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Linda Loring Nature Foundation Awarded Robert F. Schumann Foundation Grant

Funds provided through the grant program will support avian habitat improvement at the LLNF property through invasive species removal, ecological restoration, and associated monitoring.

Nantucket, MA: The Linda Loring Nature Foundation (LLNF) is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a grant from the Robert F. Schumann Foundation to improve habitat for grassland and heathland bird populations by removing non-native invasive tree species and restoring native vegetation. LLNF was awarded \$51,000, which includes funds for invasive plant management as well as ongoing avian and vegetation monitoring.

The LLNF grant will be used to fund the removal of invasive, non-native Japanese Black Pine (*Pinus thunbergii*) in an effort to restore valuable sandplain grassland and heathland habitats, in an effort to improve the health of local bird populations. This funding will allow us to hire skilled contractors to remove these trees. In addition to our management objective, LLNF staff will perform four years of avian and vegetation monitoring. The initial avian survey will happen before management activities have taken place and will document which bird species are using the area, based on the factors of relative abundance, occupancy, and evidence of reproduction. Particular emphasis will be placed on 24 grassland and heathland bird species that have been defined by the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan as being of conservation concern. The subsequent three years of avian monitoring will occur following management and will document changes to the bird species complex found in the area. Vegetation monitoring will follow a similar protocol with one season before management to describe current conditions and three seasons post-management to document change.

The Robert F. Schumann Foundation was established out of the belief that the environment is essential to sustain the future of the planet, that education is necessary to solve many

quality of life issues for society, and that arts and cultural programs offer society hope and the ability to dream. Mr. Schumann was an avid environmentalist and fought for open spaces where birds and other animals could maintain habitats and where people could enjoy nature. The Robert F. Schumann Foundation works to support his legacy by funding initiatives that promote environmental sustainability, with a special emphasis on projects that help advance knowledge of ornithology and protect open space habitats.

The LLNF is excited to begin this important work. By removing the invasive Japanese Black Pines, we are opening up the landscape and promoting growth of the native species found beneath the canopy cover. This restoration of native vegetation will provide critical habitat for several species of grassland and heathland birds, by increasing nest site, food, and shelter availability. Among all taxa of North American birds, grassland-dependent species are experiencing the sharpest population declines, so it is crucial that we act now to protect, restore, and expand these habitats.

Work is scheduled to begin this summer, starting with the initial pre-management survey of avian and vegetation populations. Removal of the invasive Japanese Black Pines is slated for this upcoming fall and winter, with exact timing dependent on weather and contractual obligations. Following management activities, LLNF staff will monitor the changes to species assemblages for the subsequent three years.

For additional inquiries, please reach out to Seth Engelbourg, Naturalist Educator and Program Manager. He can be reached via email at sengelbourg@llnf.org. We will also be posting project updates on our website at llnf.org.