

# Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

November, 2018, Volume 17, Number 2

## Our Best-attended Fundraiser



On Saturday, August 25 more than 75 people joined us for wine and fine fare – and a surprisingly upbeat message by Steve Holmer, Vice President of Policy for the American Bird Conservancy.

Steve made it clear that many of North America's birds are in peril. Challenges include loss of breeding and migrating habitat, feral and free ranging cats, window crashes, and (for migrants) loss of habitat on wintering grounds and stopover sites. He is also director of Bird Conservation Alliance, the policy arm of the organization, where he acts as a kind of a bird lobbyist. He meets with our Congressional leaders when legislation affecting birds comes up and works to persuade them to support or not, depending on how the legislation in question affects birds. The Alliance is comprised of more than two hundred conservation non-profits across the country (including National Audubon, National Wildlife Federation, The Nature Conservancy...and Saving Birds Thru Habitat). These organizations can sign petitions that relate to legislation

affecting birds that are put together by Steve and his staff. The petitions are presented to Congressional leaders as a way to show support (or opposition) for legislation in the legislative pipeline. It is fair to say that all in attendance that night were pleasantly surprised to learn that his efforts are often successful, because, as he said, "Everybody likes birds."



Steve Holmer

We were very proud that Steve praised us in his ending remarks. He said that our organization is his most dependable supporter, which means that we sign more petitions than any other organization in the Bird Conservation Alliance. 🦋

Website: [www.savingbirds.org](http://www.savingbirds.org)

### Executive Director

Kay Charter

### Board Members:

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Dave Watkins, Treasurer

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Linda Ketterer

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**Advisor to the Board:** Dr. Greg Butcher

**Technical Advisor:** David Dister

**Edited by:** Kathie Snedeker, Kay Charter



## Leave Your Leaves – and Fallen Trees!

When leaves drift down to the ground in autumn, many grab a rake to clean them up. But there is an important reason NOT to start this task: We know that our birds – especially nesting songbirds – must have insects at some point in their lives.


Allowing leaves to remain where they fall provides valuable winter cover for pollinators and other invertebrates. In spring, when the snow is gone, migrating birds sift through fallen leaves in search of nutritious insects and insect larvae. Larvae that escape hungry beaks will grow into caterpillars and other insects that our birds need during the nesting season. 🦋



## Lunch 'n Learn

On Sunday, August 12, Saving Birds hosted a lunchtime presentation for members of Suttons Bay United Church of Christ. The event was well attended, with about 50 people joining us. The church provided the food – purchased and beautifully laid out by Jack and Leah Dunn.

After lunch, our director presented a PowerPoint program, “About the Birds and Bees,” while member Ann McInnis took younger attendees on a wildlife safari.


Let us know if your church is interested in attending a similar program next year. Simply call our office at 231-271-3738 to set a date. 

## Conservation Partners of the Year



On Thursday afternoon, July 19, Executive Director Kay Charter presented Esther and Bill Durnwald, owners of Michigan Wildflower Farm with a plaque honoring them as our Conservation Partners of the Year. Michigan Wildflower Farm (MWF) in Portland (east of Grand Rapids) is a seed producing

enterprise. Earlier this year, Esther worked with Kay to create the seed composition and packaging for our Pollinator Packets. Esther has worked with us in the past, most significantly for a Landowner Incentive Program from Michigan DNR to improve the prairie portions of Saving Birds’ property and Charter Sanctuary. While some of that fund was used to control invasive species, a large portion went for native prairie plant seeds. It is not an overstatement to say that without this wonderful farm, Saving Birds’ work would be much more difficult. When we first began encouraging landowners to use native plants, it was virtually impossible to find them in our area. Now it is easy to get native plants throughout the state. The majority of those plants were from MWF seeds, grown by various native plant producers throughout the state.

Two weeks after the Durnwalds received their plaque, Esther hosted a field trip for Saving Birds to the seventy acre farm, about thirty acres of which is in production. 

