

2020 SUCCESSES & NEW PROJECTS FOR 2021



Highlights of Grassland Bird Trust's work to expand conservation of critical habitats for endangered and rapidly vanishing grassland birds

Photo: Snowyowl, courtesy Gordon Ellmers

WHAT'S INSIDE:

**2020 Notable
Accomplishments**

2021 New Projects:
GBT Spearheads Northeast/Eastern Grassland Coalition
Can We Conserve 1.7 Million Acres a Year?

**Special Letter
from the Executive
Director**

Grasslands are the **fastest disappearing habitat in the U.S.** Learn more about GBT's work to protect critical habitat for our vanishing grassland birds at [GrasslandBirdTrust.org](https://www.GrasslandBirdTrust.org). **Donate today!**

2020 SUCCESSES

A YEAR IN REVIEW



JANUARY



Winter Raptor Surveys

We are grateful to our volunteers who stood in the freezing cold for hours to help us complete our grassland bird surveys. These surveys will help us track and understand changes in bird populations and assess the success of management strategies. GBT reports this data in a national database.

MARCH



Biodiversity Saves Lives

We lost more than 3 billion birds in the U.S. and Canada over the last 50 years, including 700 million grassland birds. An essential part of GBT's work is preserving biodiversity. Biodiversity safeguards the living organisms that share our world. It also helps protect our food supply, prevents disease and saves money. Preserving endangered and threatened species may just be the key to maintaining our species.



GBT Viewing Area Signage Added

GBT designed and installed two interpretive signs at the Alfred Z. Solomon Grassland Bird Viewing Area to educate visitors about summer and winter birds and their habitat.

Bird Collective Fundraiser Raised \$17K in Six Months

GBT's work received an incredible boost through a six-month fundraising campaign with the Bird Collective. **GBT will still receive a donation for every GBT apparel purchase made through the Bird Collective site!** Check out their incredible GBT custom-designed apparel and accessories at [Birdcollective.com/collections/grassland-bird-trust](https://birdcollective.com/collections/grassland-bird-trust)

MAY

FEBRUARY

Owl Watch and Winter Raptor Viewing – Washington County Grasslands

GBT's experienced birding team introduced visitors to the wonders of the grassland in winter on January 25 and March 14. Sightings included Short-eared owls, Rough-legged hawks, Red-tailed hawks, Northern harriers, Horned larks, Snow buntings and more!



APRIL

Breeding Bird Surveys

Breeding bird surveys allow us to assess the impact of management programs. They also help us to analyze population data and trends. The information we gather on Northern harrier, Eastern meadowlark, Upland sandpiper, American kestrel and others is shared with organizations and individuals committed to preserving bird species, including scientists and other conservation managers.

2020 Winter Raptor Fest

Our 10th Annual Winter Raptor Fest was re-scheduled to October 3-4 due to COVID-19. As with many things in 2020, GBT adjusted and evolved our initiatives and programs when the pandemic restricted normal operations.

JUNE

New Website Pages Added

GBT launched two new informative web pages on GrasslandBirdTrust.org: **Preserving Biodiversity** and **Mitigating Climate Change**. These are crucial outcomes of GBT's work conserving land for grassland birds. Grasses store carbon and greenhouse gases to mitigate climate change. Scientists have estimated that we would need to conserve 1.7 million acres of grassland a year over the next 10 years to achieve maximum potential for grassland mitigation in the United States.



Grassland bird photos, courtesy Gordon Ellmers



GBT saves land for birds and people. Conserving grassland birds protects our food supply, preserves biodiversity and helps mitigate climate change. **Be part of our mission. Donate today at GrasslandBirdTrust.org/donate.**



Solar mitigation project nears completion. Our GBT team was busy all year working on new conservation initiatives and projects. We're developing new agreements that will conserve hundreds more acres of critical habitat. We expect to share details of a nearly completed solar mitigation project once finalized in 2021.



