

# Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

May, 2016, Volume 15, Number 1

## Top Speakers Head Up All-day Bird, Butterfly and Habitat Workshop



Greg Butcher




Dave Ewert

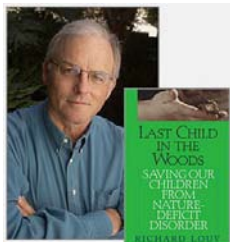


American Redstart


On Saturday, June 25, Saving Birds will host an all-day workshop featuring ornithologists Dr. David Ewert and Dr. Gregory Butcher. Dave will have just retired as Senior Scientist with The Nature Conservancy and Greg is International Migratory Species Coordinator for the U. S. Forest Service. Dave will present a program about the importance of migratory stopover sites for our Neotropical avian visitors, and Greg will talk about what is causing the monarch

butterfly decline and how we can help.

Also featured for that workshop will be landscape designer Brian Zimmerman, Michigan expert birder Brian Allen, native wildflower photographer Mike Berst, American native prairie expert, Russ Kirt and botanist, birder and dragonfly expert David Dister. Check out page 5 of our calendar of events for more information. 




## Richard Louv Comes to Traverse City

Our partner, Green Elk Rapids, is sponsoring two appearances by noted author Richard Louv; one in Elk Rapids and one in Traverse City. See page 4 of our calendar of events for more information. 



## Doug Tallamy Headlines Benefit for Saving Birds

New York Times best selling author Dr. Douglas Tallamy (*Bringing Nature Home*) will join us for a benefit evening on August 20. Wine and hearty hors d'oeuvres will be served, there will be a bird-related silent auction and Doug will speak about why Saving Birds is important to our avian friends. Details on our calendar, page 5. 

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

### Executive Director

Kay Charter

### Board Members:

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Technical Advisor: David Dister

Edited by: Kathie Snedeker,  
Kay Charter



*This is our third year working with the Detroit's Ronald Brown Academy, where we "adopt" a third grade class each year, take them on several field trips and work in class with them for seven or eight sessions over the summer. As these kids move into the fifth and sixth grade, we continue to work with them, along with the new third grade. This year will be the last for our very first class – now in the sixth grade. All six of these youngsters are National Junior Honor Society members. The new third graders are over the moon about this program, and we will miss our sixth graders as they move forward into middle school. We will see them off with a certificate of completion for our program, a small gift and our sincere hope that some of what they have learned will positively impact their lives.*

# Now You Can Add a Cuban Tody to Your List

One group of people especially happy to see Cuba opening up to visitation are birders who would love to catch sight of one of the island's 28 endemic bird species. Birds found only on the Cuban archipelago include Cuban Tody, Bee Hummingbird, Blue-headed Quail Dove and Cuban Pygmy Owl. If you are someone who would like to see the long-forbidden avian sights of Cuba, you can sign up for Saving Birds' member Paul Baicich's fall birding trip. Field trip leaders include not just Paul, but Cuban biologist Ernesto Reyes, the native bilingual leader, as well as naturalists from four different birding regions of the island.

The trip runs from November 3 through 14 of this year and includes Cuba's Wild Western Peninsula, the Western Mountains, Zapata Swamp, the Atlantic Archipelago and Colonial Havana.

You can reach Paul for questions at [paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net) and access more details on the trip here: [greatbirdingprojects.com](http://greatbirdingprojects.com)



*Cuban Tody*



*Paul Baicich and Cuban field trip leader.*



*Cuban Trogon*



## Preventing Window Crashes

Leelanau Township County Commissioner and Saving Birds member Ty Wessell was having a common painful problem with the birds around his home; one or another would regularly crash to its death against a window in his home. Ty loves birds – especially the beautiful Indigo Buntings that occur around his home during the summer months. Ty checked out solutions on the American Bird Conservancy website. Here is the window where all the crashes have occurred with one of the products designed to mitigate window crashes. He purchased the product at: [www.abirdseyeview.com](http://www.abirdseyeview.com)

## From the Executive Director's Desk

by Kay Charter



For a few weeks every year, I head by train to the Southwest to meet with members, visit with family and friends and check on the fabulous Sandia Wetland project. One of my favorite stops is Tucson, where I stay with daughter Shelley DeBlois and her husband Kerry (who is one of the best cooks in the country).

