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## More than a Building...

*A message from executive director, Mark Sparky Stensaas*

**W**ow! What an exciting and crazy busy year. Thanks to all of you who contributed to Friends of Sax-Zim Bog in 2013-14, and to several generous grants from foundations, we were able to construct the new "Gateway to the Bog" Sax-Zim Welcome Center on Owl Avenue. I have been truly inspired by the passion our members have for the birds and their threatened Black Spruce and Tamarack habitat. I can now take my hat off to all of you since it isn't forty below zero outside anymore! (The Bog hit minus 40 air temp twice this winter).

A rare Northern Hawk Owl spent much of the winter as our neighbor on Owl Avenue, even hunting near the Welcome Center for a couple days...And a pair of Gray Fox made daytime visits to the Center's feeders. Maybe these sightings were the Bog Spirits blessing our new building :)

Events such as the BRRRRDathon, Photothon, BioBlitz and field trips were a chance for members to get together and have a blast while raising money for Friends. The Big Half Year for the Bog wrapped up in June 2013 and raised over \$6,600. Participants told stories of their personal Big Half Years at our wrap-up picnic at Jay Cooke State Park [You can read their stories on our Bog Blog at [www.SaxZim.org](http://www.SaxZim.org)]

Whether you donated dollars, labor, photos, bird feeders or bird seed, your contribution is gratefully acknowledged. We are all part of this team and together we'll make big things happen.

## NEXT STEPS

**L**et's complete what we started and finish the solar panel installation, sod roof, outhouse and storage shed. We need about \$10K to wrap this up. I know that together we can do this. Then we can move on to other projects such as a Bog Boardwalk, more trails, and additional feeding stations.

In October, we will be purchasing 40 acres that is adjacent to our existing Yellow-bellied Bog. And a nearby 80 acre bog may also be coming up for auction. Can you help us increase our dedicated Land Fund?

**\*\*Friends of Sax-Zim Bog is a 501c3 non-profit whose mission is to support, promote, and protect the Sax-Zim Bog Important Bird Area (IBA) through land preservation, education, research and communication. More at [www.SaxZim.org](http://www.SaxZim.org)**



*Many visiting birders flocked to the new Welcome Center*



*A big Black Bear paid a visit to our construction site in late October*



*Tamaracks light up an overcast and snowy day in October*



## CHALLENGES AHEAD

One thing that really should concern all of us is that the habitat in the Sax-Zim Bog is disappearing. FACT. Much of the Bog's mature Black Spruce/ Tamarack forest IS OLD GROWTH FOREST. This forest type is climax forest that will self perpetuate for centuries if undisturbed.

And that is the type of forest that many of our beloved boreal birds need—GREAT GRAY OWL, BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER, CONNECTICUT WARBLER, BOREAL CHICKADEE, and many more.

Based on importance to our boreal birds and birders, we hope to identify Priority Bogs in 2014 so we can convey this to the St. Louis County Land Department and open a dialogue about future land use in the Sax-Zim Bog.

*Mark Szwed*



## FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Fiscal Year 2013-2014

April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014

RECEIPTS	FY 12-13	FY 13-14
Donations	\$25,279	\$56,784
Events & Programs	\$3,504	\$3,386
Grants	\$53,368	\$72,151
Merchandise Sales	\$0	\$4,681
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$82,151</b>	<b>\$137,002</b>

DISBURSEMENTS		
Supplies	\$273	\$752
Office rent/utilities	\$1,052	\$1,738
Postage/Shipping	\$339	\$379
Printing & Copying	\$1,422	\$2,617
Marketing/Website	\$812	\$774
Merchandise Purchases	\$0	\$3,297
Research Materials/Cont. Ed.	\$431	\$150
Professional Services	\$8,399	\$3,607
Contract Services	\$11,880	\$28,080
Payroll	\$0	\$2,943
Events & Programs	\$4,850	\$835
Travel/Mileage/Meals	\$1,563	\$1,483
Insurance	\$1,375	\$1,901
Lease (Owl Ave site)	\$800	\$800
Property Taxes	\$0	\$208
Misc	\$1,160	\$2
Welcome Center	\$0	\$77,702
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$35,356</b>	<b>\$127,268</b>
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>\$46,795</b>	<b>\$9,734</b>

