

Habitat Happenings

SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

October, 2020, Volume 20, Number 2

The Power of One – Another Couple Gary Schultheiss and Barbara Richman



View from the top.

In looking back over our nineteen years of existence, it is clear that serendipity has sometimes played a major role in our growth and development. Early last year, the meeting of our Executive Director and Barb Richman occurred when Barb prepared Kay's tax return for 2018. Barb and Gary knew about our organization, but were not members. This chance meeting led not only to the couple joining Saving Birds, but Barb became a new Board Member as well as Database Administrator.

Barb and Gary have lived on a forty acre forested tract of land a couple of miles from Saving Birds' nature center and Charter Sanctuary for many years. Their property has been protected under an easement with the Leelanau Conservancy.

In early June of this year, Gary saw a for sale sign on 37 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to their property. The next day, he con-

tacted the realtor and three days later, he and Barb put in an offer. Three weeks after Gary first contacted the realtor, they closed on the deal. They call their new purchase, "The North Unit"

The couple's first concern, the one that led them initially to con-

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SOLD!



Black-eyed Susan.



Bufo Americanus.

Website: www.savingbirds.org

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Kay Charter

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Edited by: Kathie Snedeker, Kay Charter



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sider the purchase, was that it holds the headwaters for the wetland on their property. They feared that it would be purchased for a fruit farm with the inevitable chemical applications. That would destroy the purity of their wetland, and ephemeral pond included in the property's various ecosystems.

Although protection of their wetland was their first concern, the property has other environmental assets: There are also forested areas and a large meadow.

The first thing the couple did upon taking ownership was to attack the thousands of autumn olive. As we go to press, they have removed more than 1500 of these invasive plants. They also requested information on how to improve their meadow. The answer

was simple: just spread native grass and forb seeds under the first snow. In a few years their fallow field will give way to a North American prairie.

On behalf of all the wildlife the property will continue to benefit – especially the insects and birds – we extend our thanks to this dedicated couple.



Gary finishes off a beast.



Barb with a vanquished beast.



Gary with the beast - beaten!



Daddy Oak on the left



Baby oak.



Milkweed with caterpillars.



Headwaters of wetland.



NorthUnit wetland.

From the Executive Director's Desk

by Kay Charter

As I write this, it is a beautiful day in October. Trees still hold a few leaves, the sky is clear and the air crisp. Our summer migrants have moved back to wintering grounds – replaced by species like those moving through from their tundra nesting sites, like White-crowned Sparrows, and our winter visitors like Dark-eyed Juncos. It is my guess that, with many of us continuing to isolate, we will have more time to enjoy these birds – as well as residents, like our friendly, engaging Black-capped Chickadees.

Take this opportunity to learn more about our feathered companions as they visit your winter feeders and flit about your yard. Remember that chickadees live in small troupes of six to ten individuals, sorted into a hierarchy with the Alpha male and Alpha female dominating. The Alpha male will visit your feeder first, followed by his mate, the Alpha female. The rest follow in order of rank. Take your additional time at home to see if you can figure out which pair is the Alpha by noting which comes to your feeder first.

Like virtually all organizations, performance groups, movie houses and many businesses, Saving Birds Thru Habitat has not been open this year. But that does not mean we were not working on behalf of birds.

Our most notable effort was the production of a professionally produced video. The cost was underwritten by one of our generous members. Find it by going to [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and type in the search bar: “saving birds thru habitat”. There are several of our films there, but the one we did this summer is entitled: “Saving Birds Thru Habitat: A Conservation Organization”. Our friend Doug Tallamy is featured.

I did nine podcasts – still available at [tacm.tv](https://www.tacm.tv). Follow the link and type “Saving Birds” in the search bar on the top right. Then scroll down until you find the individual podcasts. Plans are in the works for regular monthly offerings.

We continue to produce educational brochures. To date we have completed: “Habitat Hints”; “Lights, Leaves, Bugs and Birds”; “Tropical Milkweed Harms Monarch Butterflies”; “Why We Should Care About Spiders”; “Create a Pocket Prairie for Pollinators”; and “How to Purchase the Right Plant”. Next up will be fall gardening. Order (one per person, please) on our website: [savingbirds.org](https://www.savingbirds.org). More are in the works.

