

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Elliott Hillback, IRLC President

Thoughts from our porch on a beautiful early July summer evening in the Indian River Lakes area – air 75 degrees, lake water 78 degrees! One boat and several loons on the lake, gold and purple finches, nuthatches, chickadees and a lone woodpecker at the feeders and a soaring osprey searching for a fish dinner... what a unique and beautiful place... aren't we lucky to be here! Whether we are year round residents, summer residents, or just here for a visit each year; all of us know this is a special place. But people often ask "will it still be special for our kids?, for our grand kids?, for our great grand kids?" While I am not sure I can answer that question with any certainty, we are absolutely convinced that it is possible to influence the outcome in a positive and substantial way. The Indian River Lakes Conservancy, with your energy, ideas and support is aggressively building and broadening its capabilities and expanding its resources to continue to positively impact the future of our area more broadly.

Another question we frequently get asked is: "OK, so you are a Land Trust and you get land, and you post it so you can protect it. That seems pretty simple,

so then what?" For several years now we have used three key words to describe our broad mission: PROTECT, LEARN, ENJOY. In fact it is true that the foundation for everything we do is posting and PROTECTing the land and all the plants, animals, birds, insects, etc. that inhabit it. The complex and fascinating parts come next. To be successful protectors we must understand what inhabits our land, what is unique, what might be at risk and then create and implement appropriate stewardship plans. If you have a special interest in a particular area – whether it is birds, bugs, plants or whatever -- you could help us study, plan and implement stewardship programs related to your interests. Think this could be fun and rewarding? – please contact Board Member Mark Scarlett.

But there is more. Since our name contains the words "river" and "lakes" it should not be a surprise that much of our "land" is wetland. Wetlands are crucial natural water filters, serve as major biological breeding grounds and provide many other ecological benefits. Virtually all our land (wet or dry) abuts one of the eighteen lakes or two rivers that make this area so

“what a unique and beautiful place, aren't we lucky to be here! Will it still be special for our kids?, for our grand kids?, for our great grand kids?”

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Bluebirds at a home feeder.

photo by Mark Scarlett.

President's letter (cont.)

attractive and distinctive. Therefore we have begun a process to increase our emphasis on wetlands and water-related topics and to define a clear role for the IRLC to help all interested parties effectively work on the complex issues this area presents. We will involve more IRLC members and the public in this discovery and planning process over the coming months through meetings and one-on-one discussions. If you are interested in being part of this process please contact me or board member Rick Lopez. LEARNing (and teaching) and then creating an appropriate action plan related to wetland and water conservation is a high priority area for our organization, our members, and our friends and neighbors.

Also, in the LEARNing/teaching space, board member Rich Sauer is leading a year-long analysis of how the IRLC could best assist educators in our area teach topics like ecology, biology, or limnology. We will also explore how to use the natural world to teach other topics ranging from personal skills like responsibility or teamwork to

photography or art. Please contact Rich if you have ideas or suggestions.

ENJOY is the last, but by no means least, of the three keywords that define our strategy and goals. We strongly believe that ENJOYing nature and helping our members and the public do that too is a major part of our mission. Over the last year the Outreach Team has significantly increased the number and the variety of our events, outings, and guided tours. They also have a number of new ideas you will be hearing about in the months to come. If you have ideas for new event or something you have always wanted to learn more about please contact board members Jeff Garvey, Vici Diehl or Dani Baker. Our Stewardship Team has created two new trails to ENJOY and a new trail map will be available in our trail head kiosks soon. They are also in the process of designing and building a new dock to improve the beautiful Marc A.F. Baker Island Preserve in Grass Lake. A wonderful gift from an IRLC Member family from Grass Lake is providing major support for this project in honor of a beloved family member.

So, back to that question about what we do. Yes we do start with posting the land and PROTECTing it. But that step and all the steps that follow are, in the end, about PEOPLE – making sure the land will still be beautiful and bountiful and the lakes healthy, safe and usable for future generations of PEOPLE, helping PEOPLE of all ages both LEARN about nature and LEARN from nature, and finally creating opportunities for residents and visitors alike to ENJOY our beautiful natural area in many different ways. In the end, what we do is really all about the ENVIRONMENT and about PEOPLE.

ENJOY the summer. We look forward to seeing you at our events, out on our trails, or on one of the beautiful Indian River Lakes.

We would love your support, your ideas and opinions, and your involvement. Please let us hear from you! Please contact me or any Board Member on any topic.

THANK YOU!

