



Friends of the Limberlost

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LIMBERLOST STATE HISTORIC SITE WINTER EVENTS & PROGRAMS

Take advantage of two FREE Admission Days: Martin Luther King Day, Monday, JANUARY 16; and Presidents Day, Monday, FEBRUARY 20

- *Limberlost has free admission all day 10AM-5PM on these two days. Please contact the site in advance of your visit to learn more and to reserve your space. Call 260-368-7428 or email: limberlostshs@indianamuseum.org*

Movie Matinee, Date/Time: Sunday, JANUARY 22 at 1:00pm

Vintage movie lovers and fans of Gene Stratton-Porter novels can enjoy an afternoon of movies based on her books – Laddie (1940) and A Girl of the Limberlost (1934) – at the site where the novels were written.

- *Refreshments are included. Age: 10+, Cost: \$7/adult, \$4/youth, 25% discount for members of the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites.*
- *Registration deadline: January 21; Registration for this event is necessary to know how much refreshments to have available. Call 260-368-7428 or email: limberlostshs@indianamuseum.org*

Into the Case: Behind the Scenes at Limberlost & Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Sites (online Zoom Meeting FEBRUARY 15). Gene was an avid collector of all things. Join us for this virtual look into some of the cases inside the cabins at Wildflower Woods and the Limberlost to learn about some of the amazing things Gene had on display inside her homes.

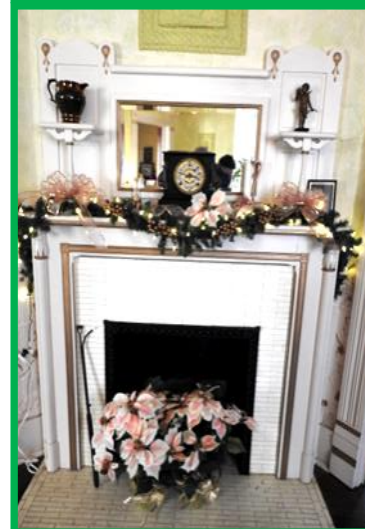
- *For All Ages; Wednesday Feb. 15; 6:00-7:30 p.m.; Cost: \$5 (members of the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites get 25% off)*
- *Registration deadline: FEBRUARY 12th. Registration is necessary for virtual programs. We need registration info to send out the Zoom link. Call 260-368-7428 or email: limberlostshs@indianamuseum.org*

Take a tour of the Limberlost Cabin—Enjoy seeing all the Christmas decorations. Seasonal decorations are on display through December 31. Timed, indoor tours are available Wednesday through Sunday at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 pm. *Please contact the site in advance of your visit to learn more and to reserve your space. Call 260-368-7428 or email: limberlostshs@indianamuseum.org*

Rent-a-Naturalist—Explore the Limberlost Preserves with a naturalist!

- *Hike through any of the Nature Preserves in the Limberlost Conservation Area & enjoy a guided tour of the land led by a certified on-staff naturalist.*
- *Experience the amazing nature preserves that inspired Gene Stratton-Porter. Choose from one of five different Limberlost preserves – one of which includes a trail accessible to persons using wheelchairs. Visit places important to her writings and personal life. Tours available year-round, weather permitting.*
- *Cost is \$40 per group (up to 15 people) for a 90-minute tour. To find out more or to make a reservation, call 260-368-7428 or email cburnette@indianamuseum.org*

Self-guided tours of the Limberlost Nature Preserve are available all day at no charge. Free maps of the nature preserves showing hiking trails and parking areas are available to the public and can be picked up at Limberlost State Historic Site. When Limberlost State Historic Site is NOT open, there is an outdoor kiosk near the entrance door to the visitor center that has free maps.



Royer Restoration Takes a Big Step Forward

by Willy De Smet, President, Friends of the Limberlost

Two years ago opportunity knocked: the owners of a piece of land that the FOL had had their eyes on for many years wanted to sell it. With the help from a lot of friends we were able to purchase the land.

We were very excited about it. This particular piece of land abuts the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve to the south, connects to White Oak Nature Preserve to the north, and to the east to a privately owned, previously restored, nature area.

The restoration will (re-) create a diverse wetland and sedge meadow habitat that will benefit migratory waterfowl and nesting birds, including Mallards, Blue-winged teal, Sedge wrens, Marsh wrens, and American woodcock. The new flora will also provide an excellent habitat for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Besides creating additional wildlife habitat, it will complement these adjacent restored wetlands and provide wildlife corridors to them.

When we bought this particular piece of land it was being farmed, but the farmer had often lost his crop due to flooding. We had hoped to start the restoration as soon as the previous owner got his crop off. Since the farmer had kept the weeds down to grow his crop, the soil would be ready to go. Then, unfortunately, COVID hit and the restoration was delayed. We had to use a cover crop and repeated mowing and spraying, to keep the weeds down. Additional expenses before the restoration even began...

