

THE Warbler

INDIANA YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

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GENE STRATTON-PORTER AND THE LIMBERLOST

An interview with Terri Gorney



I'm Alex Forsythe, and I'm speaking today with Ms. Terri Gorney, well known birder, conservationist, author and researcher, about one of Indiana's most admired birders: Gene Stratton-Porter. Ms. Gorney, everyone knows that you are an Indiana Audubon Society Board Member and Vice-President of Friends of the Limberlost, but could you please tell us about your many other titles?

I am Manager of Zeigler's Window Coverings, President of the Paulding County Chapter of the Ohio Genealogical Society (I became interested at age 12 of my 7 generations that settled in the Great Black Swamp), Stockbridge Audubon Society board member and program chair, and on the Board of Governors for the Society of the Indiana Pioneers based in Indianapolis.

It is no secret that you, like most of us, are a fan of Gene Stratton-Porter, Indiana's famous author, photographer, researcher, conservationist and scientist. When did Gene first grab your attention?

I was a Limberlost Girl Scout and read "A Girl of the Limberlost" when I was in elementary school. I did not truly appreciate Gene's contributions as a writer, naturalist, conservationist, and photographer until I started volunteering at Limberlost State Historic Site. Site manager Randy Lehman asked me to research on behalf of the site. I am amazed at what is buried in archival collections, historical

societies, and libraries. By volunteering, I've learned about Gene and other naturalists of Indiana and hope to continue learning. It is a pleasure to make others aware of their accomplishments.

What do you most admire about Gene?

I admire that Gene was able to produce a large body of work that is timeless and she used her voice to speak out for conservation. In her writings and photography, she made the Limberlost Swamp famous. After watching the swamp being drained for farmland, she took a stand against the draining the lakes of northeastern Indiana. In the early 20th century, the lakes were deemed to have little value. It is hard to believe that Indiana passed a law to drain the lakes. Gene stressed the importance of the lakes as a natural resource. Without people like Gene speaking out, we would not have the lakes we enjoy today.

During her time period it was common to kill the birds and pose them for photographs. She did not believe in this practice and spoke out against it. With patience, she was able to take incredible photographs of birds nesting, perching and feeding their young. She could have written a text book but wanted to write for the common person as demonstrated by her book "Moths of the Limberlost" which in my opinion is one of her best works. Gene wanted everyone to be able to read the book and to appreciate moths. She did extensive research on birds and moths while she lived in Geneva and it is evident in her writing.



You've conducted a great deal of research and uncovered a lot of interesting facts about Gene and her friends. In just the past month you've had yet another book published ("Jane Brooks Hine"). How has the information you've recently uncovered changed your view of Gene and her work?

There are common threads between the writings of Jane Brooks Hine, Maurice McClue and Gene Stratton-Porter. They were early conservationists in a time when it was not deemed necessary to conserve. I admire all of them for speaking out on behalf of the birds and the environment.

You and the rest of the Limberlost staff have done a remarkable job honoring Gene's accomplishments and vision. Could you tell us about some of the programs Limberlost has conducted to keep Gene's dreams and work alive?

This year, Limberlost State Historic Site hosted over 30 events in the past 11 months. Randy Lehman, the site manager and Curt Burnette and Bill Hubbard, the naturalists, consider Gene's legacy in planning events for the young and the young at heart. Over 7,000 people visited the site and/or wetlands last year. We were fortunate to have you, Alex, speak on the "Owls of Limberlost" in March with live owls provided by Soarin' Hawk. The program had to be given three times due to the large turnout! Curt Burnette created the popular rent-a-naturalist program that

can be tailored to individuals who want to experience Gene's Limberlost. The three bluegrass jams fill the cabin's yard. Randy hosts them. He does Gene trivia between some of the music. Our nights on the marsh have been very successful. It is wonderful that parents and grandparents bring the very young to the marsh. Nature rarely disappoints there.

In southern Adams County, there are over 7,000 Amish. Thanks to the Robert Cooper Audubon Society and the Indiana Audubon Society, we were able to create "Alexandra's Outreach." This year an Amish birding program was developed. Alex, you've done a wonderful job in engaging and teaching the "scholars" from 6 to 16. Friends of the Limberlost gives every school the book "A Girl of the Limberlost." The Amish love reading Gene's books about the place they call home. Randy, Curt and Bill give priority to school outreaches of nature based programs and teaching of Gene's legacy.

