



Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

May, 2014, Volume 13, Number 1

Our Pilot Program with a Detroit Inner City School

On the morning of May 8th, a school bus collected an entire fourth grade class from Detroit's Ronald Brown Academy and drove the students to Ohio's Magee Marsh Wildlife Area east of Toledo. Located on Lake Erie, Magee Marsh is one of the nation's premier places to watch spring birds, migrating from the Tropics back to their breeding grounds in northern U.S. and Canada. There, these young students enjoyed an experience that every birder in the country would give his or her eyeteeth to have. This field trip was just one part of a project we initiated with the Academy. Saving Birds member (and Board Member) David Watkins conducted several in-class sessions with the students before the trip to teach them the "Hows and Whys" of bird migration, how to use binoculars, and how to use a field guide. We have asked the students to write a follow-up report, which will be included in our fall newsletter. We will also conduct three additional field trips with the same students to Detroit area MetroParks after the Ohio trip.



Above are the Ronald Brown Academy students who will be on the Saving Birds sponsored field trip to Magee Marsh, Ohio.

Long-time Saving Birds partner Fairmount Minerals purchased logo tee shirts for the students and Michigan native plants nursery Wildtype donated an oak tree for the schoolyard. Oak trees are significant producers of Lepidoptera (butterfly and moth larva), which are essential to migrating songbirds.

Robin Schwartz of Detroit Fox TV 2 covered this event. Follow this link to see Robin's report: <http://www.myfoxdetroit.com/story/25519493/detroit-4th-graders-visit-birdwatching-hot-spot>



Website: www.savingbirds.org

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Kay Charter

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Edited by: Kathie Snedeker, Kay Charter



Saving Birds Trail Docent Rick Evans with students from The Children's House, our first school group of the 2014 season. Rick led the students on a birding hike on Charter Sanctuary. Time was then spent in the Bird House where they participated in the Great Migration Game to learn about the hazards and rewards of migration, followed by a half hour discussion about the importance of spiders to the ecosystems in which they occur.



Why Not Cultivars in the Garden?

by Brian Zimmerman and Kay Charter

Cultivars are plants bred by humans for one or more desirable traits.

Gardening with native plants has become increasingly popular over the past decade or so. It's an alternative to conventional gardening, pursued to create space that is attractive to birds, butterflies and other creatures. Incorporating native plants should be easy by simply visiting your local nursery and purchasing the native plant or plants you would like to use. Unfortunately, it is not easy.

Let's say you head to the nursery to search for swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*) because you want habitat for monarch butterflies. But you don't find *Asclepias incarnata*, instead you find *Asclepias incarnata* 'Ice Ballet'. This milkweed is not a native, it is a native cultivar, bred selectively for particular traits.

What are cultivars? How are they created? *Asclepias incarnata* 'Ice Ballet', (creamy white flower color instead of the pink flower of the native), originated as a mutant. When discovered it was separated from the native population and specifically bred to keep the creamy white flower trait. This is what makes 'Ice Ballet' a cultivar. No matter where in



Native Common Milkweed,



Nativar Milkweed "Ice Ballet"

the world you find 'Ice Ballet' all are exactly the same. These new cultivars give gardeners a plethora of visual and olfactory pleasures but may not be of any use to the wildlife they should be attracting.

We know that wildlife and native plants have co-evolved over many millennia. Plants developed unique leaves, flowers and scents to attract pollinators. The question is whether or not butterflies (and other wildlife) will interact with cultivars in the same way that they will native plants. The fact is that we simply don't know. If you are seeking plants that you are certain will serve wildlife, as, for example, monarch butterflies, then you want to purchase only true native plants.

In order to be sure you are purchasing native plants, check the names carefully. If you see a capitalized name in quotations after the botanical name, like 'Ice Dance' or 'Soulmate' you know that plant is a cultivar and not a true native.

If you question whether or not a plant is native, search the Latin name on the tag on the USDA website. There you can usually find the origin of the plant.



Meet Stuart Campbell, Our New Staff Member



Photo by Sheen Watkins

Last month, we hired Stuart Campbell to work part-time as a much needed Assistant Director. Stuart recently returned to the Grand Traverse area after spending six years in Maryland where he worked for three years for Blue Water Baltimore, an organization whose mission is to, "restore the quality of Baltimore's rivers, streams and harbor to foster a healthy environment, a strong economy, and thriving communities." Baltimore Blue Water is a big proponent of native plants, so Stuart was in sync with our message about the need to return our landscapes to native plantings.

As a child, Stuart connected to the natural world during long afternoons exploring the woods behind his family home, and outings in northern Michigan. Later, He graduated from U of M with a degree in Environmental Studies and eventually moved east to seek a position with the Maryland Department of Natural Services. After two years with that agency, he then served as an intern at the Alaska Wilderness League in Washington, D. C. During this stint, he concluded he must spend his life working for the environment.

