

Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

May 2021, Volume 21, Number 1

The Power of One – Yet Another Couple Mike Berst and Kathie Albright

By Mike Berst



I have always had an interest in native plants and Kathie is a longtime birder. We were fortunate to retire to a home on 10 acres of beech-maple mesic forest in Northern Michigan, just a stone's throw from Saving Birds. The previous homeowner had landscaped approximately half an acre, featuring an extensive lawn and mostly exotic plants.

I was well aware of various native plant restoration projects, but it had not occurred to me to take on such an effort as a homeowner. Then, something unlikely happened. We were at a local feed store to buy pet supplies. While Kathie shopped, I wandered over to a small rack of books. A surprising title caught my eye: *Bringing Nature Home* by Douglas W. Tallamy. The subtitle read: *How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants*. I had an epiphany just seeing the book's cover. Once home, I read the book in one sitting. It changed our lives.

Ten years later, most alien plants are gone, only a few grassy paths remain, and over 180 native species bloomed on our property last year. We enjoy finding and encouraging natives, like Boneset, Bluestem Goldenrod, Jewelweed and others that show up on their

own. The woods are full of the spring ephemerals, with Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Sarsaparilla, Blue Cohosh, Meadow Rue and other natives. We take measures to protect those. Every year, we introduce new natives, some from native plant nurseries, others germinated from seed (most locally sourced). Our practice is to use plants appropriate to the locale and setting.



American Lady on Joe Pye Weed

We continue to watch and learn more about the interactions between various insects and native plants, and it is gratifying to see more and more bird species foraging for seeds, insects, and berries. Year-round residents include Chickadees, Titmice, Cardinals, and both Nuthatches. Woodpeckers (Pileated, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy) overwinter here, while other species, like Goldfinch, Brown Creeper and Northern Flicker come and go. (In an unexpected, sweet moment, the two sat together after breeding and "cooed" to each other.)

Warblers, like Restart, Black-throated Green, and Yellow-rumped are heard and then glimpsed in spring before the woodland trees leaf out. Reliable summer breeders include Eastern Phoebe, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Summer Tanager, and Wood Thrush. Serviceberry, dogwood, and viburnum berries predictably attract Cedar Waxwings and Red-Eyed Vireos. Rare sightings include resident Barred Owls mating high in our trees.

We actively encourage butterfly and moth species too by planting their preferred host and nectar plants. For example, we planted host Salix (willow) species for the Mourning cloak and Wood nettle for the Red Admiral. Sunflowers and violets host, respectively,

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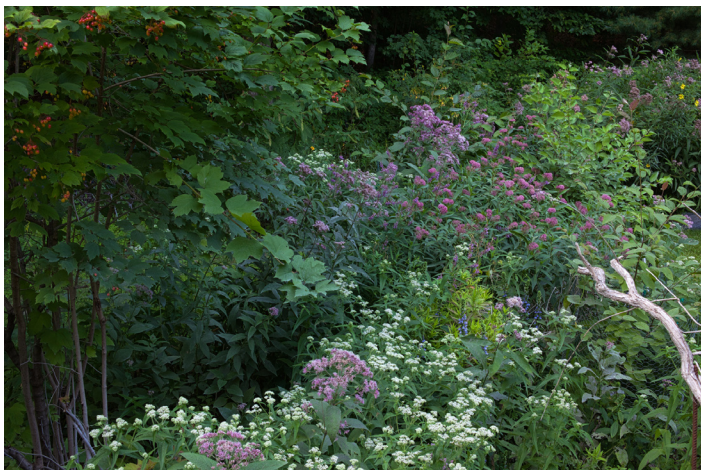
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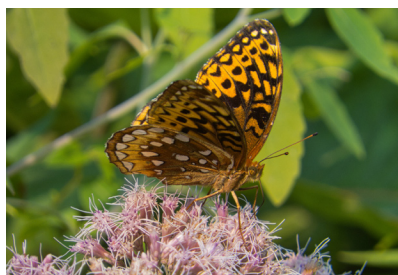
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The Bersts' yard.



Kathie with native forbs.



