

Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

July 2008, Volume 7, Number 2

Website: www.savingbirds.org

Board of Directors:

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Edited by:

John Erb and Kay Charter

Changing of the Guard at SBTH

by Executive Director Kay Charter

After serving for seven years as our Board President, it is time to offer a very fond farewell to Marlin Bussey. My husband, Jim, and Marlin have known each other all their lives. They are long-time fishing buddies and they served together as directors for Michigan United Conservation Clubs. When SBTH was first organized, there was no question that we hoped he would come along as our board leader. He has done so with grace. And he has been most effective in helping us establish the kind of organizational underpinnings required to stabilize any nonprofit. Marlin is a dedicated conservationist, an able birder and a passionate fisherman. Saving Birds is a better, stronger organization for having had his hand at the helm during our first years. L

Message From the President

by Marlin Bussey

With my tenure as President drawing to a close, I look back with enormous pride on how far we have come. Sitting around Jim and Kay Charter's kitchen table in the spring of 2001, a small group of excited individuals exchanged visions and proposals to create an organization that would strive to help our wild birds. The driving force, of course, is our Executive Director Kay Charter, whose knowledge and passion for this mission is legendary. The birth of Saving Birds Thru Habitat was quickly followed with mission statement, bylaws, non-profit status and a formal Board of Directors. By the fall of 2003, through the amazing support of an army of volunteers, the Habitat Discovery Center was built and then dedicated with a gala celebration. Developments at the site and adjacent Charter Sanctuary include a native plant garden, walkways, pond, and a meadow with native prairie grasses.

Fast forward to today. Saving Birds has a full blown operation of docent led bird walks, regular newsletters, an expanding membership, a schedule of natural science events at the Center, certification of properties, and a highly acclaimed outreach presentation delivered across the country. Our message has reached thousands and we are gratified with feedback from many who have embraced the need for suitable bird habit and are now converting their yards to insect bearing native plants. We are also pleased with many delightful responses from school students who have visited the Center and were fascinated to learn first-hand about the habitat needs of wild birds.

(cont. next page)

Summer Sostice Soiree a Success

Our fundraising dinner was everything we hoped for with more than 60 people joining us for an evening of fine wine, outstanding hors d'oeuvres and an excellent dinner served to the music of guitarist Matt Smith



Dr. Greg Butcher



Bartenders John Smart & John Erb

Dr. Gregory Butcher, Director of Bird Conservation for National Audubon, spoke about the importance of our educational efforts. Greg defined his own work both internationally and nationally and addressed the issue of declining bird populations. He pointed out that the problem is greatest among those birds that migrate from the tropics to North America for breeding. Then he talked about the critical importance of maintaining and creating habitat for those birds.

He gave SBTH high marks for its educational efforts, and also praised Leelanau Conservancy members for stepping up to the plate by purchasing Lighthouse West at the tip of the peninsula, which is critical for our beautiful migrants.

"Saving Birds has it exactly right," he said about our work to inform others about this importance as well as how to go about creating backyard habitat for migrating birds. L

Message from the President *(cont.)*

The ongoing success of "Saving Birds" is the result of many people and organizations who have embraced our mission of "saving birds through habitat". I would like to sincerely thank our generous membership for their continuing support and the organizations and foundations who provide much needed grants. The success of Saving Birds is also highly dependent on a dedicated corps of enthusiastic volunteers. My personal thanks to each of you. I would also like to recognize my fellow Board members who have tackled numerous issues and successfully guided the organization along the way.

The future looks bright for Saving Birds Thru Habitat to grow and prosper. In our community, and across the nation, we are witnessing a sea change of awareness and appreciation for managing our habitat to support native birds and other wildlife. I am sure that Saving Birds will be in the forefront to support and amplify this change as it develops.

It has been a privilege and a pleasure to be a part of this wonderful organization. L

We Get Mail

The following is from a stack of letters from students at Glen Lake Community School after a field trip to SBTH:

Dear Mrs. Charter, Mr. Hall and all of the volunteers at the Saving Birds Thru Habitat,

I loved the nature hike. Mr. Hall, if I had that job I wouldn't be able to talk about other animals either. I want to thank you for giving up your time and money to come and do stuff with us. When I grow up, I want to be just like all of you.