Recently the habitats of Limberlost and Loblolly that Gene loved so much in Geneva, Indiana were restored. As a result, the area has become one of the best birding spots in Indiana. How many species of birds does the area now host, and what are some of the highlights?

Ken Brunswick deserves a lot of credit for taking the initiative to restore some of the Limberlost Swamp around Geneva. There is around 3,000 acres in restored wetlands in public and private hands (over 1800 acres is owned by the DNR or Friends of the

Limberlost). This area will only improve as a habitat for nesting and migrating birds. The Limberlost bird list is over 200 in less than five years. In 2013, Geneva became Indiana's first Birdtown. This year, Geneva had an incredible list of birds. Some of my favorites were the short-eared owls, greater white-fronted goose, northern harriers, king rails, least bittern, short and long-billed dowitchers, bobolinks and dickcissels. Several of these birds Gene wrote about and we know she would be happy that they still call Limberlost home for at least part of the year.

If Gene were alive today, what do you think she would say to the young birders reading this article?

If Gene were alive today, she would be pleased by the formation of the Indiana Young Birders Club and its members. Most people do not know that she was a member of the Indiana Audubon Society and served on the board of directors. In 1908, she was one of the speakers at the spring meeting in Fort Wayne. At that conference, she went to the schools with other Audubon members to make young people aware of the birds and the natural world around them. She believed in teaching the next generation. I know she would have been at the Indiana Young Birders Club conferences as she was the Kim Kaufman of her day.



IYBC 2015 EVENTS SCHEDULE

- MARCH 7** 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Goose Pond
Linton, IN
- APRIL 25** 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Celery Bog,
West Lafayette, IN
- MAY 9** 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
IYBC at the Indiana Dunes
Festival, Chesterton, IN
- JUNE 6** 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
Southern IN, Cerulean
Warbler Trip
- JUNE 13** 8 a.m.-10 p.m.
Young Naturalists Day
at Mary Gray, Connersville, IN
- JULY 12** 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
Trine Recreation Area
Angola, IN
- AUGUST 22** 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
3rd Annual Indiana Young
Birders Conference Carmel, IN
- OCTOBER 11** 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
Limberlost State Historic Site
and Loblolly Marsh Geneva, IN
- NOVEMBER 28** 8 a.m.-11 a.m.
Eagle Creek
Indianapolis, IN



GOOSE POND- MARCH 7TH

This trip focus on the amazing Sandhill Crane concentration that occurs at Goose Pond FWA in March. Flocks of up to 10000+ often occur here during this time. Other highlights will include a large variety of waterfowl. Please meet at the check-in station along Highway 59 (1815 Indiana 59, Linton, IN 47441) at 8:00 a.m. The trip will be half day, but if people want to bird longer we can do that.

YELLOWWOOD STATE FOREST-JUNE 6TH

This trip will include observing Cerulean and other breeding warblers. Hopefully with some banding and some viewing of their nests! This trip will be all day. More details to come soon.