A Good Day in May

The *Birds & Blooms* hike on May 19 attracted over 35 participants eager to explore the Butterfield Lake and Eagle Marsh trails. Hikers came from as far away as Potsdam, Watertown and Speculator.

Dividing into 3 groups: *Birds* led by Marybeth Warburton of NNY Audubon, with her husband, Bill, enlisted to carry the spotting scope; *Blooms* led by Anne Johnson, a research botanist, and *Dragonflies et al* led by Vici and Steve Diehl.

There were exciting finds and sightings - many of which were made by children in the groups. What was found? Bald Eagles, Loons, Baltimore Orioles, and a male Cerulean Warbler. Wild Ginger, Dutchman's Britches, Wood Anemone, Violets, Sedges, Glade and Maidenhair Ferns. Tiger

and Giant Swallowtail butterflies, a Ribbon Snake, Leopard, Green, Spring Peeper and Gray Tree Frogs, Tiger Beetles, Baltimore Checkerspot caterpillars and 10 species of dragonflies including a Belted Whiteface, a first for Jefferson County.

Future hikes should bring many more exciting discoveries!

above: The Birding subgroup, lead by Marybeth Warburton, spots an interesting warbler.

below: Vici Diehl helps a young photographer document a dragonfly.



Bobolink

Master of the meadow, Songster of the stems, rice bird and many other colloquial names exist for this handsome blackbird. Highly migratory, they winter largely on the Argentine Pampas/Paternal and other southern South American wetland and grassland areas. Bobolinks, like many blackbirds, are not favored by farmers because they consume grain. Large numbers of this declining species are still killed in South America as they are considered an agricultural pest in rice fields. In North America, however, they are not considered to cause any significant crop damage. They are viewed by us as a wonderful addition to our summer meadows.

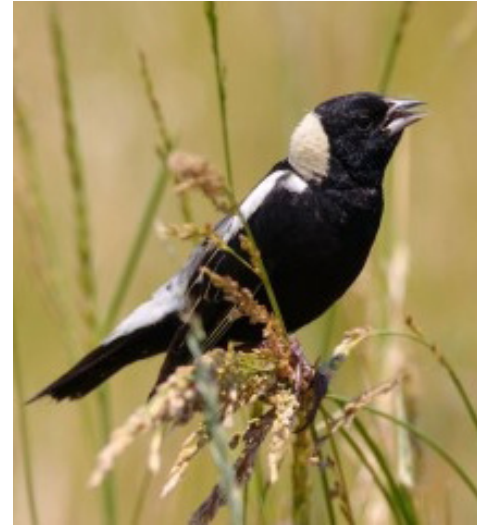
This Bobolink is one of the greatest travelers among songbirds, migrating over 6000 miles one way from wintering areas to breeding grounds. Such a journey requires as much as two or more months so birds may be northbound by February. The majority pass through Central America in spring before exploding into North America. In our region the first males usually appear like clockwork on May Day or one –two days either side of the date. First arrivals are invariably males as the species migrates in gender segregated groups in spring. By the end of the first week of May grassy areas throughout the North Country are populated with the black and white males guarding their territories. The arrival of remaining males and the females over the next ten days leads to nearly continual bouts of territorial singing and defense. Most Bobolinks are in our area by the third week of May and they quickly begin the serious business of reproduction.

Bobolinks breed in high densities in suitable grassland or grassland/low shrub early successional habitat. The relative abundance of such habitat in Northern

New York assures this species is common in our region. It is estimated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service that 15-20% of the world Bobolink population breeds in the lowland areas of the St. Lawrence River Valley and nearby regions. Clearly our region is critical to the long-term survival of the species. Many parts of the interior of eastern North America that were once suitable breeding habitat are now covered with agricultural crops such as corn and soybeans. Maintenance of suitable grasslands in this region is clearly important to maintenance of populations of Bobolinks and other grassland birds in the long-term.

Bobolinks abound in suitable habitat in our region forming loose colonies. From dawn to dusk the air is filled with the complex rolling bubbly song of the males. It is the dominant sound in these habitats from early May to early July. The males sing, chase other males to drive them off, chase females and court them and generally seem to be in constant motion. The window for successful breeding is short in all seasons and females pair quickly, build the nests by themselves and lay eggs in late May. Most clutches contain 3-7 eggs in the nests on or very near the ground. Incubation averages 12 days and if all goes well young are quite mobile in another 10-11 days and capable of limited flight.