When the restrictions eased, contractors had big backlogs. Timing also needed to take the weather into consideration. This field frequently floods, and although we want to return it to wetland, you need the soil to be dry and firm enough to work in it with heavy equipment.



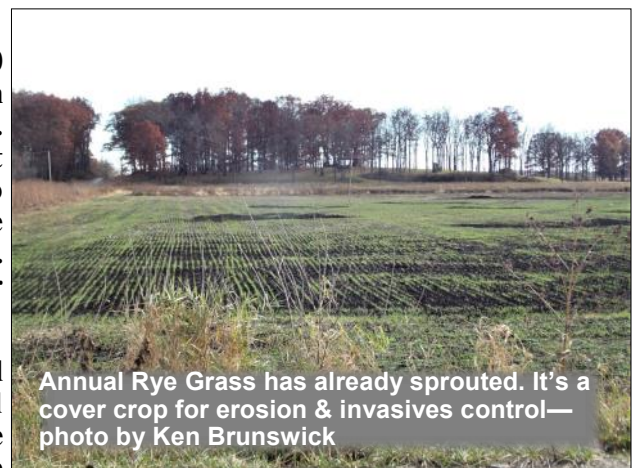
Eventually everything lined up and in the last week in September the ground work was finished: the removal of drainage tile, installation of a solid tile to maintain upstream drainage, excavation to construct a low berm along the adjacent ditch, installation of a vegetated emergency spillway, creation of depressions for the water holding areas and so on. A diverse native wetland and sedge meadow seed mix was installed in the first week of October. That will be it for this year, except for paying the bills. The next couple of years will require more weed control, especially until the natives get established.

It will take several years before it looks natural, and it may take additional work and planting. But after two years of delays we're

excited with the progress. Next spring, after some good rains, we will hopefully see how the "new" hydrology works, and some of the native plants starting to sprout up.

We thank U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for providing \$8,350 toward native seeding and \$2,500 in cost share for the excavation work; also Ducks Unlimited, Inc. provided \$1,000 in support. This does not cover the whole cost of the restoration by far, but we recently received a generous donation from a person who wishes to remain anonymous, and her donation will cover the cost of the Royer restoration work done by the Stanger Group. Because of this anonymous gift to the Friends, we also know for certain that future Royer restoration expenses will be covered.

This anonymous gift allows us to focus our attention and limited financial resources on other wetland projects. Memberships and donations from many generous people and organizations over the years have helped us bring back nearly 1800 acres of the Limberlost Swamp. There are other opportunities to restore more of the Limberlost, so please keep those donations coming.



YOU WANT TO RESTORE WETLANDS? WHO DO YOU CALL? by Terri Gorney Lehman

The Friends of the Limberlost call Scott Fetters, Private Lands Biologist with the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). As Ken Brunswick can confirm, it would be difficult to find another person who has worked so hard for years on northeastern Indiana land restoration projects.

It is not just a job with him, as he is passionate about wetland restoration and offering guidance on ways to fund projects. His accomplishments over the years are too numerous to mention, so we will focus on how he has helped the Friends of the Limberlost with the Limberlost Conservation Area.

Most of us met Scott for the first time when he did a PowerPoint presentation at a Friends of the Limberlost board meeting July 19, 2021. Since that meeting, the Friends have relied heavily on him for advice on how to restore 10 acres of land that we purchased as an addition to the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve—land we refer to today as the Royer property.

Ken Brunswick, the retired East Central Regional Ecologist, who started Limberlost Swamp Remembered, wrote the following about Scott:

I first met Scott in 1991 when I was working on restoration projects in Jay County for Jay County Soil and Water Conservation District. During this project, we restored approximately 55 acres of hydric soils and wetland associated uplands on eight different farms. Many of these wetlands were adjacent to habitat that supported upland birds. The additional habitat covered approximately 150 acres of grassland and woodland.



A picture of Scott taken in late Nov. 2021 in the Eel River near Logansport, IN, after a dam removal project. He is pictured holding a native mussel called a Pink Heelsplitter, which is uncommon, but not threatened or endangered in Indiana.

I continued to work with Scott restoring wetlands in 1993 through 1996. It was during these years when the Limberlost Project began and we made our first purchase.

I worked with Scott periodically during my years with Indiana DNR Nature Preserves. I sought Scott's advice numerous times. Every time we made a purchase, Scott was there giving technical advice to us and our partners. This assistance continued through the restoration of approximately 1700 acres of wetland and wetland associated uplands. I owe much of my early on-the-job wetland education to Scott. With him, I learned what to look for in a good restorable wetland.

