

# The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

February 2008

## Backyard birds have national impact

*Audubon partner schools invited to count; feeders needed for Wayland outdoor classroom*

There's nothing like seeing the bright plumage of birds of a gray winter day. Experiencing those pleasures is part of Cornell University's 11<sup>th</sup> annual Great Backyard Bird Count. This year's count will be Presidents Day weekend, Feb. 15-18.

As of presstime, at least two Audubon Adventures schools will be represented on GBBC counts. On Feb. 16, education committee members will count with Burns Middle School teacher Lisa Newman as an introduction to the program.

Grace Ford, DCAS education chairwoman, contacted all Audubon Adventures schools to see if they wanted help from any DCAS member to do their own bird count. She's also asked teachers if they wanted help setting up feeders outside their classroom windows, providing them a list of area species that may stop by. She's also offered DCAS assistance for classes that want to build their own feeders using recyclable materials.

Another AA school participating is Wayland Alexander Elementary School in Hartford. Its Junior Audubon Society will be counting birds, but co-sponsor Brenda Little is hoping to have feeders placed in the school's outdoor classroom by that weekend. The school

recently received funding from the National Audubon Society. To make those funds go further, Little is asking DCAS members for donated feeders. If interested, please bring your feeders to the Feb. 11 meeting.

People of all ages and experience levels are invited to take part wherever they are — at home, in schoolyards, at local parks or

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*Judy Howle of Mississippi snapped this photo of a northern cardinal, a composition finalist for the 2007 GBBC photo contest. DCAS members are invited to snap pictures of their backyard birds for the contest.*

## KWC instructor to explore exotic species threat at meeting

The relationship between plant and animal life ... and how it can go awry ... will be the subject of the Feb. 11 meeting of the Daviess County Audubon Society.

Dr. Justin Rosemier, assistant professor of biology at Kentucky Wesleyan College, will talk about the indirect effects of exotic species of native ecosystems. He will then briefly discuss his research for his Ph.D., a look at the effects of beech bark disease on native small mammal communities in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Rosemier said he chose his dissertation subject because he wanted to explore exotic species beyond their effect on their host plant.

"Rather than just looking at the impacts of beech bark disease on American beech (which has been done some, although perhaps not as much as one might expect), I chose to focus on how the disease complex indirectly impacts small mammals that

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# Sierra Club seeks greener city, county

A grass-roots effort to reduce carbon emissions was brought to the Daviess County Audubon Society's Jan. 14 meeting. Representing the Sierra Club, DCAS member Jill Flachskam presented a program on the Cool Cities/Cool Counties program.

"What started this was the lack of commitment to greenhouse gas reduction on a national level, specifically, the failure to sign the Kyoto Treaty," she said. One person who sought a local solution was Seattle Mayor Gary Nickels, who created the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement.

The commitment requires a city or county to:

Reduce greenhouse gases by creating an inventory of local emissions and identifying where changes can be made.

Plan and implement policies and programs to meet reduced emission goals. Some cost-effective ways of accomplishing it are: planting trees, improving fleet efficiency, such as stationing police on bikes and buying hybrid cars; instituting "lights out" programs, changing light bulbs, adding reflective coating to rooftops, buying energy-efficient equipment and instructing staff on energy-savvy actions.

Flachskam noted that several of these measures have been a priority on local comprehensive plans, such as development of mass transit systems, creation of bike paths and the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park and recycling initiatives, something that should get greater emphasis.

Officials also note the importance of proper land-use, so urban sprawl is reduced and commute times decrease.

Climate protection also is cost-efficient, she said, because energy costs are lower. A study of 160 cities tackling energy measures show they have saved \$600 million. Alternative technologies can create jobs, and progressive environmental programs can help a city improve its quality of life and seem more livable, she said.

Anti-pollution measures also improve residents' respiratory health and help cities align themselves with federal standards, preserving funding.

