



# The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 52, Number 4, Winter 2003  
*Celebrating 90 Years of Conservation 1913-2002*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

The **103<sup>rd</sup> Annual Christmas Bird Count season** is quickly approaching, and I'd like to ask you to consider joining in on a count near you this winter. There are four counts that are conducted in our area. The Peekskill Count takes in much of northern Westchester from the Hudson River to I-684. The Putnam Count takes in the entire County from the Hudson River east to Carmel and Kent. The Hidden Valley Count takes in Brewster and Patterson, and the Greenwich-Stamford Count takes in parts of Bedford and Armonk.

Now, you may feel that on a cold winter's day, the last thing you'd want to be doing is being outside in the elements counting birds. I say, that after participating in a count, you may well feel differently. Not only does the data collected provide important information on the wintering patterns of North American bird populations, but it's also fun! Yes, barging through the wintry landscape in search of birds with your fellow birdwatchers, in places you'd normally not think of checking for birds can yield some very interesting results.

How many chickadees have you ever counted in a day? Have you ever really stopped to count those ducks you pass by on the reservoir every day? A Carolina Wren pops out of a winterberry bush, chirping and bubbling away in song. A Barred Owl flushes from a local Spruce grove next to a swamp that you thought would never have anything of interest in it. These are typical finds on a Christmas Bird Count.

Now if you really can't get out to join the count in the field, there is one other option. If you live in a count circle and you feed birds, you can count the birds coming into your feeder and in your yard and submit those numbers to your local count.

Whether you counted in the field, or from the comfort of your home on count day, all participants are invited to come to the compilation. This is probably the most fun of all. Everyone gets together at the day's end and provides a count of each species they identified, and how many they saw. "I saw 12 chickadees!", "I had a goshawk", and "We found 20 Turkeys!" are just a sample of how the countdown goes. Although there is no standard, most counts are also a potluck dinner of some sort with mulled cider or piping hot glug waiting to be consumed by chilled and hungry birdwatchers. So I ask, how can you possibly resist? We'd love to have you join us no matter what your skill level is.

For more information on the local Counts, where to call for information, and how to sign up, visit the Bedford Audubon website at [www.bedfordaudubon.org](http://www.bedfordaudubon.org) and click on "CBCs" or call Bedford Audubon at 914 232-1999. You won't be sorry you did!

Happy Holidays to All!

John Askildsen  
President

# The Quarterly Bulletin Winter 2003

Volume 52, No. 4

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Chapter Activities 914-232-1999  
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 Our E-Mail address is: [Info@BedfordAudubon.org](mailto:Info@BedfordAudubon.org)  
 New York City/Long Island Rare Bird Alert—212-979-3070

## 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

12/4	9 am	Croton Point Park Bird Walk
12/11	7:30 pm	<i>Members' Slide Show</i> Katonah Village Library
12/14		Peekskill Christmas Bird Count
<b>2003</b>		
1/5		Putnam County Christmas Bird Count
1/8	7:30 pm	<i>This Fine Piece of Water</i> Katonah Village Library
1/11	8 pm	Owls by Night
1/12	7:30 am	Birding Long Island's North Shore: Shu Swamp to Lloyd's Neck
1/19	8 am	A Hudson River Trip: Croton Point to Bear Mountain
1/26		Breakfast with the Birds at Westmoreland Sanctuary
1/26	8 am	Owls By Day
1/31-2/2		Catskill Bald Eagle Weekend
2/8	7 am	Birding the Eastern Connecticut Shore: Hammonasset to Old Saybrook
2/9	10 am	Sunday Morning Hike
2/12	7:30 pm	<i>Deer Tales: Deer-Proofing Your Landscape</i> Katonah Village Library
2/22	7:30 am	"Birding Hotspots" in Rye and Greenwich
3/12	7:30 pm	<i>The Itsy Bitsy Spiders!</i> Katonah Village Library



The Jack and Louisa Baur Memorial Trail was dedicated on October 19<sup>th</sup>, in the presence of the Baur family pictured here, along with some of their friends, and members of the Bedford Audubon Society Board of Directors. The memorial trail connects to the BAS Ramsey Hunt Sanctuary blue trail, meandering through fields to a wooded ridge with beautiful stone outcroppings. The trail provides a link from Todd Road in Lewisboro, to the Mt. Holly area in Katonah, where the Baur family raised their family.

## ABOUT BIRDS

By Tait Johansson

**Nuthatches** are droll little birds, entertaining backyard birdwatchers with their habit of making their way through life upside down as they search for tiny invertebrates and seeds hidden in crevices in the bark of trees. They are also frequent visitors to feeders throughout the northeastern U.S., often taking sunflower seeds, the hulls of which they peck open with several direct blows with their long, pointed bill.