In 2022, Scott helped Friends of the Limberlost with funding and technical services to restore the 10-acre Royer site. Scott spent many days helping with this project. We owe such a debt of gratitude for what Scott was able to do for us. He is an outstanding USFWS employee.

Picture of Scott taken in spring of 2018 showing him putting up newly made Wood Duck boxes that he and a friend made out of recycled water softener tanks. Placed in Whitley County wetlands, the boxes were 18 out of 20 successful in 2018, 2019, 2020, and 17 out of 20 successful in 2021. According to Scott, it's looking like 2022 will have about the same success rate as well.



In 2022 Creek Run Environmental Engineering of Montpelier, IN, raised \$7,470.00 from their fundraiser and online auction for Limberlost Swamp Remembered (LSR). LSR is a committee of the Friends of the Limberlost focused on restoring portions of the Limberlost Swamp. This annual fundraiser for selected charities has been put on by Creek Run for many years, and the total amount of dollars they have raised just for the LSR Committee over that time is \$58,152.00!

This annual fundraiser is conducted to honor the late James Peterson, founder of Jay Petroleum, and one of the original owners of Creek Run, L.L.C. Mr. Peterson was an early supporter of our efforts to restore the Loblolly Marsh in Jay County—part of the original Limberlost Swamp. Over the years Creek Run's fundraiser has become the most successful fundraisers totally organized and put on by one of our business members. The staff of Creek Run does it all!

Friends of the Limberlost works closely with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Nature Preserves, and today there are nearly 1800 acres of restored Limberlost wetlands located in northern Jay County and southern Adams County Indiana with miles of hiking trails open to the public.

You can help this fundraising effort. The Creek Run fundraiser takes place in August, and donations of prizes for this event are always needed and appreciated. If your company or business has something that would make a good online auction item, let us know! Contact Abby Michael, Administrative Assistant & Events Coordinator, at Creek Run phone: 765-728-8051, email amichael@creekrun.com or contact Randy Lehman, Friends of the Limberlost: 260-849-0308, email randvplehman@comcast.net and we will work with you to make the necessary arrangements to get your donated item(s) into our online auction. Because the Friends of the Limberlost is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, the value of your donated prize may be tax deductible.

Creek Run, LLC, is located in Montpelier, IN. Their website is www.creekrun.com. We applaud the men & women of Creek Run who help to organize this annual event that has been so successful at raising money for Limberlost Swamp Remembered.



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (the CBC) is Saturday, December 31, 2022

We participate in the National Audubon Society's annual CBC. According to their website, the CBC is... "The nation's longest-running community science bird project." You don't have to be a birding expert to participate; however, inexperienced birders are paired with more experienced birders to help with the count's accuracy.

A Christmas Bird Count has been taking place in Adams County for over 50 years. The first one was held in 1948", says Terri Gorney Lehman, who became the CBC compiler for the Adams County CBC in 2014. In 2015, following the National Audubon Society protocol, Terri established a 15-mile diameter circle to define the area surveyed by count volunteers. It's known as the SANJO circle. The SA is for Southern Admads County. NJ is for Northern Jay County, and O is for Ouabache State Park in Wells County. Together SANJO roughly defines our survey area. During last year's CBC, we saw a total of 43 species of birds.

Within the SANJO circle, Terri assigns groups of birders to follow specified routes through this designated 15-mile diameter circle, counting and identifying every bird they see or hear that day. It's not just a species tally. As many birds as possible get counted, indicating the total number and species of birds in the circle that day.

In every CBC organized by Terri since 2014, she has been able to get help from 3 different Audubon groups: the Mississinewa Audubon Club (from Marion), the Robert Cooper Audubon Society (from Muncie), and the Stockbridge Audubon Society (from Ft. Wayne). Members from these Audubon groups, and many volunteers from Adams county, including many feeder counters, all participate in this CBC on New Years Day.

TO JOIN US, CHECK IN WITH THE CBC COMPILER, TERRI GORNEY LEHMAN

SANJO



CALL OR TEXT TERRI BEFORE DECEMBER 31, AT 260-413-5671 OR EMAIL HER AT: bandtgorney@aol.com

NEWCOMERS ARE WELCOME! IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME PARTICIPATING IN THE SANJO CBC, PLEASE REACH OUT TO TERRI BEFORE DEC.31

CBC PARTICIPANTS WILL MEET AT THE LIMBERLOST VISITOR CENTER AT 8:00 AM OR GO DIRECTLY TO THEIR ASSIGNED TERRITORIES.

SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE SANJO CBC & WAYS YOU CAN PARTICIPATE :

- Count birds at your feeder
- Contact Terri if you want to join one of the CBC groups on Dec. 31
- If you already have skills as a birder, contact Terri to be assigned an area to survey within the SANJO Circle



All SANJO CBC birders get together for a free Chili feast at Noon on December 31, 2022 at Limberlost State Historic Site to share survey numbers and sightings

**CBC PARTICIPANTS WILL MEET AT THE LIMBERLOST VISITOR CENTER AT 8:00 AM
OR GO DIRECTLY TO THEIR ASSIGNED TERRITORIES. NEWCOMERS WELCOME!**

THERE'S PLENTY OF GOOD TERRITORY: The circle includes the Loblolly Marsh, Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve, most of Bluffton and Ouabache State Park, ACRES Munro Nature Preserve, the Wabash River in Adams and Wells Counties, Limberlost Creek, Loblolly Creek, Music of the Wild Nature Preserve, the Limberlost Bird Sanctuary, Limberlost County Park, Fields Memorial Park, Rainbow Bend & Rainbow Bottom, Rainbow Lake, Lake of the Woods, the old stone quarry and gravel pit, many Amish farms, and all the towns and rural areas you see inside the SANJO circle.

BE SURE TO CHECK IN WITH THE CBC COMPILER, TERRI GORNEY LEHMAN. IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST TIME PARTICIPATING IN THE SANJO CBC, CALL TERRI BEFORE DECEMBER 31, AT 260-413-5671 OR EMAIL HER AT: bandtgorney@aol.com

COUNT THE BIRDS AT YOUR FEEDER ON DEC.31

All birders, amateur or experienced are welcome to participate in the SANJO CBC, even if you only count birds at your feeder or just at your home or neighborhood...but remember this:

YOU MUST BE COUNTING BIRDS IN THE SANJO CIRCLE

When you are finished for the day, you can email your list to Terri, or slow-mail your list to: Terri Gorney, 131 North Drive, Geneva, IN 46740. Remember that your bird feeders must be inside the boundaries of the SANJO circle.

You can also share the list of the birds you've counted by showing up at the Limberlost Visitor Center in Geneva at Noon on Dec. 31, where a chili lunch will be served and your survey results can be hand delivered to Terri, the CDC compiler.



**ALL SANJO CBC PARTICIPANTS PLEASE JOIN US
FOR A CHILLI FEAST AT NOON, DECEMBER 31
at the Limberlost Visitor Center**

We have a SANJO CBC tradition of enjoying a Noontime chili lunch with many other food items provided compliments of the three Audubon groups participating in the SANJO CBC count. It's a great way to relax & re-energize after a morning of intense birding, you can share your results, your birding experiences, your observations, and it's a great way to make new friends.

HERE'S ANOTHER WAY YOU CAN HELP THE NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY IN 2023



The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) is free, fun, and it's easy to participate. Your observations generate data that the Audubon Society uses to study trends in bird populations. The 25th annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 17, through Monday, February 20, 2023. Visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information.

This event engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. You count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as you wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report your sightings online at birdcount.org. Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world. Participation requires internet access in order to report your checklist.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. In 2022, more than 384,000 participants (representing 192 countries) submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.



The American Pipit (*Anthus rubescens*) Tail-bobbing Visitor from the Tundra

by Randy Lehman

Pipits breed in Alaska and also in the Rocky Mountains of the United States, and in the rocky tundra of northern Canada, but they spend the winter in the southern United States or Mexico. So some Pipits do migrate through this area in the Fall.

On late Saturday afternoon, Nov. 12, my wife, Terri Gorney & I were at the Limberlost Nature Preserve, driving slowly down the gravel covered county road that separates Jay and Adams County, looking for any interesting bird activity when we happened to notice two small birds walking slowly on the gravel road in front of her car.



Just an hour earlier, Terri had called members of the Stockbridge Audubon and cancelled their field trip to this area due to a snowstorm that had dropped an unexpected 4 inches of snow in a brief amount of time making hazardous travel and slippery road conditions. Many members of the Stockbridge Audubon Society reside in Ft. Wayne, IN, and the Limberlost is about an hour drive from Ft. Wayne. Surprisingly, an hour after Terri called Stockbridge, the weather cleared and some of the snow melted, so we decided to venture out anyway.

As Terri stopped her car on the county road allowing us to get a better look at the two small birds, she was able to use her binoculars, and she quickly realized that we were looking at a bird not often seen in the Limberlost. Both birds were focused on looking for food that might be found between the small pieces of gravel on the road, and as Terri slowly moved her car closer and closer to them, I was able to lean out the passenger side window and get these nice pictures of both birds. Neither bird seemed particularly bothered by the presence of an automobile, and as we approached within 10 to 20 ft. they would simply walk a little farther away from the vehicle.



We thought it was very interesting the way their tails bobbed and their heads moved backward and forward as they walked. It wasn't long before Terri determined that we were looking at Pipits—a small bird with a body approximately 6 inches long, maybe 10 inches with the tail included. We watched them for a long time walking in the road seemingly unconcerned by the presence of our car or my attempts to get photographs. We theorized that perhaps they were not very familiar with cars, and the slowness with which we approached them didn't represent much of a threat.



