

CONTACT  
Hawthorne Valley Association / Sushannah Laurange  
Marketing Associate  
518.672.4465 x 224

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# Farmscape Ecology Program conducts Bobolink Sound Mapping Study

**August 31, 2020, Ghent, NY** – The Farmscape Ecology Program (FEP) recently posted sound maps of Bobolink usage of a hay field managed by Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent. This project was conducted over the summer as an independent study by intern Stephanie Ripsom.

Bobolinks are a migratory grassland bird that tends to nest in hay fields. Their population has been in decline due to habitat loss, changes in haying patterns, and perhaps other factors.

A Delaware native, Ripsom studied natural resource management and entomology at Colorado State University before accepting the internship with FEP in spring 2020.

“I was itching to come back east, so this was a perfect opportunity,” Ripsom says. “I didn’t have much experience in agricultural entomology before coming here, so I thought this would be a great experience to work with a new to me aspect of insect ecology before I pursue my masters’ degree.”

FEP’s internships usually involve three months of work with the team before interns have the option to conduct independent studies. With the COVID-19 outbreak and resulting travel and work restrictions, Ripsom had the opportunity to begin her independent study right away. She was inspired to look more deeply at bobolink usage of the hay field after learning about the Institute for Mindful Agriculture’s work with bobolinks as part of their Living Library of Farm Life series (<https://www.instituteformindfulagriculture.org/farm-life-meditations>).

After taking some sample recordings of the bobolinks, Ripsom decided to do a 24-hour recording with 19 different recorders on one of the fields that had a large amount of Bobolink activity. She was interested in seeing what the recordings would capture and if they gave insights into the birds’ population there.

The field has been managed under best practices from the Bobolink Project for the past two years, a program that provides farmers with a per-acre payment for managing fields to preserve these grassland birds’ habitat during the breeding season. ([www.bobolinkproject.com](http://www.bobolinkproject.com))

“A main goal of FEP is to look at how nature and agriculture interact and how that interaction can be compatible with both food production and nature conservation,” says Conrad Vispo, Ph.D., FEP co-coordinator. “The field Stephanie focused on is one that we’ve been following for almost 15 years. We work with the Farm to help it both meet its own hay needs and conserve the breeding Bobolinks.

Hawthorne Valley Association | 327 County Route 21C, Ghent, NY 12075 | 518-672-4465 | [hawthornevalleyassociation.org](http://hawthornevalleyassociation.org)

Studies like this could be useful if we want to better understand which fields, or parts of fields, are frequented by the Bobolinks.”

Next, Ripsom plans to sound map the same field again, this time returning to her love of entomology and listening for singing insects to identify varieties and understand how the insect population interacts with the landscape (and perhaps the Bobolinks!). The FEP team hopes that these sound mapping projects will help the public see the landscape through the lens of sound.

More on the Bobolink sound mapping project can be found here:

<https://progressoftheseasons.wordpress.com/2020/08/14/farmscape-wonder-wander-14-august-2020/>.

The Farmscape Ecology Program at Hawthorne Valley offers internships each year to give young biologists a chance to get hands-on experience in the field. Since the program’s inception in 2004, more than 25 students have participated in the program. For more information about FEP and their work studying the intersection of nature and agriculture, visit [www.hvfarmscape.org](http://www.hvfarmscape.org).

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### **About Hawthorne Valley**

Hawthorne Valley is a place to rediscover one’s connection to nature, to how the food that we eat every day is produced, and to ourselves as participants in a dynamic social and natural ecosystem. Through the active production of food, educational programs for children and adults, ongoing social and scientific research, and the cultivation of a vibrant artistic community, we pursue a modern way of living embedded deeply in the natural world and emphasizing the social, ecological, and economic importance of agriculture in our daily lives.

Our integrated learning campus sits in a 900-acre Demeter-certified Biodynamic® farm in Ghent, NY, in the Hudson Valley’s scenic Columbia County. Organized since 1972 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, our initiatives include: an early childhood through grade 12 Waldorf school; on-farm education programs; a full-line organic/natural foods and grocery store; a Biodynamic creamery, organic bakery, and fermentation cellar; a 300-plus member Biodynamic CSA; social, ecological, and cultural research groups; teacher education programs; arts initiatives and more.

Our work is based on genuine human relationships, wonder and love of nature, and continued commitment to self-development and lifelong learning in a social context.

For additional information, please visit <https://hawthornevalley.org>.