



The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 53, Number 3, Fall 2003

Celebrating 90 Years of Conservation 1913-2003

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jackie Jones

On July 1, I assumed the office of president of the Bedford Audubon Society. That naturally led me to ponder my two decades of association with our organization, which began when I somehow wandered up to the hawk watch at Butler Sanctuary one afternoon those many years ago. There I was met by two young men, Frank Nicoletti and John Askildsen, who were soon to become my "birding buddies" and teachers. In their company, on the mud flats of Muscoot Reservoir, I learned to identify Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers and I learned that in the fall we could find White-crowned Sparrows on what was to become the IBM property in Somers.

Frank went on to become a hawk watcher of renown at many sites across the country. John and I became friends and continued to bird the local hotspots. Our interest in BAS as an environmental organization grew, and we were soon asked to join the Board of Directors.

Both John and I have held a number of offices during our association with BAS. John has served as president on more than one occasion, most recently for the past three years. They have been an extremely active three years, as BAS has struggled to balance its commitment to presenting quality programs and field trips for our members while creating a vision and establishing an endowment for the Parker Property which has been so generously gifted to our organization.

I want to thank John at this time, on behalf of BAS, for his leadership and commitment during his tenure. His devotion to our mission and goals has helped to make BAS a more vital and relevant organization. As the new president of BAS, I'm committed to building on what he and the Board of Directors have begun.

While I feel honored to represent an organization that has remained committed to conservation for the past ninety years, I also recognize that that didn't happen with one or two leaders, or a Board of Directors. It happened, as you already know, because there are many individuals in our community who have pitched in where and when they could, for varying amounts of time. If you've been one of them, you have helped to preserve over five hundred acres of sanctuary land, provided grade school children with feeder watch programs, provided quality bird seed for our feathered friends, published informative newsletters and taught many of our citizens about their environment through the programs and field trips you supported.

I've come to realize that I have remained active in BAS and assumed the office of president, although I know it will be difficult, because twenty plus years ago I joined a community of like minded people who care about the world around them. People who want to be sure the creatures and magical places they love will exist for future generations to enjoy. I love being part of that community. It's one of the things that makes life worth living. If you are one of the people who have pitched in to help our organization where and when you could, you already know that being a member of such a community of friends is the gift you receive in return for your efforts.

As we stand on the threshold of our tenth decade, wondering what Bedford Audubon will look like at one hundred years of age, we invite you to join our community if you haven't yet done so. We need your help in order to fulfill our mission of promoting conservation and protection of wildlife habitat in our Chapter area. There will always be a need for volunteers in our organization. Just make the phone call to let us know that you want to be involved even in some small way, and we will find a fit for your interests and talents. We're waiting to hear from you!

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Fall 2003, Volume 53, No. 3

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Bedford Audubon Society, Inc.
35 Todd Road, Katonah, NY 10536

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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

9/10	7:30 p.m.	Fall Mushrooms: Sometimes Edible, Sometimes NOT! / Katonah Village Library Garden Room
9/13	9:00 a.m.	Pruyn Sanctuary Tour with Anne Swaim
9/20	11:00 a.m.	Hudson Valley Raptor Center Tour
9/27	2:00 p.m.	Mushroom Walk at Trailside Museum in Ward Pound Ridge Reservation
10/3-5		Cape May, New Jersey Weekend
10/8	7:30 p.m.	Things of Nature Around the World / Katonah Village Library
10/18	7:00 a.m.	Jamaica Bay Field Trip
10/25	9 a.m.-4p.m.	Seed Sale Pick-up at Bedford Hills Town Park
11/12	7:30 p.m.	Westchester County, One Billion Years of Geologic History/ Katonah Village Library
11/15	10:00 a.m.	The Geology of the Hunt-Parker Sanctuary
12/3	7:30 p.m.	Member's Slide Show and Holiday Celebration / Katonah Village Library
12/14-1/5		Christmas Bird Counts



Mushrooms by Rosemary Gilbert Bell

New Email List

Bedford Audubon has a new email list for notices regarding **local conservation issues and alerts**. Join this new listserv to receive notices regarding local conservation issues, as well as notices about state or national issues that may affect our region. Many of the notices will inform you of local hearings or public comment periods on issues that you can participate in as a member of the general public and as a member of Bedford Audubon Society. To join, go to www.bedfordaudubon.org and click on BAS Conservation Email List.

