



Friends of the Limberlost

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**Facebook: *Friends of the Limberlost—
Home of Gene Stratton-Porter***

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INDEPENDENCE DAY BIRDS OF PREY

Wednesday, July 4, from 2-3pm

Free (donations encouraged)

Celebrate America's birthday by joining the celebration at Limberlost State Historic Site featuring a live bald eagle, hawk, and owls. Learn about our national symbol on our nation's birthday. A live bald eagle, named "Jefferson", courtesy of Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehab, Ft. Wayne, will be at Limberlost State Historic Site on July 4th. You'll also be able to watch an eagle program presented by our naturalist, Curt Burnette. Eagles are currently making great strides in Indiana, successfully nesting in many Indiana counties. Attend this free event, and become more knowledgeable. Thanks to the sponsorship of an anonymous donor, Soarin' Hawk Raptor Rehab's program is free to the public.



**Register for the Flat 50 bicycle
ride—online deadline June 17**

www.flat50plus.com to register online
\$25 + \$2.50 online sign-up fees
Or register on the day of race for \$35

**Saturday, June 23, ride begins at Decatur Parks and Recreation
(Riverside Center) 231 E Monroe Decatur IN 46733**

- The route will have the usual options of 20, 35, 50, 62, or 100 miles starting at 7 am, with well-marked routes, maps, vehicle assistance, and well supplied sag stops as you venture through some of NE Indiana's finest farmland
- Ride one of the flattest rides of the year in Northeast Indiana. *The lunch stop at Limberlost State Historic Site in Geneva includes live bluegrass music.* The goal this year is to have over 500 riders. Join in the fun and have a great day on your bicycle. Bring a friend and experience the flat countryside together.
- The Flat 50 Plus will be timed again this year. However it is not a race. It is a noncompetitive way to challenge yourself if you so desire. If you don't want to be timed all you have to do is ignore it. Please do everyone a favor and cross the start and finish line as it is the easiest way to keep track of whether there are still people on the course.
- If you need it, tent or RV Camping in Decatur will again be an option.
- Travel the scenic back roads of Amish country, ride through Swiss communities, view the banks of the Wabash river, stop at the historic Ceylon covered bridge, and have lunch at Gene Stratton-Porter's Limberlost Cabin in Geneva, IN.

LIMBERLOST BLUEGRASS JAMBOREES

Always the 3rd Sunday of the month beginning July 15, again on August 19, and the last Jamboree takes place on September 16. Always 2-4pm.

Jamborees are held on the grounds of Limberlost State Historic Site. Jamborees are FREE (donations encouraged). The event is designed for amateur musicians. There are no paid performers. Everyone donates his or her time and talent for the good of the cause. You never know what you'll hear, but usually it's bluegrass, gospel, or folk music. The music could be good, bad, or even ugly, but regardless of the result, we always have a great time supporting any musician willing to share their music.

So bring your instrument, or just bring your lawn chair. Sit awhile, listen to the music, and enjoy life. Refreshments are provided by Friends of the Limberlost. The Limberlost Bluegrass Jamboree is sponsored by the following longtime Geneva businesses, committed to providing you the best in summertime entertainment: Limberlost Construction, Geneva Case & Quart, and Downing & Glancy Funeral Home.

As Randy Lehman, the emcee for the Bluegrass events, likes to say, "A lot of Bluegrass is about working, drinking, and dying, so our sponsors are a perfect match for Bluegrass. There is also a lot of religious Bluegrass music, but so far we have not been able to find a church willing to be a sponsor. If you know a church that would like to be a sponsor, please put them in contact with us!"

The Limberlost Bluegrass Jamborees were started back in 2003 by Betty Yoder, who played guitar and often performed locally with family and friends. Betty loved to perform and embraced the community of Geneva. She organized the first two Jamborees, but sadly, she passed away unexpectedly on May 26, 2005. Since then all Limberlost Jamborees have been held in her honor. Her daughter, Verena, also a talented musician, continues to help organize the jamborees and is committed to carry on what her mother started, and she encourages her musician friends to keep this special event going strong.

So please join us on July 15, for the first of three Jamborees, starting at 2pm. The Limberlost Cabin will be open for tours on that day beginning at 10am.