Unfortunately for Bobolinks the critical three to four week period required to produce young is often not available to them. Mowing of hayfields may begin as early as late May. In some areas fields are mowed 5-6 times a season giving grassland birds no chance at raising young. The toll of eggs, young and frequently breeding females lost to mowing machines is truly horrendous and detrimental to species populations.



For those pairs fortunate to choose a field that will be mowed after mid-July or not mowed at all in a year, success is possible. By late June-early July successful first breeding attempts have the young flying. Successful pairs may try re-nesting, attempting to bring off a second brood. Pairs that have failed may continue re-nesting attempts into early August. The Bobolinks social system is complex and adults' helping other adults feed young has been documented. Further study of this socially complex species should provide interesting fodder for future graduate students for decades to come.

As soon as early July but definitely by mid-July evidence of seasonal change is coming to our meadows. Dragonflies and butterflies become more prominent in view as the Bobolink and other bird songs become less frequently observed. As early as mid-July and very obvious

(continued on page 8)

Gerry Smith is a senior Northern New York ornithologist and consulting ecologist. Gerry is a devoted friend and advocate for grass roots land trusts and the dedicated volunteers who share his love of nature.

Thank You, Shirley Carpenter

by Ed Robertson:

Since 1997, when a land trust for the Indian River Lakes area was just an idea, Shirley Carpenter's work has been crucial to IRLC's accomplishments. From those earliest kitchen table conversations until July 1, 2012 Shirley and Harold's many pecuniary donations and her priceless gift of service have had a huge influence on the conservancy's success.

For our board of directors, Shirley came with the essential qualities of principled rational thinking, a generous spirit and a delightful personality. Because of her previous vast experience in building community organizations, she brought many valuable contacts and a long record of getting things done.

After helping found the IRLC, guiding it on the right track and serving for many years as secretary, Shirley will be sorely missed on our board. It has been a pleasure and an honor to serve with her and we are deeply grateful for all she has done for this organization and the larger community.

We are also grateful for her commitment to continued service as an IRLC volunteer and supporter.

from Margie Hillback:

Shirley (and Harold) Carpenter were two of a handful of people who were crucial to the formation of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy. The task of forming a Conservancy seemed unimaginable and daunting to most everyone - but Shirley calmly encouraged us to move forward, used her connections along the river to gather advice, and was always there. She is such a positive person. With her common sense approach, Shirley helped us explore options, think long term and find information, answers, and critical help. From the beginning she has always been the strong quiet foundation of the IRLC.

Looking Back

Serendipity or a Lucky Accident

by Shirley Carpenter

Sometimes, in the excitement of moving forward, we forget to look back. This month, Shirley Carpenter, a founding member of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy announced her retirement from the board. We thought this was a perfect opportunity to gather Shirley's memories to help us document the beginnings of our organization and some of the key people who brought us to where we are today.

As is so often the case in ventures of this kind, the founding of the Indian River Lakes Conservancy was more a result of luck than a product of any kind of careful planning on the part of the founders, except, of course, for the participation of Henry Carse. Henry was a true conservationist and environmentalist. He was way ahead of his time in his understanding of the land and what it took to preserve it.

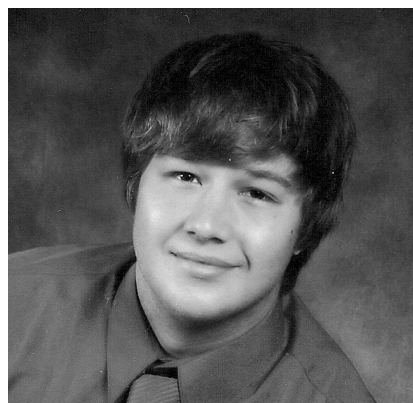
It happened that as Henry had grown older, he felt the need to divest himself of some of his holdings around Butterfield Lake, and he offered a 26 acre parcel to the Thousand Islands Land Trust. As the land was not on the St. Lawrence River or part of its watershed, they were not interested in the acquiring the land, but TILT's

Executive Director, Sissy Danforth, happened to be in my book club. She knew that I owned property on Butterfield Lake. She called me and asked if anyone on the lake might be interested. I called a few people – Sandy and Margie Hillback, Ed and Denise Robertson, Steve McDonald. Then Sissy and I met with Gerry Smith, a local nature lover and bird expert. On a crisp fall afternoon in 1997 (I think), the three of us climbed aboard my 13 foot Boston Whaler and went down the lake to explore the 26 acre parcel, Gerry found abundant plant and animal life, declared the property well worth preserving, and the rest is history. The right people had come together at the right time and place, and the Indian River Lakes Conservancy was born.

