

# Habitat Happenings

## SAVING BIRDS THRU HABITAT NEWSLETTER

May 2009, Volume 8, Number 1

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

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John Erb  
and Kay Charter

### Check It Out

by Executive Director Kay Charter

If it's been a while since you checked out our website, take a few minutes to do so the next time you log on. There is a wealth of information available, from our Habitat Hints to how using shade coffee helps our migrating birds. There are also a couple of blogs; "Weblog" concerns habitat and other bird conservation issues. The most recent entry is about the damage to native wildlife (including birds) resulting from an invasion of *Phragmites australis*. "Birding Blog" is about what's happening on Charter Sanctuary, our personal experiences, and our travels. Birding Blog is a kind of replacement for my Traverse City Record-Eagle column. You will also want to take a look at our "Plant of the Month" One new feature in the works is a regional resource guide for those searching for information about which plants are native to each respective area and where natives can be purchased. We plan to add this feature to our website within the next couple of months. L

## Message From the President

I'm bi-coastal ... lucky enough to live on Lake Michigan and also visit Chicago, the other coast, on a regular basis. After living in the Windy City for 30 years, I thought I really knew it. I've ridden my bike along the lake and in many of the forest preserves, taken in the culture, theater, museums, and sporting events, but I never once went birding. In April, the Chicago Park District offered a birding opportunity along the lakefront. Not far from where I once lived was an old military station that had been closed and has now been converted to a wildlife sanctuary.

About 20 of us gathered to meet our guide. It was a large group to keep together so I hooked up with a nice young gal, Jameela, who is also a beginner birder.

It was great to have a buddy, and four eyes are better than two. Between the two of us we were able to see more birds than we would have on our own, and we helped each other with identification.

There were kinglets, flickers, great blue herons flying over and an old oriole nest. I was happy to share some bird facts that I have learned over the past years from my affiliation with SBTH. Jameela had a good eye for identifying features; we made a good team. I asked her if she would be interested in meeting again some time when I'm back and we agreed that it would be fun.

So grab your binoculars and a bird book and have a fun day sharing your joy of birds with a friend. Happy birding.

Gina Erb L



Baltimore Oriole Nest

# Encouraging Words from Judy Smart



*Planting a dense hedgerow of native shrubs will provide a welcome nesting site for Gray Catbirds*

## TIP OF THE MONTH: THINKING LIKE A BIRD

*Reprinted from the March, 2009  
Birding Community E-Bulletin*

When you are in the field, and especially when you are examining a particular habitat, ask yourself: "If I were a bird, and not a human, where would I go in this habitat?" Look for the best brushy tangle, the best mudflat, the best dead limb, the best cove, the best burned-over area, the best scrubby transition zone, the best stretch of beach.

And if you are searching for a particular species in that habitat, look for the sub-habitat, or niche, that could be most productive for the species in question. You may be surprised how well this strategy works!

Yes, try thinking more like a bird next time you're in the field. L

As a new board member of Saving Birds Thru Habitat I am thrilled to be a part of this wonderful organization. Every time I visit the SBTH Center I come away with an appreciation of the beautiful songbirds we have here in Michigan. There is something very special about connecting with these birds, enjoying their habitat, and feeling at one with their musical lives. As chair of the membership committee, I encourage everyone to embrace the good work of SBTH. I now understand how important it is to get the word out about preserving a songbird's habitat, one backyard at a time.

Becoming a member insures you of a greater knowledge of how we go about welcoming these birds to our surroundings with a small amount of effort and love. We are learning how to look out for these beautiful creatures and keep them nourished and protected with what we choose to plant in our yards. With the information that SBTH provides, we can create an attractive environment, which draws the songbirds to us.

Please encourage your friends to join SBTH. They will be forever grateful to you!

*Judy Smart, Chair, SBTH Membership Committee* L



*The following note of appreciation was sent by Spring Lake High School biology teacher Lisa Schanhals following presentations to three of her classes:*



Dear Ms. Charter of Charter Nature Preserve —  
Thank you so much for sharing your passion and the mission of Charter Nature Preserve with my students last Friday at Spring Lake High School.