## Balance Sheet

March 31, 2014

ASSETS	3-31-2013	3-31-2014
Cash	\$21,535	\$9,455
Savings	\$20,005	\$38,010
Long-term Assets (Land/Bldg)	\$30,151	\$107,853
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$71,691</b>	<b>\$155,318</b>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Liabilities	\$0	\$5,000
Restricted Net Assets (Land Fund)	\$0	\$38,010
Unrestricted Net Assets	\$71,691	\$112,308
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>\$71,691</b>	<b>\$155,318</b>



A quite rare Dion Skipper nectars on Milkweed along Nichols Lake Road



We were graced with a cooperative Hawk Owl along Owl Avenue



A pair of Gray Fox made several daytime visits to the Welcome Center's feeder



Rough-legged Hawk along CR29

## Welcome Center is Open

**W**e opened the new Welcome Center on Owl Avenue during the bitter cold first week in January...before we had insulation! Kudos to Welcome Center hosts, Heather-Marie Bloom and Frank Nicoletti for braving those chilly first weeks. Hundreds of birders, photographers and tourists visited during the winter, sharing sightings, taking photos, getting info, buying souvenirs, using the outhouse and warming up!

Doug Zaun of Duluth's Wagner-Zaun Architecture designed this beautiful off-the-grid building. Huge thanks to builders Dan Coda and Andrew Webster who often had to deal with brutal working conditions...wind, snow and below zero temps. Special thanks to local excavator Steve Horvath for going above and beyond, often coming up with clever solutions to tricky problems.

It was important to us to build with local and sustainable materials. White Pine timbers were sourced from Rajala Lumber in Deer River.

Jack Rajala has led the way in bringing back big White Pine to Minnesota. Some say that aspen is a "weed tree," but the Natural Resources Research Institute in Duluth graciously donated cutting edge, heat-treatment technology to turn the aspen into quality rot-resistant siding. This innovative partnership garnered several TV spots and newspaper articles.

This summer we will complete the outhouse, install the solar panels, and place the sod roof. Our Welcome Center will be ready for you and all our winter visitors.

### CALL TO ACTION:

We still need to raise about \$10,000 to finish the "Deluxe" outhouse, storage shed, and install the solar panels. Please consider a generous donation today.



A new sign will replace the banner in 2014

(top) Local tradesman Jeff Litchie poured our slab in fall 2013

Donor bird tiles will be on display

(top) Dan Coda (pictured) and Andrew Webster built the center

November snows

(top) Looking out to the Bog from the Center's picture windows

# Decision!

“This is YOUR Welcome Center! Thanks to all Friends who made this Dream a Reality.”

Grand Opening was March 8, 2014. A gorgeous late winter day that brought nearly 200 folks out to celebrate the Friends of Sax-Zim Bog Welcome Center—the new Gateway to the Sax-Zim Bog.

The owl field trips, snowshoe hikes, a wildlife photography exhibit, hot cider and prize drawings were enjoyed by all.

Gray Jays, Pine Grosbeaks and a lone White-winged Crossbill also stopped by for a visit!

We plan to be open every day from mid December through mid March from 10am-3pm.



Sparky cut the red scarf “ribbon” with the loppers he used to clear the site (Photo by Don Kaddatz).

**\*\*Welcome Center construction was funded in part by major grants from the IRRRB, Donald Weesner Foundation and the Steven C. Leuthold Family Foundation**

**\*\*Interpretive kiosk funded by Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation’s Biodiversity Fund and the Carl and Verna Schmidt Foundation**



Watch birds in comfort!    Gorgeous Tamarack milled locally    Judd Brink loads his donated seed into our “Mega-Feeder”

(top) Kiosk highlights area history and natural history

(top) This feeder was frequented by Gray Fox and Pine Grosbeaks

(top) Snowshoeing at our Grand Opening. Others check out the “Bog Wild” banner



# Participation

## 2014 BRRRRDathon & Photothon

RESULTS OF THE 4th ANNUAL BRRRRdathon/PHOTOTHON—JAN 10-11, 2014

**F**rigid temperatures eluded The World's Coldest Birdathon again with highs in the 20s and NO below zero temps. Our composite total was only 61 species, lowest in the event's history, but amazingly, the Grouching Twitchers team managed to find 87% of these species. Avian highlights included multiple Snowy Owls, Great Gray Owls and Northern Hawk Owls, singing Saw-whet Owl, adult male Harlequin Duck, Spruce Grouse in Lake County, Thayer's, Glaucous & Greater Black-backed Gull, Black-backed Woodpeckers, Bohemian Waxwings and a Townsend's Solitaire in Duluth. On the "bummer" side, gulls were rare (no Iceland), and not a single Sharp-tailed Grouse, N. Goshawk, White-winged Crossbill, or redpoll of any kind was observed.

