

The Goldfinch



Daviess County Audubon Society

www.daviessaudubon.org

March 2008



From left, Grace Ford, Jill Flachskam, Ashley Stallings, Ken Hurm, Charles Morris and David Stallings look for ducks and eagles.

'Birdman of Maceo,' club co-founder dies *Powell hailed for influence*



Bert Powell

One of the co-founders and guiding lights of the Daviess County Audubon Society, Bert Powell, 92, died Feb. 22 at his daughter's home in Beattyville.

Anyone whose funeral tribute references tanagers and prothonotary warblers has to be a special ambassador for Daviess County's bird life.

Longtime friend Brenda Little takes it one step further.

"His almost evangelistic sharing of his love of nature, his fascination with birds in particular, resulted in his impacting the lives of hundreds, no, I should say thousands, of people," she said.

In his youth, she said he admitted the impact was driving his family crazy, being told: "Birds! Birds! Birds! All you want to talk about breakfast, dinner and supper is Birds! Birds! Birds!"

Ah, but Little notes that a shared love of nature helped spark an attraction between two strangers on a bus. The devotion to his wife, Millie, through 60 years of marriage, especially in her last years of failing health, was a model to all who knew him.

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Program rescheduled for March

Dr. Justin Rosemier, assistant professor of biology at Kentucky Wesleyan College, will talk about the indirect effects of exotic species of native ecosystems at the March 10 meeting. 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.

The meeting will be 7 p.m. at First Christian Church, Seventh Street and J.R. Miller Blvd.

Enjoying Ballard's best *Eagles, geese put on quite a show*

The western lakes of Ballard Wildlife Management Area beckoned to the Daviess County Audubon Society members Feb. 9.

Because of the warm January, expectations were pretty low for the trip. Area manager Charlie Wilkins had warned trip leader Mike Henshaw that most of the snow geese -- up to 150,000 this winter -- had already left. But still, that left 3,000 to 4,000 snow geese to welcome their guests. Seeing them blanket the sky -- even in reduced numbers -- is always a great sight, but it was fascinating to watch them forage for food in a nearby cornfield, preparing for their arduous mid-winter trip.

"They're good parents, they eat a lot," Wilkins said, as he explained how the corn is used as an easy energy source.

Charles Morris was taken aback by the large number of blue subspecies in the mix, estimated by Wilkins at about 40 percent. Out west or in North Carolina, that would be about 1 percent, Morris said.

They also refused to mix with the 800 to 1,000 Canada geese in the area. White-fronted geese also were plentiful.

Of course, the star attractions for the trip were the bald eagles.

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Ballard's

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"This is so cool," said Ashley Stallings, David Stallings' daughter, utterly entranced by the sight of America's national bird. Grace Ford estimated the group saw as many as 60 eagles, many of them juveniles, without the telltale white head, the true mark of eagle adulthood. They got an excellent look at eagles doing what Wilkins termed "housekeeping" at one of two active nests at the WMA.

Even if numbers were diminished, the WMA provided a look at a nice variety of ducks. Using spotting scopes, visitors got an eyeful of "blue bills," otherwise known as lesser scaups, and the cute little ruddy ducks. A member of Ducks Unlimited, David's expertise was an added bonus on the trip, as he pointed out a quartet of canvasbacks that were flushed.

Other waterfowl species spotted included great blue heron, numerous mallards, killdeer, northern shoveler, up to a dozen coots, gadwall, wigeon, green-winged teal and ring-necked ducks. Wild turkeys and white-tailed deer also romped in the woods.

There also were a handful of songbirds, including red-headed woodpeckers. In about five minutes near the main station, Jill Flachskam saw feeder birds ranging from Carolina chickadees to a red-breasted nuthatch.

Other species spotted were: eastern bluebird, goldfinch, red-bellied woodpecker, red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, turkey vulture, crow, kestrel, blue jay, mourning dove, dark-eyed junco, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, white-breasted nuthatch, white-throated sparrow, northern harrier, cardinal.

Attending the trip were: Mary Kissel, Grace Ford, Jill Flachskam, Mike Henshaw, Charles Morris, Ken Hurm, David and Ashley Stallings, Amy and Isaac Stallings.

Members will decide on the March trip at the March meeting. Henshaw said possibilities include a cave trip to Mammoth Cave or rescheduling the Peabody Wildlife Management Area trip.

Birders focus on back yards

As the Owensboro area recovered from its first winter storm of the season, birders grabbed their binoculars and pencils to record species in the 2008 Great Backyard Bird Count.