Effective June 1, the Indiana State Museum and all 11 State Historic Sites will all be open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. All sites will still be closed on most Mondays; however, all 12 locations will be open on many Monday holidays, including Memorial Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Day, and President's Day.

There are some exceptions to the "open on most holidays" policy. All locations are closed on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. In addition three state historic sites: Gene Stratton-Porter State Historic Site (Rome City, IN), New Harmony State Historic Site, and Whitewater Canal State Historic Site all are closed during the winter months, so all three of those sites will be closed January through March.

Please check the Indiana State Museum website: www.indianamuseum.org to confirm open/closed hours. Click on "Explore Our Sites" to confirm particular State Historic Site's open/closed hours. The main difference for Limberlost will be opening earlier on Sundays (now 10am, instead of 1pm) and opening later on all the other days (now 10am, instead of 9am), and Limberlost will now be open on more Monday holidays than we were previous to the June 1 announcement.

SWIFT NIGHT OUT
Saturday, Aug. 4, 7:30pm
no charge for admission—donations appreciated



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



Before European settlers brought chimneys to North America, chimney swifts would nest in caves, cliff faces, and hollow trees. So thanks to human settlement their numbers rose accordingly. A recent shift in chimney designs toward covered, narrow flues, which are unsuitable for nesting, may be contributing to a decline in this species' numbers. Even though chimney swifts do not seem to be a bird declining in numbers in this area, the Friends of the Limberlost are constructing and installing a chimney swift tower made specifically for nesting swifts. A new interpretation sign and the chimney swift tower will be installed at the Hart Barn. See pg. 8 for more information.



NEW REGIONAL SITE MANAGER STARTED MAY 1

We are very happy to report that Jordan Rodden from Bryant, IN, has joined the staff at Limberlost. Not only will he be responsible for the day-to-day operations at Limberlost, he will also be working with 3 other state historic sites in this part of Indiana: Gene Stratton-Porter SHS in Rome City, Levi Coffin SHS in Fountain City, and Whitewater Canal SHS in Metamora.

With a background in business and service on many local not-for-profit boards, we are pleased that Jordan decided to take on the challenge of improving the long-term success of all the historic sites under his charge. We look forward to working with him and appreciate how hard he has been working to master the maze of procedures and responsibilities that go with being the site manager of Limberlost.

“DISCOVER THE LIMBERLOST”
THURSDAY, AUG. 23 or AUG. 30
ALL-DAY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

DESIGNED FOR
HOMESCHOOLING FAMILIES ONLY

Pre-registration required.

Limited number of openings for each day.

For details contact Jordan Rodden or
Curt Burnette. Call 260-368-7428, or email:

jrodden@indianamuseum.org
cburnette@indianamuseum.org

The theme for this year's event is “Native Americans”. A registration fee must be paid in advance for your homeschool group to participate in the planned activities. Please use the contact information provided above to reserve the best day that works for you: either August 23 or August 30.

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

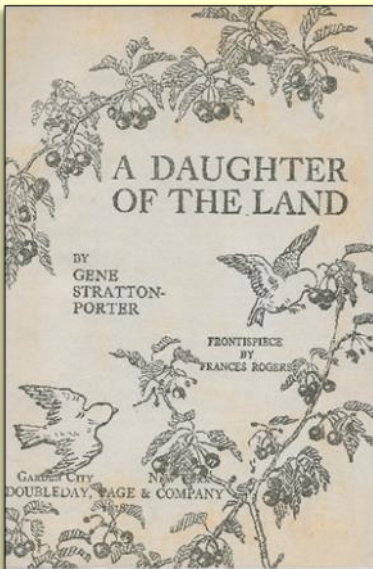
Hire Curt Burnette, Certified Interpretive Guide, to take you on a guided nature hike at one or more of the Limberlost wetlands, or include a tour of historic downtown Geneva, or take the tour that highlights locations described in Gene Stratton-Porter's books.

Cost is \$30 for 90 minutes. If interested, you must schedule your tour in advance of your visit. Curt is very experienced at putting together a package that will meet your needs and your interests.

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

Enhance your visitor experience by taking advantage of this excellent opportunity. Your satisfaction is guaranteed.

