

SPRING 2021



Friends of the Limberlost

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BIRDS & BLOOMS, HIKING & HISTORY—THE LIMBERLOST DOESN'T DISAPPOINT

Here at the Limberlost, every season offers something to lift one's spirit. Spring offers a combination of many things—warming temperatures and spring flowers, birds returning to nesting areas, birds resting in the Limberlost wetlands before migrating further north, the transformation of the Limberlost Cabin grounds shaking off the remnants of winter. It all adds up to scenes that Gene Stratton-Porter loved to describe in her writing. Her poem "Blue-eyed Mary" (first published in *Good Housekeeping* May 1921) is a good example of how she welcomes this time of the year.

When winter's chill has scarce left earth,
And April winds blow "Hey down derry!"
Comes gaily dancing down my hill
Sweet, laughing blue-eyed Mary.

She wears a dress of bronzy green
Draped round her light and airy;
She lifts the loveliest face I've ever seen—
Brave, tender, blue-eyed Mary.

Her eyes shine like the azure sky,
Her steps light as a fairy;
Her face, no crystal drift so white,
Dear, steadfast, blue-eyed Mary

My hat is off to Bouncing Bet,
Gill-over-the-ground runs quite contrary,
Black-eyed Susan is my pet,
But I'm in love with blue-eyed Mary.



Blue-eyed Mary, *Collinsia verna*, is found in damp open woods as it requires ample amounts of shade and prefers a moist habitat with a moderate or well-balanced supply of moisture with rich loamy soil. The growth and size of individual plants is influenced by the moisture conditions and the richness of the soil. Although not that common in Adams County due to agricultural drainage projects, it does bloom in the spring on the grounds of the Limberlost Cabin in Geneva. Let us know where else you've seen this brave, laughing, tender, and steadfast flower.

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

The evening starts off with night-time dip-netting in the pothole wetland on Veronica's Trail. Then we walk up to the Loblolly pavilion and using a digital microscope we have a magnified look at what we caught. Then, play "I Spy the Glowing Eyes" by using your flashlight, you hike along the Tree ID Trail searching the dark places in the woods to find and identify the reflective "glowing eyes" of plywood forest animals. Next, enjoy a couple of rounds of the Mystery Boxes (reach your hand into the mystery box and using "touch only" try to guess what is inside). The evening festivities end with roasting marshmallows around the campfires.



Masks are required

All ages welcome

Date & Time: Friday, April 23, 2021, 8:30pm – 10:00pm

Cost: \$4/adult non-member, \$3/child non-member

Park at the Loblolly Marsh Parking Lot, Jay County CR 250 W



“NEW DEAL” with the INDIANA STATE MUSEUM & HISTORIC SITES by Willy DeSmet

As many of you know, we have been working with the Indiana State Museum & Historic Sites (ISMHS) for many years and we've had an agreement (MOU - Memorandum Of Understanding) that laid out the way we work together. When our MOU expired in 2019, ISMHS came up with a new MOU. The Friends of the Limberlost, like most of the other historic site friends groups, found the rules and obligations unacceptable. Since ISMHS did not want to negotiate any changes, we did not sign the agreement. After many meetings, we have reached a new arrangement with ISMHS. Here is a summary of what this means.



Instead of one MOU tailored to our situation, like we had before, there now are several agreements. The first one is called the CPG (Community Partner Guidelines). These are guidelines that any organization (like Friends Groups) acknowledges when providing support to the ISMHS. This agreement will be reviewed in two years. It can be renewed or renegotiated. Secondly there are three agreements that address topics specific to our group: the use of the office in the visitor center by Friends of the Limberlost (FOL); the use of the Pavilion at the Loblolly Marsh by ISMHS; the use of the Hart building by ISMHS. The three agreements run for one year.

- FOL can (still) keep an office in the Visitor Center free of charge
- FOL can use Limberlost facilities free of charge (after coordination with site staff); e.g., for meetings, events, etc.
- ISMHS can (still) use our Wetland Pavilion free of charge (after coordination with FOL)
- ISMHS (still) gets rent-free storage space at the Friends' Hart building for the cedar logs designated for repairs to the Limberlost Cabin and Carriage House in Geneva and for the Gene Stratton-Porter site in Rome City



- The Limberlost gift shop is no longer a FOL gift shop; it is now fully operated and owned by ISMHS. FOL no longer has any revenue from a gift shop. All revenue from gift shop sales goes to ISMHS, but it is put in a (restricted) fund specifically and exclusively for Limberlost State Historic Site.
- ISMHS has made a commitment that any revenue generated at or for the site will be placed in a restricted fund, for use at the site. That includes, revenue from the gift shop, tours, funds that FOL donates to ISMHS for the support of the site, and so on.
- FOL will continue to control its own funds; FOL will decide if and when to transfer funds to ISMHS.