While in Tucson this year, friends (and Saving Birds supporters) Bill Lyons and Ron Cammel drove down from their new home in Phoenix to bird for a day. We went to regional birding hotspot Madera Canyon, stopping first at the gift shop where a slew of feeders and a water feature drew in hordes of birds. Three hummingbird species, juncos, lesser goldfinches, Mexican Jays,



Pied-billed Grebe by Mike Boyce.

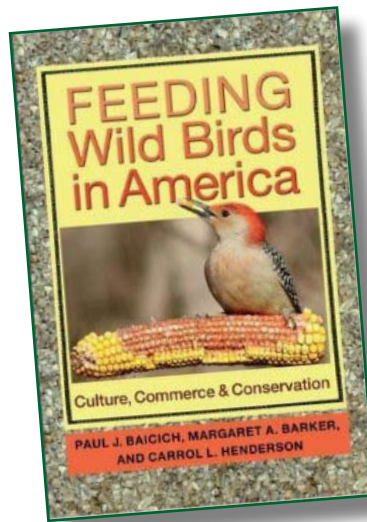
Bridled Titmice, various woodpeckers and the occasional warbler were among the mix. The birds of southern Arizona were new to Ron and Bill so they picked up a number of life birds. Since I have spent a great deal of time in that part of the state, I did not expect to find anything new for me. But I was wrong; on a walk down the mountain, a couple of people had stopped to look at something in a live oak tree. It was a Hepatic Tanager; a bird I have never been fortunate enough to see.

Mike Boyce, wildlife photographer, past board member for Michigan Audubon, and former resident manager of Baker Sanctuary was also at Madera that day, shooting away at the beautiful feathered banquet before us.

The next day Ron and I ran into Mike and his wife Nancy at Tucson's sewage treatment ponds. Just as Ron and I prepared to leave, a tiny Pied-billed Grebe struggled to get a large frog turned so that he could swallow it head first. He tossed it up, maneuvered it over and over with no luck. None of us believed this bird would ever swallow that big frog without choking on it. But finally he got the frog turned the right way and with several big gulps got it down. Mike took the great photo included here. It was one of Ma Nature's unexpected little surprises that one can only see if in the right place at the right time.

Nature offers all kinds of wonderful experiences, but only if we get out and enjoy it. It's spring, migration is upon us; frogs are singing, birds are arriving and plants are poking through soft soil. Don't miss these wonderful days of heightened activity. They are over far too soon.

Then check out our calendar of events; we have a lot going on this year. Please join us when you can.



## Feeding Wild Birds in America

A Review by Kay Charter

Of all the top tier speakers/writers on all things birds, Paul Baicich is my absolute favorite. Paul's writing is always informative and educational, and

his conservation perspective is right on target. And there are always fascinating new facts.

Paul's new book, *Feeding Wild Birds in America* (co-written with Margaret A. Barker and Carroll L. Henderson; Texas A&M University Press, 2015, \$27.95) begins with a tightly-condensed history of the United States, including the degree to which the land had been ravaged by resource exploitation throughout the 1800's. Mentioned are efforts to raise the alarm about the damage being done by this exploitation by writers like Henry David Thoreau and George Perkins Marsh. The narrative moves to efforts at the end of the 19th Century by Florence Merriam Bailey, Mabel Osgood Wright and Anna Botsford Comstock. These women are among those whom Paul refers to as "our birding foremothers", were dedicated to educating people about bird conservation, which – to them – included feeding birds.

While the book traces the history of bird feeding in the U. S. back to the 1800's, it includes a photo of birdbaths in Pompeii, preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD. Who would have imagined that people were interested in attracting wild birds to their yards more than two thousand years ago?

