

BRAS Awarded Another National
Audubon Burke Plants for Birds Grant!

By Jim Jablonski

For the second consecutive year, Black River Audubon Society (BRAS) has been awarded a grant from National Audubon Society (NAS) to carry out a restoration project.

This year, BRAS will collaborate with Western Reserve Land Conservancy (WRLC) in a tree and shrub planting project in a prairie restoration field on Oberlin's Hamilton Street. The land conservancy owns 30 acres of former farm field and an adjoining 30 acres of woods, historically known as the Oberlin Great South Woods

The two local conservation groups will partner in the project with a host of Oberlin organizations including: Oberlin College, Oberlin High School, Oberlin African-American Genealogy & History Group, Zion Community Development Corporation, Oberlin Heritage Center, and Oberlin Rotary.

The field has historical significance for the City of Oberlin as the former Copeland family farm. John Copeland, a former slave, and his wife Delilah came to Oberlin with their family prior to the Civil War and eventually bought the farm in 1862. Their son, John Anthony Copeland, took part in the 1858 Oberlin-Wellington rescue of an escaped slave. Later, he joined John Brown's raiders at Harper's Ferry, was captured, and executed, two weeks after Brown himself. The two events inflamed passions, North and South; some say leading to the Civil War in 1861.

The grant proposal, planned and written by BRAS board members Andy Lance and Kate Pilacky, was one of 20 that National Audubon chose to fund for 2019. NAS received a total of 61 proposals from 30 states. The \$2,900 grant will pay for plants and materials for a bird and pollinator garden featuring native trees, shrubs, and plants that may have played a role in the lives of enslaved people escaping north for their freedom. A cherry tree will be planted in memory of the Copeland farm orchard on the land.

BRAS received a \$2,500 grant from the same NAS program last year. That money paid for trees and shrubs at Elyria's Black River Audubon Park on West Bridge Street and other sites. The project, in collaboration with the City of Elyria, Elyria Sunrise Rotary, and Elyria High School, was publicized widely on National Audubon's website.