- Quarterly meetings between ISMHS and FOL will provide transparency over the funds that ISMHS has raised for the site and how they have used them. These meetings will also provide opportunities for coordination and cooperation in planning events, site improvement projects, and so on.
- Limberlost no longer has a resident Site Manager. Tiffany Parker, the Site Manager at the Gene Stratton-Porter SHS in Rome City, is also the Site Manager for Limberlost. This is not part of the agreements, it's a staffing change that ISMHS made; but it changes how we work together with ISMHS.



- FOL must coordinate with ISMHS any fundraising or any grant applications for the benefit of Limberlost SHS (this does not apply to fundraising, grant applications, activities, etc. related to Limberlost Swamp Remembered—a standing committee of FOL).



- FOL can advertise ISMHS events on the FOL website and on social media; e.g., the FOL Facebook page.
- FOL can advertise our activities and projects at the Limberlost Visitor Center. This includes giving visitors access to our complimentary newsletter if they want one. However, anything that FOL advertises at the site or gives away at the site, such as a newsletters, needs to be pre-approved by the site manager, Tiffany Parker.
- FOL members get a 15% discount when purchasing an ISMHS membership, and FOL members get a 10% discount in the ISMHS gift shop at Limberlost. FOL members also get one free guided tour of the Limberlost Cabin.
- Any volunteer who works 40 hours as a volunteer for ISMHS (not just at the Limberlost) can get a free ISMHS membership. This ISMHS membership gets you free tours at any ISMHS site, and a discount at ISMHS gift shops and ISMHS programs. This membership is a benefit of the ISMHS volunteer program and is not connected to FOL membership. It gives other benefits as well. Contact site staff for more details.

- FOL can again have a membership category for the support of Limberlost State Historic Site. It is worth noting that even without an agreement with ISMHS, we continued to support the site in 2020 (though to a lesser degree than in previous years). We used existing “site-support funds,” obtained from past memberships and donations. The new CPG with ISMHS allows FOL to offer the option to purchase a membership and/or make a donation to support projects and pay expenses associated with Limberlost State Historic Site (see the FOL membership form on the last page of this newsletter).

We are happy the MOU issue has been resolved. Time will tell whether or not the new agreements work out in practice. Some details may need to be further clarified or need to be renegotiated in two years, but this is a good start for renewed cooperation between ISMHS and FOL.

CECROPIA MOTH *Hyalophora cecropia* by Randy Lehman

It's always astonishing to see this large moth. Gene Stratton-Porter often used its common name, the Robin moth, when she would write about it. It is the largest moth species on the North American continent with a wing span that can vary from 4 1/4 to 6 inches. I took the picture of this female on a bush in the backyard of the Limberlost Cabin several years ago. Named for King Cecropius, who was (in Greek myths) the first king of Athens. The cecropia is mainly seen at night when it is attracted to the light on porches or in parking lots. They emerge from their cocoon with no mouth. They have no way to eat or drink, so they don't live long—at most a couple of weeks. The main mission of the adult cecropia is to mate. The female lays fertilized eggs on non-oak trees, like maple, willow, black cherry, apple, and more. Perhaps you'll see one this spring!



Bluebird Chronicles by Terri Gorney

While I was moving into my current home in Ft. Wayne, I noticed bluebirds in the yard. I believed it to be a good omen. Gene Stratton-Porter wrote of the bluebird, *“There is no bird more friendly with man or more welcome; a vision to the eyes, forever changing from almost silver lights to deep turquoise and deeper indigo, as light and shadow effect it.”* Gene wrote a chapter on bluebirds in Friends in Feathers.

A few years later, as I learned more about bluebirds, I placed two nesting boxes up in the spring. The boxes I used were specifically made for bluebirds by Wild Birds Unlimited. That first year I had a successful nest of four bluebirds that fledged.



House sparrows are natural enemies of bluebirds. There is a reason that Gene Stratton-Porter did not like these birds. They are not native and will try to destroy bluebird nests. The loss of habitat preferred by bluebirds and competition from house sparrows are partly to blame for the steep decline in bluebird numbers in the 20th century.



I discovered “sparrow guards” thanks to my cousin, Judy Schroff, who also “raises” her own bluebirds. The guards are simple fishing line, tacks and weights to prevent sparrows from entering. They can be made or purchased at Wild Birds Unlimited. The guards have worked well on my nesting boxes.

In 2020, there were two successful nests by one pair. They were the most attentive of parents. The first nest fledged on June 1 and the second fledged on July 27. This winter I had eight bluebirds that came daily to my feeders and I believe it is this family. The last day before the second nest fledged the parents were feeding them up to three times an hour. I provided a lot of mealworms for them to feed the young. According to the *All About Birds* website (link below) bluebirds don’t often come to feeders unless you offer mealworms.

