

# Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

November, 2014, Volume 13, Number 2

## Ronald Brown Academy Project



Entire Ronald Brown Academy fourth grade class at Magee Marsh.

As most of you remember, on the morning of May 8th this past spring, we sponsored a field trip for teacher Jennifer Snapp's fourth grade class from Detroit's Ronald Brown Academy to Ohio's Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. Because of the eight pre-trip in-class sessions with Saving Birds Board Member, Dave Watkins, these youngsters were primed and ready for an experience of their lives at this premier spring

*Continued next page...*

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



Some students check out the nesting American Woodcock. She was well camouflaged in the grass.

## Ronald Brown Academy Project *Continued...*

migration stopover site. Most of the kids had never paid attention to birds before that day or even had an opportunity to see them, but Dave's tutoring helped them find and ID even tiny warblers at Magee. They were all excited over every new sighting, including even woodpeckers and Canada geese.

Next May 7, we will be working again with Mrs. Snapp's students. We will also "adopt" another class from the Academy. The photos here are of the kids at Magee Marsh, as well as from their day planting the oak tree donated by Bill Schneider of Wildtype, a Michigan native plants nursery. There is also a photo taken at Lake Erie MetroPark one of two Detroit MetroPark field trips we sponsored.



*Checking out an eagle's nest.*



*Student sits on man-made example of an eagle's nest at Lake Erie MetroPark.*



*Talking birds with one of our wonderful volunteer field trip leaders.*



*Our Board Member, Dave Watkins (on the left), spent many hours working on this project. We have him to thank for its great success. On the right is nationally known author, speaker and educator - and our good friend, Paul Baicich - who helped smooth the way during the Ohio field trip.*



*Planting donated oak tree in school yard.*



*Along with all the time and resources invested in the Ronald Brown Academy project, we kept up our local school programs. Above is one of the six classes to visit the Discovery Center last spring. Students are engaged in a Q&A about birds and their habitats with Director Charter and volunteer leader Ann Hooper.*

## From the Executive Director's Desk



by Kay Charter

Early this year, Saving Birds member Dennis Turner contacted me to ask if we would accept the gift of six acres of property he and his wife Kathy purchased last fall. The land is on North

Cove Trail, across from the Turner's summer cottage. Our county was still under snow when Dennis sent his email, but in May I went to check it out after the snow had finally cleared. The property is swampland, and is filled with cedars and hemlocks. Although it's hardly a prime building lot, it is fantastic for nesting veeries, certain warblers, and other migrant songbirds. Most of all, it is perfect for nesting Winter Wrens.

At only four inches long, Winter Wrens are one of the smallest songbirds in North America. But one would imagine their songs



Winter Wren, photo by Jim Stevenson

coming from something much larger as their beautiful, flutelike notes carry afar in the damp forests they inhabit.

Because of my special affinity for these tiny creatures, there was, for me, a special kind of magic with this gift.

Winter Wrens were, after

all, the inspiration for my husband and me to sell our lakefront property more than twenty years ago and purchase the land where we established Charter Sanctuary. Eight years later, as a direct result of the efforts on our sanctuary, Saving Birds Thru Habitat was born. For the organization to now own a piece of land where these little birds can nest safely in perpetuity is like closing the circle. We sold our home – where Winter Wrens nested – and bought a place where they would not be able to nest. But with the Turner's generous gift, Saving Birds now owns a piece of land where they can breed forever.