This method of opening seeds and nuts is probably the origin of the bird's name, since "nuthatch" is a corruption of "nut-hack". Nuthatches hack at nuts to open them and do not, as the name suggests, try to incubate them in their nests in place of their eggs, which habit would have put an end to nuthatches long ago.

There are two species of nuthatches in New York State, by far the more common in our area being the White-breasted Nuthatch. The **White-breasted Nuthatch** is a small bird, only a little larger and stockier than a chickadee, with a similar plumage: largely white underparts, a gray back, wings, and tail, and a black to dark gray cap. Nuthatches, however, have longer bills than chickadees, and can be immediately picked out by their different foraging techniques: while a chickadee may land on the trunk of a tree, it will never continue "hitching" its way along it with its feet the way a nuthatch does.

The **Red-breasted Nuthatch** is smaller than the White-breasted and, similarly, has mostly gray upper parts and a black cap, but is a warm orangish-salmon color underneath, and with a dark eye-stripe separated from the cap by a white line.

White-breasted Nuthatches are common permanent residents in our area, favoring deciduous woodlands, especially areas with good numbers of oaks and other nut-bearing trees, but can be found in quite suburban areas as well. The Red-breasted Nuthatch, while present as a breeder in a very few isolated locales in this area, is found in most places here only in fall through early spring. This species favors coniferous trees for breeding, but uses a wide variety of wooded habitats at other times of year.

Red-breasted Nuthatches often "irrupt" south from their main breeding range to our north when their main food, conifer seeds, is scarce. These irregular incursions result in much variability in their numbers here from year to year. Even in a good Red-breasted Nuthatch winter, however, their larger, more southern white-breasted relatives still almost always outnumber them.

## FALL NATURE NOTES FROM BYLANE

By Tait Johansson

At Bedford Audubon's new headquarters at Bylane Farm on Todd Road in Lewisboro, signs of fall have been everywhere apparent in the past few weeks. The upper fields, now rusty-colored with little bluestem grass, have recently (Oct. 21–23) seen large numbers of ruby-crowned kinglets and some palm warblers, often foraging along the newly opened Jack and Louisa Baur Memorial Trail.

The kinglets characteristically use a foraging technique called "hover-gleaning", where they briefly hover in front of a plant (often showy goldenrod) and pick insect prey off of it, instead of trying to land on a stem too weak to support their weight.

Along the edges of the fields and in brushier areas, numbers of white-throated sparrows and dark-eyed juncos have been swelling as they move down from the north, joined by the occasional swamp sparrow in wetter areas.

Tufted titmouse and chickadee foraging flocks are now carefully picking their way through the woods, primarily in search of insect eggs, small seeds and other tiny edibles found on trees. The flocks are often augmented by smaller numbers of brown creepers, golden-crowned kinglets, downy woodpeckers, and white-breasted nuthatches, and sometimes the occasional migrating warbler will join them briefly before moving on south. The few warblers still present are mostly yellow-rumpeds and palms, most other species having already migrated south in August and September.

The butterflies, too, are almost gone now, with only the occasional orange sulphur still active in the fields on warmer, sunny days. But October 2 and 3 saw the first records for the property of fiery skipper and sagem, respectively, two generally more southern skippers that often "immigrate" north of their core ranges in late summer and early fall. And back on Sept. 19, a monarch with a wing tag (# BAN 720) was captured (and re-released) at Bylane.

Monarchs are tagged nationwide as part of an effort to study their migratory patterns, and when "Monarch Watch" gets all its tagging data for this season together, they will let us know where our Monarch was tagged. BAN 720 is probably somewhere in the southern U.S. now, winging its way toward Mexico, the envy of many of us left behind up here, as it gets colder and colder with the waning of the year.

## SUET CAKES FOR BIRDS REVISITED

By Jackie Jones

Awhile back we printed a recipe for suet cakes that I had found on the Internet. You may recall I was having trouble locating lard, one of the key ingredients. Thanks to several of our readers I found that lard is available in local supermarkets on the dry goods shelves, not in the meat or dairy!

At this point I have made several batches of the suet cakes, which disappear as fast as I put them out. I use plastic molds from the store-bought variety, which I've collected from friends and past purchases, and I just keep recycling them.

This suet does not melt in the summer, and is enjoyed by just about every bird species that comes to the feeder

I have modified the recipe slightly to match the quantities in which the ingredients are typically packaged. I try to keep the ingredients on hand. Making suet cakes is the kind of thing you can do on those days when you need to do something to feel good about. Enjoy!