Other locales have met this challenge. Since the program began in 2005, this agreement has been signed by 754 Cool Cities. They represent a large cross-section of America, from large urban areas like Chicago to cities smaller than Owensboro. Five Kentucky cities have joined the effort: Frankfort, Bowling Green, Louisville, Lexington and Villa Hills. Evansville, Ind., also participates.

In July, King County, Wash., initiated a similar program for counties. Twenty-four counties have come aboard.

"They usually start with little things, and that's what we're asking the city and county to do here. In Lexington, they did purchase several hybrid cars. They had some of their policemen on Segways, as well as quite a few on horseback and bicycles," Sierra Club leader Aloma Dew said. "Not only does that save energy, but it makes policemen more accessible and kind of brings back that community feel." Louisville is concentrating on landscaping in parks and greening their buildings. Brown-Forman, for example, has a green roof.

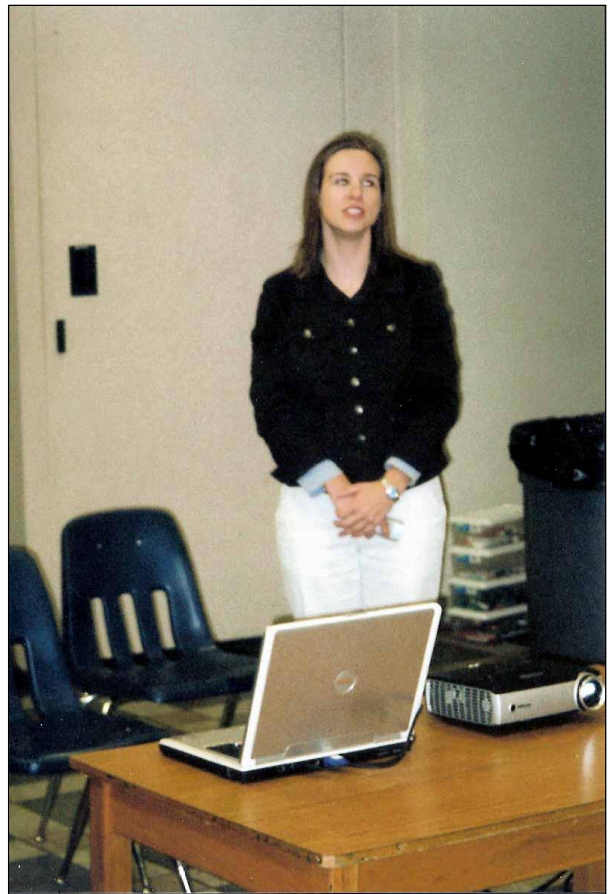
Sierra members discussed possible ways to ease the city and county into the program, with many suggestions surrounding heating and lighting. For example, some communities are uniting to buy more costly light bulbs for use in government buildings. Tree ordinances and more effective use of green space also were touted.

Addition of a hybrid vehicle seems a real possibility. Another easy step is putting LED lights in exit lights, Dew said.

Another Sierra member, Carol Mark, noted that the county has shown interesting in glassphalt, recycled glass used to make roadbeds. Officials went to Henderson to see their plant in mid-January.

Since the DCAS meeting, similar presentations were made to city and county governments.

"At the Fiscal Court meeting, Judge (Reid) Haire said that he would look over our materials, and he didn't foresee any problem with signing the agreement. At the City Commission, Al Mattingly and Cathy Armour had very supportive comments after the



*Jill Flachskam discusses the Cool Cities/Cool Counties program.*

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# Wayland students excite peers about bird watching

The recent Ohio County Christmas Bird Count was designed to tally birds around the campus. In its wake, students are tallying something else: a growing number of peers interested in bird watching.