## Letter From Our Board President



by Linda Ketterer

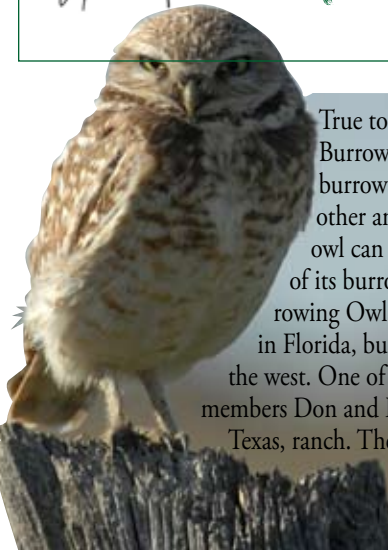
It is an honor to be sending you my first message as President of the Board of Directors for Saving Birds Thru Habitat. All on the Board and in the organization owe great thanks to Gina Erb. Gina

ended her term this summer after working diligently for the organization for twelve years on the board, six as its President. We are so grateful for all she has done for SBTH and are delighted that she is continuing to support us all through committee work. I know that I have big shoes to fill!

I recently obtained a copy of the 40-year-old book *They Saved Our Birds; The Battle Won and the War to Win* by Helen Osso. It recaps historical trends that threatened, and in many cases destroyed, bird populations, and the efforts to save and restore the birds. Everything from the devastation caused by fashion as women adorned their hats with feathers in the late 19th century, to the unregulated hunting of many species, to the devastation and subsequent ban of DDT in the early 1960's is covered. The author concludes with the caution that "many species of our birds are threatened through loss of habitat. They are being crowded out as the demand grows for more houses, more oil, more roads, more recreation areas – more everything it seems except time for man to know himself in solitude and in nature." I was struck by the statement that we, together, are carrying on the fight and making a difference today through the work of SBTH.

In this newsletter, you'll read of many exciting and far-reaching efforts that SBTH is making to foster better understanding of the issues of habitat loss and the need for habitat creation on a localized level. Of particular excitement is our work to inspire new generations in the joys of learning about birds, habitat, and our role as stewards. We are thrilled to be involved in the work with the Ronald Brown Academy in Detroit under the leadership of Board Member Dave Watkins. We hope that you are as excited as we are – and that you will help spread the word about SBTH to friends near and far. We'd love to have them join the effort!

Linda Ketterer 




True to its name, the engaging little Burrowing Owl nests underground in burrows created by prairie dogs and other animals. During the day, this small owl can often be seen sitting at the edge of its burrow, acting as nest sentry. Burrowing Owls can be found in a few places in Florida, but they occur in many places in the west. One of those places is on Saving Birds members Don and Ellen Weinacht's Balmorhea, Texas, ranch. The Weinachts are thrilled with their avian guest, whose burrow is about a quarter mile from their house.

