



# The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 52, Number 2, Summer

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, the Bush administration's plan to permanently despoil the ANWR for a possible six months worth of crude oil that would take a decade to reach was soundly rejected by both Democrats and Republicans in a U.S. Senate vote of 54-46. This major victory for the environment was secured when a bipartisan majority in the U.S. Senate stuck together to uphold the Kerry-Lieberman filibuster. The filibuster meant that there were not be enough votes to conclude a discussion of drilling so that a vote could take place. This is clearly a victory that we all should celebrate.

Let's not lose sight of the fact that though we have won a major battle, we have not won the war. The Bush Administration is currently hard at work, planning for their next round of assaults on ANWR. As voting citizens, we must continue to oppose plans that are bankrupt of logic and reason. We must also continue to push our elected officials to vote against any rehashed plan to open up ANWR to drilling.

Instead, let us get our senators and representatives to begin a dialogue on alternative fuel sources, higher MPG ratings for vehicles, and improving and expanding mass transit across the nation's urban centers. In addition, we must promote keeping our cities healthy and vital, conserving our natural resources and preserving our unique natural areas such the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

John P. Askildsen, President BAS

## ABOUT BIRDS

By John Askildsen

The **Belted Kingfisher** is one of my favorite birds. At 8 inches long, dressed in slate-blue, a wild mane-like crest on the back of the head, and a wonderfully spiky bill, the Belted Kingfisher makes no bones about who he is, what he is, and where he is! He is no shrinking violet.

Every day, a pair of these birds frequents the ponds at Bylane. As I watch them course over the water, it strikes me that they really enjoy their ability to fly. The female, with her russet brown cummerbund, and the male, without, make their loud, rattling calls for all to take notice. They frequent the ponds in search of an unaware and unsuspecting fish that might be near the surface. Without hesitation, the Kingfisher dives headfirst into the pond, usually emerging with his or her quarry. When not searching the ponds for food, the Kingfisher couple may be found on a nearby branch, or atop the red cedar next to the ponds. Always with one eye on the water!

Kingfishers have a unique style of nesting. Unlike other birds of its size, the Kingfisher digs a burrow in an earthen cliff face. This burrow may not be near water, but you can be assured that water is not too far as the Kingfisher flies. The next time you are near a lake and hear a low-toned, but loud rattle-like call, look out over the water for a Belted Kingfisher. Their carefree attitude is not characteristic of many birds, outside of hawks and owls. After seeing one, you might decide that the Belted Kingfisher is one of your favorite birds too.

## The Quarterly Bulletin Summer 2002

Volume 52, No. 2

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35 Todd Road, Katonah, NY 10536

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(All telephone numbers are area code 914 unless otherwise indicated.)

### Hotlines

New York City/Long Island Rare Bird Alert—212-979-3070  
BAS Hotline, Chapter Activities 914-232-1999  
BAS Fax Number 914-232-5038  
BAS Website; [www.Bedfordaudubon.org](http://www.Bedfordaudubon.org)  
Our E-Mail address is: [Info@Bedfordaudubon.org](mailto:Info@Bedfordaudubon.org)

### Our Mission

The mission of the Bedford Audubon Society is to promote conservation and protection of wildlife habitats in the northern Westchester and eastern Putnam region through education, advocacy, nature study and birdwatching.

## BAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- |         |        |  |
|---------|--------|--|
| 6/1     | 3pm    | <i>Babes in the Woods</i><br>with Steve Ricker   |
| 6/2     | 7:30am | <i>Bird Walk at Muscoot Farm</i> with Jeanne Waful   |
| 6/8     | 8am    | <i>Bartholomew's Cobble</i><br>with Steve Ricker   |
| 6/12    | 7:30pm | <i>Reptiles and Amphibians of the Hudson Valley</i><br>with Peter Warny<br>Katonah Village Library |
| 6/15    | 10am   | <i>Butterfly Walk at Pound Ridge</i> with Bill Wallace   |
| 6/15-16 |        | <i>Summer Bird Count</i>   |
| 6/23    | 8am    | <i>Bird Walk at Muscoot Farm</i> with Jeanne Waful   |
| 7/28    | 9am    | <i>Bird Walk at Muscoot Farm</i> with Jeanne Waful   |
| 8/3     | 8:30pm | <i>Moths in the Moonlight</i><br>with Steve Walter   |
| 8/11    | 9am    | <i>Bird Walk at Muscoot Farm</i> with Jeanne Waful   |
| 8/11    | 7am    | <i>Shorebirds and Butterflies at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge</i>                                   |

To learn about changes and additions to our list of events,  
sign up for email notification  
at our website: [www.BedfordAudubon.org](http://www.BedfordAudubon.org)

## BYLANE FARM UPDATE AND WISH LIST

As many of you recall, I wrote about the wonderful gift of the land and farmhouse in Katonah that the late Mary Welsh Parker gave to the Society. Your Board of Directors is working feverishly to establish an agenda for programs and other uses of the property. Repairs, restorations and upgrades to the house, and a capital campaign to allow funding for these items is necessary so that the property will be usable for the purposes of the Society and its members.