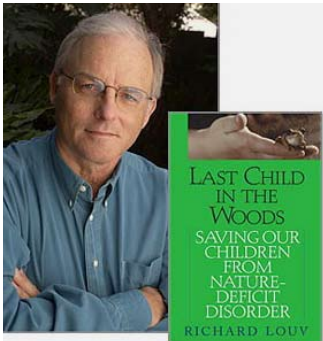
But the most interesting detail relating to bird feeding involves American agronomist Dr. Richard Baldwin and an agricultural scientist from the Soviet Union in the 1960's. Both were interested in increasing the oil yield from sunflower seeds – not for birds, but for public use. Until then, striped seeds grown in the United States were producing 20 to 28 percent oil. But Soviet scientist V. S. Pustovoit had developed a black oil seed that yielded over 40% oil. In 1966, at the height of the Cold War, Baldwin was able to snag permission to visit the Soviet Union to learn about their success with various grain crops. He visited Pustovoit, who showed him the high-yielding seeds. Baldwin asked if he might take some back to the states, but was told that would be impossible. At that moment Pustovoit gave a small bag of seeds to Baldwin's interpreter to eat. Once back in their car, the interpreter gave the bag to Baldwin, who took them to the American Embassy where they were placed in a diplomatic pouch and shipped to Baldwin's office in North Dakota. With those few seeds, production of a richer black oil sunflower crop was begun. This crop was not only used for commercial oil production, but became the most popular food to offer wild birds.

Those interested in history in general, and bird feeding and conservation in particular, will enjoy this book.

# Saving Birds 2016 Calendar of Events

Call 231-271-3738 for more information.

## May 4 and 5: Best selling author Richard Louv at Green Elk Rapids.



Our partner, Green Elk Rapids, is hosting two programs with journalist and author Richard Louv. The first will be in Elk Rapids on Wednesday, May 4, 6:30 p.m. at Peterman Auditorium, and the second will be on Thursday May 5, 6:30 p.m., in Traverse City at the Hagerty Center.

Louv is the author of eight books about the connections between family, nature and community.

His landmark book, *Last Child in the Woods; Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, has been translated into 15 languages and published in 17 countries and has stimulated an international conversation about the relationships between children and nature. His book *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age* offers a new vision of the future in which our lives are as immersed in nature as they are in technology. Serving as companion handbook to the two prior books, *Vitamin N: The Essential Guide to a Nature-Rich Life* will be published in April 2016.

Details & Tickets: [www.greenelkrapids.org](http://www.greenelkrapids.org)

## May 6: Annual Ronald Brown Academy field trip to Magee Marsh.

This is our third year to partner with RBA; this year we will be taking the fourth, fifth and sixth graders. Sixth graders will be “graduating” out of our program as they move on to middle school. Each will receive a certificate of completion (each has been through 9 field trips and 20 -30 classroom sessions) and a modest gift.

## May 15, 9AM – 3PM at the Lansing Community College Downtown Campus.

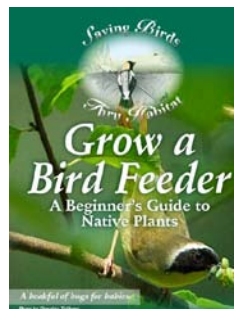
Join Saving Birds Thru Habitat’s Kay Charter for Michigan Audubon’s all-day workshop focused on the critical relationship between birds and native plants. In this workshop, participants will learn why birds need native plants, which native plants are “powerhouses” for birds, and how you can turn your backyard into a natural bird feeder. This workshop will feature an indoor educational session in the morning followed by an outdoor field trip in the afternoon to visit good examples of bird-friendly landscaping. This workshop includes a trip to

Wildtype in Mason, where owner Bill Schneider will tour us around this unique native plant nursery and participants will have the opportunity to shop and explore during one of the few days this great resource is open to the public. Participants will take home a resource bag packed with helpful tips and a native shrub to kick start a backyard habitat transformation. Lunch is provided. Please dress appropriately for the outdoors as this event will take place rain or shine. Binoculars are highly encouraged!