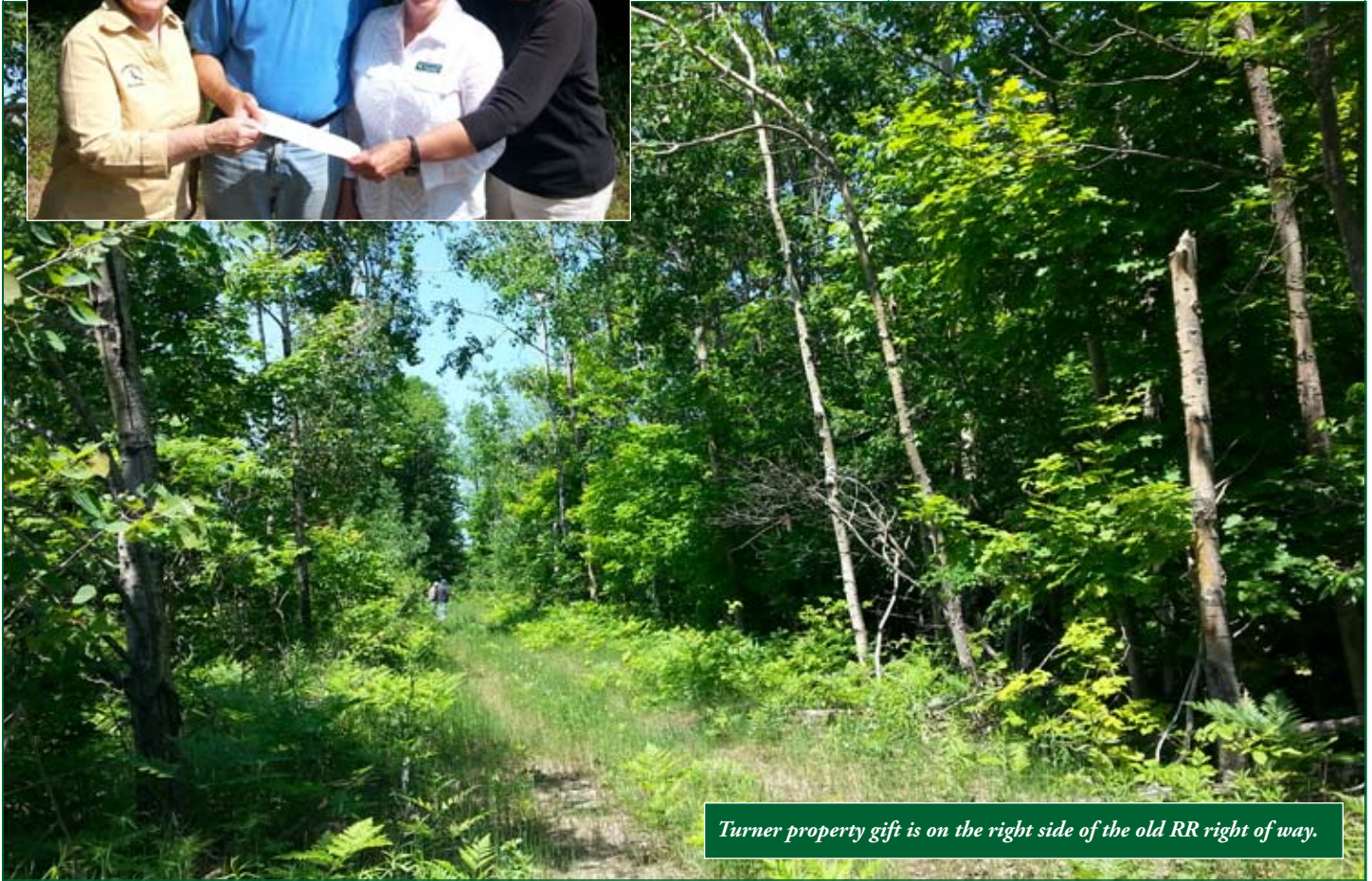


Saving Birds Board President, Linda Ketterer presents outgoing President, Gina Erb with an award honoring her twelve years of service on our Board of Directors. Gina served as President for six of those years. We deeply appreciate her hard work on our behalf.

# Turner Property Welcome Addition to SBTH



Dennis and Kathy Turner turn over the deed to their six acres of wet woodland to Executive Director Kay Charter (left) and Saving Birds Board President Linda Ketterer (second from right). This property, located off Cove Road between Northport and Omena, will be preserved in perpetuity for nesting warblers, winter wrens and other migrating songbirds. 



*Turner property gift is on the right side of the old RR right of way.*

## Conservation Partners of the Year

In July, Brian Zimmerman was honored as our Conservation Partner of the Year. Brian owns Brian Zimmerman & Associates, a premier landscape design company. He also owns Four Season Nursery, which has a very large selection of native trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses. He has been a great supporter of our organization and our mission. Next summer, be sure to visit our Discovery Center. While there, check out Brian's Garden, which is full of beautiful native plants from his nursery. Brian had the garden installed several years ago as a surprise gift to Saving Birds.



Jeri Megill, who co-manages Four Season Nursery along with Julie Altman, received our Conservation Partner of the Year award for the nursery. Many thanks to Brian, Jeri and Julie for making native plants available to those who want to make a difference for our birds, butterflies and other creatures that depend on them.



## What's in Your Yard?

by Mike Berst

The primary message of Saving Birds is that native plants host insects essential to birds. This connection between healthy native plant communities and the survival of migratory songbirds is now well established, as is the destructive effect to the environment caused by the cultivation of alien plant species, virtually all of which are potentially invasive.