Whatever it was that made them tolerate our presence, we were very thankful for the opportunity to see Pipits at the Limberlost Swamp Preserve. It was a real treat for both of us—a first for me. Terri, on the other hand, had seen Pipits in the Limberlost Swamp Preserve in 2015. It was unfortunate that winter weather caused the event with Stockbridge to be cancelled. Had the snowstorm not happened when it did,

many of the Stockbridge birders would have enjoyed seeing the Pipits. As it often goes with sightings of uncommon birds, the Pipits were nowhere to be seen the next day—now you see them, and now you don't.

THE EXTERIOR OF THE LIMBERLOST CABIN & CARRIAGE HOUSE GETS CLEANED, REPAIRED, & PAINTED

By Randy Lehman

In early September, the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites began work on painting the Limberlost Carriage House and Cabin. Both structures are made of white cedar logs stacked on one another with mortar mix, known as “chinking”, filling in the gaps between the logs. Painting these structures requires a lot of time inspecting and preparing the logs for a fresh coat of paint, or if the logs cannot be restored they have to be replaced. In addition to the work on the logs, cracked or missing chinking has to be repaired or replaced. It can take a while to prepare the exterior for painting, and then two colors of paint must be applied—white on the chinking and a dark shade of red on the logs. This two-tone look matches the original finish of the Limberlost Cabin and Carriage House, and as visitors to this historic site will tell you, it makes for a very striking appearance, but all this attention to detail, can add considerable time to the painting process.



The pictures for this article were taken on October 13, and painting of the carriage house was almost complete except for the west wall. A lot of work had also been done painting the green trim of the Limberlost Cabin. The picture above shows that the painting of the Cabin's south-facing wall was almost complete, but it was still a work in progress. When the work on the Cabin and Carriage House first started it was considered likely that cold weather would stop the process by the end of October or early November, and the work would have to be continued in the spring of 2023, but due to warm fall weather and the diligent work of the painters, I am happy to report that the work was completed in November!

As mentioned, the many steps involved in just preparing the surface of the Carriage House and Cabin for paint can make this a very time-consuming and labor-intensive job. The two men who were on the job site doing all of this work are pictured here—Jarrell Oliver, the Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites Maintenance Technician (on the left), and Michael Burgen, an employee of CB Walls, Inc., of Fishers, IN (CB Walls was the contractor awarded the job through the bidding process established by the state).

As the former site manager of Limberlost State Historic Site, I know firsthand how difficult and challenging this work can be, and I know that despite everything that is done to protect the logs from decay, they often decay anyway, so I was impressed with how much Jarrell and Michael were able to accomplish in a relatively short period of time. In doing this article for the newsletter and taking the pictures, I was able to thank them both for their hard work and dedication. The Limberlost Cabin and Carriage House, were both originally constructed in 1895. Stop by the site and see how nice they are looking today!



FYI: in 2023, re-finishing or painting of the Limberlost Visitor Center is expected to take place.

Wherein we find out how dedicated Mrs. Porter was to the craft of photography

By Shaun Payne, Site Manager
[Limberlost State Historic Site](#)

The fervor Gene Stratton-Porter applied to the medium of photography is astonishing. Her photography career culminated in four national awards, countless reproductions in magazines and books, and a visit from the Kodak company that she turned away due to the unorthodox location and manner she used to develop her photographs – which began in her downstairs bathroom and finished in turkey platters on the family's kitchen table.



This remarkable career began inauspiciously with a small box camera given to her as a Christmas gift from her daughter Jeannette. From there, as Gene writes in her nature study “Wings,” she added extensively to her collection.

“I spent over a thousand dollars in equipment,” she wrote. “All of the money accumulated from nature articles and a few stories went to pay for four cameras, each adapted to a different branch of outdoor work, also a small wagonload of field paraphernalia.”

While \$1,000 may sound meager, the same amount of equipment purchased in 2022 would cost roughly \$30,000. She wrote that she had a wagonload of hose that she could stretch over 100 feet to connect to a bulb that, when squeezed, would operate the shutter of her camera. She also used various-sized ladders as tripods.

When she began to submit nature articles to magazines, editors wrote back asking for photographs. Gene traveled to the Limberlost Swamp to get the pictures needed for her articles, and later her nature studies, which were her true passion.

The Limberlost Swamp was not as it looks now. Gene described the swamp as hot and oppressive. Its canopy stretched for miles. At times, she had to cut the canopy back to allow light in to illuminate photographs.

As determined as she was, Gene needed help getting her equipment loaded into her carriage, unloaded, set up and prepared. Several men assisted her during her time in Geneva. She spent hours in the swamp, camouflaging herself and her equipment, to get the perfect photograph. On top of her rubber waders and woolen outerwear, which provided protection from insects, Gene wore an early version of a ghillie (camouflage) suit, called a “cravenette”, which was the color of leaves.