Stephanie

Fund Raising "Barn" Sale for SBTH

Saving Birds Thru Habitat will hold a fund raising sale in the Habitat Discovery Center at 5020 North Putnam on Saturday, August 16 from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM.

Please help by bringing us your unwanted furniture, antiques, collectibles, toys, kitchen goods or any other salable goods. Donated items can be brought to the Discovery Center any time after August 1st. Pickup for furniture or other large items can be arranged by calling the office at 231-271-3738.

The sale, which will be held indoors, will go on rain or shine.

No clothing, please. L

Clear and Reflective Windows: *An Invisible and Lethal Hazard for Birds*

by Daniel Klem, Jr. Ph. D.



This Nashville Warbler died from head trauma after crashing into a sliding glass door.

Sheet glass and plastic in the form of windows that range in size from tiny garage panes to entire walls of multistory commercial buildings are killing wild birds the world over. Because of the uniqueness and limitations of life, we humans cannot be certain how birds see the world, but for certain they behave as if clear and reflective windows are invisible to them. The consequence is that a bird striking a window after leaving a perch from a bit over 3 feet away can seriously injure or kill itself outright; not from what many assume is a broken neck, but from head trauma and its resulting injuries that likewise can kill us in comparable accidents.

Like humans who sustain a powerful blow to the head in a car accident or by other means, the brain swells, breaking the blood-brain barrier; the victim struggles to breathe, lapses into a comma, and at least for birds, one out of every two strikes results in a fatality. Casualties are typically injured and vulnerable to predators and scavengers that quickly take the dead and dying from beneath the offending window on whose surface the reflected vegetation and sky were the goal of the victim. These collisions are universal, occurring wherever birds and windows coexist in urban, suburban, and rural habitat worldwide. Billions of birds are killed annually at the attractive and utilitarian windows of our homes and workplaces, and an extensive amount of evidence documents that this source of avian mortality kills more birds than any other human-associated factor except habitat destruction.

Habitat destruction is our greatest assault on wildlife because when we markedly alter or eliminate a habitat we also eliminate the fundamental resources upon which life depends; life cannot endure without food, shelter, or water. Certainly windows kill far more birds than wind turbines, power lines, pesticides, and domestic cats. Yet, it is fair to

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claim that this horrific loss of birdlife from collisions with windows is largely ignored by most, most regrettably by those that can do the most to prevent it: members of our conservation community whose mission is to protect life, and the building industry whose mission it is to construct human structures, increasingly with modern designs that are lavishly covered with glass.

Why is the glass threat to birds largely ignored? After studying bird-glass collisions for over 34 years, my view is that the attractive and utilitarian value of windows for humans is so great – economically, psychologically, and aesthetically – that we cannot imagine such a valuable product doing harm, or even considering altering these useful product in any way that would inhibit the meaningful benefits they offer. I have never advocated eliminating windows in any human structures, but I have recommended covering or altering panes by those willing make a small change in the way they see through their windows in order to protect birds. And ideally I have tried to investigate how new types of glass can be manufactured such that we humans see through windows the way we do now, but birds viewing the same windows from the outside see patterns in the panes that alert them to danger.


Covering windows with conventional insect screening is an effective lifesaver because it keeps a flying bird from striking the unyielding surface. Many homeowners have built their own safety nets, and a commercial source (see www.birdscreen.com) has existed to purchase residential home screening for some time now. Covering reflective windows on the outside surface with patterns, such that the elements making up the pattern are 2 to 4 inches apart transforms these panes into barriers that birds avoid. If the pattern is oriented vertically like blinds the elements making up the columns can be as much as 4 inches apart, but if oriented horizontally in rows the elements need to be 2 inches apart. The actual elements of the overall pattern can be any opaque or translucent object: circles, diamonds, stripes, hawk silhouettes, spider webs, or ultraviolet (UV)-reflecting maple leaves. My experiments reveal that if you cover an offending window with patterns composed of elements with this density, you eliminate bird strikes altogether. Applying patterns with greater spacing between elements, one or more, you reduce but do not eliminate fatal strikes. The more elements the greater protection and lives saved, fewer elements the greater risk and more lives lost.