Editor's note: We continue our focus this year on the centennial of *A Daughter of the Land*, Gene Stratton-Porter's 8th novel. Below is Adrienne Provenzano's commentary on the book. The gift shop is selling a hardback copy of the book at a discounted price of only \$9.34 (with sales tax included it is \$10). You can also download this book from Amazon for just 99¢. We can ship this book to you no matter your location, just add \$5, and send a check to the Friends of the Limberlost. We are getting together on Thursday, Aug. 2, at 6:30 PM at the Geneva Library to discuss this book. If you would like to participate, contact Laura Schwartz, Branch Manager, by calling 260-368-7270 or email geneva@apls.lib.in.us to reserve your place at the table. "I'm looking forward to it", said retired site manager, Randy Lehman.



Daughters of the Land: Women Farmers Then and Now by Adrienne Provenzano

In Gene Stratton-Porter's 1918 novel, *A Daughter of the Land*, the main character Kate Bates wants to own her own farm. The youngest of sixteen children growing up on a farm, she sees the boys in the family growing up and receiving farm land, while the girls grow up, marry, and move away.

Gene Stratton-Porter well understood the importance of agriculture in Indiana. Her 1913 classic, *Laddie*, champions the importance of the farmer. She herself grew up on a 240 acre farm near Lagro, Indiana and her husband Charles Dorwin Porter also owned farmland. The Hoosier naturalist was well acquainted with many farmers in the Limberlost region and would often visit their properties for her studies of birds.

While women have held significant roles in Indiana farm life throughout Hoosier history, the character Kate Bates was, perhaps, unusual in her time. In his glowing review of the book, critic William Lyon Phelps wrote as follows: "Here was a girl who really loved the country; loved living on a farm; loved all kinds of agriculture work; loved to make and see things grow. And as presented in the novel, this love is understandable and intelligible. There are not many such girls. But it would be well if there were more."

Nowadays more and more women pursue a career in agriculture. Women in Indiana who farm are most likely to run small or large-small farms, some even in urban areas. About 75% of Indiana's farms have less than 200 acres and there are 40,000 such farms. Overall, about 28% of farmers in Indiana are women. In the September, 2013 issue of *Indianapolis Monthly*, author Evan West profiled Amy Matthews, owner of South Circle Farm in Indianapolis, in an article entitled "The New Hoosier Farmer: Is A City Girl." Women are finding and creating opportunities as urban and rural farmers in Indiana.

Annually, as part of the Indiana State Fair, the Purdue Extension Women in Agriculture Program awards honors to women involved in agribusiness or policymaking. An annual conference for Midwest Women in Agriculture sponsored by the Purdue Extension took place in Muncie, February 21 - 22, 2018, including presentations on risk management and diversification for farm operations, empowering women through agriculture technologies, hands-on tractor and machinery operations, and small-flock poultry basics. The second annual Indiana Small Farm Conference held March 1 - 3, 2018 in Danville, Indiana, included presentations by women farmers and a keynote by restaurant owner Martha Hoover, who owns Patachou, Inc. and sources many items from local farms.

One aspect of contemporary farming that women benefit from is the opportunity to create and participate in cooperative organizations that help women farmers help one another. Groups such as Women4theLand create support teams to share knowledge and encouragement. Other organizations such as the National FFA Organization (previously known as Future Farmers of America) and 4H provide opportunities for young women to develop agriculture skills. FFA was founded in 1928. Young women were first able to join in 1969, and by 1988 they represented 20% of the members and in 2013, 44%. 4H started in 1902 and expanded in the 20th century. The 4 H's are Head, Heart, Hands, and Health. In 2016, the organization began a collaboration with NASA entitled "Expeditionary Skills for Life" focusing on teamwork, resilience, awareness of self and others, and perseverance. The project was launched by Astronaut Peggy Whitson, herself a 4H alum who was raised on a farm. Indeed, girls and women are interested in farming careers, and there is increased understanding that these daughters of the land can contribute successfully in this essential endeavor.

Gene Stratton-Porter once wrote of Hopewell Farm, her childhood home, that "No other farm was ever so lovely". It was there that her appreciation of wildflowers and birds was nurtured, and there, too, her work ethic and her strong character developed. I imagine she would be proud of the Indiana women farmers of today, bringing into reality in 2018 the aspirations and accomplishments of her fictional Kate Bates of 1918.