I am quick to write that I am not an expert on bluebirds. One year we had an extremely cool wet spring and hot summer, the bluebirds were late nesting. In August, the eggs were over a week past the time when they should have hatched. The female looked in distress as her head would hang out of the hole with beak open (a sign she was overheated). I called Conrad Getz who is an expert on bluebirds and lives in northeastern Allen County. Conrad told me to destroy the eggs as the eggs had “cooked.” The female would have continued to sit on eggs that would never hatch. She looked relieved when she found the eggs gone from the nest.



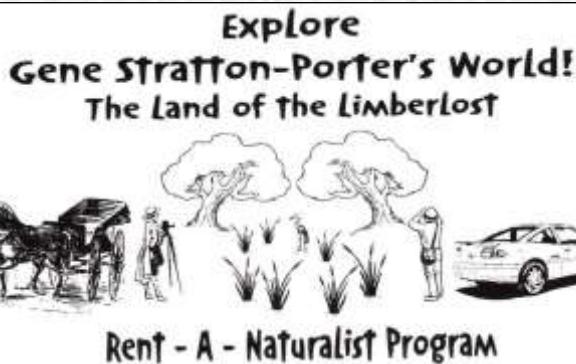
Not all bluebirds fly south for the winter. A few stay all year. It is important to help bluebirds by providing them with a supply of mealworms, suet, and dried fruits that are high energy foods. A fresh water source for drinking and bathing is also very important. When my pond freezes, I provide a heated bird bath close to the house. On days above 32 degrees, the bluebirds will bathe. They are entertaining to watch.

I have noticed that the bluebirds, house finch, and goldfinch will make their own small flock in the cold months. Bluebirds will be the first birds at the feeders in the morning on extremely cold days.

By March and April, the males and females are actively checking out the boxes. When ready, within a few days a nest will be constructed by both. It may be a week or so before eggs appear. The female will not sit on them until 3 to 5 eggs are laid so that they will hatch close together.

Henry David Thoreau penned, “The bluebird carries the sky on his back. A man who never sees a bluebird only half lives.” I think this is true. It is rewarding to have bluebirds and to have them nest on your property. You will discover that like people they have their own personality. For a lot more information about bluebirds, click on the link below. To download plans to make a bluebird house go to the tab “backyard tips”.

https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eastern_Bluebird/lifehistory#habitat



RENT-A-NATURALIST: Cost: \$40 for 90 minutes. You drive your own vehicle and follow the staff naturalist. Binoculars can be provided. These are personalized tours. The interests and physical abilities of the group, and the time of year determine areas visited and the details of each tour. A handicap trail is available at one of the locations. A choice of five different Limberlost nature preserves is available. The itinerary can be customized according to your interests. For more information or to make a reservation contact Curt Burnette, Naturalist/Certified Interpretive Guide. Call the site

at 260-368-7428, or email cburnette@indianamuseum.org. Plan your Limberlost adventure today.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If someone were to ask me "What should I do at the Limberlost?" I would highly recommend Curt Burnette's Rent-a-Naturalist program, especially if you are not familiar with the historic site and the restored wetlands. For over 9 years as the site naturalist, Curt has studied the history, the ecology, and the hidden gems of this area. You'll be delighted by the stories he can tell about this land, the people, the plants and animals of the Limberlost. You'll walk away from this experience wishing that every museum, every historic site, every nature preserve had a guide like Curt Burnette. In all the year's I've been associated with Limberlost State Historic Site (now getting close to 22 years) the Rent-a-Naturalist program would be my most recommended. Double the your fun by also taking the tour of the Limberlost Cabin with Curt as your guide. —Randy Lehman, retired Limberlost Site Manager (1999-2016)

A poster for an Earth Day cleanup. The background is a close-up of green leaves and a white, fuzzy flower. The text "EARTH DAY" is at the top, and "Cleanup at Rainbow Bend" is in the center. Below the text are details: "When: April 24, 2021 at 10am-2pm", "Where: 5 Covered Bridge Rd. (E 900 S), Geneva, IN 46740", "To register: email Regional Ecologist Taylor Lehman tlehman@dnr.in.gov", and "*Masks are required!".

EARTH DAY
Cleanup at Rainbow Bend

When: April 24, 2021 at 10am-2pm

Where: 5 Covered Bridge Rd. (E 900 S), Geneva, IN 46740

To register: email Regional Ecologist Taylor Lehman
tlehman@dnr.in.gov

*Masks are required!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO TIDY UP RAINBOW BEND

On Saturday, April 24, we need 20 to 25 volunteers to help us remove litter and debris from the Rainbow Bend Recreation Area.

The Friends of the Limberlost purchased this Wabash River bottomland on April 27, 2001, with financial help from the Wabash River Heritage Corridor Commission and the local Limberlost Conservation Association.

Many of you may have enjoyed hiking the stone trail or enjoyed fishing in this area. Please help us, if you can 10 am to 2 pm.