2012 IRLC Scholarship Winners

It is fitting that we announce our 2012 scholarship recipients on this page. Shirley Carpenter has maintained complete responsibility for the scholarship program's operation since its founding as a function of the Butterfield Lake Association. When the IRLC was formed, providing scholarships was moved under the IRLC umbrella. The IRLC has provided \$9,000 in scholarships to students since 2002.

The Indian River Lakes Conservancy works with the schools in our area and serves as the administrative unit for a scholarship program that provides funding for students who are planning to further their education in the field of science with particular emphasis in the area of environmental studies. The recipients this year are David Matthews and Nichole Reid. (article continues on following page)



David Matthews
Hammond Central School



Nicole Reid
Jefferson Community College

Scholarship Winners (cont.)

David, a Hammond graduating senior, is the son of Robert and Mary Anne Matthews. He has an overall average of 92.69 and earned 12 SUNY Canton credits and 7.5 credits from North Country Community College through the Allied Health Program. He is a member of the National Honor Society and has been involved in the senior play and mock trial. He played soccer, basketball, and baseball all four years and earned Academic All-Northern Awards. He was awarded the Air Force & Science Award and the University of Rochester Frederick Douglas & Susan B. Anthony Award. He volunteers at the Hammond Food Pantry and cleans camps for summer employment. David has been accepted by SUNY Potsdam, LeMoyne College, and Jefferson Community College.

Nicole graduated from Watertown High School where she served as president of the environmental club. She has continued her education at Jefferson Community College where she has been an honors student with a dual degree in Math/Science and Hospitality and Tourism. While at JCC, she has served as a volunteer at Samaritan Medical Center, the Muscular Dystrophy Association and participated in Teen Talk and Student Government. She recently began a summer internship as a Wildlife Technician through the Oak Ridge Institute of Research and Education, and she plans to become a wildlife biologist. This fall she plans to continue her education at Paul Smith's College where she will be enrolled in the Fisheries and Wildlife program.

Funding for these scholarships is provided by conservancy memberships, special donations from individuals, and contributions from lake associations belonging to the conservancy. Annual scholarships are available for local high school graduates, a Jefferson Community College graduate going on to study in the field of environmental science, or a child or grandchild of any IRLC member or lake association member. "It is hoped that all of the

lakes served by the conservancy will get involved in the fund raising for this most worthwhile program," said a conservancy spokesperson. Several local students have benefited from this program and are now employed here in our area at the Thousand Islands Land Trust and also for the Jefferson County Water Quality Coordinating Committee. Conservancy members are planning several fund raising activities this season to benefit the scholarship fund. Anyone wishing to help with the scholarship program may contact the Indian River Lakes Conservancy, P.O. Box 27, Redwood, N.Y. 13679.

www.IndianRiverLakes.org

Keep abreast of Indian River Lakes activities, news and events by visiting www.IndianRiverLakes.org often.

Submissions of photographs for the site and appropriate events for the calendar are always welcome. They can be submitted to IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com, and please write "website" in the subject line.

www.IndianRiverLakes.org

The Creatures Who Share our Waters

Article and Photos by Vici Zaremba and Stephen Diehl

Predaceous Diving Beetle



Found in a puddle of water was the larva of a Predaceous Diving Beetle, in April, near the Butterfield Lake Landing Trail. The larva (shown above), called a water tiger, and the adult are seldom seen but very common aquatic insects. An adult, depending on species, can be up to 1.5" long.

The larva is not a good swimmer, but camouflages itself near the water's surface and catches its prey with two large pincers (jaws). These jaws are hollow and inject the captured meal with juices that dissolve the insides. Once dissolved, those same jaws suck up the contents like a milkshake through a Dixie straw! If you see a larva, be careful, as those two long jaws can inflict a painful bite.

Adults are excellent swimmers with smooth, streamlined exoskeletons

and hind legs covered with long hairs which they use like people use flippers. They are fast and also difficult to detect because they hide in vegetation and woody debris. Most of their prey are caught live, and eaten whole or in pieces.

As their name implies these beetles "eat" other creatures...mostly bugs, but sometimes a tadpole or small fish.



An adult Predaceous Diving Beetle can be up to 1.5" long.

Renew your membership. Don't miss out on our 2012 Newsletters!