LIMBERLOST VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

by Randy Lehman, Volunteer Coordinator

There are many volunteer opportunities at Limberlost, but before I list them, let me say that I've been volunteering ever since I retired as the site manager in July of 2016, and before 2016, I worked with, supervised, trained, and encouraged many volunteers at Limberlost.

Volunteering is for all age groups. It's fun, important, and meaningful. Typically, Limberlost volunteers have been retired or semi-retired, but many great volunteers have been younger, and have provided important service, and performed vital tasks, sometimes teaching "this old dog" new tricks. Depending on how involved you want to be, volunteering can be a year-round commitment, or something you do on a seasonal basis, on weekends, or just during special events.

We can be as flexible as needed to accommodate your schedule; after all, you are "donating" your time and talent. However, it takes time to train volunteers, so it's helpful if we can count on you to volunteer when you are most needed and during times when staff is more likely to be available to help with orientation and training. We want your volunteer experience to be rewarding and fulfilling, and that takes commitment from both you and the staff at Limberlost.

Here are some of the main volunteer opportunities at Limberlost:

Gardening & grounds keeping: Flower gardens and the grounds need attention. Plants need to be watered, and some weeding may be required. If you like gardening, perhaps you have taken a Master Gardener course, then you will find plenty of opportunity to use your gardening skills. It's not unusual for visitors to ask about our plants & flowers, and you are encouraged to interact with visitors who are interested in the Limberlost flora. There is plenty of opportunity for the right volunteers to make the grounds of the Limberlost look better and to provide a more educational experience for our visitors.

Gift shop clerking: shoppers often need help. Often point-of-sale volunteers are the first people that our guests encounter, so you can help answer a lot of questions, and help with orientation and the sale of gift shop merchandise. Gift shop merchandise needs to be inventoried, re-ordered, priced for resale, and shelves re-stocked. Inventory requires some computer data entry. Operating the cash register requires some training. There is plenty of opportunity to make the Limberlost gift shop better.

Giving guided tours: The main requirements for giving a great guided tour are familiarity with the subject matter, an ability to share that information in

an interesting and accurate way, and an ability to always be hospitable and helpful. It takes time to become comfortable with this position, and typically there are many steps to reaching the point where you are doing tours without supervision, but the rewards are many, and if giving guided tours is something you'd like to try, then we will be happy to train you.

Helping with events and programs: Events require planning, preparation, and clean-up, and it's good to have help with those things. There's often less of a time commitment with this volunteer position, but any help offered is greatly appreciated since we typically offer over 20 events/programs per year at Limberlost.

Helping the Friends of the Limberlost with record keeping. If you are a detail-oriented person, and happy to focus on computer work, there are several record keeping tasks that need week-to-week attention and updating. Good record-keeping and timely communication with membership is essential to the operation of the Friends of the Limberlost. You can help the Friends be a more effective and professional not-for-profit.

DNR Nature Preserves sometimes uses volunteers. Typically, volunteer help is limited to maintenance of kiosks, parking areas, and outbuilding maintenance. Volunteering to work with DNR staff requires direct contact with that office. Ask to be put on their volunteer contact list by emailing the new East Central Regional Ecologist, Taylor Lehman, at tlehman@dnr.in.gov or call 260-368-7594.

After 40 hours of volunteer service you will have earned the following benefits:

- Free admission to the Indiana State Museum and 11 State Historic Sites for 2 adults and all dependent children or grandchildren age 21 and under.
- 10% discount at the Indiana Store at the Indiana State Museum and at the Limberlost Gift Shop
- A complimentary subscription to the ISMHS & FOL member e-newsletters
- Reciprocal benefits to participating Association of Science-Technology Centers (astc.org) and North American Reciprocal Museum Association institutions (narmassociation.org)
- A complimentary membership with the Friends of the Limberlost, which includes a complimentary Friends of the Limberlost lapel pin.

If you have questions about volunteering at Limberlost, or would like to start volunteering, please contact me at randylehman@comcast.net or call Limberlost Historic Site: 260-368-7428

Leave your contact info, and Randy will get back to you.



THE LIMBERLOST SWAMPER

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INTRODUCING THE NEW DNR NATURE PRESERVES REGIONAL ECOLOGIST— TAYLOR LEHMAN



My name is Taylor Lehman, and I am taking on Ben Hess' position as the East-Central Ecologist. I wanted to share some information about my experiences that led me to this position.