We are looking forward to working with you in order to have a successful cleanup day at Rainbow Bend. This land has been part of an on-going wetland restoration project for the past 20 years! It's a project managed by DNR-Nature Preserves. Some of you may have hiked this area with Curt Burnette, Limberlost Naturalist. The giant sycamore trees he likes to show people are located near here.

PLEASE NOTE ! IF YOU WANT TO VOLUNTEER ON APRIL 24, YOU NEED TO PRE-REGISTER. EMAIL TAYLOR LEHMAN TO SIGN UP: tlehman@dnr.in.gov If you need more information about this Earth Day project, or perhaps you are not sure where Rainbow Bend is located, Taylor can help you with that.



Late Spring Loblolly Wildflower Safari

Join a Limberlost naturalist for a stroll along the Loblolly Marsh trails focusing on the beautiful and varied late spring wildflowers – what they are and how man and animals use them.

Age: adults & families

Date & Time: Saturday, June 5, 2021; 10am-12pm

Cost: \$3/children; \$5/adults; 25% off for ISMHS members

Meet at the Loblolly Marsh Parking Lot



Explore the Indiana Birding Trail with the

#21IN21 CHALLENGE!



To find your adventure and take the #21in21 challenge, visit
WWW.INDIANAAUDUBON.ORG/21IN21

WIN PRIZES!

**21
IN
2021**



Join Indiana Audubon and our birding partners for an exploration of the [Indiana Birding Trail](#) in 2021. #21in21 is your chance to visit some of the best birding sites in the Hoosier state. It's also a chance to see great birds and make some memories along the way.

Download the #21in21 gamecard at www.indianaaudubon.org/21IN21 and visit 21 Indiana Birding Trail sites to be entered to win prizes at the end of the year. This can be 21 unique Indiana Birding Trail sites or the same one 21 times!

Just for participating, every person who completes the 21 in 2021 Challenge will receive a special Indiana Birding Trail limited edition patch and certificate. The deadline to submit your gamecard is December 15, 2021. Go to www.indianaaudubon.org/21IN21 for more information.

The Limberlost is part of this challenge. We've been assigned Saturday, June 12, 8 AM—11 AM.

SANJO CBC (Southern Adams Northern Jay Ouabache) Christmas Bird Count "RESULTS"

This was the 121st National Audubon Society CBC. It is an early winter bird census. Thousands of volunteers in the US and Canada participate. Volunteers go out over a 24 hour period one calendar day to count birds. Counts are between December 14 and January 5.

On January 1, for about the last 50 years there has been a bird count in Adams County. The Adams County CBC became the SANJO CBC circle for the National Audubon Society six years ago. The center of the circle is west of Berne. It includes Ouabache State Park and all of the Limberlost Conservation Area. Terri Gorney became the organizer and compiler eight years ago. Prior to that Larry Parker was the longtime compiler.

The oldest continuing Christmas Bird Count in our area is the Fort Wayne CBC that was begun in 1910. Since then, a number of counts have been added.

Due to temperatures between 30-33 degrees and freezing rain during daylight hours, there were fewer field counters and a lower number of birds reported. Our local feeder and yard counters were even more important this year. We had a total of 38 species of birds reported.

Some notable birds:

- Mark Davidson & Nancy Scott had turkeys in their yard (they live close to the Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve).
- Jeanette Johnson had the only owl – a screech owl west of Geneva.
- Jackie Caffee reported red-headed woodpeckers and a flicker at her feeders at Lake of the Woods.
- Bill Hubbard had four robins and a gull in his yard.
- Larry Bieberich had a crow and horned larks in his Berne territory.
- Curt Burnette had 50 mourning doves.
- Ken Brunswick had a tufted titmouse.
- Randy Lehman & Terri Gorney had three eagles, a Carolina wren, bluebirds, and a northern harrier.

The week of the count Ken Brunswick had three red-winged blackbirds and Curt Burnette had a pileated woodpecker.

Randy Lehman had the best picture of the day: a bald eagle perched over the Wabash River at the Ceylon Covered Bridge (that picture is included below).

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) recently removed the bald eagle from Indiana's list of state endangered and special concern species due to evidence of successful recovery. Indiana DNR reintroduced bald eagles to the state from 1985–1989. During this time, 73 eaglets from Wisconsin and Alaska were raised and released at Monroe Lake to restore a breeding population in Indiana. The first successful nesting occurred in 1991.

By 2007, the eagle was declared recovered and removed from the federal endangered species list. Indiana followed suit in 2008, upgrading the bald eagle from a state-endangered species to a species of special concern after reaching a goal of 50 nesting pairs. This was a significant achievement—no eagles were known to have nested in the state from around 1900–1988.