Bylane Nature Notes

By Tait Johansson

May and June at Bylane, the Bedford Audubon headquarters in Lewisboro, saw many returning and transient migrant birds. More easterly winds than usual brought us migrants that would perhaps normally have been following the coast instead. A Gray-cheeked Thrush spent a full week by a woodland seep in back of the cottage here, often giving its wild, reedy song, even in the middle of the day. This species breeds far to our north in the scrubby transition zone between boreal forest and tundra. Many warblers that breed to our north also passed through here on their way in May, including Nashville, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Black-poll, and Canada Warblers, usually only present for a day or two, leaving in the night to continue their journey.

Although our fields at Bylane are too small to support a breeding population of Bobolinks, two males stayed for a few days in May, giving their bubbly, clinking flight song from opposing fields. There seemed more cuckoos, both Black-billed and Yellow-billed, in evidence this year than last, perhaps because of a plentiful supply of tent caterpillars. One Black-billed Cuckoo sang from a shade tree in the garden for a day, but elected not to stay for the summer. Birds migrating high overhead included flocks of Brant on three separate occasions in late May and early June, flying north on their way to the tundra, and a lone Common Loon in mid-May. The most rare bird of the spring, though, was a young male Summer Tanager on June 5th, a first record for the property.

After migration tapered off in early June, birds on nesting territories here included a Blue-winged Warbler in a brushy field west of the Parker house, and a pair of Hooded Warblers near the intersection of the Red and the White trails in the Hunt Sanctuary off North Salem road. The Hooded Warblers were a welcome sign, as they are a species in trouble in our area, having lost much of their under-story nesting habitat to severe deer browsing. For the second straight year, a young male Orchard Oriole spent June in the sugar maples around Bylane, but gave no evidence of nesting. The oriole was joined in the maples by a pair of Yellow-throated Vireos, one of which was seen carrying food for its young in June.

The cool, wet weather this late spring and early summer seemed to delay the hatching of many butterflies, and skippers in particular seemed fewer than last year, with the exception of the ubiquitous European Skipper, which covered milkweed flowers here in June. But Juvenal's Duskywing was added to the butterfly list in May, and good numbers of Black Dashes and Mulberry Wings were gracing our wet meadows in late July.

Notable reptiles this summer included a dead Northern Brown Snake found on the road, up to four Northern Water Snakes basking at the edge of the ponds, and a Garter Snake seen swallowing a small toad. The water snakes, some of which are quite large, can startle visitors to the ponds by remaining motionless until an

approaching person is nearly next to them and then suddenly splashing into the water to make their getaway.

Finally, as the summer progressed, the ponds saw as many as three Great Blue Herons hunting their shores and shallow waters, and on July 16, a southbound Solitary Sandpiper stopped by at the muddy shore of the larger pond, to foreshadow the coming fall migration.

Conservation News

By Don Pachner, Conservation Committee Chair

Our conservation message has been boosted this year by the efforts of our energetic new list master Barlow Humphreys. You can subscribe on our website to his stream of interesting local, regional and national information relating to birds and the environment, as well as occasional action alerts on issues important to Bedford Audubon. Go to www.bedfordaudubon.org to plug into the network!

On the Croton Watershed front, we have seen a victory and a defeat. At the moment, Donald Trump appears to have given in to community pressure and opposition by the Village of Mount Kisco to his plans for the Seven Springs Golf Course over Byram Lake, the sole drinking water source for the Village of Mount Kisco. Trump now trumpets a possible luxury housing development on the site; stay tuned! A rousing "thank you" to all who turned out at the public hearings to point out the serious flaws in his proposal!