I grew up in a small forested subdivision on the outskirts of Fort Wayne. In addition to being forested, our subdivision contained small wetlands and a creek ran nearby. I would spend much of my time outside and was known for catching frogs, turtles, and the occasional snake.

Due to my fondness for animals and the outdoors, I decided to pursue a degree in biology. I attended Ball State University and developed my field experience interning with Little River Wetlands Project at Eagle Marsh. After graduating, I

monitored blunt-nosed leopard lizards in California as part of an internship with American Conservation Experience. Shortly after, I began as an intermittent working under the Southeast Ecologist for the Division of Nature Preserves, Jason Larson. It was here that I discovered my love of land stewardship and gained valuable experience identifying and managing plant communities.

Following my position with Nature Preserves, I worked for The Nature Conservancy in Georgia monitoring upland pine forests and gopher tortoises (seen with me in the picture). After TNC, I worked on a Black-capped Vireo monitoring project in Oklahoma. I then returned to Indiana to pursue a Master's degree in biology at Purdue University Fort Wayne (formerly IPFW) working under Dr. Bruce Kingsbury. My thesis research was on the distribution of the Massasauga in Indiana. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Massasauga, it is a species of small rattlesnake that is not aggressive. I finished my thesis and graduated in 2016 and immediately began working with Asplundh Tree Experts, LLC. I learned a lot about trees, shrubs, and people working for Asplundh, but knew that I wanted to pursue a career in land stewardship and ecology.

I was delighted when I was selected to serve as the East-Central Ecologist. I am looking forward to continuing the work of Ben Hess and Ken Brunswick. I plan to use my background in land stewardship, conservation, and ecology to continue to improve and expand the natural areas in the East-Central region.

I would like to thank everyone for the warm welcoming.

HIKE WITH THE SWAMP TROTTERS. MONTHLY HIKES TAKE PLACE AT THE

LOBLOLLY MARSH—Free nature hikes take place this summer on the following Saturdays: June 9, July 14, and August 11. The hikes begin at 9 am (please note the earlier starting time) and start at the Loblolly Marsh Nature Preserve parking lot—go 3.5 miles west of Bryant on Hwy 18, then turn north on 250W, and then go about 1/2 mile north to the Loblolly parking lot (the address is 8323N 250W, Bryant, IN). The hikes are organized by FOL board member and Indiana Master Naturalist, Melissa Fey. For additional information please contact Melissa at linngrove@live.com (or call 260-849-0967). Usually these hikes attract up to a dozen individuals—all ages are welcome. The hikes last about 2 hours, but participants are welcome to stay longer or end their hikes sooner. It doesn't matter if this is your first hike or you're an experienced naturalist. The idea is to hike with like-minded individuals who enjoy the outdoors and want to learn more about nature.

Unusual Predator Among the Moths - Life and Death on my Balcony

By Willy DeSmet



▲ I have been attracting and photographing moths on my balcony for a couple of years now. My set up is pretty simple.

I bought one of those energy-saving new light bulbs (about \$5) - a UV light bulb because UV bulbs (“black light”) attract moths better than regular light bulbs. I put it in a clamp-on reflector. I hang out a white cotton sheet when it gets dark and light it with the UV light. (Cotton reflects UV, synthetic doesn’t.) And then I wait. I don’t do this every night, sometimes it’s too cold, too windy, too wet. Sometime I don’t feel like it or don’t have the time to stay awake and wait.

Be aware that not every animal that you attract with the light will land on the sheet. The area in front of the sheet will also get a bunch of visitors. So you may want to put another sheet or something on the ground between the light and the sheet to make them easier to see. The new Peterson Field Guide to Moths of Northeastern North America is a great start if you want to identify the moths you’ll see.

I have identified and photographed around 400 different species of moths so far. But the UV light doesn’t only attract moths. Stinkbugs, Katydid, Tree Crickets, Planthoppers, Leafhoppers, all kinds of beetles, even Water Boatmen plop onto my sheet.