Within the Owensboro city limits, 34 species totaling 1,265 birds were recorded through Feb. 23. As an offshoot of the Audubon Adventures program, longtime Burns Middle School seventh-grade science teacher Lisa Newcom joined DCAS members Mary Kissel, Jan Howard and Donna Hanley to count in Kissel's "back yard," the stretch of the David C. Adkisson Greenbelt Park from Dairy Queen to Higdon Road.

Despite the demands of state assessment programs, Newcom, whose big area of expertise is trees, said she tries to teach students about birds within discussions of habitats and other environmental subjects.

Gray skies made counting difficult, because it was difficult to pick up plumage color, but Newcom was pleased to see a great blue heron in flight. In the four days of counting, Kissel also was pleased to nab her first fox sparrow for the GBBC.

Across the city, Rose Ann Radzelovage recorded both white-breasted and red-breasted nuthatches as well as tackling the tricky identification of female red-winged blackbirds.

That 34 species represented an eight-species drop from last year. Rob Rold noted the warm – and windy -- weather affected his feeder watching.

"I probably had less birds at the feeder than I've had all winter. Just the normal juncos, cardinals, house finches, blue jays, song and white-crowned sparrows, doves and a downy woodpecker," he reported.

Species recorded in the Owensboro city limits included: Canada goose, great blue heron, sharp-shinned hawk, red-tailed hawk, killdeer, Eurasian collared-dove, mourning dove, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, northern flicker, blue jay, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, red-breasted nuthatch, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, American robin, northern mockingbird, European starling, eastern towhee, American tree sparrow, fox sparrow, song sparrow, white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco, Lapland longspur, northern cardinal, red-winged blackbird, common grackle, brown-headed cowbird, house finch, American goldfinch and house sparrow.

Species were submitted from around the Ohio Valley. Poor weather canceled plans for Wayland Alexander's Junior Audubon kids to count, but adults associated with the program soldiered on. Brenda Little noted they saw 65 sandhill cranes in the Dundee bottoms, in a cornfield across from where the Christmas Bird Count eagle was spotted. Between the Littles' property and an assisted living facility, 16 species and 280 birds were recorded: sharp-shinned hawk, mourning dove, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, blue jay, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, white-breasted nuthatch, Carolina wren, European starling, dark-eyed junco, northern cardinal, common grackle, house finch and American goldfinch.

A count at Camp Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp included eight species, including a red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, Carolina chickadee, red-breasted and white-breasted nuthatches, white-throated sparrow, northern Cardinal and American goldfinch.

A Maple Mount count had 17 species, highlighted by three pine siskins and a



Burns Middle School teacher Lisa Newcom braved the chill for an introduction to the Great Backyard Bird Count.

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Powell

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Back in 1967, Powell placed an ad in the newspaper asking for people to join him for a Sunday afternoon nature walk. That was the roots of what is today the Daviess County Audubon Society. He set a tone which has served the club well in 40-plus years. Bird watching shouldn't be a solitary sport; it's an activity to be shared joyfully with others. Anyone who ever saw Powell hold court at a Christmas Bird Count needs no further explanation.

Joe Ford can still remember one memorable bird outing from 60 years ago.

"During the '40s, Bert and I did a bird count in a field not included in the bird count areas of today. We went to a field on my farm in hopes of seeing short-eared owls that I had previously spotted. Bert was confident that I had exaggerated the number I had sighted earlier. But as we neared, one flew upward, soon to be followed by 10-12 more. Bert said he'd never seen that many before, nor had I. And neither of us ever saw that many together again," he said. This time of the year also triggers memories of Powell's ability to mimic woodcocks, although Ford notes he never succeeded in attracting a hen.

Powell's ability to spot birds was matched by another key trait.

"It is likely Bert's unmatched repertoire of corny jokes and his sense of humor have played a major role in keeping our club alive and well all these years," Little said.

That sense of humor – even at his own expense -- was a sense of welcoming to Charles Morris in his early club days.

"My first exposure to Bert Powell was at our first Audubon meeting, the summer break picnic at the Wilson farm. I was shown the creek and told how Bert went right in the water making sure not to let his eyes off the fake painted bunting (which had been planted by Julian Wilson as a joke). Being an ardent birdwatcher, I chuckled as I could see myself making the same mistake. Bert even enjoyed talking about the 'bird' in later years," Morris said.