How can you help? First of all, the house is in need of furniture and other household items. We ask all members to consider making a donation. The only thing we ask is that the items be new or gently used, and be of a style in keeping with our 300 year-old homestead. Our needs include:

- Large dining table and chairs
- Love seat or small sofa
- Living room chairs (upholstered)
- Sofa pillows
- Rocking chair (s)
- End tables, cocktail tables
- Large folding tables (the type that seats eight)
- Twin bed mattresses
- Quilts for twin beds (cotton or down)
- Floor and table lamps
- Area rugs, hall and stair runners
- Wall-to-wall carpeting (15'x15' or larger)
- Wall hangings
- Matching sets of wall sconces
- Matching sets of dishes
- Silverware
- Cocktail and wine glasses
- Patio furniture (chairs, tables, etc.)
- Lawn chairs
- Folding chairs
- Wicker furniture (for use on a covered terrace)
- Gardening tools
- Household generator

Bylane's late 60's vintage, "Farm-All" Cub Cadet farm tractor has served its owners well over its long life and is ready to retire. If you're getting out of the farming business, and your tractor needs a good home, please let us know.

Naturally, all gifts are tax-deductible. Please contact John Askildsen at 914 232-1701 if you have any questions or wish to make an inquiry about a particular wish on our long list!

On March 13, BAS presented a program entitled “What’s the Buzz,” A number of our members were looking forward to hearing about bees from the voice of a master. Crystal Johnson was one of our most enthusiastic participants that evening. Here’s her follow-up story. Thanks, Crystal.

## **BEE DAY**

By Crystal Johnson

My queen and her 2,000 ladies-in-waiting arrived under the charge of one slightly nervous UPS driver on April 16th. He had nothing to fear as they were all tightly locked within a wooden and screen cage for his leg of the journey. I, however, was the one who would have to release them, and on one of the hottest April days on record.

I had attended the Bedford Audubon Society lecture “What’s the Buzz” last month. I had re-read the book *The Queen and I* by Ed Weiss for the second time, highlighting, dog-earring and committing to memory the pertinent pages. I had my hive, sugar-water syrup, hammer, gloves and netted hat ready. However, in spite of the preparation, I was facing the most terrifying experience of my life, and my dread continued to build as I waited for the cool of the evening to finally hive my bees.

Well, it turned out that all that anxiety was for nothing. No stings, no mishaps. I was, I know, less graceful at the entire procedure than described in the book. I fear I may have squashed a few of my workers in the process. But all in all, it was quite uneventful, culminating in an anticlimactic sit-around-and-wait situation until next week, when I get to crack open the hive lid and see what my girls have accomplished in their new home.

So now I have pollen patties stored in my freezer and my first bee war story to tell and I am starting feel like a real beekeeper. Interested in learning more? Below are a few tips from the Back Yard Beekeepers Association on how you can get started in the world of beekeeping.

Autumn: Join a beekeepers club, attend meetings, latch on to a mentor and subscribe to a journal such as *Bee Culture*. Winter: Read books and more journals on the subject,

order supplies, build and paint hives, select a site for your apiary and pre-order packaged bees for spring delivery (Do this by February to avoid being disappointed; bees sell out fast!). Spring: Your bees arrive! Attend hands-on workshops and lectures that will provide valuable info that you can apply to your apiary.

## **RESOURCES**

Back Yard Beekeepers Association

Meetings held at the Weston Library in Weston CT, open to the public, no charge.

Phone: (203) 853-7177

Website:

[www.backyardbeekeepers.com](http://www.backyardbeekeepers.com)

Bee-Commerce.com Beekeeping supplies, books and bees for sale. Everything you need to get started. Website: [www.bee-commerce.com](http://www.bee-commerce.com)

## **From the Membership Committee**

Looking for a way to contribute to Bedford Audubon, but don’t have a lot of time? Each summer, Bedford Audubon staffs an educational exhibit at the Putnam 4-H Fair held in Veteran’s Memorial Park in the town of Kent (the southeastern section of Putnam County is covered by Bedford Audubon).

Our table puts a special emphasis on information about Audubon, and fun activities for kids with stuff like paw prints to make, drawing material, and raptor wing spans to measure themselves against. This year’s date is Saturday, July 27th, and we will be there from 10am to 4 pm.

