



Friends of the
Washington County Grasslands IBA
(Important Bird Area)
- 2015 Annual Report -

www.ibafriends.org

Friends of the Washington County Grasslands IBA, Inc.
PO Box 82
Fort Edward, NY 12828
www.ibafriends.org

www.winterraptorfest.com



ANNUAL REPORT - 2015

2015 – A YEAR IN REVIEW

This was a year of growth and new opportunities! Friends of the IBA's exciting new conservation initiatives increased habitat for grassland birds in the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA) and Winter Raptor Fest and Raptor Rapture drew record crowds, educating thousands of children and adults about our imperiled grassland birds.

Our new video, "Birds At Risk," premiered at Winter Raptor Fest to standing room only audiences. The five-minute video introduces people to the endangered, threatened and rapidly declining birds of the Washington County Grasslands and the need to conserve this critical habitat. It was produced through the generous support of Junda Video Enterprises.

Friends of the IBA's dedicated Board of Directors worked hard on building the organization's capacity to acquire, conserve and manage additional lands in the IBA. Thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the NYS Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP)* we were able to hire consultants and contractors to assist with bookkeeping, fundraising, and communications. As a result, membership and revenues increased by double digits and continue to grow.

Friends of the IBA's Board of Directors also completed a Strategic Plan with a bold vision to "*protect and conserve a resilient landscape of healthy grasslands across New York State...*" The planning process helped us identify and assess opportunities and challenges for land conservation, education and organizational development and steps needed to reach our goals.

**Funding for this grant comes from New York's Environmental Protection Fund. The NYSCPP is administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).*

LAND CONSERVATION

Friends of the IBA signed a conservation agreement on 50 acres adjacent to the Loftus parcel in Fort Edward over the summer. The landowner voluntarily conserved an additional 60 acres through April of 2016. This placed more than ***100 acres of critical grassland bird habitat in the heart of the IBA under conservation!***

By fall we were seeing more threatened **Northern harriers** hunting the conserved parcels, with at least one pair roosting at the site. Prey populations seem high, indicating a good winter for Short-eared owls and other wintering raptors. We expect to see an increase in breeding birds in spring and summer 2016. We will be scheduling restoration work to remove brush and invasive species in spring or fall.

WINTER RAPTOR FEST 2015 - March 14 & 15, Fort Edward

Record numbers of visitors braved gusty winds and frigid cold to see and learn about the hawks, owls and falcons of the Washington County Grasslands; a new live wolf program by our friends at Adirondack Wildlife Refuge proved especially popular! New York State DEC's Kathleen Moser praised Friends of the IBA's hard work and the progress we've made over the past few years. She assured a standing room only audience: "... **DEC knows we need to do more to save grasslands.**" Moser is the Assistant Commissioner of Natural Resources.

Estimated Attendance: just under 2,000

A group of tour operators and travel writers from the United Kingdom traveled to New York for three days of bird watching in our region, culminating at Winter Raptor Fest. New York State Tourism sponsored the group; Friends of the IBA initiated the collaboration, developed the wildlife viewing itinerary and co-hosted the local stay with Washington County. All of the tour operators said they plan to return and one of them has already scheduled a tour for May of 2016.

RAPTOR RAPTURE 2015 - November 21, New York State Museum, Albany

Friends of the IBA's 5th annual Raptor Rapture was the best yet! Visitors of all ages followed our birding trail through the museum's first floor to see and learn about some of New York State's most endangered birds and their habitats, with sightings of live hawks, owls and falcons along the way! Kids and adults enjoyed participating in activities that let them test their birding skills, dissect an owl pellet, create "make and take" bird crafts and more. Raptor Rapture was founded in 2011 by Friends of the IBA and the New York State Museum. Audubon Society of the Capital Region co-sponsored the event for their fourth year. *Estimated Attendance: 3,000*

YOUTH EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Friends of the IBA reached more than 2,000 children this year through our events, educational programs and outreach. Volunteer educators taught over 200 elementary age school children about birds and their habitats at Moreau State Park's annual Conservation Field Day and at a summer camp in Greenwich. The kids participated in activities ranging from creating bird habitat posters to going on a bird walk to see the birds that share their world. They loved the activities and enthusiastically shared what they learned with classmates. We are seeking grant funds for a part-time educator to expand summer and after-school youth programs next year.

Friends of the IBA handed out free "Grassland Bird Fact Cards" to about 350 kids at the Washington County Fair in August. The professionally designed cards were made possible thanks to a grant from Stewarts Shops Holiday Match program.

Friends of the IBA Field Trips & Workshops: January - October 2015

- IBA Field Trips: 4 Winter Raptor/Owl Watch, 2 Spring/Summer Breeding Birds
- Friends of the IBA Members Trip to New England Coast (May)
- Kestrel Nestbox workshop with DEC biologist (September)

FINANCIAL STATEMENT - FY 2015

Revenues

Grants	\$21,370
Public Support	\$17,196
Programs	\$24,373
Merchandise	\$1,075
2015 Total Revenues	\$64,014

Special Thanks to: Stewarts Shops, Sandy Hill Foundation & New York State Conservation Partnership Program and all of our members and supporters! *(NYSCPP grants are funded through NY's Environmental Protection Fund and administered by the Land Trust Alliance in coordination with NYS DEC).*

Expenses

Administration	\$8,815
Communications & Marketing	\$3,487
Land Conservation & Stewardship	\$4,100
Programs	\$15,579
Consultants & Contractors	\$4,150
Other	
2015 Total Expenses	\$36,131

Balance

\$27,883

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

NON-VOTING DIRECTORS:

Laurie LaFond, President
 Cliff Oliver, Vice President
 Ron Renoni, Secretary
 Margaret Baldwin, Treasurer
 Scott Pulver
 Sandra Scroggins
 Sandra Smith
 Ken Beckley
 Wendy Hall

Marilyn Stephenson -
 Grants Coordinator,
 Membership

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION:

Thanks to the more than 40 volunteers who assisted at events and programs through the year!

Special thanks to Board Members for their work on Winter Raptor Fest and to year-round volunteers: *Dave Larrow, Bob Parker, David deVries, Robin Lyle, Paula Hasson, Karen Chapman Rich Speidel, Stewart Brown and Kathleen Bond.*