The governor has signed into law a disturbing bill (A.8069/S.4791) that approves alienation of dedicated Van Cortlandt Park lands to site a large chemical filtration plant. We do not see any assurance in the legislation that the \$243 million promised to the Bronx will be used for park land around the proposed site, or that it will be used at all for accessible parks in the Bronx (we would have preferred that it be put into escrow before construction starts) or that the source of funds is in fact legitimate.

The legislation does require a supplemental environmental review and consideration of alternative sites on the Harlem River and in Westchester, but the feeling is that this is now a pro forma stamp of approval for a project that may have a pronounced impact on real estate dynamics in Westchester and Putnam Counties. Stay tuned for further developments and news of what you can do to help protect the wildlife habitat in our region.

Shop On-Line with BAS
go to www.bedfordaudubon.org and
click on "Nature Store."

History Notes

By Patricia Humphreys

In December 1948, a group of people interested in wildlife and conservation reorganized the Bedford Audubon Society, which had been inactive for about 25 years. They started with 35 members, and the Society quickly grew to 147 members in 1949 and 300 in 1951. As stated in the First Annual Report (May 6, 1949), “the general purpose of this Society shall be to strengthen the Audubon cause . . . toward the end that there be greater public appreciation of the value and need of conservation of our wildlife, plants, soil and water, . . . also to advance definite steps which will better protect and conserve these natural resources, particularly wildlife.” Some of the founders of this new branch were Robert J. Hamerslag (future founder of The Nature Conservancy), Stanley O. Grierson (a nature photographer), and Douglas C. Orbison (membership director at National Audubon). One of the earliest members of the Society and a member of the Conservation Committee was Mrs. Morgan Parker of Bylane. She was, of course, Mary Welsh Parker who made a generous gift of her 120-acre property and farmstead to Bedford Audubon Society in 2001.

To carry out its purpose, the Society immediately established committees for conservation, education, membership, programs and publicity. The Publicity Committee kept track of the articles printed in newspapers about Bedford Audubon. During 1951-1952, BAS released and published 59 separate stories, a very productive year.

The Conservation Committee mainly focused on obtaining environmental goals at the state and local government levels. Its first local endeavor was to conduct a campaign abolishing Bedford’s 1901 bounty law on raccoons, foxes, and woodchucks. The farmers viewed these animals as pests in the early 1900s. The Society accomplished its goal in the November 1951 referendum when the voters decided by 2-to-1 to repeal the law.

The Society accomplished many things in its early years such as setting up Junior Audubon Clubs at area schools, presenting nature films and nature talks in the “Audubon Room” at the Bedford Community Center. It also conducted member-led field trips, set up a nature bookshelf at the Mt. Kisco Library, started publishing the quarterly bulletin, and pursued conservation issues.

To end on a funny note, let me share with you a 1955 letter received by Douglas Orbison concerning membership qualifications. The writer said that a friend had told her that just paying annual dues was not enough for membership in the Audubon Society. To really be a member it was also “necessary to identify 125 birds by their calls, give the location of the birds, have the information certified and receive a card attesting to the same.” Obviously, her friend played a joke on her. I don’t know about you, but I know I could never qualify if those were the requirements.

Donations

The Bedford Audubon Society has received a donation of \$1000 from the New York unit of The Herb Society designated for the garden at Bylane Farm, our property on Todd Road in Katonah.

Phyllis Tillinghast, who is in the process of downsizing her residence, has gifted Bedford Audubon with her entire collection of books on birds. They will provide the foundation for the library that will be housed at the BAS headquarters at Bylane. In addition, she has donated many lovely and useful kitchen and serving items for use at Bylane.

The Town of Lewisboro delivered 10 yards of mulch at no charge.

Bartlett Tree Experts removed a huge pile of Lilac trimmings from the garden at no charge

We are extremely grateful for these donations. We appreciate your support!