In just 35 years, the bald eagle went from extirpated to a thriving population statewide. In 2020 biologists estimated Indiana supported about 300 nesting pairs across 84 counties. In the last five years, at least one bald eagle nest has been documented in 88 of Indiana's 92 counties.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 13, 2021
THE BERNE WITNESS, PG. 1

Berne man fined for killing bald eagle

Samuel G. Graber, 24, of Berne was sentenced before U.S. Magistrate Court Judge Susan Collins following his plea of guilty to unlawfully killing a migratory bird, announced Acting United States Attorney Gary T. Bell.

Graber's sentence was suspended, he was ordered to complete six months probation and to pay a fine of \$5,000 for the incident.

According to documents presented in this case, on or about November 2, 2019, Graber unlawfully killed a bald eagle, a migratory bird as defined by 50 CFR10.13, in violation of Title 16 U.S.C. §703. Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the \$5,000 fine will be paid to the North American Wetlands Conservation Fund.

The case was investigated by the United States Department of Fish and Wildlife.



We join early naturalists and enjoy spring advances... by Fred Wooley

Another naturalist and writer from the previous century, Edwin Way Teale, wrote a book published in 1951 entitled *North with the Spring*. In it, he chronicled a 17,000-mile journey taking his wife Nellie and him from south Florida to northern New England. They spent the season zigzagging and poking their way north, enjoying a several-month perpetual spring as the new season spread north. They were in constant advance of spring bird migration and the emergence of spring ephemeral wildflowers. The quickly appearing and then disappearing nuances of the season, which we get to enjoy for just a short period, they lived, enjoyed, and noted continually during their extended journey north.



Picture of female non-breeding goldfinch by Frank Leung



[www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/
American-goldfinch](http://www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/American-goldfinch)

The males of some species, on the other hand, can sport a little flash to the feathers. It helps to impress and attract the more subtle females, and to puff up a chest towards any challenging male counterparts. Male goldfinches in summer breeding attire feature a brilliant bright yellow body, accented by dark black wings and forehead. ►

I think of that journey every year at this time. I think of it when noting the first male goldfinch on our thistle sock feeder showing feathers of bright yellow! It is as if it notes the calendar and thinks, "Hey, time to get out the summer clothes!"

◀ Female goldfinches wear a drab, olive green/yellowish plumage year-round. It is typical of many bird species for the female to fashion more cryptic colors, blending in for nest sitting and young rearing. You don't want to draw the attention of hungry predators while tending to eggs and young.

Photo of male goldfinch in redbud tree mid-April by Fred Zilch



◀ People sometimes contact me this time of year with reports that their goldfinches returned for the summer. They are surprised to learn their goldfinches never left! The males just molt feathers in the fall and wear the drabber plumage of females all winter. I always enjoy and welcome these spring days when I note the first patches of bright yellow. One year on the first day of noticing a finch's bright yellow, I called a colleague in southern Indiana. "Oh yeah Fred, our goldfinches have been all yellow for a week or two now!" We confirmed by phone what Edwin Way Teale observed the spring of his journey north. Today we confirm by phone and Internet.

The eastern phoebe, the little, nondescript, brownish, tail-bobbing, flycatcher, is a favorite bird at the Wooley property. For several years a pair, likely the same pair, has made their home in a mud and moss nest under our back deck. They, or their offspring, have since moved and built their nest atop an abandoned barn swallow nest on the front porch. Every mid to late March we listen for that distinctive, explosive call with a slight lisp, "FEE-BE!"

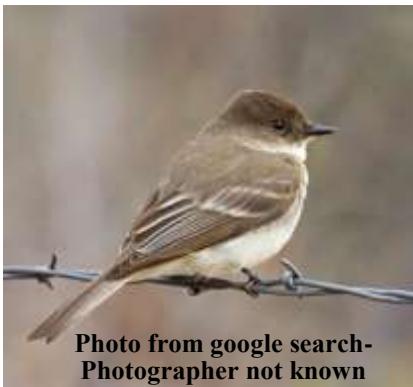
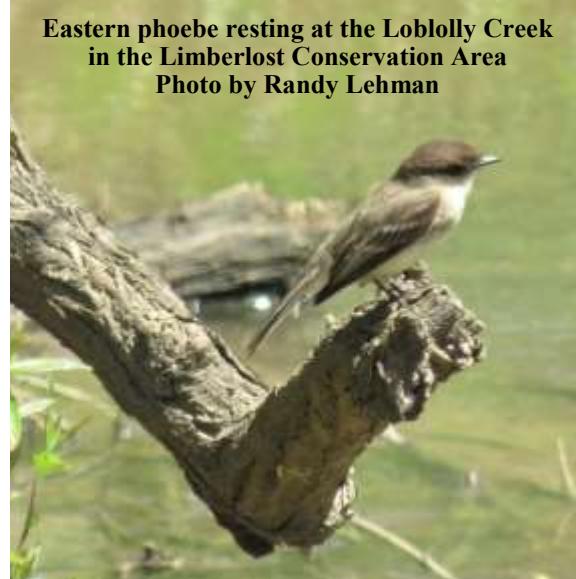


Photo from google search-
Photographer not known



Every year I see on the list-serve, In-Bird, phoebe reports in southern Indiana in early March. By the mid-March reports in the Allen County region, I know they are back at Limberlost. I know too that days later, "FEE-BE!" "our bird" returns to the back deck in northern Steuben County!

