

2020 Annual Meeting Friends of Iroquois NWR, Inc.



We Welcomed 2 Staff and Say Goodbye to 2.

This past year we brought on two new staff members. Our new Administrative Support Assistant Jessika Bulera started in February and Tom Wolabaugh, Federal Wildlife Officer, joined our team in August. Jess has past experience with the US Postal Service, GEICO, and US Air Force. Officer Wolabaugh is a former Marine with previous work with the National Park Service and most recently coming from Chincoteague NWR. We are excited to have both on board!

Unfortunately, we had to say goodbye to Sasha Azeez, Hispanic Access Foundation Intern, this fall. Sasha was a huge asset to our team and we are sad to lose her. However, we are happy to report she accepted a permanent job with Refuges in the regional office in Hadley, MA and hope to get to work with her in the future! Brian Capron, American Conservation Experience Biological Science Technician is leaving us in November. Brian has helped with numerous biological projects with both Fisheries, Iroquois NWR and Erie NWR. He will be missed and we look forward to seeing what's in store for him next.

Presentation to the Medina, NY Lions Club

Friends of Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, Inc. (FINWR) President Celeste Morien and United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Visitor Services

Specialist Eric Schaertl were invited by the Medina, NY Lions Club to speak about the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System and FINWR, Inc. Twenty five people were in attendance at the dinner meeting on Tuesday, January 7. A lively PowerPoint presentation explained the history of the refuge, refuge habitats, habitat management, biological monitoring, public use and how the volunteerism of the Friends supports the refuge mission. Eric and Celeste learned that there is a great deal of curiosity in how the refuge supports wildlife, fights invasive species and intermeshes with the local community. We thank the Lions Club for their interest!



Iroquois Observations 20th Anniversary Celebrated with IO Palooza!

On February 1st, the Refuge and Friends celebrated the 20th anniversary of Iroquois Observations! Iroquois Observations has grown over the years and has offered things like canoe treks, landscape painting, bird walks, guided hikes, pond studies, and the ever popular Eagle Watch. We are so excited that it has reached this milestone!

by hosting “IO Palooza”. One-hundred and twenty-five people attended this fun-filled day with back to back programming that started at 8 am with “Birding by Car”. Individuals and families also were able to enjoy a guided hike, coloring, creating pinecone bird feeders, creating seed balls for their gardens, story time, owl origami, eagle watch, track casting, a tree dormancy hike, and owl trivia. The day concluded with a pre-registered “Owl Prowl.”



The Kiosks are Done!

Over the last few years, the outreach committee, which consists of Lower Great Lakes FWC, Iroquois NWR, and Friends of Iroquois NWR personnel, has been working on the mobile education trailer. The trailer was finished two years ago, and this winter the kiosks, that can be transported inside the trailer, were received. The outreach committee worked diligently to finalize this product and are very happy with the results.

There are six themed kiosks each with four panels – US Fish and Wildlife Service, Migration, Wetlands, Uplands, Invasive

Species, and the Great Lakes. The kiosks are informative and have interactive displays, including video monitors with information about the National Wildlife Refuge System and each of the Great Lakes, a wetlands effects and benefits flip book, a jigsaw puzzle of the different upland habitats, a pick-up sticks game to demonstrate the difficulty of eradicating invasive species, and a standalone skee-ball game to demonstrate the obstacles of migration. We are enthusiastic to see the final product and excited to start writing educational programs based around them. We believe that these kiosks, along with the archery and fishing equipment will make a well-rounded educational program that we can share with visitors and bring to classrooms, urban outreach events, and other groups who can't get to the Refuge.

Purple Martin Public Banding Day Moves Online

Annually, our purple martin banding team hosts an interpretive program for approximately 15 members of public. This event was scheduled for June 24, but the dreaded corona wouldn't let us host any public programs. So, this year, we recorded it and posted it on Facebook. During the program, volunteers discuss the nest cycle of purple martins, how we monitor their nests, their migration patterns, and banding with special guest, the Groundwork Buffalo Green Team. You can watch it here: <https://www.facebook.com/168915473153818/videos/596666371020112>.



You can also find the American Kestrel Nest Box Checks video on the Iroquois NWR Facebook page. Another Friends sponsored banding program.



Improved Outreach through Social Media and Website

A new website, www.finwr.org, helped facilitate weekly articles by Friends members, online memberships, and more. Modifications (and consolidations) to the FINWR Facebook Page, Friends of Iroquois NWR, and Group, Iroquois Observations!, created a flurry of active engagement through photo sharing and conversations. Both changes lead to large increases in visitation and followers helping us to better engage with the public and our conservation community.

Buffalo Adventure Hunt - A Trial Year

We had an awesome first Buffalo Adventure Hunt in celebration of Urban National Wildlife Refuge Day. We decided to celebrate a bit early, on Saturday, September 26th. Twenty-five people from our [#CommunityintheWild](#) showed up to help create and participate in this fun event. Teams bounced around to different stations and had a blast doing a variety of activities focused around history, culture, outdoor recreation, and conservation. Everyone had fun and took home some awesome prizes! All this was made possible through the combined efforts of our seven partners! We can't wait to do it again next year!



Fishing for the Future



On September 30, 2020, the refuge completed installation of an accessible trail and floating fishing dock at Ringneck Marsh. The project was initiated last year when a trail was constructed providing easier access to the refuge's primary public fishing area. This years' activities were delayed due to COVID-19 delaying many field activities, but included

finishing the trail and installing the floating structure. FINWR provided a little over \$3500 towards and received a grant of \$3500 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to help support this project providing accessible fishing for all the public to enjoy.