Great Spangled Fritillary

Painted Lady and Fritillary. For Monarch breeding, we established several *Asclepias* species: Butterfly-Weed and Common, Poke, Whorled, and Swamp Milkweed. I have often observed late summer Monarchs preparing for their long journey to Mexico by fueling up

on nectar from native Joe-Pye-Weed (*Eutrochium maculatum*). So we added a stand of that. Every year, emerged Monarchs, raised on milkweed, head right away for the Joe-Pye-Weed. Our Common Milkweed and Joe-Pye-Weed seeds came from wild stands at Saving Birds.



Red Admiral on Kathie's hand.

The American Lady uses *Antennaria* species as the preferred host plant. A few years ago we bought some *Antennaria parlinii* - Pussytoes - and other plants, new for us, from a native plant nursery.

When we got home, I started unloading the plants. Pussytoes were first out. I set them down just 15 feet away from the car. By the time I came back with other plants, seconds later, two American Lady butterflies were already laying eggs on Pussytoes. What fun! We're hooked. 🦋

Up to a Million Seabirds Die From Plastics Every Year. But Not This Bird.

by Kay Charter

For at least the last six decades, plastics have been littering the planet's oceans. Since that time, seabirds like albatrosses, petrels and shearwaters have consumed increasing amounts of plastics, which



Wisdom

appear to be food. It is estimated that a million seabirds (as well as 100,000 marine mammals and sea turtles) die when they either become trapped in plastic or eat it.

After being nearly extirpated by feather hunters at the turn of the last century, Laysan Albatross numbers have since recovered to about 600,000 breeding pairs. But this species – as are most seabirds - continues to be threatened by plastics floating in and on the oceans. When they are at sea foraging for food for their chicks, they often ingest plastics by mistake. When they regurgitate what is a food-and-plastic mixture for their chicks, the young birds ingest it. As a result, they often die of

starvation, stomach rupture or asphyxiation from plastics. Each year, parents bring approximately 4.5 tons of plastics to Midway Island as food for their offspring.

And then there is the amazing Wisdom, first banded in 1956 by noted ornithologist Chandler Robbins, co-author of *A Guide to Field Identification: Birds of North America*. This handy little book was my first; I had no idea Robbin's name would come back to me decades later. It was in 2013 when I first read about Wisdom. Wisdom was then believed to be 63, far past the age experts thought Laysan Albatrosses would still be able to breed. But there she was in a photo, brooding her tiny nestling.

Early this year, at 70 years of age, Wisdom was discovered with another chick. I last wrote about her two years ago. At the end of that piece, I added that I thought the most amazing aspect of this remarkable bird was the fact that she has clearly avoided eating plastic trash that has killed so many seabirds. I later learned tht Chan Robbins said the same thing: He believed this old albatross had learned to avoid dangers facing seabirds, including ingesting plastics.

Think of Wisdom the next time you are disposing of anything plastic, and make sure you do it in a manner that it won't end up in our oceans. 🦋

From the Executive Director's Desk

by Kay Charter

Along with many of the rest of you, I spent the last year plus isolating in my home. In my case, I was kept company by two (indoor only) cats that have been great companions since they came into my life sixteen years ago. During isolation, they were especially important. But, unlike some of you, I spent most of my time doing what I love most – conducting research, and writing about birds and bird conservation. There was no time for me to be either bored or restless because of the limitations necessitated by the pandemic. Although I confess to a special kind of joy after receiving my second shot of the Pfizer vaccine, knowing that, for the first time in 14 months, I was going to shop for my own food – in an actual store – rather than relying on curbside pickup.

Also, perhaps because of the virus, there were many more emails and telephone calls with questions – especially about how to improve or create habitats. One of our newer members, who lives in Indiana, has engaged in a months' long email exchange about a number of aspects of bird conservation. Her latest one referred to work she is going to begin after she goes to Bill Schneider's wholesale nursery, Wildtype in Southern Michigan. I want to share her comment with you, because it isn't just about the work that I do, but all the efforts of our great organization and the impacts resulting from those efforts:

A long awaited and eagerly anticipated new chapter has begun! My hope is that it brings renewed interest in, and action for, the topics that you and so many others are passionate about. To all of you working to make our planet a better place for all, my sincere thank you!

I wanted to share this note of gratitude to all of you who support Saving Birds, because none of what we do or have done would have been possible without your belief in and support for our efforts.

