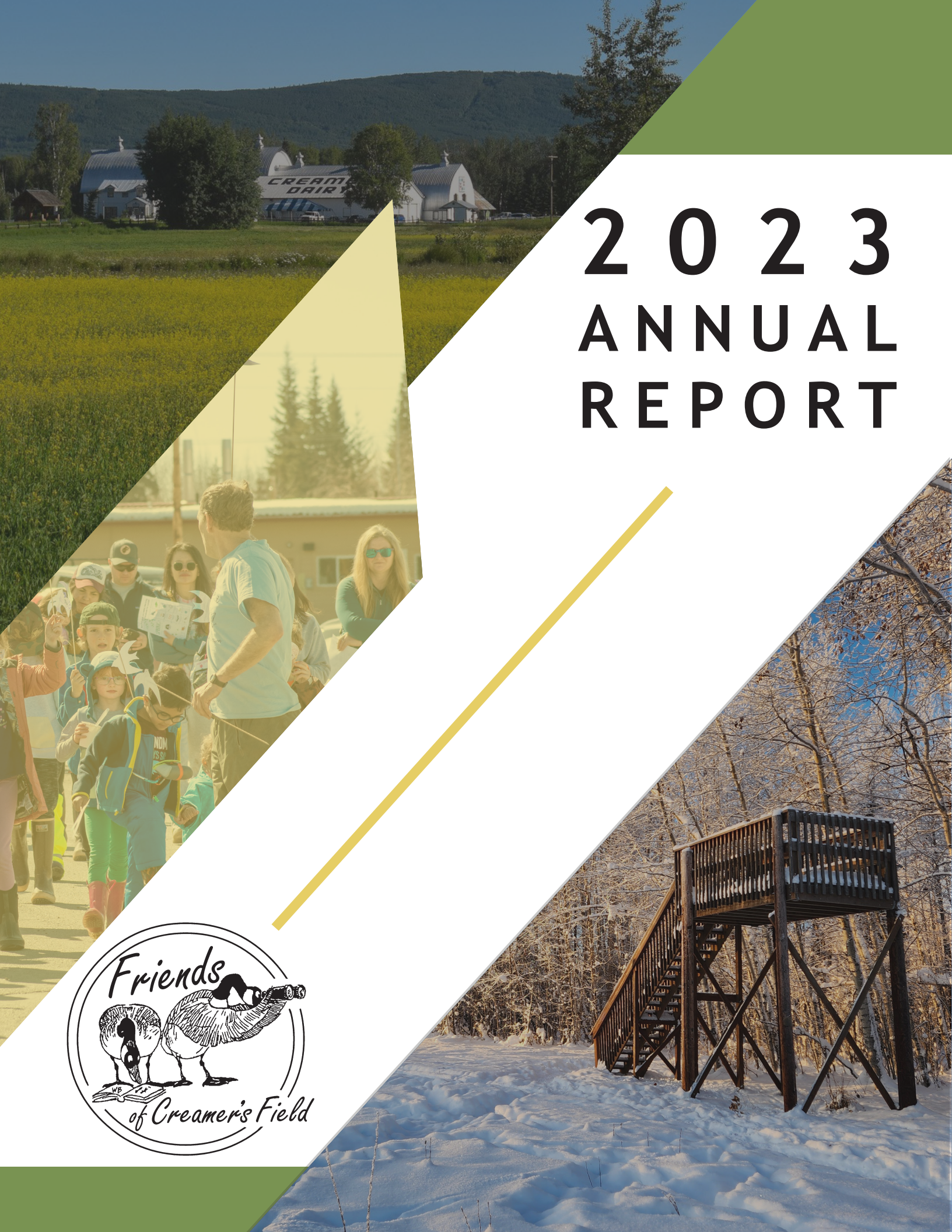
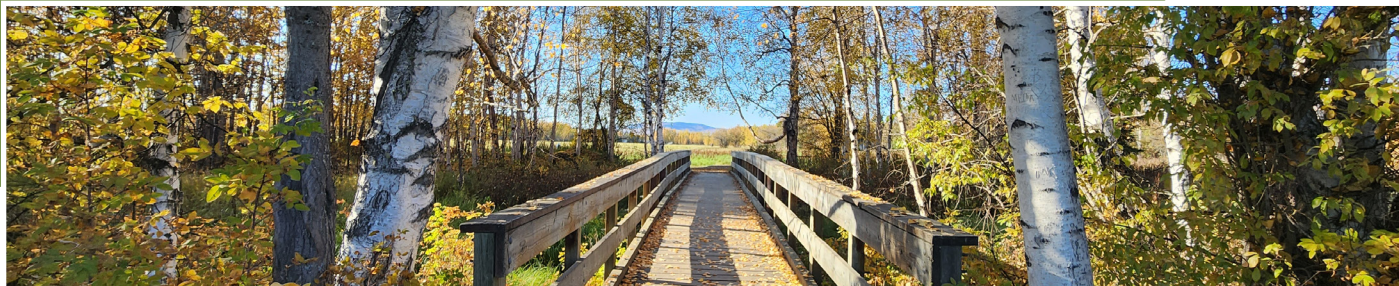