“The Junior Audubon Society at Wayland Elementary is the hottest spot on the school’s extracurricular activities list. Students are pleading to be admitted even though the word is out that we have all the members we can allow,” co-sponsor Brenda Little reports. “We’re hearing from parents and grandparents asking, ‘What do I have to do to get my child in that club?’ We are limited by the number of pairs of binoculars and field guides. Another limitation is that we only have 45 minutes total time for each meeting, and the more youngsters involved, the less one-on-one time we have, plus the rowdiness factor is some kind of exponential that has to be respected.”

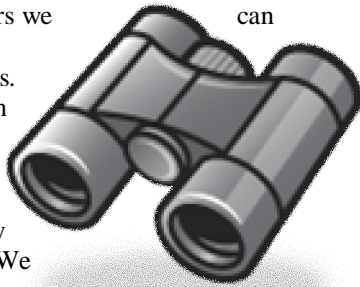
News of the kids’ role in citizen science caught the attention of third-grade teacher Phyllis Martin, who asked them to speak to their classmates.

“She told us that the children listened intently to their peers and unanimously expressed an interest in learning more about birds. She then contacted Starla Cravens to ask if we would do a presentation for her class. We agreed to do our ‘fake birds’ with introduction to binoculars from her classroom windows as our idea for a good way to start. Next thing we knew, Ms. Martin had invited us to do the Introduction to Birding for all four of the third-grade classes,” Little said.

The Junior Audubon Club has now begun using Audubon Adventures. They studied grizzly bears to start off the new year and will soon delve into learning about the bald eagle, one of the species observed on our Christmas Bird Count.

With the \$400 from the National Audubon Society, they will buy bird seed for a new feeding station in their outdoor classroom, join Cornell University’s Classroom FeederWatch program and plan an April field trip to the Powell Bird Blind. Earth Day, Arbor Day and International Migratory Bird Day also are on their 2008 calendar.

“The sponsors knew the club would be popular, but we never dreamed it would be this hot. Birds are big with the kids!” Little said.



## Dundee shines at holiday count

The Dundee region got high marks from Scott Harp, who led a portion of the Wayland Alexander Christmas Bird Count Dec. 19.

Tallied were 58 species & 10,252 individuals. With more help next year to take in the entire circle, and more time to listen for owls and walking, particularly at L.B. Davison Wildlife Management Area, he believes the circle could top 70 species next year.

The Dundee count reaffirms one finding elsewhere in the region ... the robins found another home for the holidays. He recorded “not a single robin in the count ... that is a bit surprising, but not entirely unexpected given the lack of food available to them and other similar guild birds this year.”

Recorded birds considered “rare” for this region included chipping sparrows and American woodcock. “Uncommon” sightings included: tree sparrow, brown thrasher, savannah sparrow, turkey vulture, bald eagle, northern pintail, northern shoveler and sharp-shinned hawk.

He lamented missing several other species spotted outside of the count time period: house sparrow, wild turkey, white-crowned sparrow, American coot, ring-billed gull, belted kingfisher, Ross’ goose and cedar waxwing. “I’ve seen all of these in the count area over the last month or so, we just missed them,” he states.

He considered the area promising for additional waterfowl sightings.

The Dundee count included: eastern bluebird (58), northern cardinal (92), Carolina chickadee (26), American crow (59), mourning dove (63), house finch (7), Canada goose (12), red-tailed hawk (22), blue jay (166), dark-eyed junco (84), American kestrel (22), eastern meadowlark (9), northern mockingbird (12), white-breasted nuthatch (3), American tree sparrow (5), song sparrow (21), white-throated sparrow (38), European starling (4,114), brown thrasher (9), tufted titmouse (27), eastern towhee (21), red-bellied woodpecker (9), Carolina wren (18), field sparrow (5), white-crowned sparrow (6), northern harrier (2), northern flicker (8), red-winged blackbird (1,151), pileated woodpecker (3), savannah sparrow (1), rock dove (26), turkey vulture (30), bald eagle (1), killdeer (64), northern pintail (1), mallard (294), northern shoveler (2), common grackle (3,635), house sparrow (5), American woodcock (2), northern bobwhite (6), chipping sparrows (10), yellow-rumped warbler (1), brown-headed cowbird (6), American goldfinch (4), great blue heron (3), swamp sparrow (13), sharp-shinned hawk (1), red-shouldered hawk (3), gadwall (25), Cooper’s hawk (2), downy woodpecker (2), horned lark (15), American black duck (20), rough-legged hawk (dark phase) (1), red-headed woodpecker (4), hairy woodpecker (1) and fox sparrow (2)

