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While statistically speaking losses from window collisions haven't been shown to reduce a species population, if you are trying to conserve birds on your property, it may be fitting to take some steps to prevent deadly collisions.

Actions: Whatever you can do to break up the reflections of sky and branches that a bird sees. This can be decals, soap, plastic, or insect netting on the window or shading by an awning or tree. Note: decals are only effective if a window has a lot of them a fist widths apart.

If you're putting in new windows, have them tilted slightly downward to reflect the ground. Maybe it would be best to move a feeder in front of a window that reflects less or closer to the window, so birds are not traveling as fast when they hit the window. These ideas are explained more at Cornell's All About Birds website.

10. CATS, COFFEE, CLEANLINESS, AND SNAKES.

Cats - With feral and pet cats as the number one direct threat to birds, it is understandable that the American Bird Conservancy and Audubon are asking that pet owners keep cats indoors.

Coffee - Some of the sharpest declines in bird populations are a result of habitat loss outside of our country, but there is something you can do! When we buy coffee, we can affect whether bird habitat is protected by buying shade grown coffee.

Cleanliness - Should you clean out a nest box? The consensus is that for most species it doesn't matter, unless it passes a threshold of being completely soiled. Bluebirds preferred old nests in one study. At the feeder however, it is important to clean it regularly as birds can pick up diseases and pass them to each other at dirty feeders.

Snakes - One last interesting tidbit: a study from the U.S. found that flycatcher nests were predated less frequently if they had a snakeskin wrapped around them.

RESOURCES

- Loss, S.R. and others (2013). The impact of free ranging domestics cats on wildlife of the U.S. Nature Communications 4:1396.
- North American Bird Conservation Initiative, U.S. Committee, 2013. The State of the Birds 2013. Report on Private Lands. U.S. Department of Interior: Washington, D.C. 48 pages.
- Williams, D.R. and others (2012) Bird Conservation: Global evidence for the effects of interventions. Exeter, Pelagic Publishing
- <http://abcbirds.org/program/cats-indoors/>
- <http://www.savingbirds.org/hints.html>
- <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>



Outdoor cats kill an estimated 2.4 billion birds per year in the U.S. (Loss et al. 2013). Photo courtesy of Gerrit on iNaturalist.org. The snake in the clutches of this cat escaped.



SAVE THE DATE

2nd annual Aldo Leopold Festival

Les Cheneaux Islands
May 13-15, 2016



Presenting the **new**
North Huron Birding Trail!

Featured Presentations

Native Orchids of the Upper Peninsula
New Book: Beautiful Birds of the Eastern U.P.
Dark Sky Presentation



art by Katie Eberts

For more information
visit www.lescheneaux.org.

Activities occurring throughout the
Hessel/Cedarville/Drummond Island region.

Outdoor Fun

Guided Birding Trips
Nature Hikes
Kayaking Trips
First annual Triathlon



We would like to create a conservation easement landowner listserve!

- ⚙ We would like to inform you about opportunities as they arise. An example would be this fall when we had Kestrel nest boxes available for landowners.
- ⚙ Email blasts would be occasional at most!
- ⚙ You can ask to be taken off the email list at anytime. We have email addresses for about 40% of you. Feel free to send your address to Derek@landtrust.org to see if we have yours!
- ⚙ This year we will be sending our monitoring reports to each of you. If you prefer to have them emailed, please let Derek@landtrust.org know. Otherwise we'll be putting them in the mail.

Conservation Easements by County as of March 2016

County	# Easements	Acres
Charlevoix	73	3749
Cheboygan	56	9235
Chippewa & Luce	19	4536
Emmet	112	4490
Mackinac	17	962
TOTAL	277	23,535

Conservation Easement Landowner Newsletter

A newsletter for owners of land protected with a conservation easement.

