

Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

November, 2012, Volume 11, Number 2

Chestnut-sided
Warbler



From the Director's Desk

by Kay Charter

Dear Supporters,

It's always rewarding to be able to let you know that we have had another very good season. For the second year in a row, Saving Birds was a major partner in the Leelanau Peninsula BirdFest. We also partnered with Inland Seas Educational Association for their Classic Boat Show, in Dahlem Nature Center's Birds, Blooms and Butterflies Festival in Jackson, and the butterfly garden at Westwoods Elementary School in Traverse City. We continue to be a consulting partner in a west Texas wetland construction, created to benefit migrating birds, and we recently finished construction on three Chimney Swift nesting towers at our Habitat Discovery Center.

This year our onsite and outreach school programs reached more than 350 students; you can read about several of our student activities in this edition. We reached 1800 adults with a variety of programs and presentations in our nature center as well as at numerous Michigan venues and beyond the state.

For next year we will be hosting an event or activity at our center at 10:00 AM every single Saturday from early May through the end of September. Landscape Designer Brian Zimmerman will kick off these weekly activities with a wildflower walk on Charter Sanctuary on May 4th.

Our biggest offering for the year will take place on the Saturday after Labor Day. A little over nine years ago, on September 20th, 2003, we dedicated our Habitat Discovery Center. On Saturday, September 7 of next year, we will host a gala event celebrating ten years in our building. The Northport Community Band will provide music as they did for our first event. Guest speakers include Dr. Greg Butcher, who was Director of Bird Conservation for National Audubon, and is now Migratory Species Coordinator for U.S. Forest Service International Programs.

Please mark your calendar for that date and join our celebration. Be sure to bring a friend to see our facility and to learn more about what Saving Birds Thru Habitat does. In addition to entertainment and speakers, there will be bird hikes into Charter Sanctuary, where the prairie will be at its most beautiful. On behalf of our wonderful birds, thanks for your support.



Letter from our President:

Salt Lake City, Utah

I knew that name would catch your attention. No this letter is not about politics or religion; it's about the environmental struggles around the country that are similar and how

important partnerships work.

My husband, John, and I were in Salt Lake City for a Land Trust Alliance Conference. We had a wonderful tour of the Jordan River Valley. The Jordan River starts at Lake Utah, travels 50 miles through the Valley terminating at the Great Salt Lake. It's really an oasis in the middle of the high desert surrounded by beautiful mountains. But it was almost completely wiped out by development. No, I'm not against development, but it should be done with respect for the environment.

Fortunately before the shoreline was completely built over, many conservation groups, Native American Tribes and the Governor worked together to save a corridor that is rich in flora and fauna.

This provides a sanctuary for wildlife, open space for recreation and scenic beauty for all. The coalition is working on controlling invasive species that push out native plants thus improving the natural habitat for the insects, birds and animals that are historically common to the Valley. I commend them on their efforts.

SBTH has also developed many partnerships with garden clubs, various conservation groups, land conservancies and Fairmount Minerals, working on habitat improvement. International mining company Fairmount came to us six years ago to ask our advice on how to return mined areas back to a healthy habitat for flora and fauna. SBTH helped them identify invasive species, did a bird survey and guided them on what native plants would be best to attract more wildlife to the area. Fairmount is committed to restoring, preserving and supporting biodiversity at their mining sites throughout the United States.

Through these partnerships, and others, we have been tackling the many pressures on our environment, such as invasive species and lack of native habitats, but we can't stop now. Ask yourself, "Am I a partner to the environment?" Maybe you only need to add a few native plants to your yard; maybe you know a company that would like to improve its environment. We need everyone's help to accomplish our mission and be ready to face what new surprises lie ahead of us. Be a partner; it's good for the environment, it's good for you.

Thanks,

Gina Erb

Website: www.savingbirds.org

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Kay Charter

New SBTH Board Member Brian Allen



Brian Allen has been fascinated with birds virtually all of his life. In high school, he joined the Grand Rapids Audubon Club where he participated in Christmas Bird Counts. When he attended Michigan State University, he was such an accomplished birder, he was able to teach the ornithology lab while taking the course.

Upon graduation, Brian joined the Peace Corps. He served two years in Botswana, living at the edge of the Kalahari Desert, teaching biology, chemistry and physics at a regional high school. He also ran the school's first aid clinic,

coached track and was advisor to the wildlife club. He birded as much as possible in Africa. Before he left, he co-authored a published article on the birds of S. E. Botswana.

After returning to the States, Brian married his college sweet-

heart, Maripat, and moved to Manistee where he joined the local Audubon club. His sighting of the first record of an Ash-throated Flycatcher in Michigan reconnected him with the state's top birders; he was soon invited to join the Michigan Bird Records Committee. He was subsequently one of the editors of American Birding Association's publication "A Birder's Guide to Michigan."

Declining bird populations served as a motivator to help conserve bird habitat. In the 1990's, Brian founded the Points Betsie to Sable Conservancy. This Conservancy became part of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, where he served on the Board of Directors for eight years, where he was thrilled with his role in implementing protection for birds and their habitats.