Over the winter, let's all hope that we will be able to put isolating behind us and that the virus will be in control so that we can look forward to another summer of great events.



Letter From Our Board President

by Bert Thomas

Fall has descended, and the great natural habitats that have sustained our native bird population and the insects that thrive here in northern Michigan are entering a long period of hibernation. Oblivious of the virus that has changed human behavior worldwide this year and likely into the future, birds and other forms of wildlife have gone about



Chickadee in Birch

their business as usual. And with unexpected time son our hands, many of us have found solace in nature whether in gardens, trails, observation and backyard birding. At our house, at least, that has been the case, and what I have noticed in particular is the maturing of many of the native plants we spread about our property before building here five years ago. Evergreens are providing shelter for birds and other critters, and plants like viburnums, red stemmed dogwood, winterberry and serviceberry bushes produced berries for the first time this summer and their blossoms attracted swarms of pollinators and little predator insects. Eight butterfly weeds not only produced orange blossoms most of the summer but became magnets for monarchs and the great spangled fritillary. We suspect these factors and the two birdbaths we tend are reasons bird activity around here seemed much higher this year. For someone who enjoys wildlife photography, this has been a banner year.



Dark-eyed Junco

The organization that you continue to support so generously is also thriving, in spite of everything. Why, even we upped our contribution this year. The board of directors prudently avoided close contact and Kay wisely, if sadly, shelved the great programs she worked so hard to plan. The slowdown has helped us focus more on the future, however. The board created an assistant director position for the first time and developed a formal compensation policy directive, both actions indicating our confidence in the strength of our mission well into the future. And Kay, with generous help from one of our members, John Putnam, produced an outstanding and moving video about our organization.

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I am hopeful every one of you is staying well and safe. As for me, in addition to reading Doug Tallamy's new book *Nature's Best Hope*, I have hunkered down with a fascinating new fungi book, *Entangled Life*, and an old one I'm just now discovering, Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*. Better late than never.

Bert Thomas 🐦

(Ed. Note: We have included some of Bert's photos here. What we love most about them is that they have not been altered in any way – no brightened colors, just the subtle beauty of these four species.)



Yellow-rumped Warbler

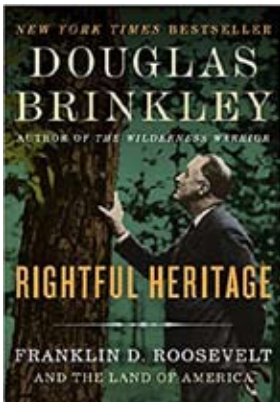


White-throated Sparrow

BOOK NOTES: Birds and FDR

by Paul Baicich and Wayne Peterson

A review of Douglas Brinkley's *Rightful Heritage – Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America* (Harper, 2016).



If you are like some of us, you may have your “must-read-next” pile of books on your desk, on your living room coffee-table, or your bedside nightstand. The heap never seems to go away. And very often the larger and daunting volumes get passed over for “a better time.”

Well, that “better time” has been with us for a few months, and the pile of books may be getting smaller. It could be time to conquer one of those big books you've bypassed for a few

years. One such hefty volume may have been Douglas Brinkley's 744-page *Rightful Heritage - Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Land of America* (Harper, 2016). And with time on your hands, that four-year-old book deserves serious consideration.

The book doesn't start with FDR as New York Governor or as President, it starts with his early years in the Hudson River Valley and his personal explorations.

Douglas Brinkley does a masterful and detailed job in tracing FDR's love of the land and love of nature that began during those early years, bird watching, studying natural history, and dabbling

in taxidermy. Early on, FDR emulated his distant cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, with an interest in conservation, and he honed real skills in forestry and a love for the sea (including fishing) for the rest of his life.