My most recent experiments have produced some hopeful results for using UV patterns to alert birds to the dangers of windows. But whether UV signals, or some other inventive techniques, are actually effective in making glass and plastic safe for birds manufacturers must be convinced that there is a market for such products. It is therefore imperative that we work together to educate our

friends in conservation and those in the building industry that saving birds from this unintended lethal hazard is a practical, ethical, and moral commitment we must make to one of nature's most useful and exquisite creations. I know no one purposefully seeks to kill birds at the windows of their homes or workplaces. There are international treaties that forbid the intended killing of even a single individual bird, yet so complicated and pervasive is the glass threat that it is only recently that federal agencies have begun to acknowledge the need to address the toll that glass is exacting on protected birds.

The U.S. Green Building Council has created an evaluation system called Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) to encourage the construction of environmentally responsible structures, so-called "green buildings." But none of these sanctioned and award-winning structures are green to me if birds are killed striking the energy saving windows, bathing interiors with natural light, that in turn frequently nurture internal plantings that lure nearby birds to a crashing death from an invisible obstacle. Those charged with creating new versions of the LEED evaluation system need to be educated and encouraged to include a process for designing bird-safe glass and surrounding landscape architecture. To this end, the New York City Audubon Society (www.nycaudubon.org) and the City of Toronto (www.flap.org) have recently published bird safe building guidelines. These recommendations such as those in Chicago (www.birdsandbuildings.org) are fundamental to educating our architects so that their creative designs will be safe and ensure survival of birds, among them the common as well as the rare, threatened, and endangered species. Winning the hearts and minds of architects to this worthy cause of stopping the unintentional killing of birds is essential if glass manufacturers are to judge there is a market worthy of their investment in creating bird-safe glass. No one wants this unintended killing to continue. Surely this extravagant source of bird mortality must be curbed or stopped completely if our future generations are to appreciate, use, and enjoy these magnificent life forms before their diversity and numbers become too rare to see.

Source of more detail: *Windows: an unintended fatal hazard for birds*. In *Connecticut State of the Birds 2007*. Connecticut Audubon Society, Fairfield, CT, pp. 7-12 (available at www.ctaudubon.org).

Daniel Klem, Jr., Acopian Center for Ornithology, Department of Biology, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA 18104-5586; e-mail: klem@muhlenberg.edu 

A Special Class Project

By Angelo Cavagnini

What started out as an early morning outing with my grandfather, whom we call Nono, turned into an extraordinary event. My family was visiting my grandparents who live in Northport for a week last summer. One early morning we were trying to think of something to do while we were waiting for the sun to come out and the temperature to warm up for us to spend the afternoon out on the water. My Nono suggested going out to visit a bird sanctuary. I wasn't too sure what to think of it but I enjoy spending time with my grandfather, so off we went.

Mrs. Charter showed us around the walking trail and explained to us the need for planting the different types of plants that the different birds need to survive. Up to that point I really never gave it any thought about how we as humans affect the birds around us, I just always figured they are here and always will be. I took a pamphlet explaining everything that Mrs. Charter had discussed with us. My family also purchased a bluebird house.

This past April I was assigned a project to do in my English class. It was an activism project and I wanted to do something different than anyone else in my class. I was trying to think of something to do that would make a difference for the world we live in...something that I could actually see make a difference and would make a lasting effect.

I remembered how Mrs. Charter had talked about how, by just making a few simple changes in your own yard, a person could make a difference in the lives of many birds. Thus started our idea for our transformation of a section in our backyard.

I started to research this project by going onto the Saving Birds website. As I read all the information that is out there concerning our birds and how we can make a difference, this project became more and more interesting

to me.

Since we already keep part of our backyard wooded and have many native plants which are helpful because they host the insects required by the migrating and nesting birds, we chose to use my back yard. We purchased one dogwood and one serviceberry shrub and planted them near our birdhouse and birdbath to help provide food and nesting sites. We used a shallow planter saucer for a birdbath. We then used rocks, which we

gathered from the ground, for a resting place for the birds.

We placed our tree branch bluebird house on a wood pole which we placed into the ground. This type of birdhouse provides a safe environment for the birds to nest in as it prevents overheating. We placed some clean pet fur from my dog Daisy into a small suet basket and hung it from a close by tree limb for the birds to use when building their nests. We then put birdseed onto feeders that we hung on tree branches and one from a pole that we placed into the ground near the birdbath.

