

GRASSLAND BIRD TRUST NEWSLETTER



FALL 2023

News on the Wing Delivered to Your Mailbox



SOLAR FARM UPDATE

We continue our discussions with Boralex, the solar company that plans to build an approximately 800-acre solar farm in the Audubon designated Important Bird Area (IBA). Boralex's plan is to install solar panels just south of GBT's 78 conserved acres in the IBA. Solar panels would also be installed in a number of parcels around the 478 acres that the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) owns and manages for grassland birds and other wildlife.

Significantly, this IBA is within one of the largest Grassland Bird Conservation Centers remaining in New York State.

In exchange for the 800 acres that Boralex is taking, New York State may require Boralex to conserve (i.e., leave undeveloped) less than half of that as habitat for grassland birds during the 30-year life of the solar project.

Given the worldwide threat of extinction to grassland birds, we do not consider this to be sufficient. Accordingly, we are asking Boralex to permanently conserve more contiguous grassland habitat in the IBA.

These negotiations are just as difficult as we expected and we want to thank you for your continued support.

Grassland Bird Trust, Inc. 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.

WINTER 2024 JOIN A GBT BIRDING EXPEDITION



SOUTH AMERICA

Escape to Colombia on our third international birding expedition and discover what the birds already know – warm, welcoming Colombia is the perfect escape from winter! We'll seek out exotic species in birding "hot spots" including the rolling páramo, forested Andes and a 2,000+ year-old archeological site. The January 29th trip is sold out but two spots are open for January 15–26.



UPSTATE NEW YORK

Two spots are open for GBT's March 1–3 Winter Raptor Tour in the Audubon designated Important Bird Area (IBA) in the Washington County Grasslands. See Arctic migrants (Short-eared Owls, Snow Buntings, perhaps a Snowy Owl, and more) who migrate to the grasslands in search of food. Enjoy farm-to-table dining at local establishments and accommodations at the historic Queensbury in Glens Falls, NY.

Destination: Wildlife, our travel partner, is committed to the principles of conservation tourism, creating unforgettable journeys that do good. Your tourism dollars stay local, create jobs, improve the livelihoods of local residents, and support GBT. Trips are limited to six guests, a leader, and a guide.

Contact Destination: Wildlife, Roberta Kravette at 908-656-4106, for more information or go to Walks & Events on our website at grasslandbirdtrust.org/upcoming-guided-walks-and-events.

HITTING THE MUDDY TRAIL

Enormous strides, as it were, have been made on our new two-mile birding trail. Under Ron Renoni's fabulous leadership and direction, GBT volunteers Mark Janey, Tom Federlin, Keith Swensen (aka GBT Chair), Dave Larrow, Mark Di Ianni, and many other GBT stalwarts have been out measuring, hammering, digging, and nailing.



GBT's brave volunteers wallowing in the mud

These folks worked all through this rainy and buggy summer, slogging through the mud to get this done.

One culvert has been improved and a raised boardwalk has been installed over one of two wet areas. The second boardwalk will be built next spring. We're expanding the parking lot at our Alfred Z. Solomon Grassland Bird Viewing Area. And we're making it easier for disabled bird enthusiasts to get a better view of the grasslands.

The trail goes to the back of our 78-acre property. This is a truly lovely, quiet spot that we think birders will enjoy for years to come.

We are planning the grand opening by fall 2024!

We want to thank the Hudson River Valley Greenway for providing funding for this project.



GBT'S HIGH FLYERS



For the first time, GBT is publishing a list of major donors in our print newsletter. These are people who donated between \$100 and \$10,000 during the period from October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023. We hope you discover someone whom you regularly see at Stewart's or the bank is a fellow birder!

And a big THANK YOU to our High Flyers and all our donors and supporters!

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Visit GrasslandBirdTrust.org/donate or scan the QR code.

A donation of any amount will protect the grassland birds in the Audubon designated Important Bird Area.



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CELEBRITY SIGHTING

So, some of you may have read about me in the July 2022 national issue of GBT's world-famous Newsletter. (Yes, Mom, I can make it in entertainment – that theater degree from Corn-owl University WAS worth it.)

I'm a Short-eared Owl. I was misrepresented in the Newsletter. They called me "Shortie." (I don't know who's doing the fact checking over at GBT. All they had to do was call my agent.)

My name is Shirley. And I am NOT short. I am, in fact, arguably statuesque for a Short-eared Owl. About 16 inches tall, with my talons flat on the ground. Some people have said I could model full time. And I have been pretty popular on the 2023 fall season bird walks.

My so-called "ears" are not short either. In fact, those little attractive tufts of feathers on my head are not ears at all. Some experts claim they are for camouflage. I have my doubts. What are they supposed to look like? Pine cones? Those are so last season.

Others say my tufts are for distinguishing friend from foe in the dark. That's silly, because I have amazing eyesight, and I know who my haters are with my eyes closed. As far as I can tell, the tufts are for communication. When I'm upset, those tufts flatten right down. (Right, Mom?) Also, tufts are pretty in right now. Like frosted tips for humans in the 90s. You all really made a mistake with those frosted tips. My tufts, on the other hand, are timeless.

It IS true, as previously reported in this newsletter, that I had a terrible accident. First, I got hit by a car. And then, as I'm lying there in the road, I was attacked by a gang of crows. That's why they call a gang of crows a "murder." And trust me, they're not a gang in the jazzy, snapping West Side Story kind of way.

I'm currently being rehabbed. (No Mom. It has nothing to do with drugs.) It's where you go after getting Hitchcock-style attacked by crows and then being released from the owl hospital. It's sort of like a fabulous spa.

Problem is, I lost one of my gorgeous eyes in the process. I can't go back to the grasslands with one eye. What would *Page 6* say? I used to be able to spot a vole – my favorite dish – on the ground from 100 feet up in the air. Now I'd practically have to be on a Hinge date with the thing before I'd see it.

So that's me, Shirley. You'll be hearing from me from time to time. You people need to be better informed about Short-eared Owls, especially if you live in New York State. There's only about 100 of us living full time in NYS anymore, and not just for tax reasons. So watch for news from the GBT paparazzi. They'll tell you how to catch a glimpse of some of my family and friends this winter.