Tropical birding trips stimulated his desire to protect habitat. He joined the American Bird Conservancy and raised funds for the Amazon Conservation Association and the Los Amigos Biological Station in Peru. Although Brian felt fortunate to be able to experience the bird flocks of the Andes and Amazon, he also felt a responsibility to tell the tale of the struggles of the conservation movement there. Articles he wrote about the issue were published in Traverse Magazine, The Jack Pine Warbler, and Michigan Birds and Natural History.

Brian expressed a deep interest in joining the board of this organization as he believes it is an excellent fit for him, considering his long-term interest in bird conservation. He sees many threats to our birdlife, and hopes that in joining the Board, he will be able to extend the organization's reach and efforts.



New SBTH Board Member Barbara Nowinski

Barb Nowinski received her MILS from University of Michigan and subsequently served as Director of the Leland Township Library for ten years. She then worked as Assistant Director of the Traverse Area District Library. Barb is now retired. She is interested in the historical, cultural and natural history of our region and is active in several local organizations. She spends her winter months in Carmel, California, where she serves as a docent for Point Lobos Reserve.

She has always been interested in the natural world, reading such authors as Sigurd Olson and Aldo Leopold and, she says she is one of those rare individuals who reads field guides for fun. As an early member of the Leelanau Conservancy Barb has always tried to participate in Alice Van Zoeren's birding group. Barb grew up on an acre of land surrounded by fallow farm fields that were filled with wildflowers from spring through fall. Every year the fields were burned and the remnant native plants returned taller and healthier than before. Nesting Eastern Meadowlarks were present annually, as well as giant moths and many mayflies during the season.

Barb has said that she is thrilled to have the opportunity to serve Saving Birds Thru Habitat as a Board Member. She jumped in immediately and took the

reins of our Program Committee, where she serves as chair. Barb strongly believes in our mission, and she looks forward to getting the good word out, and working to keep this a strong organization

Barb's favorite bird is, as she says, "the little chickadee." No surprise there, the Black-capped Chickadee is the favorite of many serious and not so serious birders.



Black-capped Chickadee photo by Wayne Richard Pope

Missile Towers?



No – This is “Swifthenge!” Photo by ©Ken Scott Photography.com

Late in August we received an unexpected, and very welcome grant, thanks to Conservation Resource Alliance for Chimney Swift nesting structures. Chimney Swifts, often called “flying cigars,” arrive in early May in our area and begin searching for suitable nesting sites before the end of the month. One of the most aerial of our migrating species, they spend their entire lives, except when roosting, on the wing. They feed on the wing, court on the wing, and drink on the wing. It is believed by some that they even sleep on the wing.

Historically, they nested in hollowed out trees, but with the arrival of European settlers, the little birds quickly adapted to masonry chimneys. Populations increased and expanded as they moved west with the settlers. Chimney Swifts were subsequently much more commonly found around towns, villages and even cities, where masonry chimneys or industrial air shafts are found. They still are, but as old buildings are pulled down, masonry chimneys capped off, and with the increasing use of metal chimneys, the birds are losing nesting sites and their numbers are falling.

Help for these beneficial little birds (which, by the way, are great for mosquito control) can be found in the kind of nesting towers we have added at our nature center. Considerable research went into the

design of these structures, which, at 14' tall, replicate the chimneys preferred by the birds. Interior walls are rough cedar, on which the birds attach their stick nests with their own saliva. Incredibly, the birds collect the sticks and pine needles for the nest on the wing, snapping materials off with their feet. The three to six white eggs laid in saucer-shaped nests hatch in roughly three weeks. They are incubated and fed by both parents.



Nesting Chimney Swift

In migration, Chimney Swifts roost in large numbers, inside chimneys, air shafts or silos. However, each nesting tower will only accommodate a single pair. Swift advocate Ron Windingstad of Minnesota Audubon sent us a CD of their calls. We will be playing this CD from about the second week in May of next year until we have a nesting pair (or two or three). Once we have success with this project, we will seek funding for additional towers. We hope to attract a colony of swifts, and to provide them with at least a couple of masonry structures.

Stay tuned; we will let you know when we get our first nesting pair. 

Beaver Island Seventh Graders Captivated by Birds



Photo by Joe Moore

On the Monday after Mother’s Day, SBTH was represented on Beaver Island to lead bird hikes for two different classes of Island students. We took the seventh graders out in the afternoon, gave each a pair of our loaner binoculars, then taught them how to use them and how to locate a bird in the canopy by tracking down its song. Within minutes the kids had located a migrating Scarlet Tanager. What a great first bird for them to find! That was remarkable enough, but moments later they located a Warbling Vireo, a tiny gray-green bird that spends its life in the treetops. Its color and size make it hard to locate for seasoned birders, but these kids had no problem tracking the bird down from its song.

We have been invited back for next year and will happily return to work with such enthusiastic students. 