The research took about four days of reading and emailing between Mrs. Charter and myself. The construction itself took about two days. We saw immediate results. The first evening a few finches and a cardinal stopped to eat and use the birdbath. The next day more

birds came, including two bluebirds.

Eventually we will plant a butterfly garden in the area.

I enjoyed doing this project. I think it was pretty cool that Dylan and Nolan and myself could make a difference to our environment and help to preserve nature and the world we are living in. L



Angelo Cavagnini (center) is a seventh grader who lives with his parents in Fowlerville. He earned an "A+" for his project. His grandparents, Tony and Diane Cavagnini, live south of Northport. They are members of Saving Birds Thru Habitat."

55 Million Acres Protected in Ontario



*Woodland Caribou Provincial Park, Northern Ontario
Photo credit: Garth Lenz*

Earlier this month, Dalton McGuinty, Premier of the Province of Ontario, announced a landmark commitment to protect **225,000 square kilometers – 55 million acres** – of Boreal Forest in the northern area of the province. This swath of northern boreal forest is larger than the Maritime Provinces. With this commitment, roughly half of Ontario’s boreal forest has been protected and designated strictly for tourism and traditional aboriginal use.

Scientists around the world have been calling on Canadian governments at all levels to protect the boreal forest, which is under increasing pressure from logging, mining and oil and gas exploration. The vast boreal region in northern Ontario represents 43 per cent of the province’s land mass and includes one of the world’s largest intact ecosystems.

This move is great news for wood warblers, vireos, tyrant flycatchers and other species, as it **will protect the habitat for as many as 300 million Boreal birds.** L



*Palm Warbler
Dendroica palmarum*

An estimated 98% of the global population of Palm Warblers breed in Canada’s boreal forest region. Photo by Robert Epstein.

Birding with the Experts

On Saturday, June 21, Dr. Greg



*Greg Butcher
Photo by Leonard Klein*

Butcher led a bird hike of the Leelanau Conservancy’s Lighthouse West property. About twenty people joined for the hike. SBTH Board Member (and past President of Michigan Audubon) Gary Siegrist co-led the hike. More than forty species were counted. Butcher said that

because it was the peak of breeding season, species seen should be considered to be nesting.

On Sunday morning, Greg was joined by international birding tour leader Jeff Kingery and botanist, birder and all around naturalist David Dister for a bird hike around Charter Sanctuary. L



Dick Kennedy at spotting scope. Photo by Leonard Klein



*Naturalist and bird enthusiast Jeff Kingery.
Photo by Becky Alsup Kingery.*

Memorial and Honorary Gifts:

JoAnn Pope in memory of Maurice (Nick) Pope

John and Judy Smart in memory
of Charlotte Carrington.

Bermuda Petrel Flies Back from the Brink

*Reprinted from
American Bird Conservancy website*



Bermuda Petrel

Bermuda's only endemic breeding species, the Bermuda Petrel, was once abundant throughout the main island and the smaller satellite islands. But exploitation for food by the early settlers, burning and deforestation and the introduction of pigs, rats, cats and dogs soon eliminated most of its population. For 300 years it was thought extinct but a specimen was found in 1935 and 18 pairs were rediscovered in 1951 nesting on rocky islands in Castle Harbor totaling only 1 hectare (~2,500 acres) in size.

Under the direction of David B. Wingate, who has worked on the species for over 30 years and has saved it from extinction, intensive management had by the 1990s increased its numbers at its breeding site to 53 pairs; the total population is estimated to be around 180 individuals. It formerly nested in soil burrows but this habitat is not available on its current and suboptimal sites, where it nests in limestone crevices and artificial burrows.

Among the threats to the species are competition for nest sites with the White-tailed Tropicbird and light pollution from the nearby airport and a U.S. Naval Air Station, which negatively impacted nocturnal courtship (the lights at the latter are now turned off during the breeding season). There is a threat of sea-level rise and increased storm activity. In recent years there have been several instances of burrows being flooded, something which had not happened in the previous 25 years. Construction of a sea wall on one islet has prevented flooding and destruction of nests there. In addition contaminants may result in lowered nesting success.