So as we gradually celebrate the receding cloud of COVID, let's also celebrate the fact that this terrible pandemic has brought increased attention to our natural world and new efforts to work on behalf of ALL wildlife.

Thanks to all of you for your ongoing support.



Letter From Our Board President

by Bert Thomas

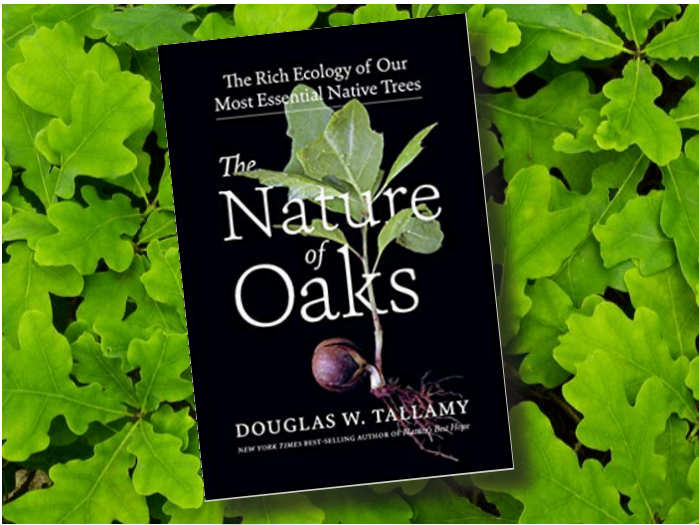
The ash trees started falling about 2013, four years after we bought the property. The dying had already started, of course, as the invasive emerald ash borer was pushing its way through the Leelanau Peninsula pretty strongly. "They're all going to die," is what we heard and that's what has happened on our 10 acres. Parts of the woods looked like a game of pick-up sticks with ash trunks lying crosswise on each other or leaning against sugar maples, beech and bass trees. Some had snapped off halfway up the trunk. We left those standing for the birds to poke at, roost or nest in, or use as a perch for catching insects such as the Eastern Wood Pewee did last year. Most of the leaners were cut to lie flat to hasten decomposition. Some still stand complete, straight and towering in the forest but not living. Ring counts suggest the forest is over 100 years old, which lines up with the logging across the area in the late 1800s.

Nature has replaced with diverse native species what was lost to the loggers. But because we found no oaks, we planted red and white oak saplings and to diversify further we planted white pines, hemlock and white spruce, mountain ash, American chestnut, American hazelnut, white birch and understory plants like various species of viburnum, dogwood, service berry and five leatherwood shrubs among others. All of these were bare root saplings, and over the past dozen years the survivors are looking great. We have earned our Certified Bird Habitat sign from Saving Birds Thru Habitat and joined Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park website www.homegrownnationalpark.org. (For an interesting Smithsonian Magazine article about that visit www.smithsonian-mag.com/science-nature/meet-ecologist-who-wants-unleash-wild-backyard-180974372/) As for the birds? They love the habitat and as a budding (some may dispute the possibility of that) wildlife photographer, I have a wide range of subjects to photograph all summer without leaving our place.

The point is, we can all do this with no more than a small patch of land. But you know this already; I'm preaching to the choir. Birds eat what they've grown up with and native plants host the insects and fruit they need. Seeing a flock of kingbirds hanging on the branches of a pagoda dogwood tree in August devouring berries is an amazing sight.

You may not know that our board of directors voted in two new members at our meeting in early April – Karen Edgley and John Putnam. Both are well rooted in the Omena area part of the year and will be strong additions to our team, which has reached the maximum number - eleven - allowed by our bylaws. In addition to working with Kay to do a complete overhaul of our website (soon coming), we took under wing the excellent website Sleeping Bear Birding Trail (www.sleepingbearbirdingtrail.org) in January to link us more securely to the wider birding community, and are in the early stage of a major initiative to ensure the organization for the future. For that we'll definitely need your help and when the time comes, we'll tell you all about it.