Stuart is founder of Perennial Harvest, an organization whose goal is to provide miniature ecosystems, food for people, birds, and others in the natural world, and to connect home and business owners to their surroundings. He offers a no fee initial landscape walk-about for interested property owners. Through Perennial Harvest, owners of qualifying properties can receive a Saving Birds habitat certification. Through this program, Stuart says he is creating "bed and breakfasts for birds."

Because of his education, background, and organizational experience, Stuart has become an invaluable asset to Saving Birds during his short tenure.

Stuart will present two programs at the Bird House this summer; the first, "What Can We Do to Stop Bee Decline?" will be at 2 PM on Sunday, June 29. The second, "Perennial Harvest," about his organization, will be Saturday, July 20 at 2 PM.





From the Executive Director's Desk

by Kay Charter

Finally! – Tree Swallows! After the longest, coldest, snowiest winter in Michigan's recorded history, all who stayed here were more than ready for spring, and with it, calling peepers, unfolding buds, and – most importantly for some of us – the dawn chorus of birdsong. But this year, spring was delayed, and so were the avian melodies of the season. Yes, the cardinals were singing, along with the goldfinches, chickadees and other hearty species that annually stay behind to tough it out. Most years at least some migrants are back by the end of March, but not so at the end of the devil winter of 2013-2014.

In the middle of April, a pair of bluebirds did arrive to check out one of our nest boxes. Ruby-crowned Kinglets came next, followed by White-throated Sparrows. But the Neotropical migrants, birds that winter in Central and South America, were still well to the south of us long after their usual arrival. And then, as if by magic, they began to trickle in. First there was word of a Brown Thrasher from my friend Dave Barrons, then a lone Yellow-rumped Warbler outside our window, and finally – *finally!*

- on a sunny morning two weeks after they normally return, a pair of Tree Swallows soared over our prairie.

I have many favorite bird species. In some ways, they are all favorites. But few birds bring the kind of joy that returning Tree Swallows do when they spread their effervescent songs across the landscape, swooping down, climbing back up and diving again after freshly hatched aquatic insects.

Spring migration is the most important time of year for many birders. But in a very real way, I am not a birder, for I don't live to simply watch these marvelous creatures. Rather, I live to see that they have returned once again from that harrowing trek, crossing the great Gulf of Mexico twice in their travels. Just knowing they have survived that unbelievable trip to reproduce and maybe even expand their respective populations is balm for my winter weary soul.

Welcome back, dear little swallows, and to those yet to come: Thrushes, orioles, grosbeaks, tanagers, buntings and all the others that will soon be here to fill the air with music more rich and beautiful than anything ever created by man, even Beethoven's spectacular Ode to Joy.

I wish you all a warm – and birdsong-filled – spring and summer.



Tree Swallow



Letter From Our Board President

by Gina Erb

After twelve years on the Board of SBTH, six as Board President, this is my last letter and I wonder, "Is our message getting out there"? To my delight I know it is. I recently had a vacation in Costa Rica at a resort called Xandari in the Central Highlands near the Poas Volcano. It was beautiful. Formerly a coffee plantation, it is now a reforested resort concerned about preserving the natural habitat. Their efforts are paying off. When it first opened there were hardly any birds, now there are many nesting in the native trees and shrubs they have planted. There are daily bird walks, they participate in the Backyard Bird Count, and they have developed a program called "Saving the Planet". Every guest can plant a tree to contribute to the program and my husband, John, and I were more than happy to participate. We planted a Guapinol (*Hymenaea Courbaril*), which supplies many species of birds with food and shelter. A placard is placed next to it with the date and a name. I chose to make ours "Save Birds". We will be sent a picture once a year to track its growth. The message is clear: "If you build it they will come".

Saving Birds' message echoes the message of Xandari.

Over these past twelve years many organizations and private property owners have come to SBTH for advice, including Fairmount Minerals and many others, all trying to do the right thing to make a better environment. They ask and we deliver. School kids, garden clubs and other environmental organizations from all over the state have heard our programs.

I'm proud to have served SBTH over the past twelve years. At our annual meeting this June, I will be handing over the gavel to the capable hands of Linda Ketterer, a Dale Carnegie instructor and bird enthusiast.

I want to thank all board members, past and present, for their dedication, and Kay for tirelessly pursuing our mission. Mostly I thank you all for your support of SBTH and know that you will continue your support as our board leadership transitions. Saving Birds thru Habitat's Board of Directors is in good hands for many years to come.

Gina Erb 



Gina and John Erb at Xandari

SBTH 2014 Calendar of Events

*All activities will begin at 9 A.M. at the Habitat Discovery Center, 5020 North Putnam, unless otherwise noted.
Call 231-271-3738 for more information.*

Friday, May 23 – Sunday, May 25: Beaver Island Birding Trail Dedication.