Gene often laid in the swamp waters for hours, as still as possible, so she wouldn't frighten or startle the subject of her photograph. Gene wrote on several occasions that she became quite ill, leaving her “at the very doors of death.” Her husband's brother Miles, a doctor, was often called upon to help Gene. The Aug. 22, 1902, edition of the Fort Wayne Sentinel reported that Miles Porter took a special “midnight train” to Geneva to care for his critically ill sister-in-law.

Despite her near-death experiences, Gene returned to the Limberlost Swamp as soon as she was able. Her husband, Charles, had long since given up trying to stop her. It is this devotion that we see in all her works, but especially in her photography, as she went to great lengths to share her beloved Limberlost and its inhabitants with the world.



The Limberlost Bird Sanctuary at 75 Years by Randy & Terri Lehman

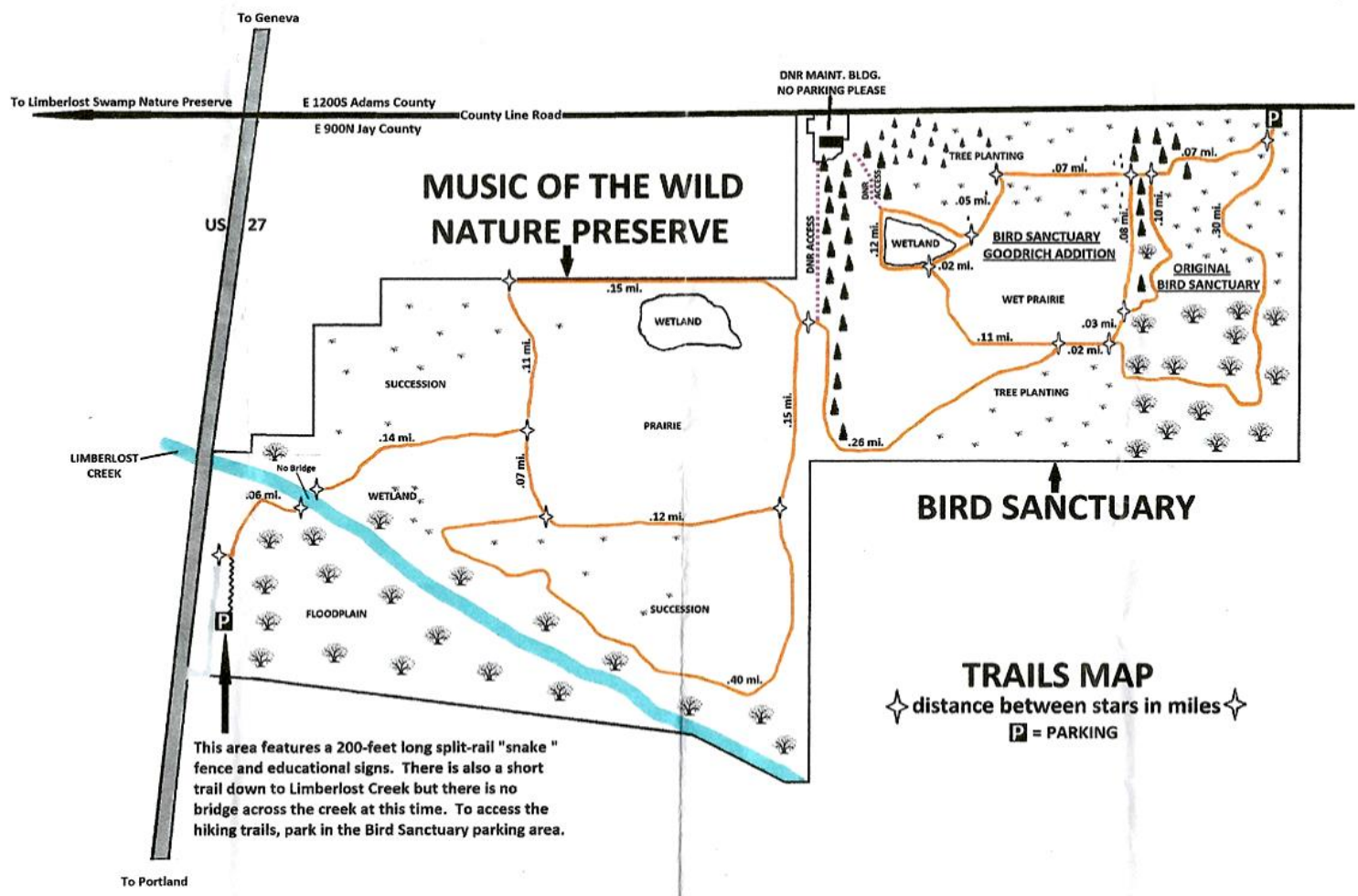
We think it's fair to say that the Limberlost Bird Sanctuary was the beginning of what is now the Limberlost Conservation Area (LCA). The LCA is composed mostly of flood-prone land in southern Adams County and northern Jay County that has been restored to wetlands, and typically these properties are owned and managed by either the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (Division of Nature Preserves) or by the Friends of the Limberlost. Most people know of the Limberlost Swamp Nature Preserve and the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve, part of the LCA, but fewer people know about the Bird Sanctuary.