PHOTOS FROM THE 2014 IYBC CONFERENCE



above photo by Kristena Lynn Photography



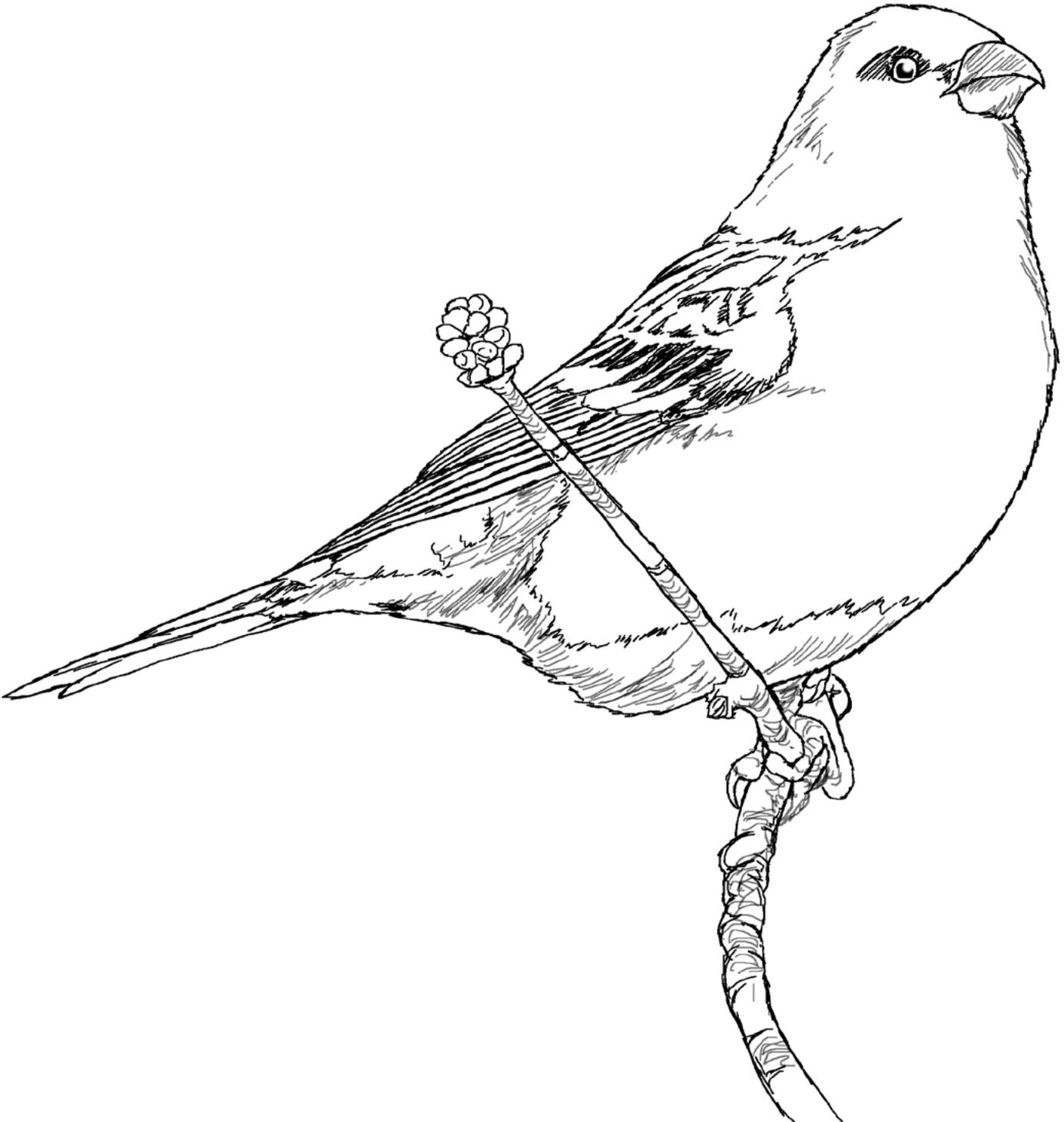
A LOOK BACK AT IYBC 2014 EVENTS



Fledgling Coloring Page

Try your best and you might win a Field Guide.

Pine Grosbeak



Send your completed coloring page to iybc@indianaudubon.org or mail it to: IYBC, 5720 Long Ridge Place, Indianapolis, IN 46221. The winner will be selected for a guide. Deadline March. 20. *This contest is open to all young birders up to age 18. You do not have to be a member of the IYBC to enter.*



Indiana Young Birders Club
5720 Long Ridge Place
Indianapolis, IN 46221

SPECIAL THANKS

The Indiana Young Birders Club would like to thank the following people and organizations for their support:

Indiana Audubon Society
Kenn and Kim Kaufman
Bill Thompson III

Are you interested in writing for our newsletter? Do you have a picture or drawing you would like for us to share? Or, would you like to blog about some of your birding adventures with us on our blog site? If so, please email us, we would love to hear from you.
iybc@indianaaudubon.org

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The IYBC is a community for young birders across the State of Indiana to come together and support birding as a sport and to promote conservation initiatives that help sustain bird populations throughout the Americas.

*email: iybc@indianaaudubon.org
website: www.indianayoungbirders.org*

