

# The Tully News

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Town Supervisor .....696-4693, ext. 12  
Tax Collector .....696-4693, ext. 11  
Town Historian ..... 696-4681  
Trash & Garbage ..... 315 472-7455  
Village of Tully ..... 696-5041

## Town of Tully Website

[townoftully.us](http://townoftully.us)

## Village of Tully Website

[villageoftully.us](http://villageoftully.us)

## Onondaga Co. Website

[www.ongov.net](http://www.ongov.net)

The Tully News is a monthly publication of the Tully Town Board. The Town Board meets on the Second Wednesday of each month at the Town Hall. Dead-line for publication is the night of the Board meeting. Materials may be submitted to: The Tully News , 19 Railroad Street, Tully, 13159 or they may be e-mailed to: [ben.bibik@outlook.com](mailto:ben.bibik@outlook.com)

# Be on the Look-out for Rare Winter Raptors Short-eared Owl & Northern Harrier

Bird watching is not just a springtime activity. In fact, winter is the best time of year to see two of New York's rare grassland raptors, the state-Endangered Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*) and state-Threatened Northern Harrier (*Circus hudsonius*). Short-eared Owls (SEOWs) breed across Canada and the Arctic and migrate to our region for the winter season. Northern Harriers (NOHAs) are year-round residents but can be easier to spot in winter conditions as they hunt the same types of open grasslands, farm fields, pastures, and marsh habitats that are also favored by SEOWs.

SEOWs have mottled brown plumage and striking yellow eyes set within dark facial discs that help to amplify sounds to the birds' ears, improving their ability to locate prey in dense vegetation or in low-light conditions. Distinctive dark comma-shaped patches near the wrists are a good field mark for identification. While SEOWs are most active at dawn and dusk, they are also active during the day, making them one of the most visible owl species.

NOHA is a slender hawk with a relatively long tail. They have an owl-like face, also with eyes set in facial discs. Male NOHAs are gray with dark wing tips, while females and immature birds are brown with a banded tail. Both males and females have a prominent white rump patch, which is a key field mark for identifying this species. SEOWs and NOHAs glide low over the ground vegetation in search of small mammals.

The presence of these species is indicative of large, unbroken tracts of high quality grasslands. These ecosystems are already scarce, and what remains is under increasing pressure. Grassland habitats in New York State have undergone significant long-term decline, and grassland birds remain among the fastest-declining groups of wildlife in the state.

One emerging cause of loss of grassland birds and habitats is the conversion of these open lands for the construction of industrial renewable energy projects. Industrial wind turbine facilities pose significant risks to SEOWs and NOHAs, as well as to other grassland bird species of conservation concern such as Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) and Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), through both direct mortality and habitat loss and fragmentation. Since SEOWs and NOHAs typically fly and hunt at lower altitudes, collision risk for these species is comparatively lower than for other raptors, however, death from collisions still occurs. The primary threat for these open habitat raptors is functional habitat loss and displacement, as these birds avoid areas with and near turbines.

Cumulative impacts must also be taken into account. New York—especially rural upstate communities like ours, is experiencing a rapid expansion of industrial renewable energy facilities, with numerous existing, newly permitted, and proposed projects—some sited directly within or adjacent to high-quality grasslands, wetlands, and known winter raptor concentration areas. Each project removes or fragments habitat, but the effects are not isolated. Taken together, they create a statewide pattern of shrinking open space, reduced carrying capacity for wildlife, and increasing pressure on already vulnerable species.

For birds that rely on large, continuous landscapes, the loss of multiple habitat patches across the state compounds the overall reduction in suitable foraging and nesting areas, and because projects are reviewed individually, cumulative impacts are rarely considered. Protecting these species means protecting the last intact habitats they depend on—and keeping industrial-scale renewable energy facilities out of the remaining open grasslands in our rural communities.

# Be on the Look-out for Rare Winter Raptors—Short-eared Owl & Northern Harrier

Cont.

Have You Seen These Birds?

Suitable grassland and marsh habitats occur throughout the town of Tully, and numerous NOHA sightings have been reported to e-bird between 2020 and 2025. While much less commonly observed, SEOW has also been documented in Tully and could be found in the same locations as NOHAs. Open fields near the Meeker Hill area, the South Meadows Nature Area, marshy habitats around the Kettle Lakes, and large ag fields throughout Tully and neighboring towns are great places to look for these species.

If you think you've spotted one, we'd love to know! Photo documentation is best, but any details about your sighting can be reported to: [findoutmore@southernhillswindwatch.com](mailto:findoutmore@southernhillswindwatch.com).

Key ID Tips:

- Short-Eared Owl: mottled brown; irregular wing beats; yellow eyes in dark facial disks.
- Northern Harrier: slim, long-tailed; white rump patch; low, gliding, buoyant flight. Wings often held in a V.
- Both: hunt low over fields and marshes, typically at dawn and dusk, but also seen during the daytime.



SEOWs commonly use elevated perches to look for prey. (Image source: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org))



SEOW in flight. Notice the facial discs and dark comma shape near the wrist (Image source: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org))



Female/ Immature NOHA in flight with brown plumage and distinctive white rump patch (Image source: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org))



NOHA hovering in flight while honing in on its prey (Image source: [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org))

## For more information:

- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Short-eared\\_Owl](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Short-eared_Owl)
- [https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern\\_Harrier](https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Northern_Harrier)
- <https://ebird.org/explore>
- <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/animals-fish-plants/birds>
- <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/wildlife-and-habitat/wildlife-action-plan>
- <https://dec.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/grasslandbirdsstrategyfinal.pdf>

## Tully Community Christmas Basket Program 2025

**THANK YOU!!!**

To all the businesses, individuals, community groups and churches for your generous donations to the Tully Community Christmas Basket Program! **Special Thanks to :**

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