You can do the same. Websites track the migration of hummingbirds, a backyard favorite for many. As the birds migrate, North American maps show east to west parallel lines of dates of advancement. Think of the isotherm lines on a weather map, showing a progression of warmer temperatures south to north, and those will mimic migration advancements of birds. In northeast Indiana, you can mark your calendars for April 29/30 to May 1/2 for the arrival of your backyard hummers and Baltimore orioles. You may have other favorites; take note when they arrive and check with family and friends further south, and then call and alert others further north.

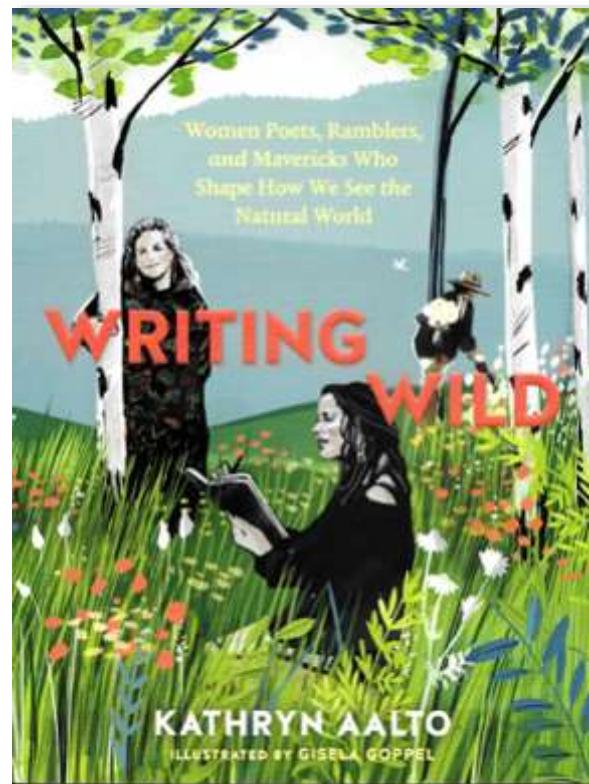


Teale said it best, "If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant."

****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 can be reached at fwooley@frontier.com.*

Of course, we should not get ahead of ourselves longing for spring. March belongs as much to winter as it does spring and April snows are not impossible, particularly now as weather patterns become more irregular and extreme.

Take heart though, spring weather will come and so too will follow the flow of flowers and return of birds. Edwin Way



WRITING WILD

Women Poets, Ramblers, and Mavericks
Who Shape How We See the Natural World
by Kathryn Aalto

A Book Review by Limberlost Naturalist Curt Burnette

Some of you may have become acquainted with Kathryn Aalto's excellent writing ability through the article she wrote for the March 2020 Smithsonian Magazine, "The Legend of Limberlost." We here at the Limberlost State Historic Site heard nothing but praise for the article and were pleasantly surprised by the number of visitors who told us the article was the reason they came to visit.

I, too, was impressed by the article, but was even more impressed by Kathryn's book that was published the month after the article came out. *Writing Wild* opened my eyes to the contributions that women

writers have made to the topic of nature and how humans relate to it. As a naturalist, I have read scores and scores of nature books and, without question, the vast majority were written by men. In *Writing Wild*, Kathryn dedicates a chapter each to 25 women, and gives a paragraph each to an additional 48. Of the 25, I had heard of 5 of them and read 3. And, even worse, of the 48, I had heard of 4 and read 1. Her book has allowed me to begin an exploration into an ocean of knowledge and experience that heretofore I have just dipped a toe.

Each chapter of the book begins with a drawing of the head of each woman (illustrated by Gisela Goppel) and a quote from that woman's works. Although Kathryn supplies plenty of information on the life and career of each woman, the approach of each chapter can be somewhat different from the others. In one chapter, Kathryn describes hiking up a mountain in England that Dorothy Wordsworth climbed in the 19th century. In another she reflects how a class on nature writing which she took in college, supervised by Carolyn Merchant (an ecological "rock star" to the students), helped influence her. In yet another, she walks through a forest with British writer Saci Lloyd. At the end of each chapter Kathryn gives a list of the writer's works, or a paragraph on another writer of the same or similar topic.

In the introduction, Kathryn says, "I weave my own voice in and out of the narrative." This is one of the more delightful aspects of the book. In the introduction she lets the reader know she ran away from home a lot as a child to have outdoor adventures inspired by books like *The Tales of Uncle Remus* and *The Wind in the Willows*. She tells us how she watches her two sons exploring the gardens from the tower of the home of an early 20th century writer, Vita Sackville-West. She admits to a "laugh-out-loud, alarm-other-patrons-in-the-café" moment while reading the hilarious animal stories in the book *Animals Strike Curious Poses* by Elena Passerello.