## Many thanks to the following:

- Ralph Kalchik for keeping our lawn mowed and trimmed
- Van Dusen Landscaping for keeping our demonstration gardens at their best
- Thomas Wosachlo for accounting assistance
- Manpower Traverse City for supporting our Ronald Brown Academy project

## Thank You

### We Appreciate the Following Memorial and Honorary Gifts:

#### In Memory of:

##### Jim Charter

Kay Charter  
Gary and Nancy Siegrist  
Bert and Diane Thomas  
Jack and Leah Dunn  
Bill and Mary Valpey  
Dick Shuster

##### Pat Bussey

Chuck and Janet Dickerson  
Kay Charter

##### Jean Putnam

Marlin Bussey  
Kay Charter

#### Geraldine Suhr

In memory of  
**Elveria Scheppres**

#### Tina Greene-Bevington

In memory of  
**Clyde C. Greene**

In honor of:

**Kathleen Brewer Leece and David Leece**

In honor of **Judie Leece** for Mother’s Day

In honor of **Judie Leece’s** birthday



## From the Executive Director's Desk

*by Kay Charter*

After my husband's passing, friends asked how I would care for Charter Sanctuary's 45 acres. I wondered, too. For more than 20 years he had kept invasive plants in check by spending nearly every day during suitable weather in the woods, wetlands and fields pulling and digging up everything that does not belong here.


It has been three years since Jimmy was able to continue his work, but it wasn't until this summer that autumn olive began to reappear. It was a daunting issue for me. Board member and friend Jack Dunn offered to help, but there was so much that it would have taken considerable time and effort to remove.

In early September I was put in touch with Vicki Smith of Wildlife and Wetlands Solutions (a Traverse City company) regarding European willow, brought here by a biologist who believed it to be native black willow. That was an even greater concern; European white willow is a wetland invasive. The thought that an invasive plant might ultimately destroy my beautiful, productive wetland was horrifying. Vicki assured me that her team could deal with the willows, and – best of all – it wouldn't be expensive.

Her team of four men came in early October and not only killed the invasive willow trees, but also cut and treated every non-native plant (largely autumn olive) on my entire property in less than a day. Best of all, Vicki was right: it was not nearly as costly as I had expected.

It is impossible to share the depths of my relief at finding a company that was affordable to maintain the floral integrity of this special place. The possibility that it might eventually become filled with the invasive plants surrounding it, thus reducing its role in supporting birds and other wildlife, was simply unacceptable.

I am not in the habit of recommending companies in this newsletter, but I thought that those in the Grand Traverse area who face an invasive species challenge might appreciate knowing about my experience with Wildlife and Wetlands Solutions.

While our co-founder, and the co-owner of Charter Sanctuary cannot be replaced, it's wonderful to know that his excellent conservation work will continue. 



## Letter From Our Board President

*by Bert Thomas*




On a hot summer afternoon in 2016, my wife Diane and I drove down a dusty driveway through a beautiful field of little bluestem and prairie grass and met Kay Charter. She was sitting in a chair in the shade of a tree with her husband Jimmy. They were patiently waiting for us and others who had signed up for a hike through the Charter Sanctuary. But we were all late, having mistakenly stumbled into a lecture at Saving Birds Thru Habitat's Discovery Center on the other side of the sanctuary. After driving seemingly in circles, we found the driveway. Kay led the hike, telling us interesting facts about plants and birds along the way, and that's essentially how this all started for me.

Most of you do not know me yet, but like Kay, our board and all of you, I am passionate about conservation and the mission of this organization. We cannot protect our local and migrating bird populations without protecting and restoring their habitats so crucial to survival by giving them cover to nest and hide, and providing the seeds, berries and little creepy things they eat.

I founded a forest conservancy in northern Kentucky in 2008 and chaired it until we moved permanently to Leelanau County three years ago, so I understand the challenges. No stranger to this area, I summered here from the days the town of Lake Leelanau was called Provemont. Gravel roads crisscrossed the county then, and there was a working railroad. So I feel a kinship with the land and its people and love its history and fresh enduring beauty.

On a personal note, our kids live west of the Mississippi, we have an indoor cat named Jake and like to entertain, garden and work outside around our house south of Northport. Wildlife photography is one of my hobbies, with birds my favorite subjects.

After that first hike in the Charter Sanctuary, I returned later in the summer by myself to scout photography options, was collared by Kay who spied me from a distance with a wary eye, shamelessly dangled membership for all the access I wanted, and the rest is history. I am honored to follow Linda Ketterer as president and look forward to serving and engaging with members and other loyal supporters, to working with our dedicated board on new initiatives and most of all helping Kay along the way. 



