



Friends of the Limberlost

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LIMBERLOST STATE HISTORIC SITE OPENED FOR TOURS FRIDAY, JUNE 19

**THE SITE IS OPEN WEDNESDAY
THRU SUNDAY FROM 10 AM TO 5 PM**

**Members of the Indiana State
Museum get in free**

Admission for non-members:

Adult \$7 Senior \$6

Child \$3 (age 3-17)



ROYER PROPERTY UPDATE

As you might recall from the spring newsletter, we are in the middle of a fundraising effort to purchase 10.42 acres of flood-prone farmland. Ken Brunswick stated in the last newsletter, that he had envisioned adding this property to the Loblolly Marsh for the last 38 years.

35 donors, so far, have stepped up to make this purchase possible, donating \$14,989.84 (which is a great start!) but we want to increase this amount as we continue our fundraising efforts. When we started this fundraising campaign our goal was to raise \$100,000. To help us kick-off this effort a \$5,000 donation was made by a generous Kokomo, Indiana couple. To date, we have almost matched their donation twice thanks to the generosity of 34 other donors. We don't want to publish the names and amounts of individual donors without their consent, but all donors will be acknowledged at the next board meeting.

We feel comfortable thanking the Robert Cooper Audubon Society in Muncie for donating \$2,500 for this project. We received two other large donations, both from long time members of the Friends of the Limberlost, one for \$2,193 and the other \$1,000. Almost half of the donors gave \$500, \$200, or \$100. All donors should have received a thank you letter or email by now. If that is not the case, please let the Treasurer, Randy Lehman, know that you have been missed—email Randy at randyplehman@comcast.net

This fundraising campaign to raise more funds for the Royer property continues. Be looking for another update in the Fall newsletter. If you want to donate to this campaign, make your check payable to the "The Friends of the Limberlost, write on your check "for Royer property", and send your check to the Friends of the Limberlost, P.O. Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740.

Register for the June 27 Flat 50 Plus bicycle ride Online registrations deadline June 24—limited to 225 riders



- Go to www.flat50plus.com for more information and to register
- \$25 online registration fee
- No "day-of" or "mail-in" registrations
- Lunch included at Limberlost State Historic Site
- Listen to a Bluegrass Band while you eat lunch
- Email any questions to:
<http://www.flat50plus.com/contact-us.html>

COVID 19 SHUTS DOWN 2020 BLUEGRASS LIMBERLOST BLUEGRASS JAMBOREES CANCELLED

It's a headline that we are very sorry to use, but it's true. There won't be any Bluegrass Jamborees at Limberlost State Historic Site this year. Many of you will be very disappointed, and we wish it weren't so, but it's just too risky to gather together. Our audience is primarily seniors, and we don't see



any effective way to maintain social distancing for audience members and for the musicians. Randy Lehman, emcee for the Bluegrass events, put it this way:

"A lot of Bluegrass is about working, drinking, and dying, but we don't want anyone dying or getting sick because they came to our Bluegrass Jamborees. Cancelling this event for this year is the right thing to do. Because of changes at Limberlost and my own wish to play a reduced role in organizing this event, it also seems the right time to talk about the future of Bluegrass at the Limberlost. Verena Sutton and I want your feedback and help to think of a way to keep it going. Last year we only had two jamborees; musician and visitor attendance was trending downward. Perhaps it is time to move it to a new location? Perhaps fresh ideas, different perspectives, maybe a new person in charge, can make Limberlost Bluegrass last another 17 years? If you want to play an active role in what happens in the future contact me or Verena and join the discussion."

The Limberlost Bluegrass Jamborees were started back in 2003 by Betty Yoder (Verena's mother), who played guitar and often played locally with family and friends. Betty loved to perform and she embraced the community of Geneva. She organized the first two Jamborees, but sadly, she passed away unexpectedly on May 26, 2005. Since Betty started Limberlost Bluegrass, we've kept the party going for another 15 years. Perhaps the time is right to retire Bluegrass at the Limberlost?

Randy Lehman can be reached at randylehman@comcast.net or by phone at 260-849-0308. Verena Sutton can be reached by phone: 260-525-1943. You can also mail your thoughts the old-fashion way—send a letter to Randy and address it to PO Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740

Planning a visit to the Limberlost? Remember to **RENT-A-NATURALIST**

Hire Curt Burnette, Certified Interpretive Guide, to take you on a guided nature hike at one or more of the Limberlost wetlands, or include a tour of historic downtown Geneva, or take the tour that highlights locations described in Gene Stratton-Porter's books.