2023 ANNUAL REPORT





MISSION STATEMENT

Inspiring environmental stewardship and lifelong learning through experience, awareness, appreciation, and conservation of the natural and historic resources of Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge



Friends of Creamer's Field is a community-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (Tax ID# 92-0137107) founded in 1991 to provide educational opportunities and family programs at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. The refuge stretches across 2,500 acres of fields, woods, and wetlands in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The original Creamer family farmhouse (circa 1908) sits on the property and serves as our headquarters and features interpretive exhibits on migratory birds and on the historic dairy complex.

Working collaboratively with Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and other community partners, Friends of Creamer's Field aims to "inspire environmental stewardship and lifelong learning through experience, awareness, appreciation, and conservation of the natural and historic resources of Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge." Without the dedication and commitment of our 100+ active volunteers, we could not begin to accomplish this mission. Volunteers assist with programs & events, are trained to lead guided nature walks on the Refuge, and work as Hosts in the Farmhouse Visitor Center.

OUR 2023 TEAM

STAFF

Grace Nelson, Executive Director
 Melanie Graeff, Programs & Events Coordinator
 Jesi Lobato, Camp Habitat Director
 Ashley Hoover, Assistant Camp Habitat Director
 Kasey Brovold, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Christina Burt, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Jenneca Favos, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Christianna Hunt, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Bret Johnson, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Maria Keller, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Emma Ostbloom, Camp Habitat Instructor
 Cora Bonds, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Zoe Gul, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Holly Hawkaluk, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Daria Mantei, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Ole Schuldt, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Gracie Mae Skaggs, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Isabelle Soden, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Madalynn Tucker, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Anna Belle Valentine, Camp Habitat Counselor
 Sarai Williamson, Camp Habitat Counselor

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

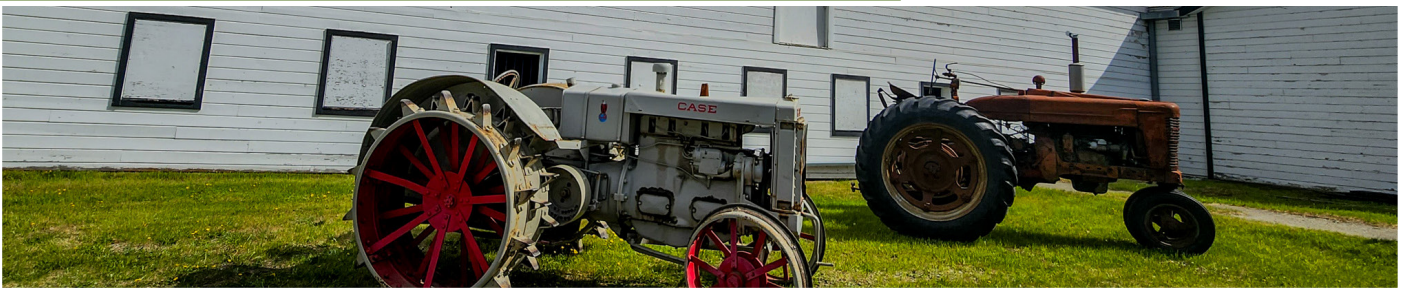
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 Anne Ruggles, Vice-President
 Dave Vick, Treasurer
 Jamie Marschner, Secretary
 Carol Davis, Board Member
 Riga Grubis, Board Member
 Kirstin Hunter, Board Member
 Arthur Hussey, Board Member
 Jerry Lipka, Board Member
 Tom Schneider, Board Member
 Roxy Creamer, Emeritus
 George Happ, Emeritus
 Cathie Harms-Tordoff, Emeritus
 William Holman, Emeritus