### Martha's Marvelous Suet for Birds

2 lb. lard  
1 40oz. jar crunchy peanut butter  
8 cups oats (half of the round 42 oz. container)  
1 2lb. bag cornmeal  
4 cups white flour (about 1 lb.)  
1 1/3 cups sugar

Melt the lard and peanut butter over low heat. Stir in the remaining ingredients and pour into square freezer containers about 1 1/2 inches thick to fit your suet basket. Store in

### Do You Like GREAT COFFEE and Protecting Birds?

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## GRANT AWARD FOR GREAT SWAMP

At a press conference on October 17<sup>th</sup>, the Friends of the Great Swamp (FROGS) announced that a coalition of conservation groups, which includes Bedford Audubon, has been awarded a Federal grant of over \$950,000 for open space land purchases in the Great Swamp of Putnam County.

With a two to one match by NY State, Putnam County and private sector donations, almost three million dollars will be set aside for land purchases in the Great Swamp's "South Flow"!

Congratulations go to Great Swamp activist and BAS Board member, Dr. Jim Utter, and many others, for working so hard on this project! But our work is not done yet. The "North Flow" in Dutchess requires the same protection.

## CAPE MAY WEEKEND By Anne Vajsabel

Cape May, NJ is known as the "crossroads of migration." Each fall, thousands of birds are funneled through the narrow strip of land at the end of NJ as they make their way south. Traditionally, birders also follow that path and converge upon Cape May each fall in search of waves of warblers and hordes of hawks.

On the first weekend in October, 19 of us gathered for BAS' annual Cape May trip. We hoped for winds from the north to propel the birds into our view. This time, we happened to be visiting during a warm weekend when the winds were fairly still and the air felt more like summer than fall. We added to our tans instead of to our bird-lists!

Nonetheless, we did have some close-up views of Peregrine Falcons, Sharp-shinned Hawks and Ospreys passing overhead, and a Swainson's Hawk perched in a tree. We also had great looks at some Parasitic Jaegers wheeling and diving just off shore.

The winds did pick up on Sunday morning, ushering in scores of Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers. All in all, we enjoyed a warm weekend with good birding and great company.

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)

## NOTES FROM THE HAWK WATCH By Sean Clawson

It is twenty past five on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October at the **Chestnut Ridge Hawk watch**. The sun has sunk low to the west casting the hills before me in an orange glow.

Dogwood, red maple and sugar maple have changed into brilliant autumn color and there is a definite crispness to the air. I have been here all day to count migrating raptors, to be witness to a truly remarkable spectacle in nature.

Here I have seen people from all age groups and backgrounds brought together in an appreciation of birds of prey. It has been especially exciting for me to see young people leave the hawk watch with a newfound love for birds.

In an age of TV's, computers, and automobiles, watching migratory hawks connects us with our home. It makes us residents of our landscape. May the people of this area continue to mark the change of seasons, and continue to connect with their home, by watching these magnificent birds of prey on their incredible flight south.

[Sean has been the BAS hawk watcher at the Chestnut Ridge Hawk Watch, at Butler Sanctuary, during this past season.]

### Do Your Holiday Shopping On- Line with BAS

If you're looking for that perfect gift to give someone special, why not give Bedford Audubon's On-Line Nature Store a try! There are over 7,000 unique gift items to select from, and best of all you can shop right from the comfort of your own home. In addition, you'll be supporting Bedford Audubon Society as well! Just log onto [www.bedfordaudubon.org](http://www.bedfordaudubon.org) and click

## PROGRAMS

**Member's Slide Show**  
**Katonah Village Library**  
**Wednesday, December 11, 7:30 pm**

Members who have slides of anything related to nature are asked to bring from one to ten of their favorites. We're not looking for great art. We just want to share some of your favorite, unusual, or lucky shots. This will be a holiday gathering of members and friends, as well, with special refreshments which you can add to if you like. Call Jackie Jones, 666-2057, if you have any questions.

**This Fine Piece of Water**  
**Katonah Village Library**  
**Wednesday, January 8, 7:30 pm**

In discussing the environmental history of the Long Island Sound, Tom Andersen will weave current events, natural history and environmental history to tell the story of how the Sound changed from being one of our richest estuaries to one of our most degraded-and, most importantly, *what is being done to save it*.

Tom Andersen is coordinator of the Westchester Land Trust's Open Space Alliance project. He lives in Pound Ridge, NY with his wife and two children, where he is chairman of the town's open space acquisitions committee. His recent book, "This Fine Piece of Water: An Environmental History of Long Island Sound" (Yale University Press) will be available for purchase and signing.

**Deer Tales: Deer-Proofing Your Landscape**  
**Katonah Village Library**  
**Wednesday, February 12, 7:30 pm**

Learn about environmental and biological factors which influence deer and their choice of food, that will assist you in developing a strategy for "deer-proofing" your landscape. In his slide presentation, Brad Roeller will highlight trees and shrubs that are inherently resistant to deer browsing, and provide us with the latest information about deer repellents and other methods of discouraging deer browsing.

Brad Roeller is Manager of Display Gardens and Grounds at the Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, NY. His strategies are drawn from over 25 years of investigating and evaluating environmentally sound gardening and landscaping practices.