Costa Rican Birding Adventure in January 2022

Trip rescheduled to January 2022. This one-of-a-kind birding tour was designed exclusively for GBT by Destination Wildlife and Greentique Birding. See Scarlet macaws, toucans and other tropical birds and animals in their native habitat! Join us to support sustainable tourism and also benefit GBT's work. Limit 10 people.

JULY



Solar Mitigation Advances Bird Conservation

GBT continues to advise renewable energy company Boralex on its 400-acre Washington County solar panel project. We're seeking to minimize the impact on grassland birds and their habitat. Company officials are enthusiastic about working with GBT on this and future grassland bird conservation projects across the United States.

SEPTEMBER



Coalition Meeting Results

GBT's Laurie LaFond and Paloma Spina introduced GBT projects and goals to representatives from 15 major conservation organizations at this historic meeting. Experts from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and American Bird Conservancy (ABC) discussed grassland bird conservation in New York and a preliminary model for the coalition. Participants agreed on several major goals to advance grassland bird conservation. We look forward to the next meeting in the first quarter of 2021.

NOVEMBER

AUGUST

2020 Winter Raptor Fest Goes Virtual

GBT's Winter Raptor Fest (WRF) committee transitioned the fest to a professionally designed and directed virtual Bird of Prey event to comply with pandemic restrictions. Thanks to our collaboration with Look Media and Junda Video Enterprises, our Winter Raptor Fest had a new look but the same experience and wonder of hawks, owls and falcons in flight!



OCTOBER

Virtual 2020 Winter Raptor Fest Launch

GBT released the Winter Raptor Fest for viewing on October 18. Filmed live at the Washington County Fairgrounds on October 4, this reimagined virtual event combined the best features of our traditional live Bird of Prey programs, flight demos and Wild Encounter while remaining COVID-19 friendly.

Northeast/Eastern Grassland Coalition Initial Meeting

GBT hosted the first Northeast/Eastern Grassland Coalition meeting as a virtual conference on October 21. GBT is proud to spearhead the formation of this regional coalition to vastly increase the pace and scale of grassland bird conservation in New York state and the Northeast United States.

DECEMBER

GBT Was Awarded Two Grants Just in Time for the Holidays!

\$50,000 from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP). Funded through NY's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), NYS DEC and Land Trust Alliance-NY administer the grant. It requires a 25% match from GBT. Your donations will ensure GBT has the funds to move forward on several conservation initiatives!

\$63,000 from the Hudson River Valley Greenway. This grant will help fund a new trail at our AZS Grassland Bird Viewing Area.



GBT has conserved or helped conserve more than 240 acres of critical habitat in the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA). **Get the latest updates on our work** by visiting [GrasslandBirdTrust.org/news](https://www.GrasslandBirdTrust.org/news) and signing up for our exclusive e-newsletter!



Grassland Bird Trust, Inc.
P.O. Box 82, Fort Edward, NY 12828
grasslandbirdtrust.org
facebook.com/grasslandbirdtrust
instagram.com/grasslandbirdtrust
(518) 499-0012

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
ALBANY NY
THE MAILWORKS

Copyright © 2021 Grassland Bird Trust, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

Your contributions help us conserve critical habitat for endangered, threatened and rapidly declining grassland birds.

Check out what we accomplished in 2020 and our plans for 2021.



Photo: Short-eared owl, courtesy Gordon Ellmers

Grassland Bird Trust, Inc. (GBT) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust **conserving critical habitat** for endangered, threatened and rapidly **declining grassland birds**. Visit [GrasslandBirdTrust.org](https://www.GrasslandBirdTrust.org) to learn more.



Dear NAME,

This has been a tough year for all of us, but Grassland Bird Trust (GBT) members, staff and volunteers pulled together to keep us moving forward. I'd like to extend a special thanks to everyone who donated to our appeals, volunteered or supported GBT's work in some way! Rest assured your support helped us advance several conservation initiatives that will protect thousands more acres of critical habitat for endangered Short-eared owls and other rapidly declining grassland birds in the coming years.