You can't understand his wildlife-and-land conservation leadership as President unless you appreciate his hands-on interests in these subjects during his early years. You can better comprehend his Presidential concern over the Civilian Conservation Corps, the National Parks, building a National Wildlife Refuge “system,” assisting the building of state parks across the country, and his soil-conservation emphasis when you appreciate his bird-obsessed youth and his self-identification as a forester.

Not only do birds fly in and out of Brinkley's narrative (with a few mistakes that only a few readers of this publication would likely catch), but the cast of characters with bird-and-conservation credentials also flow in and out of the narrative - and the White House - with equal ease. Some familiar conservation personalities include Frank Chapman, Ira Gabrielson, Bob Marshall, Rosalie Edge, Ding Darling, Aldo Leopold, J. Clark Salyer, and Ludlow Griscom.

There's no doubt, 744 pages is an investment of time. But if you take it on, you will undoubtedly be rewarded.

First published in Birding Community E-bulletin - August 2020 (Paul Baicich and Wayne Peterson). 🐦

Everybody Loves Warblers

Because there were no summer activities we could share with you, we thought you might enjoy this feature about migrating warblers. We have included photos of five here, along with the places they move to in winter. We have focused on a sixth, the Blackpoll Warbler, a tiny bird with the most amazing migratory journey imaginable.



Blackpoll Warbler

Blackpoll Warblers

nest across much of Canada into Alaska. Consider a bird that hatched in Alaska this summer, which will journey to its wintering grounds in the northeastern part of South America. One would think it would follow the Rockies down through Mexico, then

cross Central America, where it would make a hard left on the last leg of its journey to Venezuela. In that way, it could rest and forage as it traveled, as other songbirds do. But this little half-ounce superbird will not do that. Instead, late in summer, it will fly east, crossing the whole of Canada. From there, it will stop along the east coast of our neighbor to the north, or someplace in Maine or another eastern state. There, the little bird will be carried out over the open Atlantic by northwesterly winds. About halfway through its trip, trade winds from the northeast will push it back toward Venezuela.

Following a trip of more than 2,000 miles over open seas, this feathered wonder will reach its destination, having traveled for up to four days and nights; and it would have flapped its wings three million times – without stopping to refuel or rest.

Researchers have compared the bird's amazing flight to a human driving his or her car 720,000 miles on a single tank of gas.

Our bird's return trip will be much easier, less vigorous and safer, traveling across the Caribbean to North America's mainland, where it will continue overland to its breeding grounds. 🐦



Let's Help Fill Doug's Map!

Our good friend and supporter, Douglas Tallamy has long dreamed that we would create what he has called Home Grown National Park. That would be accomplished when each of us returns half of our property to nature by installing native plantings.

He has said: "In the past, we have asked one thing of our gardens: that they be pretty. Now they have to support life, sequester carbon, feed pollinators and manage water."

Since he began promoting native plants as a way to restore habitat for insects and the birds they support, the popularity of incorporating native vegetation has grown exponentially. Now there is a way to track just how much has been added back to the natural world by adding our efforts to an interactive map that documents all of the properties that either have been improved, or preserved by individuals, nurseries, land trusts or others outside of local, state and federal parks, preserves and refuges.

We can all help Doug reach his goal by participating in the effort. Simply go to: homegrownnationalpark.com and fill out the form. 🐦



Chestnut-sided Warbler

Chestnut-sided Warbler breeds in second growth woodlands and edges across northeastern U. S. and south-western Canada. Winters in southern Mexico through Central America



Prothonotary Warbler

Prothonotary Warbler – Breeds in swampy understorey in eastern U. S. Winters in Central America.



Yellow Warbler

Yellow Warbler – Breeds in riparian edges of streams, lakes and swamps across northern two-thirds of U. S. up through most of Canada and Alaska. Winters in western Mexico down through Central America



Black-throated Green Warbler

Black-throated Green Warbler – Breeds in the boreal forest of northeast U. S. and southwest Canada. Winters in eastern Mexico down through Central America.

Many thanks to the following:

Peter Van Dusen for landscaping assistance.

Katherine Bowman for landscaping assistance.

Thomas Wosachlo for accounting assistance.



