

Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

May, 2015, Volume 14, Number 1

SPRING IS FOR THE BIRDS



Ronald Brown Academy students at last year's Magee Marsh field trip.



Chestnut-sided Warbler, photo by Jim Stevenson



Alma and Leno Davis are joining our Ronald Brown Academy project this year. Alma is from Mexico and Leno is Bahamian. He is pursuing a PhD in Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. The couple has worked with students of all ages on environmental issues. We welcome them to our RBA team!

This is that magical time of year when millions of migratory birds sweep north on their way to breeding grounds across North America. It is, without question, the perfect season to introduce new birders to the wonders of warblers, orioles, buntings and a host of other species traveling from as far south as Argentina to as far north as the Arctic tundra. It is the best time for young and old alike to connect, or reconnect, to our marvelous migrants.

One of the best ways to double down on connecting others to birds, especially youngsters, is to visit a migratory hotspot. Migratory hotspots are places where birds collect in large numbers after crossing the Gulf, like High Island in Texas. Other hotspots are places where birds are stopped by onshore winds. There, they wait for favorable conditions before continuing their journeys. Ohio's Magee Marsh Wildlife Area, east of Toledo, is one of the nation's premier places to check out spring migrants. It is for that reason Saving Birds hosted a fourth grade class from Ronald Brown Academy (a Detroit public school) on a trip to Magee Marsh last year.

On Friday, May 8, we will be hosting our second field trip to Magee with students from the Academy. This year, we are again taking fourth graders, as well as students from last year's trip. We are providing each with a birding guide, a beginner's workbook, and a tee shirt. Every student will also have a pair of loaner binoculars to use for the day.

Also, Board Member David Watkins will spend pre-trip time with the kids in the classroom, teaching them how to use birding field guides and binoculars so they are

primed and ready as soon as they get off their chartered bus.

Last year, Dave asked the students to select their favorite bird, and to an individual, they picked Yellow Warbler. Detroit's Fox News 2 joined us for that trip and interviewed several of the students. When the reporter asked one of them what she had seen, the girl answered, "I saw a Yellow Warbler, only it wasn't yellow. It was brown and white had yellow on the head;" a perfect description of Chestnut-sided Warbler. It was apparent that the kids thought all warblers were yellow warblers, one of the things Dave worked through during three subsequent field trips we provided.

Website: www.savingbirds.org

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Kay Charter

“Saving the Environment, One Backyard at a Time”



Dr. Douglas Tallamy

Nationally known speaker and best selling author Douglas Tallamy will wrap up this year’s Green Elk Rapids Days with his program “Saving the Environment, One Backyard at a Time,” on Monday, May 18 at 6:30 PM at the HERTHA Building, 401 River Street in Elk Rapids. The public is

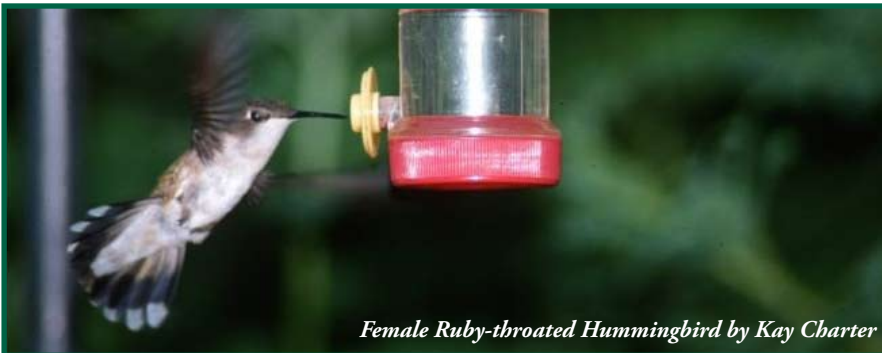
cordially invited to attend.

Dr. Tallamy is the Director of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware in Wilmington where he has taught for 33 years. He is the author of *Bringing Nature Home*, co-author of *The Living Landscape*, and author of 80 scientific articles. Chief among his research goals is to better understand the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. His research also examines the impact of invasive and alien plants on our food chain, and the degree to which alien plant species are reducing populations of native herbivores and the animals that depend on them. Many of our native species, especially birds, bees, and butterflies, are experiencing declines.

Those attending will learn how his practical recommendations can help every single one of us to reverse those declines.