Kathryn, of course, includes a chapter on Gene Stratton-Porter. She tells of Gene's life and career, and how her novels made her wealthy and famous, but what I found refreshing is Kathryn's emphasis on her personal favorites, Gene's nature books. She says of Gene, "Her intrepid research methods and use of photography cut a portrait of an adventurous American writer who understood the urgency of what was happening in real time to the landscape she loved." Kathryn's favorite of Gene's books is *What I Have Done With Birds*. "It's filled with the author's presence—her daring and hilarious mishaps and keen observations of flora and fauna." As in the Smithsonian article, Gene's chapter shows us Kathryn's admiration and affection for the Lady of the Limberlost.

I met Kathryn when she came to Geneva to do research for the article and we spent about a day and a half together. She is an amazing and delightful woman and I enjoyed our time exploring the Limberlost. Among her many other accomplishments, she is also the author of the New York Times' bestseller, *The Natural World of Winnie-the-Pooh*.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Writing Wild* and I heartily recommend it to anyone who wants to discover an important aspect of nature writing that has often been overlooked, and meet some fascinating women poets, ramblers, and mavericks from both the past and the present.



Writing Wild can be purchased at the Limberlost State Historic Site gift shop for \$24.95. IN State Museum and Historic Sites members and Friends of the Limberlost members get a 10% discount.

Kathryn Aalto conducts on-line courses in An Introduction to Nature Writing, The Art of Narrative Nonfiction, and The Art of the Personal Letter. You can learn more about these courses or sign up for them at Kathryn's website: www.kathrynaalto.com.

Word of the Day: Phenology!

by Adrienne Provenzano

Signs of Spring are starting to appear! Have you noticed longer days? A little less nip in the air? More and different birdsong? Buds on trees? Green shoots emerging from the ground? It's a bit early for the scent of many blossoms, still there's a certain familiar muck and mud smell that reappears annually as winter snows melt. Such seasonal changes are all part of something called phenology!

Earlier this year, Advanced Indiana Master Naturalists like me had a chance to learn more about the study of seasons. Hosted by IMN coordinator Jody Heaston, special guest Amanda Wanlass, founder and executive director of the group Indiana Phenology gave a talk on this organization www.indianaphenology.org/home. It's part of a national group called the National Phenology Network www.usanpn.org.

According to the state group's website, phenology is "nature's calendar – when cherry trees bloom, when a robin builds its nest and when leaves turn color in the fall." Phenological events connect flora and fauna in an ecosystem. The site states: "Phenology influences the abundance and distribution of organisms, ecosystem services, food webs, and global cycles of water and carbon. In turn, phenology may be altered by changes in temperature and precipitation."



To get a better understanding of such changes, Indiana Phenology provides several opportunities to participate in citizen science. Volunteers are needed to assist with several programs: Indiana Backyard Observers, Nature's Notebook, Schoolyard Phenology, and Phenology Trails. There are currently Backyard Observers in 24 of Indiana's 92 counties. The goal is to have observers in every county! The Schoolyard Phenology project includes free online educational resources for formal and informal education, including a Phenology Scavenger Hunt for ages 6 – 12 and a 10-week Spring

Phenology Environmental Education curriculum for grades 4 – 8. Check the site to see if there's a Phenology Trail near you and learn how to start a trail!



Nature's Notebook provides a way to simply and efficiently observe, record and submit information about changes you observe in plant and animal species. In Indiana, the focus is on plant observations. Are there buds? Leaves? Flowers? Fruits? You choose a few plants in your area to check on regularly. Even a few minutes weekly is enough to be part of this project! Information can be submitted via a special, free app and there are pencil/pen and paper options for data collection as well. The information gathered is submitted to the national organization, NPN, and then available to be viewed in connection with data from across the United States in a variety of formats.

Understanding seasonal changes assists farmers and gardeners with decisions about what to plant and when. On the National Phenology Network website are maps tracking the "Status of Spring" across America. The NPN's vision is clear: "providing data and information on the timing of seasonal events in plants and animals to ensure the well-being of humans, ecosystems, and natural resources."

With their eye for detail, curiosity about the natural world, and interest in conservation, Friends of the Limberlost members can play an important role in gathering and sharing phenology data. While Gene Stratton-Porter considered herself a nature lover, rather than a scientist, I think even she would have gotten involved!

Adrienne Provenzano is a Friend of the Limberlost and Advanced Indiana Master Naturalist

Photos for this article provided by Bill Hubbard, retired high school biology teacher and Limberlost naturalist.