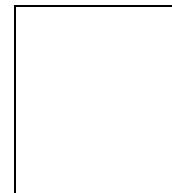
## Ballard trip rescheduled for Feb. 9

Because of conflicts with a youth waterfowl hunt, the Ballard WMA field trip has been rescheduled for Feb. 9. The group will still meet at 8 a.m. in the south parking lot at OCTC.

The Peabody WMA trip did not occur and may be rescheduled.



The Goldfinch/February 2008  
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

## Sierra

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presentation, but the mayor (who would actually have to sign) was hard to read ... don't know what our chances are there," Flachskam said.

This program is the latest in a series of efforts by the Sierra Club to spotlight climate change, efforts which arose out of a film festival. They also included: The Step It Up Day held at Brescia, which included a bike race and information booths, and a month's worth of energy-related activities in July. This included a focus on local farmers markets. "It's amazing how much energy goes into food production. The average item on your plate has traveled 1,000 miles from where it was produced, and then there's the cost of packaging, processing and refrigeration," Flachskam said. They also participated in a regional energy conservation expo, came together to watch the Live Aid concert and eat a local food meal and learned about gardening at the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden.

## KWC

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rely on beech seed as a food source. I had a fair amount of experience trapping small mammals as an undergraduate, so it seemed like a logical fit," he noted. "One of my colleagues also looked at similar impacts on moths and ground-dwelling insects, and we both made some informal observations and hypotheses about how birds might be expected to respond."

Rosemier earned his bachelor's degree in biology from Indiana (Pa.) University in spring 2001 and his master's in forestry and doctorate from Michigan Tech. Since arriving at KWC in August 2006, he has taught such topics as general biology, ecology, entomology, environmental science, evolution, field biology and tropical marine biology.

"I went into biology because I enjoy(ed) all kinds of outdoor activities, as well as learning about different species of wildlife. I loved the outdoors, so getting to ecology/field biology seemed like a good fit," he said.

Interested in the life cycle? Join us at 7 p.m. at First Christian Church, 7<sup>th</sup> Street and J.R. Miller Blvd.

## Backyard

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wildlife refuges. Observers count the highest number of each species they see during at least 15 minutes on one or more of the count days. Then they enter their tallies on the Great Backyard Bird Count Web site [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

In 2007, Great Backyard Bird Count participants made history, breaking records for the number of birds reported, and the number of checklists. Participants sent in 81,203 checklists tallying 11,082,387 birds of 613 species. In Kentucky, 130 species, totaling 166,000 birds, were spotted.

Like the recent Christmas Bird Counts, Cornell uses this information to gauge the current health of America's birds. According to Cornell, the count results support CBC findings that northern pintails have declined and hooded mergansers have increased.

"The GBBC is a great way to engage friends, family and children in observing nature in their own backyard, where they will discover that the outdoors is full of color, behavior, flight, sounds and mystery," said Janis Dickinson, director of citizen science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, stated in a news release. Participants can compare results from their town or region with others, as checklists pour in from throughout the U.S. and Canada. They can also view bird photos taken by participants during the count and send in their own digital images for the online photo gallery and contest.

For more information on how to participate, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). If you'd like to participate but don't have access to a computer, visit the Daviess County Public Library or contact Mary Kissel, 926-3321, who would be happy to submit your totals.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored in part by Wild Birds Unlimited.

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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.