See more about this special weekend later in this edition. Check out activities and events for this great new birding trail at: www.beaverislandbirdingtrail.org

Saturday, May 24 - Saturday, May 31: Native Plant Sale

7757 Harry's Road, Traverse City, MI. Open Monday – Friday, 9 – 5 and Saturday 9 – 4. Four Season Nursery is closed on Sunday. Four Season Nursery has the best selection of genuine native flowers, grasses, trees and shrubs in northern Michigan. The nursery's program, "Plant Michigan. Plant Native." is designed to encourage property owners to include native plantings in their landscapes.

Thursday, May 29 – Sunday, June 1: Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival

Join us for the Fourth Annual Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival. Check out the article about the festival's new digiscoping offering in the article later in this edition. Then go to www.mibirdfest.com to check out other activities, and to register for the festival.

Friday, June 6, 10 - 4: Native Plant Program and Sale at Leelanau Conservation District

Vern Stephens, owner of Designs by Nature, will be joined by forester Kama Ross to present a program on native and invasive species at the District from 10 AM – Noon. Native plants produced by Designs by Nature will be on sale from 1 PM – 4 PM. 121 N. Joseph Street, Lake Leelanau, MI.

Saturday, June 28, 10 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still nesting at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve habitat on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena, MI.

Sunday, June 29, 2 PM: What Can We Do About Bee Decline?

We have all heard that bees are in decline, but few people know we have thousands of species of native bees – and they are declining, too. Fewer people know we can help our native bees by providing them with homes and food. Join us to learn how easy it is to build beehives and create habitat to help these very efficient pollinators. At the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena, MI.

Saturday, July 5, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary.

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve habitat on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.

Saturday, July 12, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve habitat on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.

Saturday, July 19, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary.

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve habitat on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.



Common Yellowthroat, Photo by Jim Stevenson

Sunday, July 20, 2 PM: Perennial Harvest

Would you like to create a garden that is more closely aligned with our local ecosystems and does not generally require watering or weeding? Perennial Harvest founder Stuart Campbell will show you how to design a landscape that combines edible and medicinal native plants. Perennial Harvest also offers rain barrels, herb spirals and rain gardens. Join us to learn how you can transform your yard into an edible pantry while providing habitat for birds, butterflies and other creatures. At the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena, MI.

SBTH 2014 Calendar of Events *Cont.*

Saturday, July 26, 11 AM – 5 PM: ISEA Classic Boat Show

Again this year, Saving Birds will partner with Inland Seas by having a booth with information about our organization at ISEA's annual Classic Boat Show. At the dock in Suttons Bay.

Saturday, August 9, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve the habitats on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.

Saturday, August 16, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve the habitats on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.

Saturday, August 23, 2 PM: Prairie Pantry

What is on the menu in the grasslands? Join Kay Charter and Bobbie Poor for a gourmet tour, featuring Nature's green grocers, local "foodies" and clean-up crew. A short prairie garden walk will follow this indoor program at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena, MI.

Saturday, August 30, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary

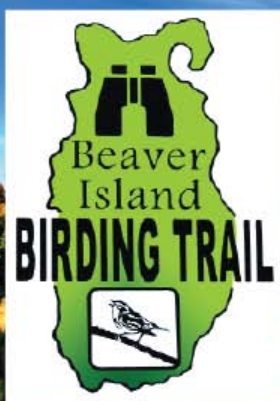
Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve habitat on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.

Saturday, September 6, 9 AM: Bird and Habitat Hike at Charter Sanctuary

Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter, for a hike at Charter Sanctuary. We will check out which birds are still present at the Sanctuary. We will discuss various habitats, and you can learn how to improve the habitats on your property. Meet at the Bird House, 5020 N. Putnam Road, Omena MI.



Canada Warbler, Photo by Jim Stevenson



*O*ur ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.
— Aldo Leopold

One of our biggest projects over the winter was serving as main consultant for the new Beaver Island Birding Trail. The website launched in February, and has attracted thousands of visitors since then. Over Memorial Weekend, there will be special field trips, a Friday night banquet and a Sunday seminar on using eBird and

presentations by noted speakers. Check out the website to learn more about birding and other nature related activities on this beautiful island. Field trip and banquet participants **MUST BE REGISTERED** to attend. www.beaverislandbirdingtrail.org



Laysan Albatross, Wisdom, Still Nesting at 63



We know; we have featured 63-year-old Laysan Albatross, “Wisdom,” in these pages before. But we’re including her again because we think she is the perfect ambassador for clean waters around the world. Wisdom has logged millions of miles over the Pacific Ocean during her lifetime in search of enough fish eggs and squid to feed herself and her many offspring. Her age is a



testament to the fact that she is either very wise or very lucky not to have ingested plastic waste as the bird in the photo in the inset did.