You don’t have to be an expert, you don’t have to be a resident of Putnam County (though we’d love to have some of our members from that neck of the woods join us), and you don’t have to be there all day. An hour or two would be wonderful. We would especially appreciate some help with set up at 9:30am and some coverage from 12-2pm. Our tent features lots of entertainment for kids, so you won’t even need a babysitter. If you think you can contribute some time, please e-mail me at [jbruskin@bedfordaudubon.org](mailto:jbruskin@bedfordaudubon.org) or leave a message at 914-232-1999.

Jackie Bruskin

## COMMUNICATIONS TOWERS AND MIGRATING BIRDS

by Jane Grant

Spring is here, and birders are joyfully watching the return of the many beautiful birds that winter in the tropics but return every year to breed and fill their ecological niches in North America. The “flight of angels” - as migration is sometimes known - is one of the most magnificent spectacles and sophisticated achievements in the natural world. But it is a long and arduous journey, fraught with dangers. One increasing hazard - in particular for the approximately 350 species that migrate at night - is collision with tall buildings as the Communication Tower. Lighted towers are especially dangerous.

When birds encounter lighted structures, their nocturnal navigation systems can become disorientated. They circle the structure repeatedly, reluctant to leave the lighted area. Many collide with the guy wires, or with the tower itself, or with each other. Based on studies conducted over many years, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that at least four million birds - and perhaps as many as forty million - are killed in this manner every year during spring and fall migrations.

Many of the birds killed belong to species whose numbers are already in decline. They include the Golden-winged Warbler, Bell’s Vireo, Bachman’s Sparrow, Black Rail, and many others. Worse, the numbers and species reported are only the tip of the iceberg. Studies have been conducted only at a small minority of towers, and most bird carcasses are quickly scavenged by predators.

While mortality may be low on some nights studied, it can reach drastic proportions under certain weather conditions such as fog. On one foggy, snowy night in 1998, between 5,000 and 10,000 Lapland Longspurs died at a single 420-foot tower in western Kansas.

Lights are required by the Federal Aviation Authority on all towers higher than 200 feet and any within three miles of an airport. In June 2000 there were just under 50,000 lit towers nationwide, and now there are more than 60,000. Industry projections are that there may be as many as 100,000 new towers built in the next decade. In New York State the number of towers has doubled since the 1980s.

The good news is that the impact of the studies along with large kills such as the one in Kansas, and the proliferation of new towers nationwide, have brought the issue to the attention of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, conservation organizations - including The Audubon Society - and birders everywhere. Through such groups as The Communication Towers Working Group and Partners in Flight, conservationists are working with state and federal agencies and the communications industry, to improve awareness and to implement measures that will reduce these tragic deaths.

In addition, the US Fish and Wildlife Service recently issued a set of guidelines for the siting and construction of new towers. The guidelines include simple measures, such as co-locating towers wherever possible, keeping as many towers as possible under 200 feet and therefore unlit, using monopoles or lattice structures to avoid the need for guy wires, and not siting towers in or near wetlands, migratory flyways, or other known bird concentration areas. The guidelines should be of great help in balancing the need for new towers with their environmental impact.

At the local level, municipalities and counties can help protect migratory birds by taking account of these guidelines when considering Applications or passing ordinances concerning new tower construction. Last January, Brevard County, Florida, passed a model bird-friendly ordinance for tower siting and construction.

Bedford Audubon Society has recently set up a Cell Tower and Wildlife Subcommittee and passed a resolution to promote awareness of the issue among the public, local municipalities, and county and state authorities. By encouraging implementation of simple conservation measures, we can help preserve many individual birds and continue to look forward to “the flight of angels” every spring and fall.

For further information see <http://www.towerkill.com> and <http://migratorybirds.fws.gov/issues/towers/comtow.html>, You may also contact Jane Grant, who is chair of the conservation committee’s new Cell Towers & Wildlife Subcommittee, at 914-764-4241 or [celltowers@bedfordaudubon.org](mailto:celltowers@bedfordaudubon.org) .

**Volunteers Wanted!**  
**No Experience Necessary!**

Please consider volunteering to join one of the following committees. We would gladly accept anyone who has even a small amount of time to give monthly.

Public Relations/Publicity Committee

Conservation Committee

Field Trip Committee

Sanctuary Committee (Clearing trails, posting signs, carpentry skills)

Program Committee

To learn more about how you can volunteer, please call:

Jackie Jones at 914 666-2057 or  
JJones@BedfordAudubon.org,

John Askildsen at 914 232-1701, or  
JAskildsen@BedfordAudubon.org

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**BAS**  
**PROGRAMS/FIELD TRIPS**

**Babes in the Woods  
with Steve Ricker  
Saturday, June 1, 3:00 pm**

At this time of year, the woods are alive with young animals, birds, and even plants. Participants will go on a leisurely hike while Westmoreland Sanctuary Director, Steve Ricker, shows us the secret places where young ones are hiding. All ages are welcome.