Cost is \$40 for 90 minutes. You must schedule your tour in advance of your visit. Curt is experienced at putting together a package that will meet your needs and your interests.

Enhance your visitor experience! Take advantage of this excellent opportunity. Explore the Limberlost with a knowledgeable guide.

Call Curt at the Limberlost 260-368-7428 or email cburnette@indianamuseum.org and start planning your Limberlost adventure today!

CREEK RUN'S ANNUAL FUNDRAISER **Proceeds go to Friends of the Limberlost**

Creek Run LLC Environmental Engineering
1 Creek Run Drive, Montpelier, IN 47359



This will be Creek Run's 14th annual fundraiser to honor the late James Peterson, founder of Jay Petroleum, and one of the original owners of Creek Run, L.L.C.

Donations to the Friends of the Limberlost that come from Creek Run's annual fundraising event help support the mission of the Friends. It is one of our best opportunities to raise money for Limberlost wetland restoration projects, and our efforts to bring back portions of the Limberlost Swamp were projects James Peterson personally supported before his passing in February 2012.

Since its beginning over 13 years ago this annual Creek Run fundraiser has raised over \$40,000 for Limberlost Swamp Remembered, a standing committee of the Friends of the Limberlost focused on bringing back portions of the Limberlost Swamp made famous years ago by noted Indiana author and naturalist, Gene Stratton-Porter.

Today Friends of the Limberlost works closely with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserve, and there are over 1800 acres of restored Limberlost wetlands and uplands located in Jay County and Adams County Indiana with miles of hiking trails open to the public.

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Creek Run is not having any on-site events during this fundraiser. So the fish fry, cornhole tournament, and 5K Run/Walk and other events are cancelled; however, they are still raising funds for Friends of the Limberlost.

THE RAFFLE & SILENT AUCTION

You can participate in BOTH the raffle and silent auction. Raffle tickets cost \$10/each and you can purchase as many tickets as you like. **There are two RAFFLE prizes:**

- (1) a 28" Blackstone Griddle with Griddle Tool kit
- (2) half a hog from Slusser Family Farms in Hartford City, IN. The half hog will be processed at Adairs in Pennville, IN. If you win the hog, it will be ready for you in October so that you can make your own selection of cuts and spices.

The Raffle has started and will be on going until August 14, 2020. To purchase raffle tickets call or email Abby Michael 765-728-8051 or amichael@creekrun.com. You can mail Abby a check and she can mail or email you your raffle tickets. You can also pay for and pick up raffle tickets at the Creek Run office in Montpelier,



THE SILENT AUCTION currently has 65 items and more are being added. If you or anyone you know would like to donate an item for the auction contact Abby Michael at Creek Run. Her email is amichael@creekrun.com

Here is the link to the silent auction:
<http://www.32auctions.com/creekrun2020>

The auction will run for two weeks, from August 2 to August 14, 2020 at noon. You have to sign up to participate in the auction by going to the silent auction website. You can register in advance, sign in when the auction starts, and then you will be able to bid. All items won will need to be picked up at Creek Run's office in Montpelier.

This special fundraising event at Creek Run is open to employees, family, friends and clients of Creek Run and includes Friends of the Limberlost members and family.

JUNE BERRIES! by Fred Wooley

Part of the charm of wild and native plants is their appearance year-round and often how animals, including us, react to them. In spring, it is pure anticipation. When will the first hepatica stir to life and send up its fuzzy bud, when will buds swell on red maples down in the marsh, when will conifer candles light their branch tips and give glow to warming temperatures?

Spring turns to summer, flowers to fruit, and we predict what kind of year it will be for summer and autumn fruit abundance. Foresters and wildlife biologists refer to heavy mast years when heavy loads from nut trees fall to the forest floor and feed hungry critters. Even we look forward to bumper crops of bountiful peaches, apples, pears, and other fruits.



One small tree captures all this magic for me each year, the Juneberry. There are many closely related Juneberry species, sometimes challenging the most ardent botanist on identification. We resort to the scientific genus name, *Amelanchier*, which covers 20 or so species in most field guides to trees and shrubs of North America.