As people become aware of this growing problem, and decide they want to be responsible stewards of their land, a movement to "plant native" is growing around the country. Some nurseries have geared up to meet this demand, the range of plants available is often limited or includes species inappropriate for our region. Plants that are specialized cultivars of native species may not provide all of the benefits we seek when we make the commitment to garden and landscape with native plants. Cultivars may also have a negative effect on the gene pool of the wild plants.

One overlooked approach to this challenge is to learn to recognize, preserve and nurture the native plants that are already on your property, or native plants that continually arise from the existing seed bank in the soil. We can schedule a visit and survey your property to help you identify the desirable native plants that are volunteers, plants that are showing up in your lawn or garden all on their own.

All photos by Mike Berst.

*Mike Berst is a native wildflower enthusiast and photographer. He is a member of Saving Birds Thru Habitat, and has offered his services conducting wildflower surveys of private properties. Please contact our office for more details.*



# Going Native

*Large-flowered Beardtongue*



*Brown Hooded Owlet caterpillar on Smooth Aster*



*Lesser Fringed Gentian*



*Monarch caterpillar on Common Milkweed*



*Wood Lily*



*Common Buckeye on Flat-topped Aster*



# *Saving Birds Thru Habitat* Membership List 2014

## **NEST BUILDERS**

### **Donors \$250 and up:**

Kathie Albright and Michael Berst  
Bruce and Judy Balas  
Dave and Patty Barrons  
Robert and Nancy Beekman  
Marlin and Pat Bussey  
Jim and Kay Charter  
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Brian Zimmerman and Ass'ts.  
Designs by Nature  
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### **Donors up to \$249**

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Thomas and Sarah Woods  
Northport Women's Club  
Oryana Natural Foods Market



# Thank You

## We Appreciate the Following Memorial and Honorary Gifts:

Kathleen Pratt in honor of Mary Pratt

Cherryll and Alan Frick in honor of Ruby Halbert's 90th birthday

Barbara Enders in memory of Larry Enders

John and Patricia Foote in honor of Charlotte Foote

Fred Neidhardt in memory of Geri Chipault

Micki Special in honor of Arlene

Vicki Flier in honor of Bobbie Poor

David Wible and Mary Cusick in honor of Gina Erb



In this season of giving, please consider a donation to help us continue and strengthen our educational efforts.

## Beaver Island Birding Trail News



Dr. David Ewert, Senior Scientist for The Nature Conservancy, presents a program about the Beaver Island archipelago during the dedication weekend for the Beaver Island Birding Trail. Dave also led a couple of birding hikes during the weekend. The dedication was a great success, and introduced islanders to the economic value of the birds that occur on their islands. This kind of awareness can inspire residents to protect habitat crucial to migrating and nesting birds.



Birders in the field during Trail dedication weekend.

### 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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Summer Address (if different)

Street \_\_\_\_\_

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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.*

## SBTH Backyard Habitat Certification Program

**ELK RAPIDS**  
First community in the world certified by Saving Birds Thru Habitat

Properties owned by this Village host significant numbers and varieties of native plant species. These plants support healthy bird populations by producing an abundance and diversity of insects.

[savingbirds.org](http://savingbirds.org) Perennial Harvest

Our backyard habitat certification program has moved right along since it was established in the spring of 2014, thanks to our partnership with Perennial Harvest, a local native landscaping company. The most notable certification was for the Village of Elk Rapids, the first community in the world to be certified by Saving Birds. Also certified was the six acres surrounding Pine Hollow Institute in Elk Rapids and the gardens at Oryana Natural Food Store in Traverse City as well as many private landscapes. Contact Perennial Harvest ([www.perennialharvest.org](http://www.perennialharvest.org)) if you are interested in having your property certified.



*Our backyard certification reaches all the way to Beaver Island. This sign is on Pam and Brad Grassmick's acreage in the center of the island. It has few invasive species, lots of native vegetation and is full of birds.*