ADF&G PARTNERS

Mark Ross, Refuge Educator
 Nate LaShomb, Refuge Technician
 Clint Cooper, Refuge Manager
 Jason Caikoski, Regional Management Supervisor
 Lincoln Parrett, Regional Supervisor
 Kerry Savereide, Administrative Lead

OUR COLLABORATORS





A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

In 2023, the Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge welcomed nearly 18,000 visitors from around the world. These visitors came from all 50 states, 3 U.S. territories, and 25 other countries.

Despite some harsh weather conditions, our programs and events hosted over 4,000 visitors. During the Tanana Valley Sandhill Crane Festival, visitors braved the blustery winds and rain to bid the cranes farewell, while during the Luminary Trail, they had to endure temperatures as low as -30°F.

Additionally, Camp Habitat reached full capacity in 2023, with 275 youths from Fairbanks exploring and experiencing the natural world at Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge. Throughout the camp, attendees went on hikes, played games, and learned about the ecology of Interior Alaska.

In December, we welcomed Clint Cooper as the new Refuge Manager to the Creamer's Field team. Clint has worked with Alaska Department of Fish & Game for six years and previously managed the Delta Bison Range. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to his new role.

We have exciting plans for 2024! In addition to our regular programs, we will install interpretive displays around the historic barns, refurbish facilities, and add even more programs to our year-round schedule. We cannot wait to share more with you!

We want to express our heartfelt thanks to all of our volunteers, donors, sponsors, partners, and supporters. You are the reason we can continue "inspiring environmental stewardship and lifelong learning through experience, awareness, appreciation, and conservation of the natural and historic resources of Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge". THANK YOU!

See you on the Refuge,

Grace Nelson

Grace Nelson
Executive Director
Friends of Creamer's Field



SPRING MIGRATION CELEBRATION

Overview of 2023

THANK YOU to ADFGG, USFWS, NPS, UAF, Duck's Unlimited, Fairbanks Garden Club, Alaska Songbird Institute, Northern Center, Fairbanks SWCD, Arctic Audubon, Alaska Falconer Association, and Backcountry Hunters & Anglers for making the event such a success!

Local falconer Randall Compton.



Custom Spring Migration Celebration button.

Volunteer Ryan Marsh updates the bird list.



Mark Ross leads the annual parade of swallows.



Attendees measure their wingspan.

Design Alaska Wild Arts Walk

Alden Hill at the 2023 Wild Arts Walk.



Young attendees watch Rian Mortensen race against the clock during the 2023

Thank you!
Design Alaska



2023 Mug with a Chickadee Design by Tehya McLeod.



Teresa Knezek shows off her QuickArt piece.



Randall Compton works on his QuickArt piece.

CREAMER'S DAIRY DAY

Welcome Table



Alaska Range Dairy's cow.



Three tractors that have been used on the Refuge over the last century.



Mark Ross oversees the tire flip portion of the Farm games.



Jeff Creamer & Jeanne Creamer-Dalton next to their Grandfather's 1910 Chalmers.

Programs & Events



Volunteers talk to attendees about duck banding on the Refuge.

Big thanks to our festival speakers Sergei & Elena Smirenski and festival artist Erica Mathews.



Speakers Sergei & Elena Smirenski address audience.

TANANA VALLEY SANDHILL CRANE FESTIVAL

Attendees view wildlife in the front field.



Thank you to our event cooperators:



Festival Art by Erica Mathews of LolaBug Creations.



Attendees build a nest box.