The Nature of Oaks Doug Tallamy's Best Yet

by Kay Charter

From the time I met Doug Tallamy, his writings and presentations have had significant influence on my learning. I have all four of his books, and have been guided by his messages in each. But his last, *The Nature of Oaks*, had the greatest impact. I have long been aware that oaks are number one on his list of the numbers of caterpillars supported by our native trees. I also knew that, although I do not have oaks on my sanctuary, I do have the other top three in abundance (black cherry, many willows and maples) so I thought “good enough”. Clearly, it wasn’t. We have planted a few oak trees on Saving Birds’ property, and I added a handful of seedlings to my land three years ago. But I hadn’t read more than 20 pages of this book before I knew I needed to add oaks to my sanctuary.

Oaks perform an amazing list of ecological services where they occur. They contribute to watershed management, and each tree sequesters tons and tons of carbon retained for many hundreds of years. Oaks can live a thousand or more years, during which, the author says, “...these magnificent plants are making outsized contributions to the life around them.” I can’t say that about my short lived cherry trees, or my maples that may live as long as 100 years.

“A yard without oaks is a yard supporting only a fraction of its life-supporting potential,” Doug writes. And he recommends planting the smallest trees you can buy for the best result. Planting acorns is even better. If you have a rodent problem, you may want to plant seedlings. Protect them from deer damage for several years, and then see what insects they bring to your yard, like the incredibly cute greater oak dagger moth. Doug informs us that small trees will soon outgrow larger specimens and will be healthier than larger ones.

This book makes me wish I had paid closer attention to Doug’s passion for oak trees. He set the criteria for our Bird Habitat Certification program; I wish I had queried him when he said, “Anyone who has an oak tree in their yard should be automatically qualified. If I had done either, I would have begun to add this “magnificent plant” to my property years ago.

If you want to improve your property for birds, or for the planet, purchase this book, read it and then add oak trees. You will be happy you did. 🐛



Meet Our New Assistant Director Anne Rodeck

We are happy to announce that Anne Rodeck recently joined Saving Birds Thru Habitat as Assistant Director. She is a native of Northern Michigan and has lived in several areas of Leelanau County. She now calls Omena her home - just down the road from our Habitat Discovery Center.

Anne graduated from Hope College in Holland, Michigan, with a degree in Language Studies and an emphasis on Spanish. After receiving her Associate of Arts degree in Child Development at Northwestern Michigan University, she served as an early childhood educator for over 16 years. In that position she used the outdoors as her classroom throughout the seasons. Inspired by courses such as Fresh Water Studies and Ecology Field Studies, she saw the necessity to connect children with their environment – especially in the age of technology. She has a passion for learning about our natural resources and sharing what she has learned with others, especially children. In November, she completed a 10-month internship with the Leelanau Conservancy as Stewardship Technician.

When she is not working at our Discovery Center, you can find Anne exploring coyote dens in her backyard, enjoying bird migration around the county, finding owl pellets in the woods, hiking and adventuring to new places. Anne’s favorite songbirds are Indigo Bunting and Scarlet Tanagers. She will expand that list as she works with our organization. 🐦



Singing Junco

Welcome Three New Board Members – All With Omena Connections



John L. Putnam

A retired Brigadier General, John served as a professor at the U. S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, CO. Early in his life, he was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand. He studied at the University of Florida and took his PhD in Medical Entomology from the University of Florida.

In his retirement John enjoys traveling, snowboarding, cycling and grandfathering. He spends

his summers in Omena and winters in Colorado Springs. He is very happy to assist our efforts by joining our Board of Directors. 🐦



Bill Sulau

Bill Sulau (William C.) joined Saving Birds' Board of Directors in late 2020. He was born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio and educated at Denison University (BA), Xavier University (MA) and Cooley Law School (JD). He practiced law in Cincinnati for over 30 years and retired to Omena in 2012.

He has served on several volunteer boards, including as President of

the Wyoming (Ohio) Golf Club and President of Omena Woods Association. He is married to Kay Nolen, has 2 children and 3 grandchildren. He enjoys maintaining his Certified Bird Habitat on his Omena property, including planting a wildflower meadow with seeds from the Michigan Wildflower Farm to create a home for his feathered friends. 🐦



Karen Edgley

Karen grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and started coming up to Omena in the summer when she was six years old. When her oldest son was a year old, her parents moved to Omena full-time, and thereafter she and her family spent more and more time in Leelanau as all four children grew up. In the past 30 years, while a stay-at-home mother, Karen lived in

Hong Kong, Chicago and Salt Lake City, prior to moving to Traverse City last year when her husband retired. Leelanau is definitely her favorite place and has remained the center of all of their plans. She has spent more time thinking about the environment, habitat and birds in the last 5 years, beginning with the birds around the Great Salt Lake area, and now here in Michigan. She said that if she had to re-do her subject in university from all those years ago, she would change from Political Science to Environmental Science!!