Dr. Tallamy’s program will be part of an annual village council meeting dedicated to work done by the Green Elk Rapids committee, a local volunteer group working to raise awareness about environmental issues and green practices. Prior to Tallamy’s presentation, Kay Charter, executive director of Saving Birds Thru Habitat, will present village officials and the committee with a sign designating the village as the first in the world with Certified Bird Habitat. The Leelanau County-based organization is awarding the certification because of abundant native trees, shrubs and flowers on village-owned properties. Dr. Tallamy has received many awards including the Garden Club of America Margaret Douglas Medal for Conservation and the Tom Dodd Jr. Award of Excellence.

The program is free to the public, but space is limited. 



Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird by Kay Charter


Food Coloring Warning

The Smithsonian Institution has issued a caution not to add food color to hummingbird (oriole) nectar. These dyes are manufactured from petrochemicals, thus are harmful to the little birds.

Eagle Scout Project at SBTH

Gregory Hooper, from Boy Scout Troop 33, chose a significant project on Charter Sanctuary and Saving Birds’ property for his Eagle Scout badge. His goal was to add steps to the boardwalk just below the Charter Home, spread chips and install a nice bench for bird watching over the wetland. Added to that project was clearing out a larger spot for benches on the property near our small pond, just down the side hill from our nature center.

Gregory rounded up the required number of volunteers, cleaned out sod where the new chips would go, solicited funds for the benches and snagged lunches for his crews. The finished result was wonderful.

The photo shows one of his volunteers sitting on the new bench above the newly installed steps after the fresh new chips had been spread. 





From the Executive Director's Desk

by Kay Charter

Favorite Birds

In the middle of February, I left the cold and snow behind for a month-long trek to the Southwest. This was my annual break from my desk, as well as a getaway from wintery weather of Leelanau County. It was also a time to reconnect with friends and family members, and – perhaps best of all – a time to see those avian species on my list of favorites that do not occur this far north. My first stop was to spend a week with Beaver Island friends Pam and Brad Grassmick, who had rented a condo in my old birding haunt, Rockport, Texas.



Great Kiskadee, photo by Jim Stevenson

The area hosts many overwintering birds, including endangered Whooping Cranes. But as beautiful and elegant as they are, Whoopers were not at the top of my list. That place was occupied by the most colorful and gregarious flycatcher north of the Mexican border – the Great-crested Kiskadee. In spite of all the issues facing many avian species today, this beautiful flycatcher is doing so well it is expanding its range. Once largely confined to the Lower Rio Grande Valley, kiskadees

now nest far to the north; at least three are currently regulars at Paradise Pond in nearby Port Aransas. Other favorites along the way were Phainopeplas in Tucson and Western Kingbird in San Diego.

As much as I love these southwestern species (to the extent that I had the cheerful, raucous kiskadee call installed as a ringtone on my cell phone), there is nothing quite like the return of nesting Neotropical species to Charter Sanctuary in the spring. But there is no possible way to choose a favorite from among them, from the cheerful, gregarious Tree Swallows to the very shy Mourning Warbler. Every one fills my heart with a passion that is unequaled by anything else in my life.

The question is not which bird is our favorite, but what are we doing to insure that those birds we love will continue to occur here in the Great Lakes, or in the southwest, or every other place on the planet. It's not so hard to get started, just pick up a copy of Doug Tallamy's first book, *Bringing Nature Home*, read it, and then begin to install native plantings in your personal landscape. By doing that, we can help insure that all of those birds will still be here well into the future.

Kay Charter 



Letter From Our Board President

by Linda Ketterer

Even though I can see stray icebergs floating around in the bay, we are definitely seeing evidence of SPRING!! Whether you are a birder, a gardener, or both, this is one of our most exciting times of the year. The joy of walking out and hearing morning birdsongs is such a delight! Our annual feast of seeing nesting birds return and the array of migrants passing through brings me renewed pleasure and excitement. It is the time to keep binoculars and field guides handy, and to brush up on field markings. A bonus for this time is that the early migrants can be more easily seen with no leaves on the trees.

I was thrilled last week to see a large flock of migrating Trumpeter Swans on West Bay just south of Suttons Bay. I just had to stop and watch them for several minutes – a once a year treat!