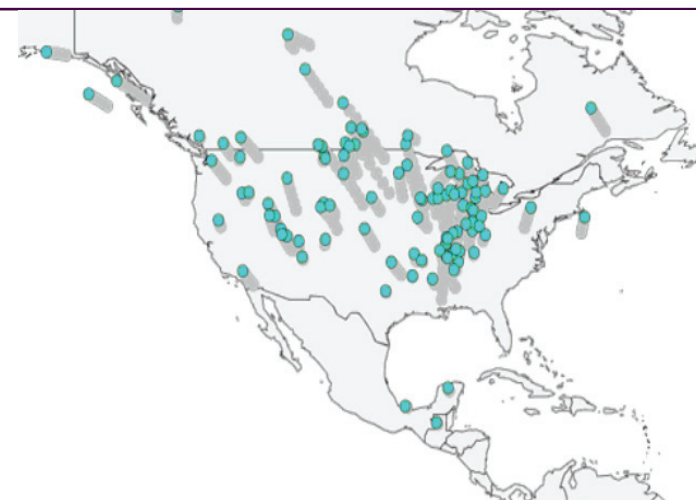


Spring 2016

Bird Inspiration

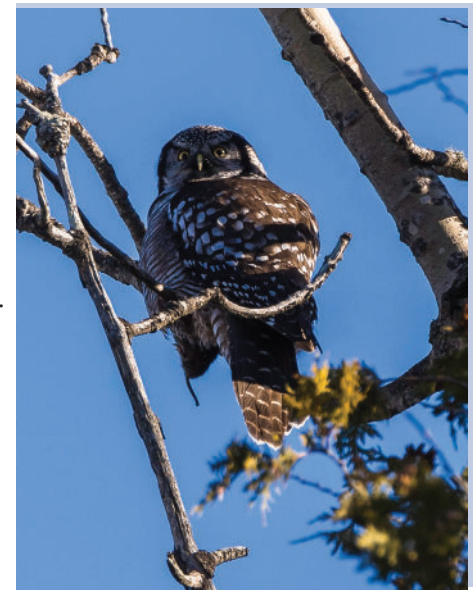
Birds are charismatic and easy to love. They are a great motivation for conserving nature. Rachel Carson taught us that birds are a great measuring stick for the health of our ecosystems and our well-being. Wildlife viewing activities such as birding have expanded lately and are increasingly important to tourism in our area. Your land lies in a strategic location to harbor migrating birds as they funnel through the straits area (see map below).

You demonstrated leadership and became an active player in bird conservation when you permanently protected your land with a conservation easement. This year's newsletter is about bird conservation and the steps you could take to increase bird diversity on your land, be more active in creating ideal bird habitat, and establish a safe haven for nesting birds. Birding is a wonderful way to enjoy your land. Each easement is different and not every easement will allow all of the activities discussed. Please review your easement document and don't hesitate to contact us with any questions. Thanks for partnering with Little Traverse Conservancy in conserving the beauty of northern Michigan and the wonderful bird habitat!



Each dot represents a bird species' location during migration on May 21st by averaging millions of observations from eBird. From the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (AllAboutBirds.com). Notice the concentration around the Great Lakes!

Nature is a competitive arena with winners and losers. Our interactions with our land influence these outcomes. Letting fields go through natural succession to a forest negatively impacts open, grassland-dependent birds. Actively clearing forests to create heterogeneity impacts a suite of birds dependent on large tracts of closed canopies. One action is not necessarily better than another. However, informed and intentional consequences are likely to do more good for wildlife than the impacts we make unknowingly.



Northern Hawk Owl at LTC's Susan Creek Nature Preserve courtesy of Darrell Lawson

There is no shortage of guides and tips related to birds on the internet—maybe you've been overwhelmed, too. A helpful place to start is by identifying and naming your priorities and targets, asking questions such as: do you want to see more species overall, or do you want to improve the habitat for the species already using your land? Do you have specific species you want to target? What is your budget? What other uses of your land are important to maintain? Does your easement preclude certain management activities? With those thoughts in mind, we present ten actions you can take to manage your land for the benefit of birds.