____ Renewal

INDIAN RIVER LAKES CONSERVANCY
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FORM - 2012

____ New Member

Name: _____ E-Mail: _____

Permanent Mailing Address: _____ Phone: _____

Seasonal Mailing Address: _____ Phone: _____

Total Amount
Enclosed:

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Membership Levels:

Dragonfly - \$25.00

Warbler - \$50.00

Whip-poor-will - \$100.00

Loon - \$250.00

Osprey - \$500.00

Eagle - \$1,000.00 and above

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This is a Donation in Memory/Honor of _____

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Please send an acknowledgement to: _____

Make checks payable to: *Indian River Lakes Conservancy* and mail with this form to: P.O. Box 27, Redwood, NY 13679.

Know someone who might be interested in joining? Please give us their name and address: _____

Please contact me: regarding Conservation Easements with information about including IRLC in my will I have included IRLC in my will

If you prefer to keep your newsletter intact, this membership form is also available online at www.IndianRiverLakes.org

Annual Celebration of the Lakes - August 11



This year's Celebration of our beautiful Indian River Lakes will be held the evening of Saturday, August 11 at Coyote Moon Vineyards in Clayton. The event will feature a great food, dancing and fantastic silent auction of local artwork, gifts and services.

Festivities begin at 4:00 with drinks and hors d'oeuvres. Mingle with your fellow lake-lovers and enjoy the atmosphere. Winery tours will be

offered at 5:00. Dinner will be a pig-roast with all the trimmings – salads, corn and salt-potatoes, with a fruit shortcake dessert and special hand-dipped chocolates from Covered-in-Chocolate. Non-alcoholic beverages will be provided. A cash bar will be available.

Dinner will be followed by dancing to the music of the *Caramelo Trio*, featuring Oscar Sarmiento on guitar,

Beth Robinson on cello and Mark Seymour on percussion. Both Beth and Oscar are members *Piquant!*, a popular ensemble from Potsdam. The *Caramelo Trio* specializes in Latin dance styles with a touch of swing.

Tickets to the event are \$40 for an individual and \$75 a couple and reservations are a must. Reserve your spot now by returning the RSVP card mailed to members with an invitation last week. If you didn't receive an invitation, send us an email (IndianRiverLakes@gmail.com) and we'll make sure you have all the details. Don't miss this Celebration of the Lakes – it's going to be a great time!

Note: Donations for the Silent auction are still being sought. If you have something special you'd like to add to our offerings, please call Dani Baker at 315-482-3663 or Vici Diehl at 315-659-8205.

ODE NOTES

Lyre-Tipped Spreadwings



Lyre-tipped Spreadwing - male

Wisps of movement are all you normally see of Spreadwing damselfies... a brief glimpse and they're gone! All of our IRLC waters and wetlands, however, support these beautiful and elusive creatures.

Why are these damselfies called spreadwings? The answer is obvious... when at rest, their wings remain partially open or spread, unlike all other damselfies whose wings remain closed above their bodies. But like other damselfies, they are generally smaller and sligher than most dragonflies.

Delicate fliers all, 11 species of Spreadwings are found in New York State. Two of these, the Great and the Southern, have only been found south of the Thruway. The remaining 9 were found in Jefferson County over the 5 years of the NY/NHP Dragonfly and Damselfly Survey (DDS), completed in 2009. Of these 9 species, the hunt is on for the Amber-winged and Lyre-tipped Spreadwings, yet to be found in the IRLC service area.

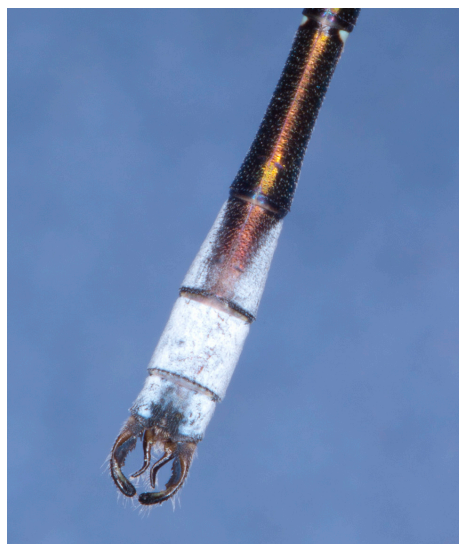
Lyre-tippeds (*Lestes unguiculatus*) are of particular interest due to their scarcity in New York State. Prior to 2005 they were found in 26 counties across the state. Unfortunately,

only 10 locations in 4 counties now have populations of Lyre-tipped Spreadwings. Jefferson County appears to be the "hot spot" for this uncommon/imperiled species, with 6 of the 10 sites. We hope to make it 7, 8 or more.