There is an active program to provide artificial burrows that exclude tropicbirds. Rats are periodically removed from the islets. There are plans to establish a colony on Nonsuch Island, which could accommodate 1,000 pairs. During the nonbreeding season the Bermuda Petrel apparently wanders to the offshore Atlantic waters of the southeastern U.S. L

Marlin Bussey Honored by SBTH



Marlin Bussey and Gina Erb. Photo by Becky Alsup Kingery.

Outgoing SBTH Board President, Marlin Bussey accepts an award from Vice President Gina Erb. The matted and framed watercolor of a flying squirrel was done by wildlife artist Greg Garman. The gift was in appreciation for Marlin's dedicated efforts on behalf of the organization during his seven-year tenure. Included in the artwork was the following text by Audubon magazine writer Ted Williams:

They are out there now, wherever the globe has whirled into its own shadow, haunting woods you thought were spiritless, flying between the cold moon and the earth, jesting at Oberon – and accomplishing the important work of keeping night what it was meant to be.

Copied, with permission, from The Insightful Sportsman

Thanks to our Wonderful Volunteers!

Many thanks to all who gave their time and energy this year to make our work successful:

- To Norv Hall, Bobbie Poor, Marlin Bussey, Pauline McClure, Rick Evans, Trudy Lewis, and Ann McInnis, who led many rewarding bird hikes.
- To habitat helpers Elaine Stuckey and Alison Heins for assisting with SBTH gardens.
- To Alison and Conrad Heins for building the beautiful fence and gate that separates Charter Sanctuary from SBTH property.
- To Judy Smart and Gina Erb for putting on a terrific Summer Solstice Soiree.

Special notes of appreciation to Ann McInnis for coordinating school groups and adult events, and then lining up docent leaders, and to Jim Charter for his extraordinary efforts caring for our grounds and building. L

Upcoming Events



Thursday, August 21 at Dusk:

Evening Entomology:

MSU Entomologist Erwin “Duke” Elsner will help us search for nighttime insects. Many species of moths and other nocturnal insects feed on the sap that oozes from wounds in trees. We will be attracting these insects with baits that simulate this natural food source. Bring a good flashlight and mosquito repellent, as we will be walking along woodland trails during the evening. The best observation of these moths usually starts well after darkness falls. The main moths we are hoping to attract are called “underwing” moths, all in the genus *Catocola* of the family Noctuidae.

Saturday, September 6, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.:

Sustainable Seminar:

At Traverse Area District Library. Sponsored by Saving Birds Thru Habitat, the Leelanau Conservancy, the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, the Leelanau Conservation District, the Grand Traverse Conservation District, MSU Extension, Master Gardeners Association of Northwest Michigan, and Plant it Wild.

Dr. Douglas Tallamy, Chair of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at University of Delaware will headline this program. He will present a PowerPoint program on the importance of incorporating native plantings into our personal landscapes on behalf of birds, butterflies, amphibians and other wildlife. Tallamy is the author of *Bringing Nature Home*, which includes research about native plants regarding our native wildlife.

After a short break for refreshments, Craig Rautiola, Director of Environment, Health and Safety for Fairmount Minerals, will present his powerful program about sustainable development. Rautiola not only works within his own company on sustainable development, he also strives to encourage other industry leaders to adopt sustainable practices. At Fairmount’s suggestion, Menominee, Wisconsin, is working toward becoming a sustainable city.



*Eastern Kingbird eating alternate leaved dogwood berry
Photo by Doug Tallamy*



Fairmount Minerals site restored with native plants

Saturday, September 13, 2 p.m.:

Prairie Presentation by Vern Stephens:

Vern and his wife Sue Tangora bring their North American prairie presentation back to the Discovery Center. **Native plant sale follows.** Call 271-231-3738 for complete list or additional information.



Prices:

\$5.50 per quart pot grasses and wildflowers

\$6.00 per quart/gallon pot woodlands

\$65.00 per garden flat (butterfly, grass, wildflower, rain garden) 38 plant plugs per flat and comes with design

\$55.00 per plug flat single species (woodlands are not available in plug flats)



Saving Birds Thru Habitat

5020 N. Putnam Rd.
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Mission Statement:

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.**