We appreciate your time, the funding and grants that made your visit possible.  
I had several parents stop me at an evening sporting event to say their children had come home and shared what they learned! This is the

ultimate compliment when a high scholar talks to their parents!  
THANK YOU AGAIN,  
Sincerely —  
Lisa Schanhals

## If It's Not Native – It's Not Habitat



*This Eastern Kingbird can survive very well on fruits and berries, but it must have insects for its young.*

It is a sad truth that too many conservationists, even those who are engaged in habitat efforts (particularly those who teach others about habitat) have no idea that native plants are the key to offering aid to declining bird and other wildlife populations. A perfect example of this disconnect occurred two years ago, while I was attending an International Wildlife Conference in Columbus; I was engaged in a conversation with the educational director of a state Audubon Society and mentioned the fact that only native plants host the insects that support our migratory birds. The educational director, a biologist, challenged my statement, and asked me if we really know that is true.

Dr. Douglas Tallamy, who chairs the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at University of Delaware explained the disconnect when I first interviewed him about his book, *Bringing Nature Home* (Timber Press, Inc., \$27.95, 2007).

He confessed that during the very time he was studying the relationship between native plants and insects in college, he was busy filling his personal landscape with non-native ornamentals and cultivars. I asked about his epiphany; what was the moment the light came on about the importance of native plants. He said it was after he and his wife purchased ten acres of old Pennsylvania farmland for their home.

The property was overgrown with alien plants like autumn olive, multiflora rose, and Japanese knotweed. The vegetation was so dense that they had to cut trails in order to get inside of it. One day, he took a walk to look for insects. He was dismayed to find none except on the handful of native plants that struggled to survive under the stranglehold of invasives. It was a defin-

ing moment for him. He began to present programs to educate the general public about his discovery. It was a rediscovery, actually; he already knew that our indigenous herbivorous fauna (insects, amphibians, mammals, etc.), with few exceptions, either cannot or will not eat plants from other continents. He just hadn't applied the concept to his own property.

In his book, Tallamy talks about the "insect biomass" which is the base of the food web. A full 97% of all terrestrial birds require insects during some part of their life cycles. That is especially true during the breeding cycle; nestling birds must have protein-rich insects in order to develop. No bugs, no baby birds. Only native plants support this biomass. Thus, if you use a variety of native plants, you will provide a haven for vastly more birds and other members of the wildlife community than if you don't. L

### Thanks to our Photographers:

We wish to extend our deepest thanks to the following for permitting the use of their photos:

Dave Brunell  
Robert Epstein  
Deb Harp  
Jeff Kingery  
Doug Tallamy

# SBTH Summer/Fall Events Calendar

*All SBTH programs are open to the public at no fee. Unless otherwise noted, all events will be held at the Habitat Discovery Center, 5020 North Putnam in Omena. Call 231-271-3738 for details and/or directions.*



**Thursday, May 21st; 9:00 AM**

## **Wildflower and Bird Hike**

Join Plant it Wild and Saving Birds Thru Habitat for a birding and wildflower hike in Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Begin at Esch Road parking lot.



**Saturday, May 23rd; 9:30 – 11:30 AM**

## **Bird Hike on Charter Sanctuary**

Join Saving Birds Thru Habitat Executive Director Kay Charter for a bird hike on the 44-acre sanctuary which she and her husband own. Charter Sanctuary has hosted 63 nesting species of birds. Meet at the Discovery Center.



**Saturday, May 30th; 9:30 – 11:30 AM**

## **Bird Hike on Charter Sanctuary**

Join Saving Birds Thru Habitat Executive Director Kay Charter for a bird hike on the 44-acre sanctuary which she and her husband own. Charter Sanctuary has hosted 63 nesting species of birds. Meet at the Discovery Center.



**Saturday, May 30th; 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM**

## **What Birds Are In YOUR Yard?**

While Northern Cardinals might nest in your yard, you may also have one or more of those wonderful Neotropical beauties – such as Indigo Bunting. Bring photos and/or site drawings of your yard and SBTH Executive Director Kay Charter will help you figure out which birds you should expect to find. Charter will also help you figure out how to improve the habitat in your yard for our migrating birds.



**Saturday, June 6; 9:30 AM**

## **Herp Hike**

Join Saving Birds Thru Habitat docent Ann McInnis to make discoveries about Michigan amphibians and reptiles, meet some live ones, and take a “Herpin” Hike at SBTH.