Location, location, location! We need not look along the Indian River nor any of the lake shores. The required real estate consists of seeps, slow streams and small temporary or vernal ponds. Throw in a nearby grassy area for foraging and we may be lucky enough to find this 1.2" to 1.7" subtle colored damselfly. Fortunately, they are weak fliers (about 3 feet per flight) and usually stay within vegetation, perching/landing about 1 foot below the top of a stem, making for easy netting.

And then the fun part, the identification. A female specimen can take up to 15 minutes to positively ID...but all you have to do with a male is look at his terminal appendages; if the inner two are lyre-shaped...this is a Lyre-tipped Spreadwing!

A few notes and photographs, and the Lyre-tipped is free, vanishing into the grasses once again.



Dorsal view of the terminal appendages of a male Lyre-tipped Spreadwing.

Volunteers at Work



Jason Walker, John Scarlett, and Ed Robertson are shown working June 28th on the installation of a kiosk at the Burns Road trail head of the North Ridge Trail leading to Grass Lake. The same day, they installed a kiosk on the shore of Grass Lake at the junction of the trails from Burns Road and also delivered a kiosk for later installation at the lakeshore landing near the end of the Butterfield Lake trail. Altogether, IRLC volunteer Dick Edgar has built seven of these beautiful kiosks over the course of the last year. The other four were installed last year: at the start of the trail that loops around the Marc AF Baker Island Preserve on Grass Lake, one each near the Burns Road trail head of both the Grass Lake Overlook Trail and the Butterfield Lake Trail, and one at the IRLC office on Stine Road in Redwood. Each of the kiosks is outfitted with a trail register, an informative Grand Lake Reserve Trail Guide, and a brochure describing IRLC and its commitment to preserving places like the Grand Lake Reserve for the benefit of the people of the region and future generations.



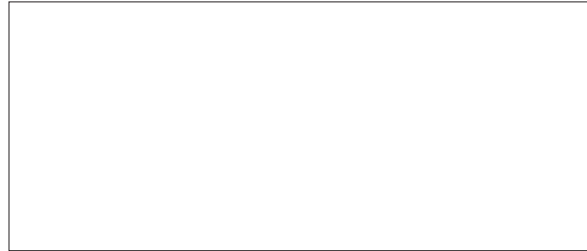
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Bobolink (cont.)

by the end of the month Bobolinks are forming flocks as territorial boundaries are no longer defended. Most males are molting to a plumage virtually indistinguishable from the females and young of the year. These flocks begin to frequent wetlands and uncut grasslands working through the grasses feeding on insects and seeds. The uproarious boisterous behavior of May is replaced by downright secretive behavior. It is time to begin the migration south.

The distinctive spink flight call of this species may be detected overhead by nocturnal acoustic monitoring as early as late July. Movements along the mid-Atlantic coast are often detected in early August. Unlike spring migration, males, females and young of the year form mixed flocks that move together. The eventual destination of most of the population is the Patanal region of Argentina. Moving primarily at night guided by instinctive knowledge of night

skies and the earth's magnetic fields they undertake the twice annual journey. The entire breeding population that extended from the Maritimes to British Columbia heads for South America east of the Andes from Southern Brazil to Argentina. Bobolinks are rare in our region after mid-September and virtually unknown after mid-October.

Bobolinks have declined greatly in my half century of birding. They are gone from many areas of the northeast. Northern New York is probably the best area in the state to see this species in numbers. While even regional extirpation seems improbable for such a numerous bird there are reasons for concern. The decline is real and is driven at least in part by relentless mowing regimes associated with intensive modern agriculture. We do not know how many Bobolinks are intentionally killed on their wintering grounds but these losses magnify the problem of decline. These

issues need addressing at both ends of the species epic journey. At our end development of managed grasslands with mowing regimes favorable to this and other grassland species is essential to their long-term conservation. The efforts of land trusts and individuals in our region to protect and expand suitable habitat will bear future fruit. With a little planning and care the spectacular song of the Bobolink will delight humans for many generations to come

About the IRLC

Formed in 1998 to conserve critical lands in the Indian River Lakes area of Northern New York, the IRLC is a non-profit land trust with 501(c) (3) tax exempt status operating in a manner consistent with the published standards of the Land Trust Alliance, a national organization