### TWO-DAY BRRRRdathon

Dave Benson, Lars Benson and John Ellis—the Grouching Twitchers—re-gained the BRRRRdathon crown with a near-record count.

53 species—Grouching Twitchers (David & Lars Benson & John Ellis)

35 species—Modest Grouse (Chris West, Alex Stark, Luke Dahlberg)

34 species—Luther Seminary (Luke & Friends)

29 species—Naturally Avian (Erik Bruhnke, Ami Sheffield)

27 species—Team Cox (Cara & Steven Cox)

### ONE-DAY BRRRRdathon

The upstart "Coldfinches" took home the top prize by tallying 29 species (one short of the record).



29 species—Coldfinches (Cindy Edwardson, Barb Akre, Al & Kim Loken)

27 species—Egretsy (Abigail Kritzer, Anne Marie Geniusz, Stephen Bockhold)

### WINTERGREEN (non-motorized)

Undefeated in 4 years, Tim Bates and Andrew Webster (Slush Cyclers), rolled again with 23 species found in 20 miles of bicycling and hiking in Duluth's city limits

23 species—Slush Cyclers (Tim Bates, Andrew Webster)

13 species—The Red Lantern (Bryan French)



Erik Bruhnke took home the top spot in the Photothon. Flying Snowy Owl



Andrew Webster (top) and Tim Bates, winners of the "Winter Green" non-motorized division, atop Lake Superior ice.



2-Day BRRRRDathon Winners—Grouching Twitchers (L to R, Lars Benson, Dave Benson, John Ellis)

## BIG HALF YEAR FOR THE BOG

### BIG HALF YEAR GENERATES BIG EXCITEMENT

**S**ix months of birding? Yes! Sixteen individuals defined their own goals and rules for this January through June fundraiser for Friends of Sax-Zim Bog. Annemarie and Stephen only counted birds seen on Tuesday, Sharon tallied the number of bird species she digiscoped, Elizabeth only counted birds she saw while walking or skiing, and Shawn limited his to Itasca County. All gathered pledges from friends and families.

About 20 Big Half Year participants and supporters gathered at Jay Cooke State Park for a pot luck picnic and to share stories of their own Big Half Years. We also had a drawing for the prizes donated by our prize sponsors.

The 6-month event raised over \$6,600 for Friends of Sax-Zim Bog! This is even more amazing in that we only had about 16 active participants.

Here are the TOP FUNDRAISERS. Thanks to all!

Kim Eckert \$1,077  
Elizabeth Closmore \$815  
Sparky Stensaas \$583  
Sharon Stiteler \$576  
Mike Hendrickson \$548  
Erik Bruhnke \$546  
Jessica Dexter \$444  
Dave Benson \$431  
Shawn Conrad \$388  
Lars Benson \$288  
Annemarie Geniusz &  
Stephen Bockhold \$258

*Big "Thank You's!" to our prize sponsors Stone Ridge Press, Whole Foods Co-op, Epicurian, Loll, and Duluth Pack.*



### CALL TO ACTION:

Think about getting a business or corporation to sponsor your team for the 2015 BRRRRdathon—The World's Coldest Birdathon. Help us raise much needed funds for our continued mission to Preserve, Promote and Protect the Sax-Zim Bog.