**Friday, June 12; 10:00 AM**

## **Butterfly Walk**

MSU Extension entomologist Erwin “Duke” Elsner will lead a hike on Charter Sanctuary in search of butterflies, moths and other flying insects. Meet at the Habitat Discovery Center.



**Saturday, June 13; 10 AM – 4 PM**  
**Nature North at the Boardman River Nature Center**

You are invited to join SBTH and other conservation organizations for a day of fun and educational nature celebration. For more information, go to the website for the nature center: [www.natureiscalling.org](http://www.natureiscalling.org)



**Saturday, June 20; 8:30 AM – Noon**  
**All About Birds**

At the Leelanau Conservation District,  
112 West Philip Street, Lake Leelanau

During this three and a half hour event we will learn:

- Where and how birds build their nests
- How they care for their young
- How and why they migrate
- How to select and use a field guide
- How to use binoculars
- How to attract more birds to your yard



For the last hour, we will put our new knowledge to use with a bird hike along the Leelanau Narrows.



**Wednesday, July 1; 9:00 PM**  
**Nighttime Moths with Duke**

MSU Extension entomologist Erwin “Duke” Elsner will present a program at the Discovery Center in search of night-flying insects including moths, mayflies and many other groups. Plan to stay late. Action picks up as night goes on. Be prepared for cool weather and mosquitoes. Bring a flashlight.

**Thursday, August 20th; 8:30 PM**  
**Moth Baiting with Duke**

MSU Extension entomologist Erwin “Duke” Elsner will bait trees on Charter Sanctuary to attract insects of the night. Join us for to see what strange creatures show up.



**Saturday, September 5th; 2:00 PM**  
**Prairie Habitat and Native Plant Sale**

Vern Stevens of Designs by Nature brings his engaging PowerPoint presentation about North American prairie back to the Discovery Center. Native prairie plant sale follows. *(see next page for plant sale information)*





# Native Plants for Sale

## Prairie Habitat and Native Plants September 5, 2009 • SBTH Discovery Center

**Prices:** \$5.50 per quart pot grasses and wildflowers  
 \$6.00 per quart/gallon pot woodlands  
 \$65 per garden flat (butterfly, grass, wildflower, rain garden)  
 38 plant plugs per flat and comes with design  
 \$55 per plug flat single species (woodlands are not available in plug flats)

### 2009 Plant List:

#### Grasses:

Little Bluestem  
 Big Bluestem  
 Indian Grass  
 Switch Grass  
 Prairie Dropseed  
 Sideoats Grama  
 June Grass

#### Wildflowers:

Bergamot  
 Black-Eyed Susan  
 Blue Vervain  
 Boneset  
 Butterfly Weed  
 Cardinal Flower  
 Columbine  
 Compass Plant  
 Culver's Root  
 Cup Plant  
 False Boneset  
 False Dragonhead  
 Foxglove Beard Tongue  
 Gray Headed Coneflower  
 Golden Alexanders  
 Great Blue Lobelia  
 Hairy Beard Tongue

Hoary Vervain  
 Horsemint  
 Ironweed  
 Joe Pye Weed  
 Lead Plant  
 New Jersey Tea  
 Nodding Wild Onion  
 New England Aster  
 Marsh Blazing Star  
 Prairie Coreopsis  
 Prairie Dock  
 Prairie Smoke  
 Pale Purple Coneflower  
 Purple Coneflower  
 Queen of the Prairie  
 Rattlesnake Master  
 Rosin Weed  
 Rough Blazing Star

Round Leaf Ragwort  
 Sand Tickseed  
 Showy Goldenrod  
 Sky Blue Aster  
 Spiderwort  
 Stiff Goldenrod  
 Swamp Milkweed  
 Sweet Black-Eyed Susan  
 Thimbleweed  
 Turtlehead  
 Western Sunflower  
 White Wild Indigo  
 Wild Lupine  
 Wild Senna  
 Woodland Sunflower  
 Zig Zag Goldenrod  
 Blue Eyed Grass