“State of Nature was conceived and curated at Indiana University-Bloomington by Betsy Stirratt, director of the Grunwald Gallery of Art, Indiana University, and Distinguished Professor Roger P. Hangarter.” For more information and for prices go to the Indiana State Museum website www.indianamuseum.org/experiences/state-of-nature/

This experience is included with the cost of admission to the museum.

As Randy Lehman will tell you..."Watch out for the wolves!"



◀ **OPEN-AIR BEE HIVES**—As you hike the trails at any of the Limberlost nature preserves, you may encounter a very unusual sight. The photo to the left shows an open-air beehive. They are a fairly rare phenomenon. We are used to beehives being located in hollow trees or inside some dark, protected area, but in the past couple of years one of these open-air hives was spotted at the Rainbow Bend Preserve and another was photographed on the Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve. So if you see one of these spectacular hives be careful to put plenty of space between you and the hive. Allow the bees to work without being distracted or annoyed by an unwanted visitor.

DRILLING DOWN DEEP TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE “SO-CALLED” [TEAYS RIVER VALLEY](#)—AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF DRINKING WATER FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS

On March 1, Curt Burnette, Randy Lehman, & Ken Brunswick stopped at a drilling site near the Loblolly Marsh in Jay County to talk to T. Andy Nash, geologist for the Ohio Division of Geological Survey (seen in this picture standing to the left) and to talk to Henry Loope, Research Glacial Geologist, for the Indiana Geological Survey—standing next to T. Andy.



In a future newsletter we want to feature an article describing what they were doing and why their research is important to our understanding of the formation of wetlands like the Limberlost Swamp. The now buried Teays River valley does not contain a buried underground river. The valley was modified by glaciers and filled in by glacial debris; however, it does still contain thick extensive beds of gravel and sand. These deposits are excellent ground water reservoirs. Many cities, including Geneva and Berne, get their drinking water from these underground water reservoirs.



If you have the opportunity, go see the exhibit, *State of Nature*, at the Indiana State Museum about the importance of Indiana’s biological diversity. The displays are engaging, informative, and some are interactive. One is even focused on the work of Gene Stratton-Porter. The museum’s website offers this description of the exhibit...

“Experience the astonishing beauty and discover the importance of Indiana’s biological diversity through pieces from the natural world and artworks created by artists with Indiana connections. Explore how forests and ecological diversity in Indiana defined the lives of Hoosiers over the years, then consider how urbanization and climate change has impacted Indiana’s biological system and our everyday lives.”

FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST
NEW MEMBERSHIP & MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Friends of the Limberlost is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation. We support Limberlost State Historic Site, which is owned and operated by the Indiana State Museum. We also support the IDNR—Division of Nature

Preserves which manages the restoration of wetlands in the Limberlost Swamp Conservation Area. Your membership dues and extra donations are vital to the many projects honoring the memory and legacy of Indiana author, naturalist, and nature photographer, Gene Stratton-Porter.

You decide how your annual dues will be spent. You choose one of the following:

- Choose the Limberlost Historic Site Friends who support projects and help pay expenses associated with the improvement or the betterment of Limberlost State Historic Site
- Choose Limberlost Swamp Remembered, a committee of the Friends of the Limberlost, which is primarily focused on Limberlost Swamp restoration projects
- Or you can support both missions of the Friends of the Limberlost

As a member you receive our quarterly newsletter. You get one free tour of the Limberlost Cabin, a 10% discount on Limberlost Gift Shop purchases, and you get a 15% discount if you purchase a membership in the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites. As a member of the Friends of the Limberlost you help us preserve the legacy of Gene Stratton-Porter and help us restore the environment by bringing back the Limberlost Swamp.

If you have any questions about your membership, please call or text Randy Lehman, membership chairperson, at 260-849-0308 or email randylehman@comcast.net

Please make checks payable to: FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST. Mail both your check and completed membership form to: PO BOX 571, GENEVA IN 46740

STEP ONE

Select which mission of the Friends Group you want to support by checking a box to the right



Limberlost Historic Site Friends—dues and any additional donations you make supports Limberlost State Historic Site and associated events, projects, and programs

Limberlost Swamp Remembered Friends—dues and any additional donation you make supports Limberlost wetland restoration projects managed by the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves

Combination Limberlost Historic Site and Swamp Remembered Friends—dues and any additional donation are equally shared by both groups

Older Adults—\$10

Business—\$50 (Please enter the name of a contact-person below)

Other Individuals—\$20

Family—\$35

Lifetime—\$1,000

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Check the box if you want your newsletter mailed to you via the US Postal Service. We'd like to EMAIL the newsletter to you because it saves us money and time, and the e-newsletter is in color and has more pages. However, we are happy to mail you a "paper copy" of the newsletter, if that is what you prefer—just check the box. If you check the box and give us an email address, we will send you both versions of the newsletter.

AMOUNT ENCLOSED (additional donation appreciated!): \$ _____

ANY COMMENTS?