Stew Crew 2016



Derek Shiels
Conservation
Easement
Specialist

Mike Lynch
Preserve
Specialist

Cacia Lesh
Volunteer
Coordinator

Charles
Dawley
Preserve/GIS
Specialist

Kieran
Fleming
Director of
Stewardship



2 What birds are found on your property?

1. KNOW WHAT IS THERE. The first step to protecting birds is to know what you have to protect! In order to make priorities and plans, it would be helpful to first know what can be found on your land, whether that's the birds or plants/habitats that support the birds.

Examples: A state-endangered Prairie Warbler was documented on LTC's Rogers Family Homestead Preserve in Charlevoix County in 2014. This observation will be used to guide our management actions of the preserve knowing that Prairie Warblers like shrubby open habitats. Since this bird is a priority species for MI DNR's Private Lands Program, LTC may be eligible for financial assistance to implement management activities. In the southwest US, a study found that black-chinned hummingbirds' habitat decreased when invasive shrubs were removed. Managing invasive species may still be the desirable action, but knowing that those hummingbirds were present facilitates informed decision making.

Actions: Join an Audubon or a similar group to hone your identification skills or invite an Audubon group to your land to complete a survey for you. They are often looking for field trips. Hire a biological consultant or make and record your own observations with iNaturalist.org or eBird.org (*contact LTC to learn more about these tools*).

2. CREATE A VARIETY OF HABITATS.

Each bird species has their own particular habitat preferences and while it is not possible to meet all the requirements for all the species that live in a particular forest or grassland system, creating or maintaining a mix of habitats may be the best way to invite more species to your property.

Actions: In creating habitat diversity, take caution to not excessively fragment large, intact forests or grasslands that some species require. But maybe you have an old field that abuts a neighbor's open area and is starting to transition into a forest again. This could be an ideal target for maintaining an open habitat. With dying beech trees, you may want to try and replace them with oaks to



Some birds need open grasslands (*Northern Harrier-top, Meadowlark-bottom right*) and others need large tracts of forests (*Scarlet Tanager, bottom left*). Unless you have large tracts of both open and forested land, it may be best to focus on improving one habitat by adding native plant diversity. *Photos courtesy of Steven Kersting, Michael D. Fox, and Scott Buckel - Top to bottom left*

Observations (*blue and red marks*) of bald eagles recorded on eBird.org shown above highlight the utility of citizen science for understanding species distributions. Check out eBird.org and iNaturalist.org to see what has been observed near you and submit your own observations!

keep diversity in a forest. Do you have a stand of mature aspens? These could be harvested, creating new early successional habitat. Studies show that replicating natural disturbance events can increase overall species diversity. Keep in mind, some species may decline and disturbance means invasive plants may be more likely to appear too.

3. MANAGE WOODLAND EDGES. Do you have a woodlot? Do you have a defined area where the trees on your property start and abruptly end? One way to generate habitat diversity is to create or maintain a transitional zone from a forest to an open field or yard. This shrubby area can increase species diversity and provide a safe place for some nesting birds.

Actions: One method — if your easement allows for it — would be to employ a border-edge cut that requires cutting trees back into the forest 30 to 120 feet and leaving the slash to lie on the ground. The resulting shrub and forb growth combined with the woody materials left on the ground would create the transition zone. Another method would be to expand out from the forest line 30 to 120 feet by letting the grasses and forbs grow and planting native shrubs and small trees.

4. SNAGS AND DEADWOOD IN THE FOREST ARE IMPORTANT. Likely, you already have standing dead trees (snags) or dead trees on the ground (woody debris). The loss of our ash and beech trees is awful, but in the process the woodpeckers must feel like they are winning the lottery. And it means that you do not need to take active measures to provide the snags and woody debris in a forest.

Actions: Leave [some] snags and downed logs, resist the urge to “clean” up the forest floor. The wildlife, especially the birds, see this “mess” as ideal habitat to roost, raise young, and feed!

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Please call us, if...

...you would like to schedule a specific time and date for LTC staff to monitor your property.

...you are selling your easement-protected property.