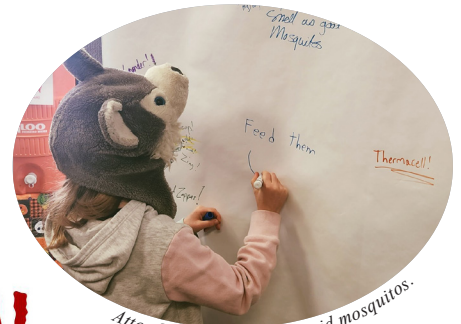
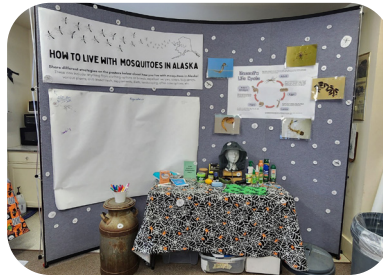
Creepy Critters



A family of "mosquitos"



BOREAL BLOODSUCKERS



Attendee shares tips to avoid mosquitoes.

Thanksgiving for the Birds!



Participants create bird feeders.



Participant shows off garland masterpiece.



Participants cover pine cones in bird seed

Luminary Trail & Ornament Making



Attendees show off their beautiful ornaments.



Luminary Trail over Jussila Creek



Attendees create holiday garland.



CAMP HABITAT

Camp Habitat is a unique nature education and ecology camp designed for youth. It was established in 1992 by Susan Grace Stoltz, a local environmental educator. For the past 31 years Camp Habitat has taught over 5,000 Alaskans about the natural world and their place in it.

In 2023, a total of 275 campers aged between four and eleven years old participated in the program. The camp consisted of four sessions: two half-day camps in June for 4-5 year-olds and three full-day camps in June and July for campers aged 6-11.



Campers and staff walk out to closing circle with their animal masks



Campers circle up for activity.

During the camp, the children enjoyed singing camp songs, playing nature games, and exploring different habitats found in the refuge, such as meadows, wetlands, ponds, and boreal forests. They learned about various aspects of the environment and how they all interact with each other, as well as understanding their place in it.

Camp Habitat will continue to grow in 2024, as we are adding an extra week of full-day camps to accommodate more campers.



Staff have a garden cart race in preparation for camp.

We are incredibly grateful to our Camp Habitat partners, the Alaska Department of Fish & Game and the Northern Alaska Environmental Center, for their support in putting on a successful program. Additionally, Camp Habitat receives generous donations from local businesses and individuals.



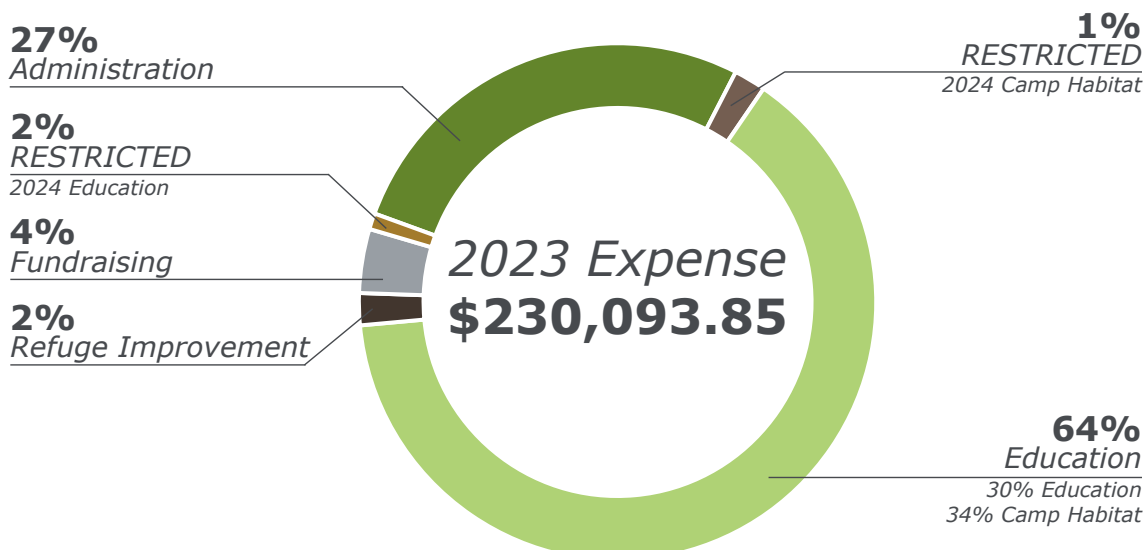
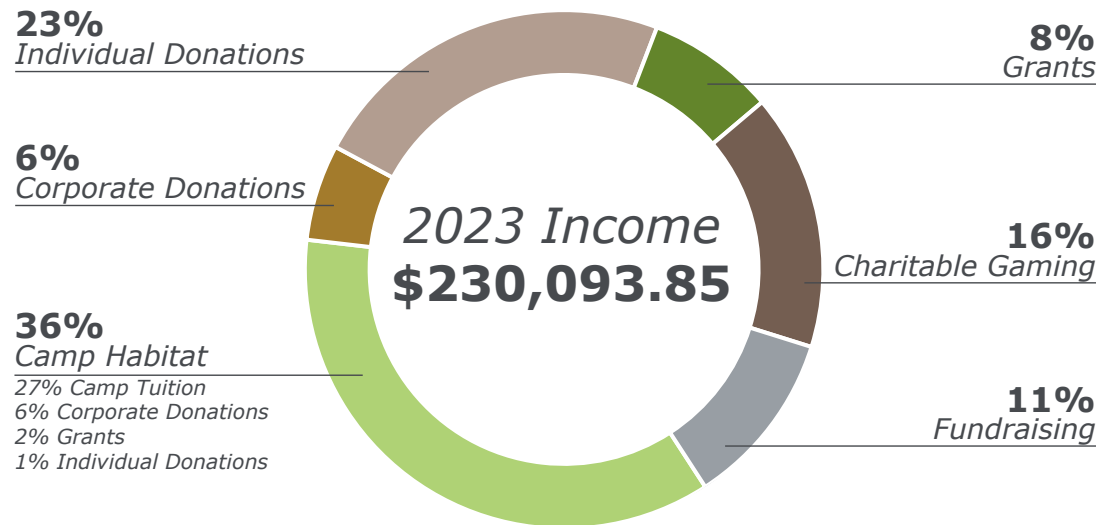
2023 Camp Staff