In 1947, the state accepted the Limberlost Cabin, in Geneva, from the Limberlost Conservation Association (not the same as the LCA mentioned above). They had purchased the Cabin from Chloe Price in December 1946. Back in those days when the Limberlost Cabin was first opened to the public, it was called the Limberlost State Memorial to honor the legacy of Gene Stratton-Porter and was managed by DNR. Today it is called Limberlost State Historic Site, and is managed by the Indiana State Museum & State Historic Sites.

In October 1947, Lt. Gov. Richard James and Kenneth Cougill, Director of State Parks, came to Geneva and met with some 70 residents from Geneva, Berne, Decatur, and Portland about establishing a Bird Sanctuary in the area. The meeting was, in part, motivated by an awareness by many people that the Limberlost site was missing a very important part of the Gene Stratton-Porter story—she celebrated the Limberlost Swamp, but the swamp, ditched and drained years ago, seemed gone forever. It was obvious and a bit sad to notice that the Limberlost Historic Site had barely any connection to the natural world of birds and swamp that were so much a part of Gene's life in Geneva from 1895 to 1913.

Several sites were inspected. Eventually, a 12.4-acre wooded site just off the Adams/Jay County Line Road, east of US 27, was selected. There was a discussion about putting in a lake, a reservoir, or a state park, and although the state did study this proposal, nothing ever became of these ideas.

It is worth noting that Lt. Gov. Richard James had deep roots in Jay County (born in Jay County and attended Portland High School). He held several elected positions in Indiana, including the Indiana House of Representatives, Deputy Secretary of State, and State Auditor. His daughter, Becca James, was on the Friends of the Limberlost Board of Directors from 2014 to 2018, and Becca still lives in Portland today.



As a result of the impressive gathering of state officials and locals in 1947, the 12-acre Bird Sanctuary was established, thanks once again to the Limberlost Conservation Association which purchased the acreage and donated it to the state, but there was not much else to show from this meeting—the study conducted by the state determined a lake was not possible because the land was too flat, and no lake meant limited recreational opportunities, so the notion of establishing a state park in the area did not get much traction with state officials.

The Bird Sanctuary did become a state-designated area, often described on old maps as an Indiana Department of Conservation State Game Preserve. Many pine trees were planted there, but little else seems to have been done. As time passed it became a forgotten footnote in local history. But fast forward to the 1990s, when Ken Brunswick was beginning to restore portions of the Limberlost Swamp, and in his research he noticed the Bird Sanctuary and recognized an opportunity. In 1997, Ken, with help from area Boy Scouts, put in a small parking lot, and a couple of Eagle Scout projects created a hiking trail in the Sanctuary and put in walkways over wet areas. Suddenly here was a connection to nature, that had been sitting in plain site for 50 years, which could be enjoyed by visitors to the Limberlost. Below, is a picture of a sign posted at the Sanctuary.

Contributors to the 12 acre Limberlost Bird Sanctuary and the 26 acre Sanctuary Addition

1947—Limerlost Conservation Association/Donates 12 acres

to the State of Indiana with goal to begin a local state park

DNR Division of Nature Preserves • DNR Division of Museums and Historic Sites

Limerlost Swamp Remembered Committee • Friends of the Limberlost

1997—Decatur Boy Scouts/Clear parking lot

1997—Larry Bieberich/Marks trail

1997—Tony Bertsch, Eagle Scout & Troop 67/Blazes trail through Bird Sanctuary

1999—AJ Bertsch, Eagle Scout & Troop 67/Builds bridges and intermittent stream crossings
Bird Sanctuary Addition

2000—Limerlost Conservation Association/Sells 26 acres of land at a bargain sale

2000—Portland Foundation/Grants funds to help purchase the 26 acre addition

2001—Mrs. Ann Goodrich/Retires remaining debt and restores the 26 acre addition

2001—CLS Construction—Andy Yoder/Constructs the Wildlife Watering Facility

2002—Ed Davidson Drainage Contractor/Removes drainage tile

2002—Wakeland Forestry/Plants 6,000 trees

2003—Justin Shaneyfelt, Eagle Scout & Troop 202/Blazes trail through the
windbreak and connects the two trails