Corporate Conservation Partner of the Year



Fairmount Employees Lisa Six (Michigan) and Cristine Lewis and Mike Anderson (both from Ohio) were on hand – along with Brian Richardson (Ohio) and Cheryl White (Wisconsin) to receive the award.

Award Text: Saving Birds Thru Habitat Recognizes Corporate Partner of the Year Fairmount Minerals, Ltd. Honoring seven years of conservation collaboration focusing on habitat improvement for migrating and nesting birds. July 26, 2012

On Thursday, July 26, we recognized Fairmount Minerals (an international sand mining company) as our Conservation Partner of the Year at our Habitat Discovery Center. This award celebrates seven years of conservation collaboration. SBTH became involved with Fairmount in 2005, and since that time, the organization and the company have partnered on a variety of bird conservation efforts. Those efforts include habitat restoration consultation and environmental education for employees during company-sponsored “Lunch and Learn” at numerous Fairmount sites. Saving Birds has also partnered with the company in providing 50,000 jack pines a year for the Kirtland’s Warbler recovery effort in the Grayling-Mio area



Killdeer and chick in a restored area at Best Sand, a Fairmount site.

of Michigan. For six years, the company has underwritten the purchase of thousands of native trees and shrubs, which were donated to a partnership that included SBTH, Conservation Resource Alliance, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and the Leelanau Conservancy. The plants were donated as part of Fairmount’s carbon sequestration efforts, and all were used for habitat restoration.

Four Fairmount employees arrived two days before the awards event in order to help with our habitat work bee: Cristine Lewis, Mike Anderson, and Brian Richardson drove in from the company’s headquarters in Ohio and Cheryl White flew in from Wisconsin. Michigan employee Roger Evens joined us for a day, and Lisa Six – also from Michigan – came for our awards event.

As a Sustainable Development company, Fairmount’s motto is “People, Planet, Profit.” We are proud to have the opportunity to participate in the planet part of that equation.



Leelanau Peninsula Birdfest 2012



Trumpeter Swans



Scarlet Tanager

Brian Allen leads a field trip at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Photos by Wayne Richard Pope.

In spite of rain and wind (and the cancellation of a couple of boat trips), our festival was enjoyed by all who attended...especially those who joined leader Brian Allen for his Otter Creek field trips. Brian snagged 75 species on his Saturday trip.

Next year will see a change in the event’s name to Leelanau Peninsula Birding Festival (search engines don’t know what a “bird-fest” is, so this should help people find the site) as well as two new offerings: A bus trip to the Kirtland’s Warbler and Hartwick Pines State Park, and Birding for Beginners. Check out the festival website at: www.mibirding.com





Volunteers Jim Charter and Jerry Kalchik spent many hours building the Chimney Swift towers. Towers overlook prairie restoration on Charter Sanctuary.



For the past year SBTH has been a partner in the planning of a butterfly garden at Westwoods Elementary School in Traverse City. Funding was provided by the Friendly Garden Club and the Grand Traverse Stewardship Initiative. In May we presented a PowerPoint program about butterflies to the students who were to be involved with the project. Brian Zimmerman designed a plan for the garden, and in June he oversaw, and assisted with, plant installation. All plants were native, and all came from Four Season Nursery.



Leave a Legacy for Migrating Birds.



Please help us continue our work on behalf of warblers, orioles, buntings and other at-risk species by joining those who have included Saving Birds Thru Habitat in their estate planning. Bequests of any amount will be gratefully accepted.

Northern Flicker Nestling photo by Dave Brunnell

Thank You to the Following Donors for Their Honorary or Memorial Gifts

Berthica Fitzsimmons honoring **Cherryll Frick's** Birthday
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Saving Birds Thru Habitat Membership List 2012



Eastern Phoebe Photo by Kristie Moore Strange

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And to photographers:

Ken Scott
 Cindy Mead
 Wayne Richard Pope:

And thanks to the following for volunteering time and effort on various projects:

Jim Charter and Jerry Kalchik for spending many hours on the swift towers.

Habitat Worker Bees:

Jim Charter
 Cheryl Slater
 Alan Slater
 Cristine Lewis
 Cheryl White
 Mike Anderson
 Brian Richardson
 Roger Evens



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Saving-Birds-Thru-Habitat

*Check Out Our
Web Site!!*

www.SavingBirds.org

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.

WoodSong Nature Photography

We couldn't pass up professional photographer Cindy Mead's offer to allow us to use her beautiful image of the Golden-winged Warbler. This elegant little bird nests on or near the ground in shrubby edges, dense thickets or overgrown pastures. It feeds on insects, especially small caterpillars and some spiders – another reason not to use insecticides out of doors. Golden-winged Warblers sometimes swing upside down from twigs like chickadees searching for "inch worms." A species that benefited from open, second-growth woodlands after massive clear-cutting in the late 1800's, populations are now declining as forests return...a good reason to include some clear-cuts in forest management programs. 



Photo of Golden-winged Warbler by Cindy Mead, www.woodsongphoto.com