Bert Thomas  
SBTH Board of Directors President





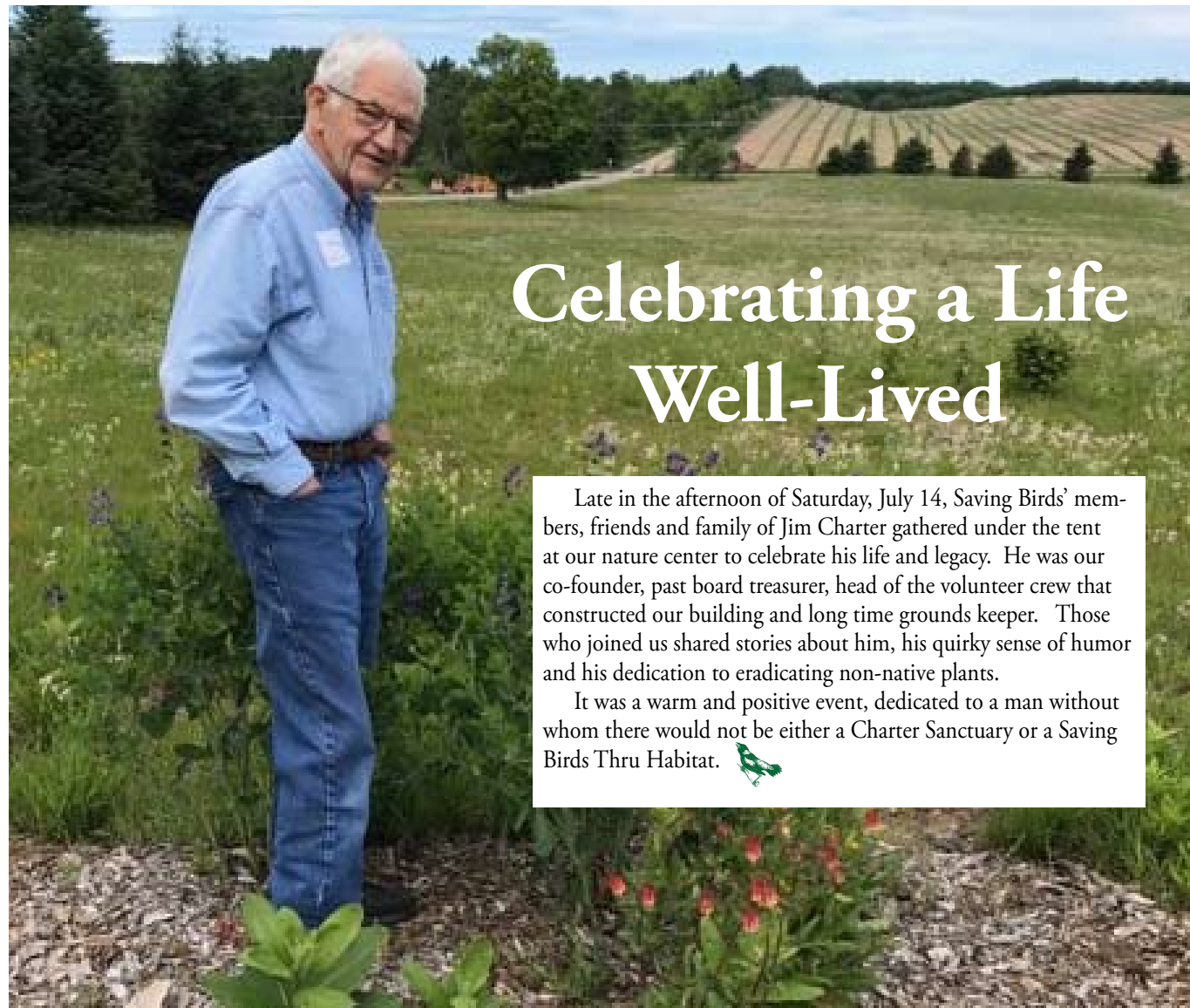
*Kay's daughter-in-law Becky chats with Jimmy's life-long friend Marlin Bussey.*



*Daughter Shelley talks about her dad. Step-son Jeff Kingery shares an amusing story about the man he called "Pa".*



*Life-long friends Ralph and Nancy Kalchik.*



*Jim Charter at his favorite pastime: searching for weeds in one of our gardens.*

## Celebrating a Life Well-Lived

Late in the afternoon of Saturday, July 14, Saving Birds' members, friends and family of Jim Charter gathered under the tent at our nature center to celebrate his life and legacy. He was our co-founder, past board treasurer, head of the volunteer crew that constructed our building and long time grounds keeper. Those who joined us shared stories about him, his quirky sense of humor and his dedication to eradicating non-native plants.