This program is cosponsored by Westmoreland Sanctuary, and will meet at the Westmoreland Museum, at 260 Chestnut Ridge Rd., Mt. Kisco. For more information call Westmoreland at 914 666- 8448.

**Bird Walks at Muscote Farm  
with Jeanne Wafal**

Sunday, June 2, 7:30am: Bird Songs  
Sunday, June 23, 8am: Bird & Breakfast  
Sunday, July 28, 9am: Habitats  
Sunday, August 11, 9am: Muscote Mountain - visit an area that is usually off limits.

All bird walks will last approximately two hours. Bring binoculars and dress for hiking—appropriate footwear and tick protection needed. The bird walks are sponsored by Westchester County Department of Parks. Jeanne is an active member of Bedford Audubon Society, and is in the second year of monitoring the breeding bird species at Muscote.

**Bartholomew's Cobble  
with Steve Ricker  
in nearby Massachusetts,  
Saturday, June 8, 8 am**

Registration: Ginny Powers at 914 764-4320

Join Steve as we explore the unique limestone rock formations from which this natural area gets its name. Along the way, identify ferns,

wildflowers, and birds that enrich the area. This is an all-day trip. Bring a bag lunch. We will meet at exit 4 off Route 684, commuter parking lot on Route 172 at 8:00 am.

**Wednesday, June 12, 7:30pm**  
**Katonah Village Library**  
**Reptiles and Amphibians of the**  
**Hudson Valley**  
**with herpetologist Peter Warny**

Peter is a research associate at the New York State Museum in Albany N.Y. and assistant curator at the Long Island Reptile Museum. Peter has been studying the behavior and habits of snakes, turtles, frogs and salamanders since childhood. His slide lecture presentation will focus on his field trips in N.Y. and N.J., as former zoologist with the Nature Conservancy and N.Y. Natural Heritage Program. He will discuss the reptiles and amphibians of the Hudson Valley and ongoing ecology and conservation projects. **Peter will also bring along some of his creatures for a close up look. Another great program for the kids!**

**Butterfly Walk at Pound Ridge**  
**with Bill Wallace,**  
**Saturday, June 15, 10:00 am**

Registration: Ginny Powers @ 914 764-4320

A pastime that is growing in popularity among nature lovers is watching butterflies. Join Bill Wallace as we explore the meadows of Pound Ridge Reservation in search of these dainty beauties. If we are lucky, we may see the somewhat elusive Harris' Checkerspot. Binoculars may be helpful.

**Summer Bird Count**  
**Saturday & Sunday, June 15 & 16**

Registration: John Askildsen @ 914 232-1701

Bedford Audubon will join forces with our neighboring chapter, Saw Mill River Audubon

Society, to conduct the Greenwich Stamford Summer Bird Count. Our territory covers Armonk, Chappaqua, Millwood, Mount Kisco, and Bedford. There will be a brief compilation on Saturday at Bylane Farm in Katonah, and then the entire count compilation will be conducted in Greenwich on Sunday, June 16<sup>th</sup>.

**Moths in the Moonlight**  
**with Steve Walter**  
**Saturday, August 3, 8:30pm**

Registration: Ginny Powers @ 914 764-4320

Although scientists have a good understanding of butterflies, the world of moths is a different story. There are many species of moths that have not been described for science, even in our region of the world. Some moths are just as beautiful as their daytime relatives, but go unnoticed due to their nocturnal tendencies. Join Steve Walter and Bedford Audubon for an evening of "moth watching" and identification in the fields of Bylane Farm in Katonah. Since no moth species have ever been documented at the sanctuary, everything we identify will be new to the list!

**Shorebirds and Butterflies at Jamaica Bay**  
**Wildlife Refuge**  
**Sunday, August 11, 7am**

Registration: Ginny Powers @ 914 764-4320

Jamaica Bay wildlife Refuge in Queens, NYC is a mecca in late summer for migrating shorebirds and land birds. Butterflies also abound this time of year. The scrubby fields around the Visitor's Center are covered with butterflies of every description, nectaring on the late summer bloom. This is an all-day trip. Pack a lunch and join us.

### New Member Application

*I would like to join the Bedford Audubon Society (a chapter of National Audubon).*

Send this form with a check made out to the  
**National Audubon Society, Bedford Chapter.**

*Please check the membership category.*

\_\_\_ Introductory \$20, \_\_\_ Two Year membership \$35, \_\_\_ Senior Citizen (65+) \$15, \_\_\_ Student \$15

I wish to make an additional donation of \_\_\_\_\_

I do not wish to have my name or contact information shared with outside organizations.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: Bedford Audubon Society  
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Katonah, NY 10536

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