Karen is really looking forward to being involved with Saving Birds through Habitat, to learn more and help and contribute to this group. 🐦



New England Aster

In Memory of

Nancy Beights for Roy A. Craik
Darlene Doorlag for Robert Doorlag
Deborah Faulkner for Doug Faulkner
Penelope and David Gordon for Helen O. Patton
Anne Kelly for Thomas Kelly
Pat Lamb for Kathryn Denny
Lillian Mahaney for Daniel Mahaney
Lisa Meils for Richard K. Meils, MD
Elizabeth Rodgers, PH.D for Phil Hill
Carol Ross for SallySue Gale
Robert and Mary Smart for Jimmy Charter
Peter and Sue Stott for Ben Lane-Korn
Edward Andres and Nancy Turner for Joan "Jo" Moore
Kathleen and Dennis Turner for Cate Varley

In Honor of

Porter and Anita Abbott for Bert, Diane, and Jake Thomas
Lisa Armas for Julie Schopieray
Darren Golde and Scott Berk for John and Gina Erb
Joanne and Keith Burnham for Gina and John Erb
Ed and Bobbie Collins for Kay Charter
Berkley and Nancy Duck for Barbara Krause
Paul and Laura Jacobson for Carol Ross
Kathleen Brewer and David Leece for Judie Leece
Gayle and Rick Lipsig for Gina and John Erb
Ann and Doug McInnis for Kay Charter
Kay Nolen and William Sulau for Katie Sulau and Ryan Werder

Saving Birds 2021 Calendar of Events

All events will begin at our Habitat Discovery Center, 5020 N. Putnam Road, two miles west of Omena. Due to unknown conditions regarding the virus, any or all of these events or programs may have to be cancelled, changed or postponed. Please check our website before making plans to attend.

Saturday, May 15, 9:00 – 10:30 AM: Bird Hike on Charter Sanctuary

Join us at our Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam Road) for a guided birding hike through Charter Sanctuary. During this hike, we may see a number of newly arrived migrants from the Tropics such as Baltimore Oriole, Indigo Bunting and Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Charter Sanctuary was established exclusively for the benefit of declining songbird populations. It is closed to protect nesting birds except for special guided events like this one. No Charge. **STRICTLY LIMITED TO 10 PARTICIPANTS DUE TO THE VIRUS: Moderately strenuous. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL.** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Saturday, May 22, 9:00 – 10:30 AM: Bird Hike on Charter Sanctuary

Join us at our Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam Road) for a guided birding hike through Charter Sanctuary. During this hike, later arrivals like Eastern Wood Peewee should be seen or heard. Charter Sanctuary was established exclusively for the benefit of declining songbird populations. It is closed to protect nesting birds except for special guided events like this one. No Charge. **STRICTLY LIMITED TO 10 PARTICIPANTS DUE TO THE VIRUS: Moderately strenuous. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL.** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Saturday, May 29, 9:00 – 10:30 AM: Bird Hike on Charter Sanctuary

Join us at our Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam Road) for a guided birding hike through Charter Sanctuary. All of our regular nesting species should have arrived by this time. We should see the usual suspects such as those named above as well as Rose-breasted Grosbeak, nesting warblers like Common Yellowthroat and American Redstart and both Brown Thrasher and Gray Catbird. Charter Sanctuary was established exclusively for the benefit of declining songbird populations. It is closed to protect nesting birds except for special guided events like this one. No Charge. **STRICTLY LIMITED TO 10 PARTICIPANTS DUE TO THE VIRUS: Moderately strenuous. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL.** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Saturday, June 12, 9:00 – 10:30 AM: Bird Hike on Charter Sanctuary

Join us at our Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam Road) for a guided birding hike through Charter Sanctuary. By this time, all summer residents are on the nest and the males will still be singing to defend their territories. Added to the above lists will be Eastern Kingbird, Tree Swallows (who will be nearly done) and Eastern Bluebirds. Charter Sanctuary was established exclusively for the benefit of declining songbird populations. It is closed to protect nesting birds except for special guided events like this one. No Charge. **STRICTLY LIMITED TO 10 PARTICIPANTS DUE TO THE VIRUS: Moderately Strenuous. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL.** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Wednesday, June 16, 10-11AM: Habitat Heroes: Nature-based Workshop.