## May 19-21: Tawas Point Birding Festival

**Thursday, May 19, 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM – Backyard Bird Habitat:** an all-day Workshop at Tawas Point Birding Festival

Join Saving Birds Thru Habitat’s Kay Charter for an all-day workshop focused on the critical relationship between birds and native plants. In this workshop, attendees will learn why birds need native plants, which native plants are “powerhouses” for birds, and how you can turn your backyard into a natural bird feeder. This workshop will feature an indoor educational session in the morning followed by an outdoor field trip in the afternoon to visit good examples of bird-friendly yards. Participants will take home a resource bag packed with helpful tips and a packet of Michigan native wildflower seed to kick-



“Grow a Bird Feeder” Brochure

start your backyard habitat. Lunch is provided. Please dress appropriately for the outdoors as this event will take place rain or shine. Binoculars are highly encouraged! The indoor part of the workshop will be held in the **conference room at the Bay Inn in Tawas City (not the event headquarters).** **FEE: \$25**

**Friday, May 20, 2:45 – 3:45 PM – Tawas Point Birding Festival:** Grow a Bird Feeder – Kay Charter

**Saturday, May 21, 2:45 – 3:45 PM – Tawas Point Birding Festival:** Grow a Bird Feeder – Kay Charter

## May 27 at 4PM: ShareCare Fundraiser

Joint fundraiser with ShareCare at Saving Birds Thru Habitat, 5020 N. Putnam Road. Short habitat program by Executive Director Kay Charter followed by a guided walk through our new Brian Zimmerman-designed gardens with Kay. Refreshments. Requested donation: \$35.00

## May 28, 9AM: Bird and Habitat Hike on Charter Sanctuary with Kay Charter.

Meet at the Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam) at 9AM.



**June 8, 9AM: Wild about Woodpeckers at Saving Birds Thru Habitat:**

Habitat Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam) at 9AM. Ants ruining your picnic? Invite a Northern Flicker as honored and working guest. Are woodpeckers architects or excavators, philanthropists or clowns? They are all of the above! Amazing birds, woodpeckers are well adapted for their avian lifestyle.

Learn about savvy sapsuckers, regal redheads and others of their kin with Leelanau Conservancy Docent, Bobbie Poor, and Kay Charter, Executive Director of Saving Birds Thru Habitat. A gentle morning walk on the SBTH birding path will follow the program.



**June 11, 9AM: Bird and Habitat Hike on Charter Sanctuary with Kay.**

Meet at the Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam) at 9AM.



**June 18, 9AM: Bird and Habitat Hike on Charter Sanctuary with Kay.** Meet at the Discovery Center (5020 N. Putnam) at 9AM.

**June 25: All Day Conservation Workshop at Saving Birds. \$50.00 each includes lunch:**

**8AM Photography workshop** with nature photographer Sheen Watkins.



*Sheen Watkins*

**9:30AM Ornithologist Dave Ewert: The Importance of Stopover Sites.** Dr. Ewert is retiring Senior Scientist for The Nature Conservancy



*Dave Ewert*

**11AM Greg Butcher: The Problems for Monarchs.** Dr. Butcher is International Migratory Species Coordinator for the U.S. Forest Service.



*Greg Butcher*

**12:30-1PM Lunch Break**

**1:15-2:30: Select one:**

- **How to Begin Your Native Plants Garden** with Landscape Designer Brian Zimmerman
- **Birding** with Brian Allen
- **Native Plants Gardens** with Mike Berst
- **Charter Prairies** with prairie expert Russell Kirt.



*an Zimmerman*

- **Dragonflies, Damselflies, Birds and Their Habitats** with David Dister.



*Brian Allen*

**2:45-4PM: Select one:**

- **How to Begin Your Native Plants Garden** with Landscape Designer Brian Zimmerman
- **Birding** with Brian Allen
- **Native Plants Gardens** with Mike Berst
- **Charter Prairies** with prairie expert Russell Kirt.



*Mike Berst*

- **Dragonflies, Damselflies, Birds and Their Habitats** with David Dister.

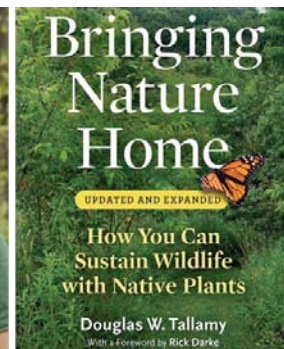


**CALL SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT 231-271-3738 TO REGISTER**

**Aug. 20, 5PM: Doug Tallamy Returns to Saving Birds:**

Fund Raiser with New York Times best selling author Doug Tallamy at Saving Birds. Hearty hors d'oeuvres will be served. Time to chat with Doug, author of Bringing Nature Home. He will speak to us about why the work of Saving Birds is crucial to the future of our bird populations.