We Thank each donor for your contribution to this project to restore, preserve, and protect a part of our natural Limberlost Territory

AREA DEDICATED OCTOBER 25, 2003

Today the total acreage of the Bird Sanctuary is 40.28 acres, which includes the original 12.40 acres that DNR still owns. The Friends of the Limberlost own an additional connecting 27.88 acres. Directly adjacent to the Bird Sanctuary (to the west—look at the map) is the 72.21 acre Music of the Wild Nature Preserve (MOW) and DNR owns 57.43 acres of MOW, while the Friends own 14.78 acres. Both preserves are maintained by DNR—Nature Preserves, and both can be accessed from the Bird Sanctuary parking lot. Drive south out of Geneva on US27, and turn east (left) on County Road 1200S, or in Jay County head north on US27 and turn east (right) on County Road 900N.

This year, while birding at the Bird Sanctuary, we have seen Lincoln's sparrows, brown creeper, purple finch, red-shouldered hawks, yellow-rumped warblers, and Nashville warbler. In October we saw seven species of sparrows. They were: Lincoln's, song, swamp, American tree, chipping, field, and white-throated. The Bird Sanctuary is finally living up to its name.

Today the Limberlost is on the Indiana Audubon Birding Trail (Geneva is Bird Town #1), and Limberlost State Historic Site has a first-rate naturalist on staff, Curt Burnette, who conducts guided nature hikes (some of them at the Bird Sanctuary). He also does nature related programs at the site and at the schools. With close to 1800 acres of wetlands and miles of hiking trails, the Limberlost is back. The connection to the natural world of the past, celebrated by Mrs. Porter, has been restored. If only the 70 people from Geneva, Berne, Decatur, and Portland, who showed up for the meeting in 1947, could see this place now.

Winter is a Season of Wonders by Adrienne Provenzano

When the leaves fall, what was once hidden is revealed. Though birdsong could be heard in the vicinity and squirrels observed scrambling and chattering, nests barely visible in summer and early fall are now able to be seen. Paper wasp nests, their delicate layers an amazing example of the architecture skills of such pollinators, hang like lanterns.

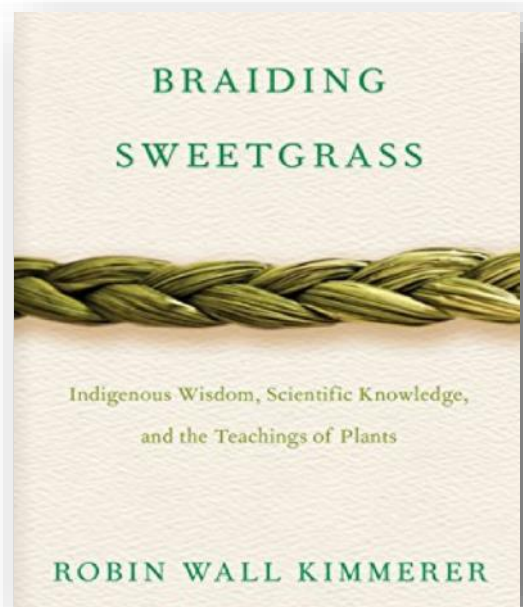
The skeleton like structures of trees can be appreciated – and a question comes to mind – does the shape of the tree match that of the leaves? Something to investigate further!



As we move towards the shortest day of the year and then the days lengthen bit by bit, the buds wait, ready for those subtle changes that will start the process of blooming and growth again.



Recently, I heard the distinctive call of the sandhill cranes. Searching the sky, at first there was no sign of them, and then a V-shaped flock came into view. A small group – perhaps 20 – with one bird at a time taking turns in-between the long lines. Heading northwest to southeast, a journey that marks the passage of time as much as the semi-annual changing of clocks, “Spring Forward, Fall Back.” The sight and sound of these migrating birds arrived like a gift as well as the indicator of a change in season.



Winter is a time to reflect and put a few good intentions into actions. Perhaps try some nature journaling, learn to recognize a few more bird calls, take a hike somewhere familiar and notice what was not noticed before. Maybe read a few more sections of Wandering Through Winter by Edwin Way Teale or of Robin Wall Kimmerer’s Braiding Sweetgrass or return to favorite storybooks. Bundle up and get in some wintertime stargazing – keep track of the phases of the moon.



To all Friends of the Limberlost, I send wishes for a safe, healthy, and wondrous winter season!

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

Editor’s note—To finish the newsletter here’s one last thing you can do on a cold winter’s day or night ...listen to Adrienne sing “On The Banks of the Wabash Far Away”. Click on this link (the scenes depicted in the video included in her song are all from this area):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHhMxucY5aA>

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 randyplehman@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

STEP TWO

Choose the type of Membership you want by checking a box below

☐ 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 restorations 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

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

☐ 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?