Great Blue Heron by Steven D’Amato

The Accipiters

By Tait Johansson

Each fall, ridge tops throughout the northeastern US play host to flights of migrating hawks. The most spectacular of these in our area are the flocks of Broad-winged Hawks that pass through in mid-September. But providing the most consistent flight throughout the fall hawk-watching season are the three species in the genus *Accipiter*; the Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Northern Goshawk. A steady stream, rather than a flood like that of the Broad-winged Hawks, the accipiter migration stretches from late August into November, with a peak in early to mid-October. Catching updrafts above ridges, migrating accipiters are often more easily seen closely than other, higher-soaring hawks. The bulk of our accipiter flight is made up of Sharp-shinned Hawks, with significant numbers of Cooper's, and a smattering of Northern Goshawks.

The accipiters, the so-called "true hawks," are structurally adapted for pursuing and catching other birds, and this distinctive structure allows the hawk watcher to identify them as members of this genus. All three accipiters, relative to other birds of prey, have long tails and short, rounded wings. This combination of traits enables these hawks to maneuver through trees and brush after their prey, the long tail acting as a rudder that lets them change direction abruptly, and the bluntness of their wings makes it possible to fly through smaller spaces in the foliage more easily.

Telling the three species apart is usually much harder than identifying a bird as an accipiter. Sharp-shinned Hawks and goshawks will seldom be confused, simply because they differ so greatly in size- sharp-shins range from the size of a Blue Jay to slightly bigger, and Northern Goshawks are about the size of a crow or larger. The main problem is telling the intermediate-sized Cooper's Hawk from the other two, and this can be very difficult. Even experienced birders make mistakes, and sometimes at fairly close range. Some general guidelines for telling Sharp-shinned and Cooper's (the two most commonly encountered species here) apart are as follows: on average, Sharp-shinned Hawks have a squared-off or notched tail tip, while Cooper's Hawks have a rounded end to the tail. When soaring, Sharp-shinned Hawks also show a slight bend in the leading edge of the wing, while the Cooper's holds the leading edges of its wings straight. This difference in soaring posture gives the Cooper's a stiff, rigid look, "like a flying cross", subtly different from the Sharp-shinned's more curved wing posture.

Further, there is often a difference in the manner in which the two species flap their wings, although using this trait for identification requires much comparative experience with the two species. The Cooper's Hawk tends to have a stiffer-winged appearance when it flaps compared to the Sharp-shinned, with less movement of the "wrists" of the wings.

One good site in the area for viewing this flight is the hawk-watching platform at the Nature Conservancy's Butler Sanctuary

on Chestnut Ridge Road in Bedford. Whether you become (or already are) an expert in accipiter identification, or are content to let most of them rocket by you unidentified, the autumn migration of these bold hunters is something not to be missed.

Changes To The BAS Board

By Anne Vajsabel

This summer, the members of the Bedford Audubon Society's Board of Directors have been kept busy with planning and organizing our schedule for the upcoming fall season. Our fiscal year begins July 1, and at that time new board members join us as retirees step aside. This year we are pleased to welcome Jackie Jones of Mt. Kisco as our new president. Jackie is familiar to anyone who has ever attended any BAS function because, through the years, she has been involved with almost everything we've done! She has always been a core supporter of this organization and there wasn't a better choice for the job. We're all pleased she was able to make the commitment and we'll give her our full support.

Charles McDuffie has stepped in to serve as Vice President. Anne Vajsabel will continue as Recording Secretary and will try her hand at the post of Newsletter Editor. Jack Seirup will now devote his energies to chairing the Sanctuary Committee and overseeing our 3 properties. Laurie Nevin is our new Treasurer. John Erickson will now be Corresponding Secretary.

John Askildsen, our president for the last three years, will now serve as Chair of the Development Committee. He will have some time to enjoy a well-earned break from the rigors of the presidency. We are still counting on John's experience and enthusiasm as we move forward in our many endeavors.

We are pleased to welcome Barlow Humpheys from Somers and Tony Ianiello from Katonah, to the Board. They are members who decided this year to join the BAS Board to help us work on our many ambitious projects. Tony will be arranging our Field Trips and Barlow is running our new Conservation List-Serve. Unfortunately, we have said goodbye to Drew Reynolds who has decided to leave the Board this year but will stay active on the Sanctuary Committee.