FINANCIAL POSITION

As our programs and events continue to grow, the generosity of our supporters and sponsors has also increased. In 2023, we experienced a 10% rise in income from the previous year, which enabled us to add three more programs to our annual schedule. Thanks to this incredible support, we ended 2023 financially stable. As we head into 2024, we are devising a fundraising strategy that will provide Friends of Creamer's Field with the sustainability it needs to continue offering valuable services to Interior Alaska for many years to come.

- Grace Nelson, *Executive Director*





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Alaska**

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benevity



Sandhill Crane (\$1,000 or more)

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Gail Mayo
Michael Salzmann
Jack & Carol Wilbur

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Hannah Summerfelt DMD
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Canada Goose (\$50-\$99)

Jeff Adams
Ken Alt
Anne Armstrong
Sarita Arya
Back to Glass
Pauline Bennett-Gannon

**Canada Goose (cont.)**

Maggie Billington
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Tianna Christopher
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Laurel Devaney & Ken Russell
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Jim & Chris Villano
Jeffery Walters
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Chad B. Young

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Dudley Babb
Kristian Beckner
Catherine Bennett
Scotty Berg
Mary Bunch
Jeanne Creamer-Dalton
Julian Dahl
AJ Duncan
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Apyrllynn Encabo

Melinda Evans
Alison Foley
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Amy Macpherson
Kendall Martinez
Vince & Laurie Mauro
Lisa Meyers
Kaarin Mullowney
Aaron Partnow
Patricia Peirsol
Betty Pixley
Elaine Ponchione
Mary Powers

In honor of Teri Spires

Terry Roberts
Hugh Rose
Don Ross
Phil & Katie Sanders
John Sargent
Jeremia Schrock
Lisa Sinnott
Betsy Smith
Michael Smith
Katherine Smith
Simon Smith
Nancy Smoyer
Mark Smurda
Rosalie Stockwell
Sarah Sullivan

Cheyanna Swisher
Kaarin Tack
Richard Tarkiainen
Stewart Tucker
Helen Weston
Nancy Winford
Erika Wolter

** Thank you to all of the donors we have missed!**



Thank you Volunteers & Community Partners!