They are native, which makes them great choices for our home landscapes when found in local nurseries or plant catalogs. They tend to be small trees, even shrub-like, providing a nice size for special lawn areas.

For a natural history interpreter, Juneberries are a gold mine of fun facts. First, the name, Juneberry, called such as it produces some of the earliest ripening fruit. Tiny, sweet pea-sized berries occur in loose clusters on cherry-like stalks. Hard green in May, they begin to turn purple and then deep blue by June's end. For settlers counting on the earliest of wild fruit for the first pies and jams of the season, Juneberries were it.



Let's back up to April though, when it makes sense that Juneberries would also be one of the first trees to flower. The trees, crowned with quarter-sized, five-petal flowers occurring in clusters, viewed from a distance through a still leafless woodland or wetland, look as if strung with popcorn. Some call it the "popcorn tree."

Some know it as Sarvis, or Serviceberry. The folktale goes that in early times, small rural settlements did not have the populations to support fully staffed churches. Preachers would go from town to town to offer their Sunday sermons. This job became too difficult in winter's rigors, so services were only held in bigger towns during those months. Outreaching lands did not have church until springtime. When those small trees showed their many white flowers, the worship services would return. The "Service"berries proclaimed the good news.

Along eastern seaboard towns where tidal creeks would run with spawning shad fish come early spring, the event was signaled to inlanders by this tiny tree with many white flowers. When the "shadberry" or "shadblow" were blooming, creeks teemed with fish.



Willy De Smet took this picture at the White Oak property at Loblolly Marsh in April. It still needs to be confirmed, but looks like Amelanchier to him.

We have seven Juneberry trees surrounding our home in Steuben County. I love the early white flowers and then later the fall leaves in their special red-orange-purplish splendor. In between, we love the fruit. A few years ago, was a bumper crop as we never saw. We filled bowls with the colorful fruit. Jam was made.

Each year I am eager to pick them, knowing we compete with wild neighbors. Songbirds, turkeys, and mammal such as squirrels, raccoons, opossums, skunks, and fox enjoy them. We enjoy watching chipmunks scurry up the thin, gray-barked trunks in search of the sweet morsels.

Robins flock to Juneberries, as they likely do to your favorite cherry trees with ripening fruits. We have robins basically all the time. One bird we do not have all the time, but seemingly spring from the earth itself come Juneberry time, is the cedar waxwing. Just as Juneberries begin to ripen, I hear that familiar high-pitched cedar waxwing call. I look up and sure enough, waxwings find their way to the nearby Juneberry trees! Where have they been?! How did they know it is time?! These birds somehow have the trees on their radars and know when to come.

Are these trees on your radar? Watch for these trees on Limberlost properties. Follow the cedar waxwings. They may just lead you to some sweet treats.

This above article appeared in part in the *Natural Touch* Column of KPCNews media newspapers. Fred Wooley is a naturalist, writer, and land preservation/restoration enthusiast. He lives on part of an old farm overlooking an extensive fen in northern Steuben County. He is a Lifetime member of the Friends of the Limberlost, and he can be reached at fwooley@frontier.com.



SWIFTS NIGHT OUT

Saturday, Aug. 8, 7:30pm

Admission Charge: \$1.50 for members of ISMHS & \$2 for non-members

Enjoy a presentation on chimney swifts by naturalist, Curt Burnette. The program begins at the Limberlost Visitor Center classroom where you'll learn all about this often heard but often unnoticed bird. After the program everyone can walk or drive to downtown Geneva to watch and count chimney swifts as they enter a chimney to roost for the night. In previous events, we have counted from 80 to 100 chimney swifts entering this one chimney. *Please bring a lawn chair so you have comfortable seating while watching the action.*

North America and built chimneys, Swifts found chimneys to be perfect habitat. So thanks to human settlement their numbers rose accordingly. A recent shift in chimney designs toward covered, narrow flues, which are unsuitable for nesting, may be contributing to a decline in this species' numbers. Even though chimney swifts do not seem to be a bird declining in numbers in this area, the Friends of the Limberlost are constructing and installing a chimney swift tower made for nesting swifts. A new interpretation sign and the tower will be installed at the Hart Barn.



PURPLE MARTINS FIND LIVING IN COLONIES TO THEIR LIKING By Randy Lehman

We know that Gene Stratton-Porter had Purple Martin houses and watched each spring for the return of Purple Martins from their wintering grounds.