Pat Humphreys has accepted the post of historian/librarian for BAS. We bid a fond farewell to Nellie Balloffet who has been our historian for many years. Happily, Bobbie Reynolds will return to help Valerie Palen with the Hospitality chores. Brenda Freeman-Bates has asked to step down as Program Committee Chair but has graciously agreed to remain on the committee.

We are grateful for everyone's time and efforts on behalf of Bedford Audubon. We are truly fortunate to have many assets and many friends.

PROGRAMS

Fall Mushrooms: Sometimes Edible, Sometimes NOT!

**Garden Room, Katonah Village Library
Wednesday, September 10, 7:30 p.m.**

Late Summer and Fall are the best times to look for fleshy mushrooms. Rosalind Lomen will present an introduction to mycology emphasizing information on fall mushrooms that are curious, beautiful, poisonous, and *sometimes* edible. In order to identify a mushroom, we will discuss the spore bearing structures and the spore color as well as features such as shape, color, habitat, touch and smell. Some of the slides will feature beautiful images photographed by BAS member Ginny Weinland. There will be a follow-up walk at Pound Ridge Reservation on Saturday, September 27.

Dr. Lowen is a mycologist who has conducted research at the New York Botanical Garden for many years, is published in various mycology journals, and has given many programs for organizations throughout our area. She is presently working from her home, focusing her research on mold that occurs in buildings.

Things of Nature Around the World Katonah Village Library

Wednesday, October 8, 7:30 p.m.

Here comes an exciting program for the kids! Megan Wasp, Assistant Director of The Nature of Things is coming to visit with ten to twelve of her best animal friends. Have you ever seen a live Chinchilla? Tortoise? Iguana? Boa Constrictor? Do you know anything about their habitat? There are many animals around the world that are endangered because their habitat is endangered. Learn why habitat is important to animals and how you can help preserve their homes.

Westchester County, One Billion Years of Geologic History

Katonah Village Library

Wednesday, November 12, 7:30 p.m.

Here's a program we've wanted to bring to you for quite some time. Bring along your budding geologists and join us as Dr. John Moyle, President of Bronx River-Sound Shore Audubon Society, teaches us how the topography and rock structure of our county have been shaped by plate tectonic activity, sedimentary processes and glaciation. Local rock samples and slides will be used to help illuminate this fascinating history. See the Field Trip Schedule for a follow up hike through BAS's Hunt Sanctuary on November 15.

Members' Slide Show and Holiday Celebration Katonah Village Library

Wednesday, December 3, 7:30 p.m.

We're meeting a week earlier in the month to avoid getting in the way of other holiday events. 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. We'd be pleased if you'd like to contribute a special holiday treat to make our celebration one to remember. Call Jackie Jones, 914-666-2057, if you have any questions.

BAS Annual Seed Sale

The Bas Annual Bird Seed Sale is upon us again. This is one our biggest fund-raisers. It's your opportunity to buy good quality birdseed while supporting the many endeavors of your local Audubon Chapter. The funds raised help provide educational programs the community enjoys. The seed mixes bought through BAS have no "filler" seeds that are usually found in cheaper mixes, so there is very little waste. We urge you to buy as much seed as you need for the entire winter. We love to see large orders from as many people as possible, but, rest assured, it really does help us if many people buy at least one or two items.

As we experienced last year, winter can be harsh in our area. Food, water and shelter may be hard to come by for our feathered friends. Feeding birds offers you the opportunity to observe how different birds feed and interact. There's always the possibility of sighting a different or unusual species as they are attracted to your yard by the fine quality birdseed you provide. Maybe you'd like to try something new this year. We offer Niger Seed to attract the finches, and Safflower Seed which is very popular with cardinals, titmice, and chickadees, but not with squirrels.

The mailers will be going out by mid September. The orders are due back by **October 8**. Pickup of all seed orders is on **Saturday October 25** (rain or shine) between 9a.m. & 4 p.m. at Bedford Hills Memorial Park.