**Nature Walk Leaders**

Jeff Adams	Gail Mayo
Charlie Collins	Kim Middelstadt
Jim Hunter	Marilyn Mount
Frank Keim	Janet Schichnes
Nate Kibbey	Betsy Sturm
Ron Koczaja	Tumi Traustason
Jerry Lipka	Marci Ward
Bud Marschner	Rhiannon Wiegand
Ryan Marsh	

Creamer's Field Refuge Hosts

Greg & Ruth Ann Walker
Kenneth Hooker & Mary Perkins

Farmhouse Visitor Center

Susanne Billings	Mary Perkins
Susie Crevensten	Brenda Sadler
Mary Fenno	Betsy Sturm
Ken Hooker	Janet Taylor
Gail Mayo	Ruth Ann Walker
Sheila McCleary	Greg Walker
Millie Peak	Caroline Wolf



Wildlife Spotlight: Northern Hawk Owl Pair

Melanie Graeff, Program & Event Coordinator



Photo by Bud Marschner

Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge was home to a nesting pair of Northern Hawk Owls for almost a year. Although these birds of prey are usually solitary and mysterious, this pair's visible hunting and nesting activities created an accessible spectacle for humans and wildlife on the Refuge. Many dedicated birders and Refuge staff were able to document their lives, from witnessing daily hunting during late fall and winter, mating, establishing a nesting site, successfully raising young, and battling other local predators for territory throughout their stay.

One Northern Hawk Owl was spotted several times on Creamer's Field throughout the winter of 2022/2023. Towards the end of March, a second owl was spotted. While sex could not be determined with confidence, many observers thought that it was a male and female pair due to the size difference observed. Most female Hawk Owls are larger than males.



Photo by Bud Marschner

The first nesting site was found in early April in the middle of the wetland by the Boreal Forest Trail. The pair preferred open decayed hollows where the treetops had broken off. During this time the female began sitting on the nest while the male would bring her food.



Photo by Bud Marschner

Unfortunately, this first nesting attempt was riddled with threats from Common Ravens. Observers heard loud warning calls and hissing, saw patches of missing feathers on the owls, bark torn from the top of the nesting site, and witnessed spectacular aerial battles between the male Northern Hawk Owl and the ravens. Finally, on April 25, both adult Northern Hawk Owls were observed perched on snags in the wetland away from their nest.

The Refuge staff and local birders were worried that the owls would be driven from the refuge entirely due to the constant harassment by ravens. Thankfully, a few days after being pushed out of their first nest site, the female owl was spotted sitting in a new tree cavity closer to the southern edge of the Boreal Forest Trail. Throughout May, the ravens stayed away.

In May, as the female incubated the eggs, the male brought her voles and other small mammals. By mid-May, the female Hawk Owl was observed sitting higher up in her nest, so onlookers were anticipating a large brood of nestlings soon. Throughout the first week of June, the female owl draped her wings over the cavity to shield the eggs or owlets from the sun. Finally, on June 12, the first two owlets were observed. The female stayed with the brood for the first 10-13 days. As the chicks grew bigger, the male and female took turns sitting on the nest and hunting.



Photo by Bud Marschner

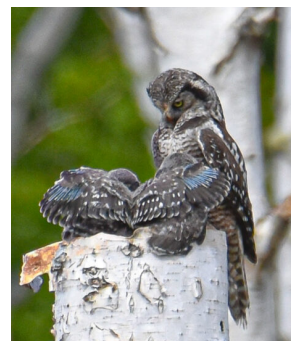


Photo by Melanie Graeff

After 3-5 weeks the chicks started to leave. Of the original 6 nestlings, 4 were seen fledged and hanging around the wetland in the first week of July. By the middle of the summer all of the Hawk Owls departed from the Refuge.

We had a hoot of a time!

This nesting pair of Northern Hawk Owls and their young brought much excitement and awe to Creamer's Field. The special spectacle brought many birders and visitors from all over to come and view this rare Northern Owl pair and their nesting activities. We will keep a watchful eye on the treetops this year hoping for the return of these unique northern raptors once again.





"Inspiring environmental stewardship and lifelong learning through experience, awareness, appreciation and conservation of the natural and historic resources of Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge."

www.friendsofcreamersfield.org

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