

A look back

Art with a message

Painter and tattoo artist Kevin Veara continues to produce stylish paintings of birds and plants, including some birds that are gone forever.

Right now, Veara said he is focusing on endangered species or extinct species like the Eskimo curlew and Bachman's warbler.

The Eskimo curlew was a common shorebird, about 12 inches long with a curved bill. Thousands were killed each year until they disappeared about 50 years ago. The bird is considered to be extinct.

People hunted the curlews for food, and also sought their eggs that were valued by collectors.

The Bachman's warbler lived in the southeast United States, choosing swampy, forest habitats. However, clear-cutting of southern forests in the 1800s caused the bird to become scarce.

It is also thought to be extinct.

"I am looking at Americans' past and how poorly we have treated nature and my response to it," he said. "I would like to paint the passenger pigeon and Carolina parakeet, especially since they were (once) living in this area.

"I might even try the ivory-bill (woodpecker)."

In addition to working at his tattoo business, Black Moon Tattoos, 1009 W. Edwards St., Veara is busy painting in anticipation of several shows of his work this year.

"There's lots of brand new stuff, just in the past few months," he said.

Veara often paints with bright colors, but sometimes he paints in stark black and white.

Veara's work will be on exhibit in the Visual Arts Gallery at the University of Illinois Springfield from Jan. 27 to Feb. 27. The gallery is in Room 201 of the Health and Sciences Building on campus. A reception for the artist will be held from 5:30-8 p.m. Jan. 30.

Other shows are in the works, with up to five shows possible in the next 14 months, he said.

— *Chris Young*