*Eagle Optics, maker and seller of quality binoculars and scopes, was a major sponsor of the Big Half Year. They generously donated a \$500 pair of Eagle Optics Ranger ED 10x42*



*This PHOTOTHON photo by Jason Rizzo scored the most points by a single photo.*



*Friends member and supporter, Jessica Dexter of Chicago (originally from nearby Twig, MN) attended the picnic and won the Eagle Optics Ranger ED 10x42 binoculars. Way to go Jessica!*

# Thank You for your Generous Donations in this Fiscal Year!

April 2013 through March 2014

—Note that this list does not include event participants and pledgers

## \$20,000+

Steven Leuthold Family  
Foundation † \*\*

## \$10,000+

Donald Weesner Foundation  
Iron Range Resources &  
Rehabilitation Board

## \$5,000-\$9,999

Steve Thompson & Ron Frey †

## \$1,000-\$4,999

Susan & Gene Bauer † \*\*  
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David Alexander † \*\*  
Jill Unferth & John Thieroff  
Ben & Heidi Yokel † \*\*

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## Up to \$99

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Judd Brink †  
Steve & Cynthia Broste  
Kathy Brown  
Kevin Brubaker  
Erik Bruhnke  
Monica Bryand



† donated at least two of last three years  
 \*\* increased donation from last year

# Donation

Diana Burlison  
 Linda Burns & Jim Eller  
 Julie Calligore † \*\*  
 Rich Cammack  
 David Carman †  
 Calvin & Vicki Cassady  
 Jane & Frank Cleave  
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 Roy Zimmerman †



## “BOG WILD” BANNER

This is the kind of cooperation we hope to foster in the Sax-Zim Bog. Twenty-one talented photographers DONATED their favorite images to create this 10-foot long banner. EVERY SINGLE PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE SAX-ZIM BOG...What amazing biodiversity! We hope to make a poster of these images and have it for sale in the Welcome Center. Come visit us and go “Bog Wild.”

**\*\*Thanks to these photographers:** Jim Almquist, Karl Bardon, Erik Bruhnke, Terry Crayne, Michael Furtman, Tim Glackin, Mike Hendrickson, Don Kaddatz, Jan Killian, Mike Lentz, Jason Mandich, Ryan Marshik, Matthew Moses, Frank Nicoletti, Earl Orf, John Pennoyer, Heidi Pinkerton, Jason Rizzo, Sparky Stensaas, Paul Sundberg and Stan Tekiela.

## BIOBLITZ RESULTS

Birds, Butterflies, Dragonflies, Spiders and more! Thanks to our (experts Kurt Mead, Jim Lind, Larry Weber, Sparky Stensaas, Mike Hendrickson) who sought out species to add to our master list of flora and fauna of the Sax-Zim Bog.

Highlights included 16 species of dragonflies (including several Prince Baskettails!), several rare spiders and Great Gray Owl.



*The Dogwood Borer Moth...  
A very good wasp mimic!*



*Very pale Red-tailed Hawk  
BioBlitz July 2014*



*Silver-bordered Fritillary  
BioBlitz July 2014*



## 2013 Field Trips

Mother Nature wreaked havoc on several of our 2013 field trips. Snow, sleet and winds cancelled our Night Hike in early May (Hey, this is northern Minnesota!) and heavy rains caused flooding that literally washed out our St. Louis River paddle. But we did get in a couple successful field trips.

The May 3rd 2014 "Things that go Buzz, Croak, Hoot & Bump in the Night" trip featured a cooperative American Bittern viewed from INSIDE the Welcome Center, a Great Gray Owl, and a displaying Woodcock seen strutting in the beam of our flashlights.

"Warbler Wednesdays" will be a regular series of field trips in late May/early June. Nearly 80 species were found on each of our first three field trips in 2014.



### CALL TO ACTION:

#### 2014 BIOBLITZ

Join us for our 2014 BioBlitz on August 2nd. We'll have experts available that you can join in the field! Learn more about spiders, butterflies, wildflowers and more!

#### 2014 FIELD TRIPS

See our complete schedule at [www.SaxZim.org](http://www.SaxZim.org) and click on the "Field Trips" tab.

Free to members!



Great Gray Owl along McDavitt on our November 25th field trip.



American Bittern seen from Welcome Center windows!



American Woodcock seen on our May 3rd Night Trip



## Meet the Board



*David Benson—Board Chair*



*Ben Yoke—Board Member*



*Kate Nicoletti—Secretary*



*David Steininger—Treasurer*



*Lori Williams—Board Member*



*Sarah Beaster—Development  
Director*



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