GBT made surprising progress in a year marred by revenue shortfalls and staff layoffs due to COVID-19. We began and continue to work with renewable energy companies to minimize and/or mitigate the impact of solar farms on grassland birds. Even as I write this letter we're finalizing an agreement that will help fund management on GBT lands for the next 20 years!

We're also working on new projects that could fund additional land acquisitions or long-term easements in key breeding and wintering areas for our vanishing grassland birds.

We need your help to keep the momentum going!

Grassland bird conservation benefits all of us. Preserving biodiversity not only protects endangered species—it decreases the risk of infectious diseases in plants and animals—including humans.

Grassland conservation also helps mitigate climate change, because grasses store carbon in their roots and the soil. This role looms more important than ever in view of the past year's extreme weather. Droughts, floods, devastating wildfires and a record-setting hurricane season underscored the need for climate mitigation.

Scientists estimate that natural resources such as forests and grasslands have the potential to store nearly one-third of the carbon emissions in the U.S.

This would require conserving 1.7 million acres of grassland a year over the next 10 years!

GBT responded by spearheading the formation of regional and national grassland coalitions to meet this goal. We successfully launched the Northeast/Eastern Grassland Coalition in October after a year of preparation. Our shared goal is to vastly increase the pace and scale of grassland bird conservation across the Northeast U.S. and beyond.

The importance and urgency of our mission is clear. We need to do everything we can to protect critical habitat for endangered and threatened grassland birds—before it's too late. The time to act is NOW.

Can we count on your donation of \$20, \$50, \$100 or more to ensure GBT's mission succeeds?

We understand you may not be able to give at your usual level, but please give whatever you can.

Together we can achieve the impossible.

Sincerely,

Laurie LaFond

Laurie LaFond | Executive Director | Grassland Bird Trust, Inc.

P.S. Please visit [GrasslandBirdTrust.org](https://www.GrasslandBirdTrust.org) to learn about planned giving.

Visit [GrasslandBirdTrust.org/donate](https://www.GrasslandBirdTrust.org/donate).

Help us protect endangered birds and their habitat.



NEW PROJECTS FOR 2021



GBT Launches Northeast/Eastern Grassland Coalition

GBT is grateful to the participants of the Northeast/Eastern Grassland Coalition. The initial meeting took place October 2020. We are thrilled with this new collaboration designed to expand grassland bird conservation in our region significantly.

The coalition will meet in the first quarter of 2021 to further our mission. Collective goals include:

- Increase the visibility, funding and pace of grassland bird conservation in the Northeast and across the U.S.
- Develop new and more effective collaborations between land trusts, landowners, and state and federal agencies
- Engage renewable energy companies in siting projects to minimize impacts on grassland birds
- Direct mitigation funding to achieve the best conservation outcomes for species/land type impacted by renewable energy projects

The participants possess a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills to help the coalition's mission succeed. Major partners include:

- NYS DEC
- American Bird Conservancy
- Cornell Lab of Ornithology
- Land Trust Alliance – NY
- New York Natural Heritage Program
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USFWS U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

We're enthusiastic about this historic collaboration and committed to ensuring the seeds we planted at the 2020 meeting sprout into a full-grown grassland bird conservation movement!

Grassland Conservation Expansion Opportunities



Field photos courtesy Laurie LaFond

GBT's conservation goals for 2021 and beyond support our mission. We need to restore at-risk grassland bird species populations to sustainable levels across important breeding and wintering grounds. Your support enables us to expand our conservation initiatives and partnerships.

Please help us realize our vision of creating a resilient landscape of conserved grasslands across New York and beyond teeming with healthy populations of native grassland birds.



Visit [GrasslandBirdTrust.org/donate](https://www.GrasslandBirdTrust.org/donate). Any donation of at least \$25 will unlock a one-year GBT membership for you and your family.

