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## Birders hunt the bob-o'-link

*June 13 walkers to spot other feathered creatures*

By Hilary Hawke  
Hudson-Catskill newspapers

Published: Tuesday, June 8, 2010 2:14 AM EDT

COXSACKIE — Not too many people, much less birds, get poems by written about them by literary luminaries like American poet and journalist William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878) but the bob-o'-link is an exception.

Merrily swinging on brier and weed,

Near to the nest of his little dame,

Over the mountainside or mead,

Robert of Lincoln is telling his name:

Bob-o'-link, bob-o'-link,

Spink, spank, spink.

The bob-o'-link is just one of many "grassland" birds expected to be on display at the Summer Songbird Celebration Walk on Sunday, June 13 from 1:30-4 p.m. at the Coxsackie Creek Grassland Preserve.

Swallows, bluebirds, meadowlarks, sandpipers, killdeers, fish crows, and the small spectacularly colored American Kestrel are among species which have been spotted there.

Local bird expert, blogger and retired New York State Department of Environmental Education employee, Rich Guthrie, who referenced the Bryant poem in a recent article, will lead the walk around the grasslands.

National Audubon Society's Larry Federman, John Cannon from the New Baltimore Conservancy, Rene VanSchaack of Greene Business Alliance and Bob Knighton of the Greene Land Trust will also provide guided exploration.

Looking at the entrance to the preserve from Route 9W, one would not expect to find such a thriving bird habitat.

Behind the newly opened Empire Merchants North and Serta Sleepers, its origins as a public preserve came about when the Greene County Industrial Development Agency announced plans to convert part of the land to an industrial park.

The IDA bought the 320 acres to "mitigate impacts on grassland habitat associated with development activities in the northern Route 9W corridor."



Richard Guthrie at the Coxsackie Creek Grassland Preserve. (Hilary Hawke photo.)

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"We knew it was a valuable habitat for winter hawks like the northern harrier and owls like the short-ear as well as summer species like bob-o'-links and meadowlarks," Guthrie said.

The harrier is a threatened species and the short-ear is an endangered species.

Ironically, construction in the area led to a series of water runoff retention ponds which have increased the land's attractiveness for many birds.

"These grasslands now serve as especially valuable habitat for sandpipers, geese, hawks, owls, bluebirds, swallows and other species," Guthrie said.

Guthrie said the walk will feature several learning stations including one featuring dragonflies and butterflies, another aimed at bob-o'-links and meadowlarks and a third for information about wetlands and grasslands.

"We want to let the people of Coxsackie and New Baltimore know this resource is available to the public," Guthrie said.

Guthrie, who has been birding for decades, said he usually visits the preserve several times a week to look for rare species and check up on nesting birds.

The walk is a result of collaboration between the Greene IDA, the Greenland Trust, the New Baltimore Conservancy and the National Audubon Society.

Guthrie is a member of three of the four organizations.

He said the coalition is planning another walk in September which may also feature a hawk demonstration by Bill Robinson, founder and past president of the NYS Falconry Association

Those interested in attending the June 13 event should meet in the cul-de-sac at the end of Houghtaling Road off 9W about 1 mile south of the thruway entrance.

Space is limited so organizers recommend registering with the Greene Land Trust at 518-731-5544.

Walkers should wear long pants and closed shoes.

Water and a light snack will be provided.



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