Because the Adams & Jay County Amish like putting up Martin houses, it's easy to see this communal bird living together in large numbers enjoying the housing provided by their human friends.

The Purple Martin is the largest swallow in North America, and like all swallows they catch the food they eat while flying through the air. A wide variety of insects are part of the diet: many different kinds of beetles, flies, dragonflies, damselflies, leafhoppers, stinkbugs, grasshoppers, crickets, butterflies, moths, wasps, bees, caddisflies, spiders, cicadas, termites, midges, mayflies, and flying ants.

They feed during the day, rarely in groups, but often in pairs (probably so the male can guard the female from mating with other males). Martins also pick up small bits of gravel to help them digest insect exoskeletons. The Purple Martin not only gets all its food in flight, it gets all its water that way too. It skims the surface of a pond and scoops up the water with its lower bill.

The Purple Martin has for a long time been praised as a great consumer of mosquitoes, but research provides little hard evidence to back up this claim. In fact, during daylight hours, purple martins often feed voraciously upon dragonflies, known predators of mosquitoes. The Cornell Lab website http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Purple_Martin/lifehistory doesn't even mention mosquitoes as part of the main diet of Purple Martins. According to other websites Martins are daytime feeders and feed high in the sky. Mosquitoes, on the other hand, stay low in damp places during daylight hours, or only come out at night. Martins tend to feed at treetop level, well above most mosquito flight paths.



Ornithologist James Hill, founder of the Purple Martin Conservation Association writes, "The number of mosquitoes that martins eat is extremely insignificant, and they certainly don't control them. In-depth studies have shown that mosquitoes comprise no more than 0 to 3 percent of the diet of martins". Rather than erecting martin houses to attract this insect-eating bird for mosquito control, we should value them for consuming other insect pests.

European Starlings and House Sparrows often push Purple Martins out of local areas by taking over all of the nest sites. One relatively new tool used in the battle to keep starlings out of nesting houses is the hole shape in the nesting house. Note in the Martin house pictures that the traditional round entry hole has been replaced with a more oblong shaped hole. This newer hole design (see the top picture) when properly executed, has proven to be an effective barrier to starlings.



SNAKE FENCE PROJECT COMPLETE by Randy Lehman

It was a bright and cool Monday morning on June 8, the day that Ken Brunswick, Curt Burnette, and I, met at the Music of the Wild parking lot with Richard “Doc” Yoder, a veterinarian from Berne, Indiana. We met with Doc Yoder because he has a passion for building snake-fences, a.k.a., split-rail fences. It’s the type of fence celebrated by Gene Stratton-Porter in her book *Music of the Wild*, published in September 1910. She liked the fence’s zig-zag structure because, unlike barbed wire fencing, it created wildlife habitat and left room for wildflowers to grow.

In fact, the interpretation sign you see in the picture below shows a picture that Mrs. Porter took of a split-rail fence with a bird’s nest resting on one end. The sign also features a split-rail fence that Doc Yoder constructed on property he owns at another location in Adams County. He was surprised and delighted that we would feature his work on this sign, and he began to study what needed to be done in order to create a split-rail fence at the Music of the Wild parking lot. The picture to the left shows him considering the details of the project we were asking him to do for us.



FIVE DAYS LATER THE PROJECT WAS FINISHED

After some discussion, Doc Yoder said he would build the fence with the help of some Amish friends. He agreed to donate all the materials and labor needed to get it done, which was an extra bonus for the Friends of the Limberlost. At best I thought the project might get done by the end of the summer.

We showed him the planned location for the fence, the interpretive sign, and the native wildflowers the Friends had planted late last fall. He indicated he could install the fence without harm to the plants. You can see rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) and wild quinine (*Parthenium integrifolium*) next to the fence in the picture to the left.

Imagine our surprise when Ken drove by the site on Friday, June 12, and he saw over 250 ft. of split rail fencing in place and looking fantastic! We owe a debt of gratitude and much thanks to Doc Yoder and his Amish cohorts for getting this project completed so quickly.

Now we need to plant more wildflowers and focus on making a pedestrian connection between this parking area and the rest of the Music of the Wild nature preserve on the other side of Limberlost Creek!