The strange creature (at the top of the next column) is a Mantid Fly. (Possibly *Dicromantispa sayii*, but I’m not completely sure of the exact species). A Mantidfly is sometimes called a Mantidfly or Mantid Lacewing. It is not a Praying Mantis, nor a true Lacewing (though they are related); but you can see where it gets its name. Notice the long “neck” (the prothorax.)

This Mantidfly is fairly small, just over half an inch long. Adult Mantidflies eat mostly small arthropods. **7**



“Arthropods” is a group of animals that includes insects, spiders, centipedes, millipedes, shrimp, crabs, and so on. They all have a hard external skeleton, a segmented body, and many pairs of segmented legs. They are also left-right symmetrical.

There are different species of Mantidflies. They have similar but slightly different life stories. The Brown Mantidfly, *Climaciella brunnea*, for instance gets about twice as big as this one, and looks more like a wasp. Their larvae find a wolf spider and get into their lungs, feeding on the spider’s blood. When the female spider starts to build an egg sac, the mantidfly larvae get in the egg sac before it is finished. They eat the spider eggs, then make their own cocoon inside the spider’s egg sac. After they pupate they leave the egg sac.



“Look into my eyes,…” This Pasture Grass-venerer moth, *Crambus saltuellis*, is about to become dinner.

Mantidflies are curious creatures and not very common. Keep your eyes open, and perhaps you’ll see one, too.

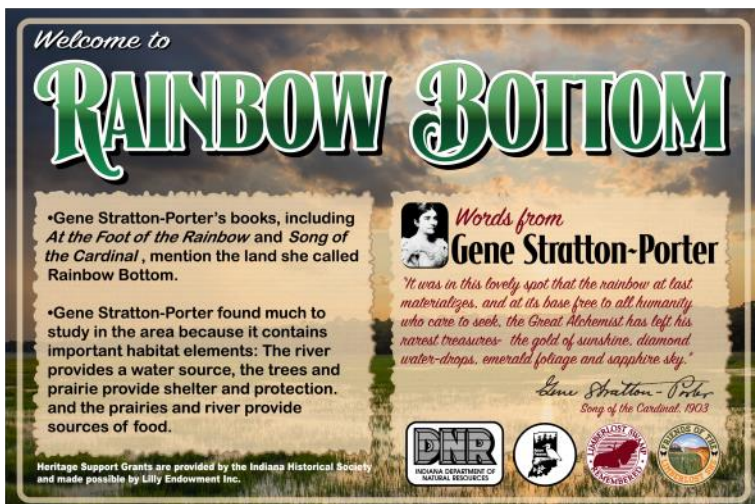
NEW INTERPRETIVE SIGNS ARE INSTALLED



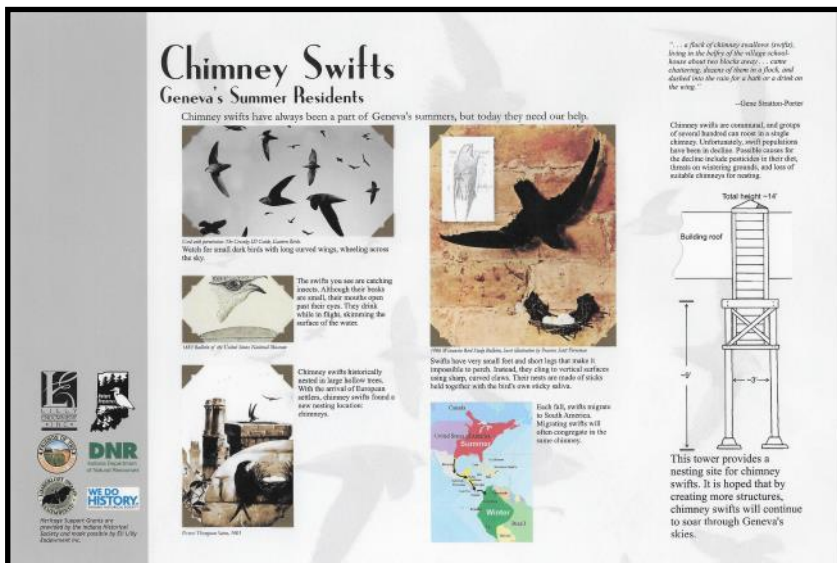
We'd like to thank Terri Gorney, FOL Board member, who applied for a \$5,000 grant from the Indiana Historical Society (IHS), made possible by Lilly Endowments, Inc.. The grant was received at the end of last year, and the money allowed us to replace nine worn out interpretation signs that were getting difficult to read due to their age. The old signs were mostly at the Loblolly Marsh and the Rainbow Bend properties, but other property signs also got replaced.