Come spend an hour at Saving Birds Thru Habitat learning about a healthy habitat for birds and other wildlife. This hour long workshop is geared towards elementary age children. Due to the pandemic, Habitat Heroes will be limited to 10 kids, (after which we will put folks on a waiting list in case there are dropouts.) Children will need to be accompanied by an adult. The goal is for you and your children to feel connected to our natural world, to observe and listen to songbirds, frogs and other creatures. We will offer nature-based games and an activity for your children to take home. No Charge. **STRICTLY LIMITED TO 10 CHILDREN DUE TO THE VIRUS. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL.** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Wed. July 7 and Fri. July 9, 9AM -Noon: How Do We Decide? Can we get better at choosing how to help birds?

Can we improve our ability to discern hooey from truth? Is it possible to increase the likelihood we've chosen the best answer to a question, or the best approach to answer the question? If we could then we might better discern the best solutions for conservation conundrums, and then more efficiently save birds, and improve the natural world. Please join us as we try to improve our critical thinking skills. Our guides will be retired Brigadier General and Professor Emeritus, US Air Force Academy Dave Westmoreland, Professor, Department of Biology, US Air Force Academy. **THIS EVENT IS LIMITED TO 12 PEOPLE DUE TO THE VIRUS. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Thursday, July 22, 6-7:30PM: Native Flower Walk with Brian Zimmerman

Saving Birds has developed gardens over the years with a diverse collection of native plants. Brian Zimmerman of Four Season Nursery, an avid native plant enthusiast, will be taking us through the gardens to identify the plants, explaining a bit about their habits, their flowering, and how well they attract pollinators. Too often native plants are thought of as those homely plants that attract pollinators, but lack beauty. Brian will dispel that notion. He is of the mindset natives serve a crucial role in servicing pollinators and bringing beauty into our gardens. No Charge **THIS WALK IS LIMITED TO 15 PEOPLE DUE TO THE VIRUS. RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL** Call 231-271-3738 or email bobolink2000@gmail.com.

Saturday, August 21, 4-6:30PM: Fundraiser: Paul Baicich Presents "Our Birding Foremothers"

Paul's engaging presentation, "Our Birding Foremothers" explores the work of our birding foremothers of the late 19th and early 20th century, and still inspires and informs us. Baicich, who is traveling from Maryland for this event, is a noted author, conservationist and speaker. Suggested donation: \$45.00. **This outdoor program is our annual fundraiser, and will include music by The True Falsettos, food, wine and a silent auction. Time of event extended over previous years by popular request. RESERVATIONS STRONGLY SUGGESTED.**

Saving Birds Thru Habitat Membership List 2021

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**Saving Birds Thru Habitat gratefully accepts gifts in honor or in memory of others.
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- Yes! I want to support Saving Birds Thru Habitat with a _____ Membership _____ Renewal at the following level:**
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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.

Saving Birds Adopts Sleeping Bear Birding Trail



Female American Redstart

Michigan's Sleeping Bear Birding Trail ("SBBT"), launched in 2013, spans an exceptional migratory flyway and thousands of public acres along the Lake Michigan coastline. The Trail is home to nesting Piping Plovers, an endangered shorebird that needs vast stretches of undisturbed beach for breeding. The Trail is anchored by Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, and an Important Bird Area ("IBA") with 71,000 acres of public land and 35 miles of beaches. The length of the Trail covers all 123 miles of Michigan Highway M-22 which runs from Manistee on the southern end, around the entire Leelanau Peninsula, to Traverse City at the north terminus.

For several years, this wonderful virtual trail (details and map found on our website) has kind of languished under volunteer care. However, at the last meeting of our Directors, our board members voted to take it on as one of our efforts. We are delighted to make it part of our work on behalf of birds. 



Sleeping Bear Birding Trail