Reading Takes You To The Limberlost

By Adrienne Provenzano

In Chapter 1 of *A Girl of the Limberlost*, Elnora Comstock starts at a new school, and her experience is frustrating! Discouraged, she finds her neighbor, Wesley Sinton, to be a compassionate listener. She pours out her heart to him, and in doing so, and with his kind encouragement, identifies how to solve her financial and social problems. She finds hope.

In *Freckles*, a poor boy seeks a new life away from abuse. He's given a chance to protect the timber of the Limberlost. On his first walk along the trail alone, he is full of fear. Unbeknownst to him, Duncan, the foreman of the lumber company, follows the whole way out of sight and earshot, making sure Freckles is safe.

A Girl of the Limberlost and *Freckles* are novels by Gene Stratton-Porter filled with details of the Land of the Limberlost in Northeastern Indiana. Both books feature leading characters – Elnora and Freckles – who are faced with seemingly insurmountable challenges and then rise to meet them, again and again. They have pluck, grit, and resilience. They also have people who provide them with a sense of community and generous care and support.

In each story, there are adults and peers who help to guide them. For Elnora, it is Wesley and Margaret Sinton and The Bird Woman, as well as Ellen Brownlee, a classmate who befriends Elnora. For Freckles, it is Duncan and McClean, The Bird Woman, and the Swamp Angel.

Because of conservation and preservation efforts ongoing for decades, visitors to Adams and Jay Counties in Indiana can visit the places that inspired both books. They can stand on Freckles' porch as they tour The Bird Woman's house, Stratton-Porter's own Limberlost Cabin. They can hike the trails of the Loblolly and Limberlost Swamp and imagine Elnora gathering moths and butterflies and Freckles discovering Little Chicken. Depending on recent rainfall, they might even get their boots stuck in the muck along the Wabash River!



The wilderness preserves and trails have been open all year, and Limberlost State Historic Site reopened on June 19. However, given the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, some visitors may understandably decide to come to the Limberlost in a different season or year.

Fortunately, readers can still travel through their imaginations! In *Nature's Storyteller: The Life of Gene Stratton-Porter*, biographer Barbara Olenyik Morrow recounts that "a favorite letter came from scholar and clergyman Oren Root, who paid Stratton-Porter high tribute by writing: 'I have a severe cold this morning, because I got my feet very wet last night walking the trail with 'Freckles,' but I am willing to risk pneumonia any time for another book like that.'" By reading her fiction, no one need put their life in any danger and still enjoy the places Stratton-Porter called "a world of light, fragrance, beauty and song."

Morrow also notes that *A Girl of the Limberlost* was intended to "uplift spirits and bring the outdoors to nature-starved readers, especially to the sick, troubled, and unfortunate." For Stratton-Porter, her story of "earth and sky" was a way to share the Limberlost with others. This gift is everlasting, and she is just one of many authors whose fiction and non-fiction writings eloquently express their appreciation for nature. Put a Limberlost tour on your summer reading list!



"Elnora knelt and slipping her fingers through the leaves and grasses to the roots, gathered a few violets and gave them to Philip."

Adrienne Provenzano is a Friend of the Limberlost, Advanced Indiana Master Naturalist, and NAI Certified Interpretive Guide.

FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST—NEW & RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

The Friends of the Limberlost, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, supports the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves. They manage the restored wetlands in the Limberlost Territories. They have an office located at the Limberlost State Historic Site in Geneva, IN. Your membership dues and donations support the many projects bringing back parts of the Limberlost Swamp—made famous by author, Gene Stratton-Porter, in her novels and nature studies.

Your annual membership dues will be used by Limberlost Swamp Remembered (a committee of the Friends of the Limberlost) primarily on Limberlost Swamp restoration projects.

Your annual dues and donation includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, and your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please fill out the form below to renew your membership or to sign up as a new member. If you have any questions call Randy Lehman at (260)849-0308, or email randyplehman@comcast.net.

Please make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST and mail both your check and completed Membership form to **PO Box 571, Geneva, IN 46740**.

Please Check the Box that best matches the type of membership you want.

☐ Senior Citizen/Limited Income—\$10 ☐ Business—\$50 (please enter contact name below)

☐ Individual—\$20 ☐ Family—\$35.00 ☐ Lifetime—\$1,000

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TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED (Additional donation appreciated): \$ _____

COMMENTS: _____

**FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST
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GENEVA, IN 46740**