In addition the grant allowed us to get eight new interpretation signs. There's only room to highlight some of the new signs. One is about the history of drainage tiles used to drain wetlands like the Loblolly Marsh, and two new signs will be installed at the Music of the Wild parking lot—one about the Grand Rapids and Indiana railroad that provided rail service to Geneva, Berne, and Decatur back when Mrs. Porter lived at the Limberlost Cabin. The other is about split rail fences—a type of fence Gene Stratton-Porter liked very much. It created good nesting habitat for many of the Limberlost birds that she studied. There are plans to install a split-rail fence at the Music of the Wild parking lot.

Two larger signs are part of the same grant: one will be located at the end of Veronica's Trail at the Loblolly Marsh. The sign is designed to meet disability standards; it has a "YOU ARE HERE" map feature, and it presents an overview of the history of the Loblolly Marsh.



The other new interpretation sign will be located on the Hart property, about 3 blocks from Limberlost State Historic Site, and features the chimney swift, a bird often heard during the summer months but often unnoticed by the general public. Limberlost has an annual event focused on the chimney swift (see page 3 for details). This event was the idea of Alex Forsythe, a 14 year-old Limberlost volunteer at the time. Attendees learn a lot about this amazing bird; for instance, chimney swifts are mostly in flight all day long feeding on insects, never landing or resting until daylight fades away. Join us on August 4 to learn more!



We hope the signs will enhance your experience the next time you decide to do some nature hiking at the Limberlost properties. See if you can locate all 17 signs.

Mrs. Porter and the Purple Martins **By Terri Gorney**

Gene Stratton-Porter wrote that there were three birds she could depend on every spring to return to the Limberlost Cabin and nest in the yard. They were: robins, bluebirds and purple martins.

Gene said that the purple martins liked to perch on the windmill in her backyard. She had placed a martin complex for eight families on the windmill and enjoyed watching the martins all summer long. She had “the most wonderful grouping of martins, circling the mill or perching.” If you are a big fan, as I am, of purple martins, you can imagine the happy chattering sounds of the birds while they were in flight or perched around the Limberlost Cabin. Reading Gene’s comments about this amazing bird, you know without a doubt she enjoyed her “pets of the windmill.” Gene wrote that she enjoyed illustrating and painting the birds from the back porch of the Limberlost Cabin.



Martins nesting in one of the compartments inside the nesting box.

Unfortunately, Gene could not photograph

the birds on the windmill due to the harsh lighting conditions. However, while on a 20-ft. ladder, she could photograph the birds sitting on the telephone wires or perched on top of a dead wild cherry tree near their nesting boxes. She would also get on the ladder and use a wire to clean out the nesting boxes of any materials that house sparrows would put in there until they gave up nest building. House sparrows, a bird for which Gene had very little sympathy, is known to harass native birds, like martins and bluebirds, taking over their nesting sites.

In late February 1905, she wrote it was the earliest that a purple martin “scout” had arrived from its wintering grounds. He looked exhausted after his long journey. When she later

spoke with a tenant on the farm that the Porters owned a couple of miles west of Geneva, he noted that a purple martin arrived on the same day there. Writing that purple martin flocks usually returned to the Limberlost Cabin between May 1st and May 15th every year, this is an indication of just how much Gene liked to study bird life. I certainly share Gene’s excitement with spring migration, and I can relate to her record-keeping. Gene would be pleased to know that purple martins have a robust population around Geneva today.

For the first time this past summer of 2016, I was able to watch and photograph young martins. A local Amish farmer, John Hilty, whose tidy farm is located just east of Geneva, invited Randy Lehman and myself to see his 40+ pairs of nesting martins. Our friend, Sherrida Woodley, who was visiting from Cheney, Washington, accompanied us. There was happy martin chatter in the air all over his yard and the birds were busy feeding young in the bird house complex. It is an experience that I will not forget. John is what Gene would have called one of her “faithful”. He said after sharing spring and summer with the martins, their departure in the fall for their wintering grounds, always results in a very quiet September which takes some getting used to—a sentiment I can imagine Gene would feel just as keenly.