For Information or Order forms not received call:

Steve Ricker (914) 666-8448

sricker@bedfordaudubon.org

John Erickson (914) 273-6967

Jerickson@bedfordaudubon.org

FIELD TRIPS

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

Pruyn Sanctuary Tour with Anne Swaim Saturday, September 13, 9 a.m.

With three miles of woodland trails, Pruyn Sanctuary in Chappaqua, was established through the generosity of Dr. F. Morgan and Agnes Pruyn. Join Ann Swaim, Education Director & Staff Naturalist at the Saw Mill River Audubon Society, as she takes us on a tour of the woodlands of Pruyn. Then join SMRA members for a tour of the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden. Bring a picnic lunch!

Hudson Valley Raptor Center Tour Saturday, September 20, 11:00 a.m.

Located on 90 scenic acres in Dutchess County, the raptor center, in Stanfordville, NY, is a not-for-profit organization licensed to care for injured birds of prey. About 100 birds representing 20 species are in their care. Pack your lunch for a stop along the way, then join us for 1:00 pm tour, bird exhibits and a falconry demonstration at the raptor center.

Adults/\$7 Seniors & students/\$5 age 12 & under/\$2.50

Mushroom Walk at Trailside Museum in Ward Pound Ridge Reservation Saturday, September 27, 2:00 p.m.

As a follow-up to the mushroom program on September 10th at the Katonah Library, join us for a mushroom walk with Roz Lowen. Co-sponsored by BAS and The County of Westchester, Roz will guide us as we test out our new talents at finding and recognizing various mushrooms.

Cape May, New Jersey Weekend Friday October 3 – Sunday October 5

Cape May, NJ is one of the most renowned birding areas in the world. The peninsular geography and prevailing westerly winds create a migrant trap unmatched in eastern North America. Join us as we view warblers, shore birds, sea birds, monarch butterflies and some 16 species of hawks as they migrate through the area. The Cape May Hawk Watch platform is a particular treat. The cost for two nights lodging is \$150.00 per room. Meals are not included.

Plan to leave early Friday morning or join us Friday evening as your schedule allows. This is a relaxed trip with easy walking. Join us for meals as part of the group or feel free to explore the area shops and dine on your own.

Jamaica Bay Field Trip Saturday, October 18, 7:00 a.m.

Join Joan & Richard Becker as we look for shorebirds, waders and other migrants at this popular destination. This is an easy walk along wide paths. Pack a lunch and join us for the day. Plan to leave our area by 7:00 a.m.

Seed Sale Pick-Up at Bedford Hills Town Park Saturday, October 25, 9AM – 4 p.m.

With storage space limited, please try to pick up your seed on this day at Bedford Hills Town Park. Any questions, or if you'd like to help us distribute the seed call:

Steve Ricker (914) 666-8448

srickr@bedfordaudubon.org

John Erickson (914) 273-6967

Jerickson@bedfordaudubon.org

The Geology of The Hunt-Parker Sanctuary Saturday, November 15, 10:00 a.m.

Enjoy an early winter walk with John Moyle as he points out various unique geological formations within the Hunt-Parker Sanctuary. This hike is a follow-up to Dr. Moyle's program on November 12. Without a doubt, the crown jewel of Bedford Audubon's sanctuary system, the Hunt-Parker Sanctuary, located in the towns of Bedford and Lewisboro, boasts a well-marked trail system through a variety of habitats. And, as you will learn, it's million of year's old! This hike will last for one to two hours.

Christmas Bird Counts

December 14 - January 5

Peekskill Christmas Bird Count

Putnam County Christmas Bird Count

Join fellow birders for the original citizen science project, the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. You can come out for just a few hours, or all day. Data is gathered from specific designations within the area for the purpose of tracking population trends of our winter friends. You don't need to be an expert; it's a great way to learn where the birds can be found in winter.

Please call John Askildsen at 914-232-1701 if you are interested in participating in either of our chapter area counts listed above.

Please note: In accordance with our insurance policy concerning field trips, Bedford Audubon will now require participants to sign a Release of Liability form at the start of each field trip.



Northern Cardinal by Steven D'Amato

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
35 Todd Road
Katonah, NY 10536

Chapter Code ROO7XCH

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