**The Itsy Bitsy Spiders!**  
**Katonah Village Library**  
**Wednesday, March 12, 7:30 pm**

Don't miss this one! Ted Gilman returns with an illustrated talk about the amazing world of spiders. We have them in our yards, we have them in our homes, and they come in many shapes and sizes. They are very special eight-legged hunters and engineers.

Ted Gilman has served as an environmental education specialist at the Audubon Center in Greenwich, Connecticut since 1977. A life long birder and naturalist, Ted enjoys sharing his knowledge and opening eyes to the wonderful world of nature. Be sure to bring the kids!

### **BIRD WITH A PURPOSE!**

Be sure to mark your calendars for the annual *Great Backyard Bird Count*, which will take place on February 14-17, 2003. The GBBC is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Spend as little or as much time as you like counting birds in your back yard, local park, or other natural area. You can count on any or all of the four days. Just be sure to report your data.

All of the information is collected over the Internet. Go to <http://birds.cornell.edu>, click on "What We Do", then Citizen Science, and scroll down to Great Backyard Bird Count.

This is a great website! Be prepared to spend more than a few minutes there.

## FIELD TRIPS

**Registration:** Please call Ginny Powers at (914) 764-4320 to register for all field trips unless otherwise noted.

### **Croton Point Park**

**Wednesday, December 4, 9 am**

Join Jackie Jones for a morning bird walk at Croton Point. There should be some newly arrived waterfowl to view, and some late fall holdovers, such as sparrows and hawks at the Park on the day!

### **Peekskill Christmas Bird Count**

**Saturday, December 14**

Join in with Bedford Audubon to participate in one of birdwatching's oldest institutions: The Audubon Christmas Bird Count! Teams will be formed so team members may comb the countryside for wintering birds. Join us! No experience necessary!

### **Putnam County Christmas Bird Count**

**Sunday, January 5**

### **Owls By Night**

**Saturday, January 11, 8 pm**

Listen for hoots and howls of the local population with John Askildsen and Tait Johansson.

### **Birding Long Island's North Shore: Shu Swamp to Lloyd's Neck**

**Sunday, January 12, 7:30 am**

The north shore of Long Island is the wintering home to many birds because of the diversity of habitats that may be found there, despite the intense development of the last 75 years. John Askildsen and Mary Normandia will lead.

### **A Hudson River Trip: Croton Point to Bear Mountain**

**Sunday, January 19, 8 am**

The Hudson hosts numerous ducks, eagles and other birds considered to be rare in the region, such as Black Vulture and Common Raven. Join John Askildsen for a morning ride "up the river" in search of the river's wild-life!

### **Breakfast with the Birds at Westmoreland Sanctuary**

**Sunday, January 26**

Learn to identify the local feeder birds! Great for children, too.

**Registration and Information:** Call Westmoreland at (914) 666-8448

### **Owls By Day**

**Sunday, January 26, 8 am**

Search for Owls in the NYC Metropolitan area with John Askildsen and Tait Johansson. We'll search evergreen groves, dunes and weeds for wintering owls!

### **Catskill Bald Eagle Weekend**

**Friday, January 31–Sunday February 2**

It's that time again for our annual Bald Eagle weekend extravaganza! Join John Askildsen to see more Bald Eagles closer than you've ever expected to see them! The cost for this trip is \$145 per person for a single room, \$110 per person double occupancy. Rate includes two nights lodging, wine and cheese Friday evening, and All meals Saturday through Sunday lunch.

### **Birding the Eastern Connecticut Shore:**

#### **Hammonasset to Old Saybrook**

**Saturday, February 8, 7 am**

This is a new trip for BAS, therefore, we have asked an Audubon friend and local birding expert, Gina Nichol of Branford, to co-lead our group along with John Askildsen. There will be an opportunity to stop at a great "Bird" store and lunch will be taken at one of the local shore restaurants.

### **Sunday Morning Hike**

**Sunday, February 9, 10 am**

Join Tait Johansson for a hike through one of the BAS sanctuaries. We'll be following the James Ramsey Hunt trails from North Salem Road to Bylane Farm on Todd Road. This will include the newly dedicated Baur Trail.

### **"Birding Hotspots" in Rye and Greenwich**

**Saturday, February 22, 7:30 am**

Join Bill Wallace for the morning as he checks out Rye Marshlands, Read Sanctuary, and Greenwich Point. Expect to see lots of waterfowl, and perhaps even a few land birds.

#### **Audubon magazine is seeking volunteers**

to assist in audio taping the contents of each issue for the benefit of our vision-impaired members. The taping will be done at our headquarters in Manhattan. Participants should have a clear, steady speaking voice and no strong regional accent. If you are interested in assisting with this effort, please contact Heidi DeVos at Audubon magazine (212-979-3138 or hdevos@audubon.org).

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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