If you would like to read more about Gene and her experiences with birds, you could read *What I Have Done with Birds* and *Friends in Feathers*. The story of the purple martins is in both books. *Friends in Feathers* is available at the Limberlost Gift Shop for \$33.75. Members of the Friends of the Limberlost and/or the Indiana State Museum, get a 10% discount on all gift shop purchases.

You can look at many great photographs of purple martins by clicking on the following link or copy & paste this address to your web browser: www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/purple_martin



A common site in the Geneva area—purple martin nesting boxes on Amish farms.

The Month of May—It's School Tours & More School Tours



Historic Sites can always count on May being a busy time of the year. The two pictures above show that at Limberlost not only do we engage student learning at Limberlost State Historic Site in Geneva, but staff uses other nearby places to stimulate interest in history and nature. Most schools not only take advantage of the learning opportunities offered by the guided tour of Gene Stratton-Porter's Limberlost Cabin, but many use the remaining part of school day doing other activities, such as dip netting for aquatic insects at the Loblolly Marsh (like you see Curt Burnette teaching in the picture above to the left), or students can check out historic landmarks, like the nearby Ceylon Covered Bridge (you can see Curt Burnette taking advantage of the teaching moment in the picture above to the right).

Finally Making Some Progress with the Kitchen Restoration



The time-period kitchen table and stove are finally in place in the kitchen of the Limberlost Cabin. The 1890s gas stove looks right at home, and the table is a perfect fit—note the coffee-grinder. We are expecting delivery of the kitchen sink and cabinet this summer. The search continues for a time-period water heater and side-loading ice box. If you are a member of the Friends of the Limberlost and/or the Indiana State Museum, the next time you are in the area, stop in at the visitor center and ask to see the kitchen. One of your membership benefits is no-charge admission into the Limberlost Cabin. There is still a lot to do in the kitchen—wood shelves need to be installed and more time-period kitchen utensils need to be acquired, but we are finally making some progress. Thank you David Buchanan, Indiana State Museum, Curator of Decorative Arts & Furniture, for helping to move this project forward.

FRIENDS OF THE LIMBERLOST

NEW MEMBERSHIP & MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

The Friends of the Limberlost, a 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation, supports both Limberlost State Historic Site and the Indiana Division of Nature Preserves. Nature Preserves manages the restored wetlands in the Limberlost Territories. Your membership dues and extra donations are vital and support the many projects honoring the memory and legacy of Gene Stratton-Porter.

You decide how your annual dues will be spent. You direct your donation to one of the following:

- Limberlost State Historic Site to support projects & public programs at the site and at the restored wetlands.
- Limberlost Swamp Remembered, a committee of the Friends of the Limberlost, primarily focused on the Limberlost Swamp restoration projects.
- Or donate to both groups.

Your annual dues to Limberlost Historic Site Friends or Limberlost Swamp Remembered include admission to Limberlost State Historic Site, a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, and a 10% discount on purchases at the Limberlost Gift Shop. A description of additional membership benefits will be mailed to you with your membership card. Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Please fill out the form below to renew your membership or to sign up as a new member. If you have any questions regarding your membership in the Friends Group, call Limberlost State Historic Site. (260)368-7428.

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

Step One:

Select your desired Friends membership.
Choose where you want your Donation to go.

Limberlost Historic Site Friends—dues and any additional donation 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

Step Two:

Choose the cost of the membership you want by checking the appropriate box below.

Senior Citizen/Limited Income—\$10

Business—\$50 (please enter contact name below)

Individual—\$20

Family—\$35.00

Lifetime—\$1,000

NAME _____

MAILING ADDRESS _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Check the box if you want to get the newsletter mailed to you via the U.S. Postal Service. We are happy to mail you a “paper copy” of the newsletter rather than the electronic version of the newsletter, if that is what you prefer—just check the box. If you get the digital version of the newsletter via email, it saves us money on postage, it also saves us time, and the “e-newsletter” is in color!

AMOUNT ENCLOSED (Additional donation appreciated): \$ _____

COMMENTS: _____



**SUNSET AT VERONICA'S TRAIL
JUNE 9**