He will be available to sign copies of his both of his books. Silent auction during the event.



# San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge Restoration

By Kay Charter



*Restored tidal marsh across the river behind Brian Collins. Note the Pacific Ocean in the background.*

Fortunately for me, the 20th Annual San Diego Birding Festival began just as I was arriving in that beautiful city by the sea. Although my schedule was tightly packed, son Scott and I were able to squeeze in time for two festival events. Because my primary interest is in bird habitat, my first pick was an all day field trip to the San Diego Bay National Wildlife Refuge restoration.

Refuge boundaries include the South Bay Salt Works, where highly saline ponds support brine shrimp and brine flies, both of which are food for various avian species. More than 90 bird species occur in and along the ponds, seven endangered or threatened. Five years ago, 220 acres of the southwestern-most ponds were restored to tidal marshland.

The restoration was accomplished by cutting channels in the levees holding the ponds and opening the area up to the influence of tidal action. Immediately after the channels were cut, the birds flocked in to check out the new mud flats. In

the succeeding years, thousands of native plants were installed by volunteers.

For our field trip, Scott and I elected to ride with wildlife biologist Brian Collins, Manager for the San Diego Coastal Refuges. Brian had planned our trip so that we would arrive at the restoration during the outgoing tide as that would afford us the best birding. Shorebirds prefer foraging at the edge of receding waters.

We didn't see as many birds as Brian expected as we made our way to the restored area. He apologized for that. He needn't have. After exiting the van at the nearest point to the restored mud flats, a host of birds were busily foraging. It was this I had wanted to see: The result of millions of dollars invested and thousands of hours of work on behalf of the birds (and many other creatures) that can once again use this great tidal marshland. 🐦

## Want To Feed Birds, But Not Squirrels?



Every year, many calls come into our office from people who want to feed birds, but not rodents – especially squirrels. Last year, we discovered the Squirrel Buster feeder that escaped our notice, though it has apparently been around for a long time. It is made so that the perching ring at the bottom is counterweighted in a way that only lightweight birds can access the seeds. Heavier birds, and rodents weight the ring down and close the feeder ports.

Although it is a bit pricey, we have found that because there is virtually no waste (or seeds going to squirrels or grackles), the savings in seed pays for the feeder in a relatively short time.

Available online from numerous feeder companies or at many stores selling birdseed. 🐦

# Sandia Wetland: A Hit with Birds and Birders




*Snow Geese, one of the many species to benefit from the restored Sandia Wetland.*

Since restoration efforts began at Sandia Wetland in Balmorhea, Texas more than five years ago, increasing numbers of migrating birds have discovered this revitalized avian Eden – thanks to owners Ellen and Don Weinacht who embarked on the project to aid waterfowl and wetland birds that have lost migration and wintering habitat.

Birds began returning to the restored ponds as soon as water appeared. Birders took a little longer to discover this gem in the desert. A couple of years ago, Sandia Wetland was added to the Far West Texas Wildlife trail. Last year the Swarovski Far West Texas Team came in second for the day in the Great Texas Birding Classic – in large

part by visiting the wetland. This wonderful place serves many wetland dependent species throughout the year – including the beautiful and delicate Black-necked Stilt. Saving Birds has been a proud partner in the project from its inception.

The Weinachts are cattle ranchers; they are also concerned about the birds that occur on their land. Their ranch is one of the places our Executive Director always visits whenever she is in the Southwest. Their effort on behalf of birds exemplifies the mission of Saving Birds and is proof that anyone can improve their land for birds and other wildlife. 





## 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)

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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.*

## She's Done it Again!!



Wisdom, a Laysan Albatross, is a mother. At sixty-five, Wisdom is the oldest known wild bird in the world, and decades past the age scientists thought she would nest. This beautiful seabird, who nests on Midway Island, is an icon for other avian species that make their collective living from the seas - and she reminds us that we need to take better care of our oceans.

Many seabirds (known as pelagics) starve from ingesting plastic materials; they cannot discern that floating objects are not food, and then they fill their stomachs with plastics leaving no room for the saltwater creatures that sustain them. Please, people, think of Wisdom when you are about to throw plastics in our waters. Even plastics tossed into freshwater streams make their way into the ocean.