# U.S. STATE OF THE BIRDS REPORT RELEASED

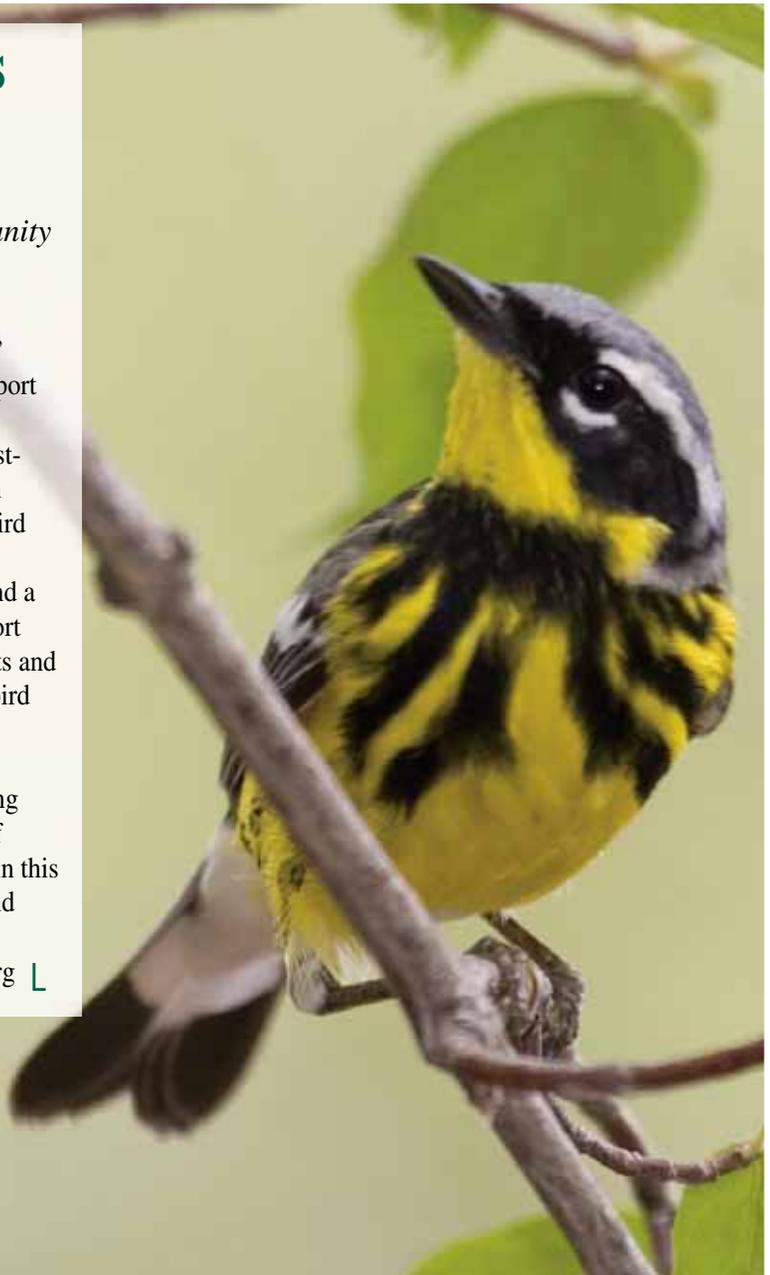
*Reprinted from the April, 2009 Birding Community  
E-Bulletin*

Related to the “Birds of Conservation Concern 2008” was the release in mid-March of a nearly simultaneous report entitled, “U.S. State of the Birds.”

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar released this first-ever comprehensive national report on bird populations in the U.S., showing that nearly a third of the nation’s 800 bird species are either endangered or threatened, or else are in significant decline due to habitat loss, invasive species, and a variety of other threats. The “U.S. State of the Birds” report synthesizes data gathered by thousands of citizen scientists and professional biologists from three long-running national bird censuses.

Salazar said, “From shorebirds in New England to warblers in Michigan to songbirds in Hawaii, we are seeing disturbing downward population trends that should set off environmental alarm bells.” There are also signs of hope in this report, highlighting examples where habitat restoration and conservation efforts have reversed previous declines.

The report can be accessed at [www.stateofthebirds.org](http://www.stateofthebirds.org) L



**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"/> 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)

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:  
[bobolink3@prodigy.net](mailto:bobolink3@prodigy.net)

*Thank You!*



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P.O. Box 288  
Omena, MI 49674-0288

*Check Out Our  
Web Site!!*  
[www.SavingBirds.org](http://www.SavingBirds.org)



*Our mission 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.*