With the days warming slightly, I know that many of you will be getting out to clean up beds and prepare the ground for the return of perennials and to plan for this year's plantings. It is a special time for all my gardener friends. Saving Birds Thru Habitat has a terrific new resource – Grow a Bird Feeder -- to help you select the best plants for creating suitable habitat for birds, butterflies, bees and insects. Information on how to get your own copy of this brochure is elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope you'll check it out! Please note also that SBTH will be embarking on a replanting of our native plant garden at the Discovery Center. We so appreciate the generous support for this project of our partners.

At SBTH, we are busy preparing for the busy season – you'll see details about upcoming activities in this document. One item of note -- I hope that you will all be able to join us in Elk Rapids on May 18 to hear Doug Tallamy speak. I'm sure that many of you have read Doug's book, *Bringing Nature Home*. It will be wonderful to hear him in person in northwest Michigan. And, for the second year, Board Member Dave Watkins has been working with two classes at the Ronald Brown Academy in Detroit preparing them for their early May birding adventure in northwest Ohio. We love the support of so many donors and volunteers that make this project possible!

Get out and enjoy our Michigan spring! We look forward to seeing you on the trails!

Linda Ketterer 



Bobolink



Eastern Meadowlark

SBTH 2015 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 8: Our Ronald Brown Academy field trip to Magee Marsh Wildlife Area on Lake Erie.

Saturday, May 9 at 9AM – 1PM: Jack Pine planting for Kirtland’s Warbler.

Go to volunteernorthernmichigan.org for information.

Friday, May 15 at 9AM: Volunteer refresher day;

Open to all. Join us to learn which birds are most apt to nest each year on Charter Sanctuary, and in which of the various habitats each species will be found.

Saturday, May 16 at 8AM: Joint Field Trip

Join our Executive Director Kay Charter and Leelanau Conservancy docent Ed Ketterer for a bird hike on Lighthouse West Preserve. If the weather is right, it will be a great day for migrants.

Monday, May 18 at 6:30PM: Doug Tallamy speaks in Elk Rapids at the HERTHA Building

See article on page 2.



Saturday, May 23 and Sunday, May 24: “Warblers on the Water”:

Check beaverislandbirdingtrail.org to learn more about this event. Saving Birds is a partner in this event; our director will present a program about backyard certification and Board Member Brian Allen will lead field trips. Greg Butcher, International Migratory Species Coordinator for the US Forest Service will be our keynote speaker. No fees to attend.



Saturday, May 29 and Sunday, May 30: Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival.

Check out activities and events at mibirdfest.com.

Monday, June 1 through Friday, June 5 at 9AM – 3PM: Volunteers Needed

For redesigning gardens at our Discovery Center. Brian Zimmerman is creating the design. Meet at the Discovery Center

Wednesday, June 3 at 10AM - 12PM: Wonderful Warblers

More than forty warbler species nest regularly across North America. An even dozen of those nest in numbers in Leelanau County. Join our Executive Director, Kay Charter and Leelanau Conservancy docent Bobbie Poor to discover what those wonderful little nesters are, where they nest and what happens to them in the winter. At the Discovery Center.



Kirtland's Warbler

Saturday, June 6 at 7AM – 3PM: Kirtland’s Warbler Festival

In Roscommon. Visit kirtlandswarbler.org to see schedule or to register. (*Gene McGarry – photo*)

Saturdays, June 6, 13, 27, July 4, 11, 18: Join Kay Charter for a birding trip:

At Charter Sanctuary to check out nesting birds. Meet at 9AM at the Discovery Center.

Sunday, August 30: Saving Birds joins the Leelanau Township Community Foundation to celebrate their 70th anniversary.

Thursday, Sept. 10 – Monday, Sept. 14: Midwest Birding Symposium in Bay City.

Many field trips and activities. All activities will be held at Doubletree Inn. Doug Tallamy will be keynoter on Saturday evening. Search Midwest Birding Symposium 2015 for more details.

Enjoy More Bird Photos



*Our good friend Jim Stevenson,
Director of the Galveston
Ornithological Society, generously
provides virtually all the bird
photos for our newsletters.*



Baltimore Oriole, photo by Jim Stevenson

Jim regularly sends out PDFs with beautiful images of birds (and other wildlife, but mostly birds) along with interesting educational information about his subjects. You can be added to his list of recipients by simply emailing Jim at galornsoc@earthlink.net and asking to be added to his list.



Bay-breasted Warbler, photo by Jim Stevenson

Jim also offers numerous outstanding low-cost birding opportunities. If you are added to Jim's list, be assured that no one else will get your e-mail, and you can have your name removed any time you would like. Jim sends out one or two PDFs a week."