It was a warm and positive event, dedicated to a man without whom there would not be either a Charter Sanctuary or a Saving Birds Thru Habitat. 🦋



*Shelley with Saving Birds' members Jim and Tisha Cartsimas looking at story boards that chronicle our co-founder's life.*



*Our Executive Director, Kay Charter, talks about the crucial importance of her late husband's role in establishing both Charter Sanctuary and Saving Birds Thru Habitat.*



*Granddaughters Emily and Molly create native wildflower bouquets for the tables.*



*Looking at story boards that chronicle our co-founder's life, created by daughters Shelley and Susie.*



# The Beauty of Native Gardens



Cardinal Flower.

Several years ago our director reconnected with friends Gene and Helen Holden, whom she had known four decades ago. Although Kay and her friends had always kept in touch during the holidays, Facebook provided a way to keep up on a regular basis. Gene had created a beautiful horticultural garden in back of their Portland, Oregon home. When Kay saw the results, she told him that if he added some native plants, he would attract more pollinators, and that would help the birds in his area.

In March of this year she visited the Holdens during her annual train trip west and learned that Gene had pulled out all his original plantings and replaced them with native plants.

The first four photos are of Gene Holden's garden. His garden and that of Kay's daughter-in-law Becky Alsup-Kingery, inspired our editors to create this collage of various native gardens.

If you have a native garden, we would like to have photos to include in future editions. Simply email your photos, along with the identification of your plants to us at [bobolink2000@gmail.com](mailto:bobolink2000@gmail.com).



Bumblebee on purple coneflower.



Butterfly Weed and Yarrow.



California Poppy.



Photos from one of our native plants demonstration gardens. One is a mix of bee balm, yellow coneflower, Culver's root, blazing star and fading butterfly weed.



St. John's Wort

The bottom two photos are of Cheryl Gross's garden. Cheryl is the founder and president of Plant It Wild, a local organization whose mission is: "To foster greater awareness and appreciation of the fragile natural environment of our region."





When our Director's son and daughter-in-law bought their home in Muckwonago, Wisconsin, they quickly began adding native shrubs and trees to their landscape. Then they developed a beautiful place to sit in the evening and relax after work. Becky was able to snap a shot of fledgling Baltimore Orioles foraging among her native flowers.



Kay Charter's son and daughter-in-law's garden.



Our Director's pollinator garden may look a bit ragged to some, but it is filled with many native pollinators - especially bumble bees.



A beautiful shot of a rose mallow blossom in one of the demonstration gardens at our nature center. In the background are yellow coneflower, bee balm and Culver's root.

**Saving Birds Thru Habitat gratefully accepts gifts in honor or in memory of others.  
When making such a donation, please let us know who should be informed of your gift.**

- Yes! I want to support Saving Birds Thru Habitat with a**  
**Membership \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal at the following level:**  
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 Bald Eagle (\$5000)                  Other (\$\_\_\_\_\_)

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**Email** \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your donation. We are a 501(c)(3) organization; your tax-deductible gift is very important to us.

**Questions?** Please call (231) 271-3738 or email:  
 bobolink2000@gmail.com

SBTH • P.O. Box 288 • Omena, MI 49674 **Thank You!**



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Saving-Birds-Thru-Habitat

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*The mission of Saving Birds Thru Habitat is to protect, enhance, and restore habitat for North American birds, and to educate people of all ages about this important mission and how to achieve it. Our goal is to improve habitat for migrating birds one backyard at a time.*



### A Tax Tip For Helping SBTH

Are you receiving Required Minimum Distributions from your IRA or similar investments? Under the new tax rules, donating all or part of your RMD directly to the non-profits of your choice gives you the MOST TAX PROTECTION available for your charitable giving.

- Checks go straight from your investment to the non-profit(s) you choose
- You work directly with your investing institution
- Your entire donation comes right off the top of your stated income, lowering your tax exposure
- Talk with your tax preparer about Qualified Charitable Distributions

## Leave a Legacy for Migrating Birds.

Please help us continue our work on behalf of warblers, orioles, buntings and other at-risk species by joining those who have included Saving Birds Thru Habitat in their estate planning. Bequests of any amount will be gratefully accepted.



*Photo by Jim Stevenson*