Black and White Warbler

Help us Help Birds



Red-eyed Vireo

We know that our members donate to SBTH because they support our mission. However it never hurts to produce a positive tax result in the process.

We want to make you aware of two changes in tax law for this year that could influence your charitable giving.

First, because of COVID, Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) from tax qualified savings plans will not be required of individual tax-payers for 2020. BUT, individuals are still allowed to make Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs), if they wish. Making a QCD, paid directly from your investment/savings plan to a qualified charity (like SBTH), is without tax implication of any kind in 2020 and will reduce the amount from which your 2021 RMD is determined.

Second, the CARES Act allows taxpayers of any age and any income level to get a break in 2020 for their charitable donations, whether or not they itemize. Taxpayers who take the standard



Northern Cardinal pair

deduction are allowed up to \$300 in charitable contributions if filing separately, or \$600 if filing jointly. Taxpayers who itemize their deductions can deduct much greater amounts for charitable donations for 2020 - instead of 60% of their adjusted gross income (AGI), this year they can deduct up to 100% of their AGI. 🐦



Brown Thrasher



Yellow-throated Warbler

Earth Almanac

Our friend and member, Ted Williams' new book.

by Kay Charter



I first became acquainted with Ted in 1999 after reading one of his excellent articles in *Audubon Magazine*. I was so moved by it that I wrote an impassioned letter to the editors, which was published. Upon reading my letter, Ted called me. That was the start of an enduring friendship, based on a mutual love for our planet and all the marvelous and magical things and places it has to offer, including one's own back yard.

Ted Williams' newly published *Earth Almanac* takes us on a journey through the seasons with the flora and fauna that dance, hunt, reproduce and frolic as the sun withdraws its light from the Northern Hemisphere in winter and returns in spring, only to slip southward again in fall. He begins with Winter: The "dead" of winter is an oxymoron, he writes Never is winter "dead"; it only looks that way to those who don't get out in it.


Each section is filled with brief, engaging tales of some aspect of the wild world. In Winter, "Dance of the Craneflies" begins: "If you would like to believe in fairies again, venture into a woodland clearing late on a windless morning after a warm front has softened the bite of winter. Rising from mossy grottoes by the hundreds, male winter craneflies hover like milkweed silk, 5 to 25 feet above the forest floor, their quarter-inch wings and long, spindly legs lit by the muted sun."

Who among us would not like to believe in fairies again?

We also learn about the author as a father. In his introduction to Spring, he shares an account between his daughter, Beth, and her second-grade teacher, Miss Smith. On a spring morning, Beth

excitedly announced to her teacher that she had seen the first turkey vulture of the year. Having been raised by parents who taught their children about the natural world, Beth was certain of what she had seen. But Miss Smith responded by saying that vultures did not occur in their Massachusetts home. Later in the year, Miss Smith pronounced that there is no Santa Clause.

When Beth shared that unhappy news with Ted, he simply said, "Of course she doesn't believe in Santa Claus. She doesn't even believe in turkey vultures," thus releasing his daughter from her fears about Santa.

Earth Almanac was written by a man who believes that we can save what is left of the plants and wild creatures populating our world. Reading it will not only entertain you with lively and descriptive prose, it will also inspire you to do what you can to save those plants and creatures. 

In Memory of

Kay Charter memory Dan Mahaney

Kay Charter memory Cate Varley

Lillian Mahaney memory of Dan Mahaney

Deborah Faulkner memory Doug Faulkner

Lisa Meils memory Richard K. Meils, MD

Nancy Beights memory Roy Alton Craig

Elizabeth Rodgers memory of Philip Hill

Peter and Sue Stott memory of Ben Lane Korn

In Honor of

Martha Black and Jim Ristine in honor of Barb Richman

Jerry Nye in honor of Barb Richman

Kathleen Brewer Leece and David Leece
in honor of Judie Leece

Berkley and Nancy Duck in honor of Barbara Krause

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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:**
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|--|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Sandhill Crane (\$2500) | <input type="checkbox"/> Bald Eagle (\$5000) |
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Questions? Please call (231) 271-3738 or email:
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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.



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