"He really enjoyed his hobby to the fullest," Morris added. For many avid birders, their focus is adding to their bird life lists. More important to Bert was the human experience connected to each one of these sightings. One of the youth he mentored, Mike Brown, movingly paid tribute to Powell in word and song at his funeral, noting that during his time spent with Powell in the woods, he felt close to God.

"Bert and Millie allowed their home to become an open and welcoming place for anyone who came with questions and needs," Little said. "The same was true of their phone line, which was often busy with what Bert described as 'little old ladies asking about something they'd seen in their yards.' "

Powell was a design draftsman for more than 30 years at Texas Gas, but Little notes he became a "magnet" for nature questions there. Fueled by his enthusiasm, Texas Gas co-workers became involved in the DCAS and laid out trails that hundreds use at Ben Hawes State Park and Yellow Creek Park. They also built the lodge that served Pennyroyal Girl Scout Camp for many years. The Powells remain a physical presence at the camp, with a bird blind named in their honor, a blind that has given hundreds of children a close-up look at feeder birds.

Even in his later years, Little said he had an impact on the Kentucky Audubon Council, noting Powell served on the technical review committee that establishes Kentucky's Important Bird Areas.

He also was a member of the Kentucky Ornithological Society, Daviess County Camera Club and a director of the Owensboro Area Museum of Science and History. He also served in the Navy, where his affliction with tuberculosis prevented him from being a submarine casualty at Pearl Harbor. Morris said he admitted sneaking in bird-watching time during his Navy stint. One of those went awry, Ford said.

"During World War II, Bert was arrested in the hills outside Memphis behind a defense plant because he was looking about with his binoculars. His alibi -- looking for birds -- didn't fly," he said.

He is survived by children, Bonnie (and Frank) Terrizzi of Beattyville and Wilton (and Sheila D.) Powell of Maceo; grandchildren, Amanda L. (and Derek) West of Reed, George A. Terrizzi of Beattyville and Jerri Robinson of Milwaukee; stepgrandchildren, Jeff S. Beavers and Rex A. Beavers, both of Maceo; three great-grandchildren; and four step-great-grandchildren.

Outside of his family, he is survived by children of all ages who have benefited from education programs which have sprung up from the organization he helped found.

"Those of us who volunteer are not out there only looking for little birds, we're out there looking for little Berts as well," Little said. "We can spot the kid with the wildly waving arm begging to tell us about a bird he saw recently, and we turn with an impish wink to each other and say, 'There's a little Bert!' Only his body has died."

Expressions of sympathy may take the form of donations to the Daviess County Audubon Society, Charles Morris, treasurer, 1400 Woodbridge Trail, Owensboro, KY 42303. Online condolences may be left at www.glennfuneralhome.com.

Yards

From Page 2

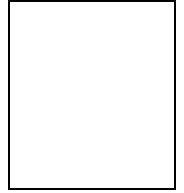
northern bobwhite. Also recorded were: turkey vulture, red-tailed hawk, American kestrel, mourning dove, blue jay, American crow, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, red-breasted nuthatch, northern mockingbird, European starling, song sparrow, dark-eyed junco, northern cardinal and house sparrow.

A 16-species count in Hawesville included: red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, northern flicker, blue jay, Carolina chickadee, tufted titmouse, red-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, Carolina wren, northern mockingbird, eastern towhee, white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco, northern cardinal, American goldfinch and house finch.

As of Feb. 27, 129,845 birds of 114 species were tallied in Kentucky.

To discover more facts about this year's national count, visit <http://gbbc.birdsource.org>.

The Goldfinch/March 2008
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KWC exhibit features Henshaw's artistry



The artistry of Daviess County Audubon Society secretary Sherry Henshaw was on display during February. Students of Rhonda McEnroe had their artwork exhibited at Kentucky Wesleyan College's Ralph Center for Communication and Fine Arts.

The exhibit, "For The Love of Art II," was highlighted by opening receptions Feb. 9 and 10, attended by several of Henshaw's Audubon buddies. There, they saw three of her works. She found the true beauty of a female cardinal, perched on a snowy branch, for "Winter's Chill." "Cloudless Evening" featured a spectacular sunset. "My Red Flower" was lifelike enough to attract the attention of a hummingbird.

Aside of family time, Henshaw said her time in the studio was "my favorite two hours of the week." She admits she is a deliberate painter, taking up to a year to complete each piece.

She's also found ways to share her talents with others. She worked with Staples to create a calendar featuring her work and some of her classmates. "Winter's Chill" was featured in the Henshaw family Christmas card.



Winter's Chill, left, was one of the pieces Sherry Henshaw exhibited during February.

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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.