Ingestion of plastic trash by seabirds has increased dramatically in the last fifty years. While it doesn't ordinarily kill the birds

outright, it fills their stomachs so that they do not feel hungry and then they starve to death. Plastic trash comes from waste tossed overboard from ships, from offshore dumping, from litter left on beaches and from waste washed out to sea via rivers.

These photos remind us to protect all wildlife by disposing of trash properly. 🌿

Sandia Wetlands Update

Last summer, Don and Ellen Weinacht received our Conservation Partners of the Year Award for their generosity and hard work restoring Sandia Wetlands as a series of ponds on their property in West Texas. I visited this wonderful new wetland again last month and found various ducks and a small flock of Black-necked Stilts foraging in one of the ponds.

Black-necked Stilts are delicate birds that wade on long, thin pink legs through shallow water, probing the soft earth underneath with needlelike bills in search of aquatic insects and crustaceans. Stilts are just one of the species that have returned to the area thanks to this restoration.

We continue to believe that Don and Ellen – and their trusty team of volunteers – deserve high praise for their continued work on behalf of shorebirds and waterfowl on their ranch. They are now seeking ways to maximize the benefit of this wetland for additional avian species, especially the ones that Ellen calls her “pretty birds.” That would be species like Mountain Bluebirds, Bullock's Orioles and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers that occur on the Weinacht's property. 🌿



Stilt

Digiscope Lessons with Swarovski Expert



The Fourth Annual Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival, May 28 - June 1, includes a special Optics Day. This all day event will be held Saturday, May 31, from 9 AM through 4 PM at Saving Birds Thru Habitat at 5020 N. Putnam Road. At 10 AM and 2 PM, Swarovski digiscoping expert, Clay Taylor will offer instructions on pairing your camera or cell phone with your spotting scope to

get close-up shots of birds, dragonflies, butterflies or other aspects of the natural world. There is no fee for this event. Enerdyne owner and optics expert Dick Cookman will also have a large selection of binoculars and spotting scopes on hand for you to try out. Charter Sanctuary will be open all day for attendees to test drive these optics. There is no fee to join this special event. Check out the festival website to learn about other activities and field trips: mibirdfest.com.



Black-throated Blue Warbler, Photo by Jim Stevenson



Blackpoll Warbler. Photo by Jim Stevenson

Thank You

Memorial and Honorary Gifts:

- Roy and Dee Meyer in memory of **Jim Poor**
- Ann and Doug McInnis in memory of **Jim Poor**
- John and Gina Erb in memory of **Jim Poor**
- Ron and Mary Tonneberger in memory of **George Anderson**
- Larry Bussey in memory of **Thelma Putnam**
- Paul Hayner and Karen Thomson in honor of **Dave Watkins**
- One Eleven Group in honor of **Gina and John Erb**
- Brian and Susan Price in honor of **Gina Erb**
- Caroline Brady in memory of **Roberta McKay**

In Kind:

Enerdyne

Ronald Brown Academy Partners:

- Stony Point Foundation (John and Francie Downing)
- Fairmount Minerals
- Michigan Audubon
- Wildtype Nursery (Bill Schneider)

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:**
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chickadee (\$25) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bluebird (\$50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Common Yellowthroat (\$100) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bobolink (\$250) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Piping Plover (\$500) | <input type="checkbox"/> Loon (\$1000) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bald Eagle (\$5000) | Other (\$ _____) |

Nest Builders: Those who make an annual pledge at the Bobolink level (\$250) or higher

In memory / honor (please circle one) of:

Acknowledgment card to go to: _____

Would you prefer your membership/gift to be anonymous?

Enclosed is my check for \$ _____
(payable to **Saving Birds thru Habitat**)

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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: bobolink3@prodigy.net

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Saving-Birds-Thru-Habitat

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If you would like to receive your newsletter as a PDF via email, please let us know at: bobolink3@prodigy.net. Be sure to include your email address. Electronic versions will reduce paper consumption and will save the organization printing and mailing costs.

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.

The Photographic Magic of Jim Stevenson



Louisiana Waterthrush



Baltimore Oriole

Texas photographer and naturalist Jim Stevenson has been generously offering his bird images to us for a number of years at no charge. Although we have always credited his work, we have never provided any information about him. Following is a paragraph he wrote for this edition:

The Galveston Ornithological Society is a Nonprofit dedicated to Conservation and Public Environmental Education. They have an e-mail list where the Director, Jim Stevenson, sends out bird pictures with educational commentary for free. Other activities of the GOS are mentioned, such as budget birding trips, though participation is strictly optional. All names of participants are withheld and nobody will ever get your e-mail. Should you wish to “try” this popular service, e-mail Jim at galornsoc@earthlink.net and try it out! You can always be removed anytime you wish.

Photos by Jim Stevenson



Magnolia Warbler



Blackburnian Warbler