush was spending the winter at the park, and was a regular visitor to the feeding stations at the visitor center. Brenda and I were greeted by a dozen Downy Woodpeckers hanging on branches, suet feeders and seed feeders. There were also many Goldfinches and House Finches, Red Breasted Nuthatch's, Juncos, Robins and Titmouse's. After about five minutes of observing these birds, the Varied Thrush appeared, he just seemed to ghost in, like pop... there he was. Everyone exclaimed at once, there he is, there he is. Cameras clicked and flashed as if Jennifer Lawrence just popped out of a limo. There were questions by the unknowing, "What's going on, what is so special about that bird?" Answers were, "Rare to this area." or "Never saw one before." and "New bird for me."

I had seen a Varied Thrush when working in Northern California, they are a year round residents in that area. That was in the late 1980s, and I have almost no memory of it. The Thrush is a colorful bird, like the Towhee or the Robin. It also has feeding habits similar to these two ground feeders. I have been told that there are three Varied Thrushes in the Evansville - Henderson area. This one preformed to everyone's delight for about ten minutes, then left as quickly as he arrived. I have never kept a life list, however somehow this bird is now marked in our [National Geographic Birds of North America](#).

by Tony Eaden



HOBBY DAY DEEMED A SUCCESS

This is the second year for the Owensboro Science Museum's Hobby Day and the first time DCAS has participated. We were prepared for long gaps between interactions. Boy, were we surprised! With our table strategically placed in front of the bird nest and eggs exhibits, we were among the first stop for many families. There were bird identification questions and lots of folks who just wanted to chat about birds. We added eight potential members to our email list (They know who they are. They're reading this for the first time.) and renewed old acquaintances. Thanks to Jan Howard, who suggested this as an opportunity for outreach and to Mary Kissel for the updated handouts. We'll definitely plan on participating again next year!

Join the Great Backyard Bird Count!

By Mary Kissel

In the 16 years of the Great Backyard Bird Count, the event has evolved to include many kinds of ‘backyards.’ There are plenty of ways to participate in the national count, set for Feb. 15-18.

Why count? It’s a good way to help scientists keep track of changing bird populations and conditions across the continent.

* To participate, count birds anywhere you like for at LEAST 15 minutes — or even longer if you wish. Keep track of the kinds of birds you see and how long you watched.

* Make your best estimate of how many birds you saw of each species: for example, 5 Northern Cardinals, 3 American Crows. Huge flocks may be a challenge, but your best guess is still valuable.

* Enter your list(s) online at www.BirdCount.org. You put in a new list for each time you count, whether it’s on the same day, a different day, at the same place, or at a new location.

* Look for the “Submit your checklists” button on the Great Backyard Bird Count website. You will be able to start entering bird lists at 6 a.m. Feb. 15.

Chapter members will engage in counts around the tri-state throughout the weekend.

As part of the ongoing “Urban Girls, Urban Birds” program, Judy Adams – and other willing volunteers -- will lead a count at Girls Inc.’s Rolling Heights campus at 9:30 a.m. Feb. 15.

On Saturday, Feb. 16, the chapter will travel to a new field trip destination: Oakland City refuge/Somerville Mine in Oakland City, Ind. (roughly 45 minutes north of Evansville). Board member Mike Brown raves about the site as a source for short-eared owls. Bird watcher Vern Wilkins reported seeing a dozen there Jan. 20, as well as two golden eagles. Last year, 60 species were recorded in Oakland City during the GBBC.

We will leave at 9 a.m. from Moonlite Bar-B-Q Inn’s parking lot.



On Sunday, Feb. 17, children 3-15 and their parents may join a count at the Joe Ford Nature Center. It will be held from 2:30-3:30 at the center, 3998 U.S. 60 West (behind the GRADD office).

A limited number of binoculars and bird identification sheets will be available for you to use. Volunteers will talk about the joys of winter bird watching. Budding Naturalists (ages 3-6) will make milk carton bird feeders. For information, call the JFNC at 302-2755 or director Grace Ford at 316-1632.

On Monday, Feb. 18, the counting shifts to the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden. Join board members at 9:00 a.m. for a count before their meeting in the educational building.

Last year, 33 species and 615 birds were seen by participants across Daviess County. In Kentucky, 117 species and more than 244,000 birds were tallied.

For more information, visit the GBBC website, www.birdcount.org. There, you learn how to enter your data, look up results from previous years and find out about the photo contest and birding prizes you can win.

The national event is co-sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology.

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Cedar Waxwing by 2012
GBBC Participant Ben Thomas



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FROM THE BACKYARD

As I write this, Owensboro is covered in a sheet of ice. It took less than thirty seconds for the birds to jam the tray feeder after I refilled it! Just a reminder that our feathered friends grow to depend on us on these nasty mornings.

It will be February when you read this and our chapter will be gearing up for the Great Backyard Bird Count. Choose a site...your own backyard, a park or WMA, then choose a day to get out and count birds. You're welcome to join one of our scheduled activities or count on your own, but don't forget to enter your data online! It will be interesting to see how many entries there are from our region.

The attendance at our two January events was fantastic...thirty-plus at the meeting and twenty-five at the winter picnic and "owl-less" prowl. By the way, we've begun a system of sending out a postcard notice to those members who have allowed their national membership to expire. So if you're one of those "lapsed members", please think about becoming official again. It's as simple as printing out the application from our website www.daviessaudubon.net and sending your \$20 dues to Mike Henshaw. We'll be happy to welcome you back!

As many of you are aware, the Dept. of Justice recently announced a settlement with Transocean for its role in the 2010 Gulf oil spill. This means that a significant portion of the money will go toward Gulf restoration under the direction of the RESTORE Act and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. According to the Audubon Advisory on 1/17/13 "with this settlement, the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council finally has some funding to begin implementing a comprehensive plan for ecosystem restoration...". And BP is scheduled to begin court proceedings in February. It's about time!

Speaking of the national organization, a National Audubon Society Convention will be held for the first time in thirteen years. Dates are July 12-16, 2012 in Stevenson, WA. overlooking the Columbia River Gorge. There will be workshops, field trips and the camaraderie that birders are known for the world over. Much more information will be available by the end of this month. Go ahead and pencil it in!

And while you have your calendars out, make a note that our March meeting will involve a **date change**. We will be collaborating with Brescia University to bring a Lucy Audubon re-enactor for our March meeting. This will be on Sunday, March 3rd at Brescia. There will not be "first Tuesday" meeting in March.

Why not make an effort to meet Bob and Judy Peak for supper with the speaker at Moon-lite? It's a great way to get to know everyone a little better...followed by their extremely informative program at First Christian Church.

Hope to see you at one of our many activities this month!

There's a lot going on...be a part of it!

Judy Adams, President

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Ideas meeting at Moonlite Barbeque. Photo by Winny Lin.