American Bittern, photo by Jim Stevenson



"Saving the Planet by Planting a Tree" Program

One year after...

This is a photograph of the tree you planted at Xandari Resort & Spa in Costa Rica a year ago, as part of our Sustainability Program.

Your tree has spread its roots and grown stronger, we are caring for it as part of our nature reserve.

If you wish to visit your tree, you'll be able to locate it within the grounds of Xandari Resort & Spa Alajuela, Costa Rica



Save Birds

Common name:
Guapinol

Scientific name:
Hymenaea courbaril



February 20, 2015

Environment Program

Our spring 2014 newsletter included a photo of members Gina and John Erb, sitting by a sapling they planted on the grounds of Xandari Resort and Spa in Costa Rica. When they planted this tree – native to that part of Costa Rica, they honored Saving Birds by putting our name on it. This is a picture of “our” tree, looking great, one year later.



Kirtland's Warbler Habitat Restoration

Last year's tree planting for the Kirtland's Warbler. Left to right are: Lisa Six, Sustainable Development Coordinator for Fairmount/Santrol Michigan, Kay Charter, Saving Bird's Executive Director, Keith Fisher, DNR biologist, Abigail Ertel, KW Coordinator for Huron Pines, and Jerry Weinrich, retired DNR biologist and onetime member of the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team.

For the fifth year in a row, Saving Birds has served as facilitator for a gift of jack pines for the Kirtland's Warbler recovery effort. The trees are paid for by Fairmount/Santrol (once Fairmount Minerals) as part of their carbon sequestration program. Saving Birds communicates with Sustainable Development Team members at the company regarding how many trees will be purchased each year. Then we work with private nurseries to grow the numbers of trees the company wants each year. After that, we work to coordinate timing for pickup of the trees and delivery to a predetermined Michigan Department

of Natural Resources site. This year the number of trees has grown to 70,000.

The Kirtland's Warbler was the first bird to be designated as endangered under the 1973 Endangered Species Act, but even after listing, numbers continued to drop. By 1987 only 183 males were counted and it was widely believed that the bird was headed for extinction. Happily, that was not to be, and today the count for males is around 2000 – twice the target number for recovery. Because this species is fire dependent (the birds only nest in young jack pine stands; once the trees reach about 20', they move on) and the region they nest in has homes dotted throughout, it will always require a managed habitat. Today, instead of fire to generate young jack pine habitat, trees are cut and sold for timber and new trees are planted in their place. Saving Birds is proud to be an important part of this effort.



Our new brochure “Grow a Bird Feeder” is now available.



You can download it directly from
our web site
www.savingbirds.org
or contact us for a hard copy.




Once Again – NO JELLY for Orioles

Please do not offer jelly to orioles. Such high sugar foods trigger a bird's satiety gland, causing it to feel satisfied even though it has ingested nothing of nutritional value. Imagine giving a child a bag of Jelly Bellies before dinner. After devouring a bag of candy, would that child then sit down at the table and eat a meal with much needed nutrients?

As well, sugar may be as addictive for birds as it is for humans. Orioles are frugivores, which means that fruit and nectar constitute a significant percentage of their diets. Fruits and natural nectars contain up to 30 percent sugars, while jellies have more than twice that amount. Also, some jellies contain artificial colors or chemical preservatives, both of which may be deleterious to birds.

More importantly, high sugar content sets up an ideal environment for bacterial growth. Birds developed the way they did by adapting to the environments in which they lived and the foods that sustained them. We do our best for them when we stick as closely as possible to their natural diets.

People offer jelly to orioles because the birds love it, but there is no way to check the effect of high sugar products on the internal organs of wild birds, or, potential bacterial growth. For the sake of our beautiful orange and black birds, offer them oranges and grapes, which are a natural food for them. 

**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**)

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Summer Address (if different)

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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.



Demonstration Garden Redesign

Early this year, we received several grants from the Wildflower Association of Michigan, the Little Garden Club, Friendly Garden Club and a donation from member Jim Heffner. We also received a commitment of \$250 in plant material from Four Season Nursery. Most importantly, landscape designer Brian Zimmerman generously offered to create a new design, complete with walking paths and seating, to make the garden more attractive to those who prefer a more formal look. We will be doing the work in the first week of June; during the weekdays from 9AM to 3PM.

Please join us if you are able and willing. Bring your own gloves and shovel. Lunch and drinks will be provided. 