...you plan to exercise one of the rights retained in your conservation easement. Examples might include the renovation of an existing structure; construction of a new structure (including things like fences, gates, decks, campsites, or sheds); conducting forest management activities; land clearing; landscaping, or trail building.

...you need advice or information about your resource protection and land management.

5. LIVESTOCK GRAZING CAN BE A TOOL FOR MAINTAINING BIRD HABITAT. Grazing can have both positive and negative effects on wildlife habitat, increasing some species' populations, while decreasing or having no impact on others. Grazing can be used to intentionally control vegetation and enhance native plant and wildlife habitats.

Examples: Grazing during the breeding season (late April–mid July) reduces grasses used for nesting cover. As a result, some species receive increased nest predation, such as Bobolinks. Species like the Upland Sandpiper do not tolerate grazing. But for some species, the resulting shorter and more sparse grasses make better habitat, such as for Horned Larks. Geese and shorebirds digest shorter grasses better and have been found in greater abundance with livestock present.

Actions: Don't allow grazing in riparian habitats because livestock will degrade understory vegetation in these sensitive areas with negative impacts on breeding birds. Create warm-season grasslands that provide new growth in the heat of the summer. Leave refuge areas, patches of uncultivated land that ensure there will be some areas of standing grasses on your property in spring. This is the basis of the tremendously successful USDA Crop Reserve Program. Because of the variable impact from one species to the next, diversify and plan your rotations to maximize the diversity of habitat available in one season.

6. RESEEDING AND PLANTING NATIVE PLANTS. Increasing the diversity and density of native plants on your land may be the

best general advice to conserving birds. It can be as simple as planting native plants bought from a nursery, or as complicated as establishing a native grassland. The number and diversity of insects that native plants provide will be more beneficial than providing birds with bird-seed (but please don't stop doing that!). Fruits don't arrive until the end of the growing season, so even fruit-eating birds rely on the insects found within native vegetation when they are rearing their young in the spring.

Actions: Find a copy of “Bringing Nature Home” by Doug Tallamy and browse it for some inspiring information.

7. CREATING AND MAINTAINING VERNAL POOLS. Water is a critical component to a healthy habitat. Vernal pools are small pools of water that are often dry by season's end. These wetlands and the surrounding upland areas provide important habitat for birds and a whole suite of wildlife, including many rare species. This is largely because these wetlands do not contain fish.

Actions: Protect a vernal pool if you find one on your land, or create one (talk to us about this). Come to our EcoStewards Kickoff event on April 23rd to learn more about vernal pools.

8. WHAT IS THE RESEARCH ON NEST BOXES? There have been many studies on the efficacy of nest boxes and the overall consensus is that they are used as often as natural nest sites (63 out of 66 songbird studies) and that nesting success can be as high or sometimes higher than natural nest sites (12 out of 15 songbird studies). One study found an increase in number of songbird species in areas with nest boxes. Similar results have been found for owls, raptors, and waterfowl too. An important note is that not all nest boxes are created equal. Different designs do influence use (13 out of 20 studies).

Actions: Find nest box designs tailored to specific species. There is a bluebird box design on Saving Birds Thru Habitat's website (*see resources on pg. 4*) that prevents nests from getting too hot, a problem with standard nest box designs. If you have open land, participate in our Kestrel Nest Box program (*see box below*).

9. ARE WINDOWS A BIRD'S MORTAL ENEMY? Well, habitat loss is still enemy number one, but surprisingly bird deaths from collisions with windows rank up there — probably just behind feral and pet cats — in accounting for multiple millions of bird deaths each year.

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Kestrel Nest Boxes Are Available!

The American Kestrel Partnership has been a leader in the efforts to study this bird and its decline throughout the country. www.kestrel.peregrinefund.org.

- * Place a kestrel box on your easement-protected property, and participate in this citizen-science effort!
- * We provide the box and can help you install it.
- * Monitor the box yourself, or allow an LTC volunteer to monitor the box from March - September.
- * Contact Volunteer Coordinator Cacia Lesh to get involved: cacia@landtrust.org.