



# The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 55, Number 2, Summer 2005  
*Celebrating 92 Years of Conservation 1913-2005*

## President's Message

April 2005

By John Hannan

I write to you just three days after some of the most stunning news the birding and environmental communities have received in decades; the verified rediscovery of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Big Woods of Eastern Arkansas. The struggle to save the Ivory-billed has been a story of epic proportion and, until three days ago, seemed to be one where corporate greed had won over sound science and human rationale. But, thanks to the pure stubbornness and will to survive of at least a few of these magnificent birds, the Ivory-billed Woodpecker may have a chance to come back from the brink of extinction.

One would think that the well-documented fate of the Ivory-billed, and other species whose demise can be attributed to habitat loss would have taught us all a lesson in the need to protect our lands and the wildlife that can flourish in them. But unfortunately this is not the case because today in places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge this story is being replayed again.

But let's get back to the good news for a moment and why I think this discovery is not just incredible from an ornithological point of view, but from a community perspective. Those of you who have read Jerome Jackson's book *In Search of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker* already know how inspirational this bird has been to so many. Very similar in looks to a Pileated Woodpecker, but at 20 inches in length and with a 3-foot wingspan the Ivory-billed is as large as a Cooper's Hawk and much more striking. So striking that it was not unusual for first time observers to cry out "Lord God, what a bird," and so the nickname the Lord God bird stuck.

To see an Ivory-billed one has always needed to travel into the swampy bottomland hardwood forests that used to stretch from east Texas to North Carolina, from southern Illinois through Florida and south to Cuba. Before European immigration some 52 million acres of this type of land existed for the Ivory-billed. But by the 1940s, due to agriculture encroachment and the timber industry's clear cutting policy, that habitat had been reduced to about 4 million scattered acres. And these were under attack, from the chain saw and channel dredge.

By the 1940s the National Audubon Society had determined that the Ivory-billed Woodpecker was on the brink of extinction and waged a dogged campaign to purchase vast tracks of bottomland forest in order to ensure at least one large refuge for the Ivory-billed. The most promising site was the Singer Tract, an 81,000-acre stretch of primeval forest owned by the Singer Sewing Machine Company, who leased the timbering rights to the Chicago and Lumber Company. But, no matter how much money the Audubon Society offered, the two companies closed their eyes and ears to responsible corporate stewardship. Instead they revved up the chain saws even faster and, in the name of short-term gain, cleared the forest of trees and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers.

But the beauty of this story is that not only the birds, but their human supporters as well, were not willing to give up the fight for survival. Over the last sixty years a small dedicated band of birders, scientists, conservationists, and politicians have conducted what many thought was a Quixotic holy grail search for this elusive but magnificent bird.

This search led them on hundreds of futile trips deep into snake, leech, and mosquito-infested swamps, but never deterred them from their mission. Their strength and will to win was demonstrated clearly when in the 1970s after an Audubon official simply reported hearing the bird in a South Carolina swamp, conservationists were able to convince the State to spare 10,000 acres of swamp from clear-cutting.

And so the events of the last year are a testimony to what our movement of people from diverse backgrounds, skills, and interests, but still a community who all share a common love for the land and wildlife can do when we work together.

## The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Summer 2005, Volume 55, No. 2

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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

6/4	10:30 A.M.	Butterflies at Trailside Nature Museum
6/5	7:00 A.M.	The Wildlife of Mount Greylock, Adams, Massachusetts
6/8	7:30 P.M.	<b>Damsels and Dragons at Bylane Farm</b>
6/11	1:00 P.M.	Babes in the Woods at Westmoreland
6/12	10:00 A.M.	Damsels and Dragons at Bylane
6/18	8:00-10:00 A.M.	The "Planet's Oldest Music!"
7/16	10:00 A.M.	Butterflies at Bylane Farm
8/21	7:00 A.M.	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

## Bedford Audubon's Membership Continues to Grow

We are pleased to welcome these new members who recently joined us and look forward to their participation in upcoming programs and activities.

**Armonk:** R. J. Allen, Howard Arden, Laney Fazio Family, Eileen Herbert, Kay and Murray Leffler. **Bedford:** Joseph and Virginia Maybank, Lindley and Paul Thomasset, Harry and Liz White. **Brewster:** Lori Samuels, Tony C. Wilkinson. **Carmel:** Timothy A. Gregg, Steve Huber. **Katonah:** Joan Eckels, Richard Gristede, Charles and Machiko Kimball, John and Sally Ledes. **Kent Lakes:** Beth Herr. **Larchmont:** Jennifer Reidy. **Lincolndale:** Irene and Said Reda. **Mahopac:** Jean Arennella, Willet and Shirley Porter. **New York:** Lynn and Wes Edens. **North Salem:** Clyde W. Garthwait. **Pound Ridge:** Christopher W. London and David Hutchinson. **Somers:** Louise Squitieri, William Taliaferro. **South Salem:** Cole and Iain Wagner. **Waccabuc:** Eugene Albert. **Yorktown Heights:** Rosemarie Harkins, Deb and Katz Kleinberg, William Morrison, Ann and Joe Perkowski, Jeanne E. Pollock, Lief Savery, Susan Taylor, Betsy Weiss.

## FIELD TRIPS

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

### **Butterflies at Trailside Nature Museum With Bill Wallace Saturday, June 4, 10:30 A.M.**

Our own butterfly expert Bill Wallace will lead us on an easy walk to observe and identify these colorful summer gems. We'll search for early summer butterflies such as Swallowtails, Question Marks and Commas, Sulphurs and the ubiquitous Little Wood-Satyr! Meet us at Trailside Nature Museum at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. For additional information, contact the Trailside Nature Museum at 914-864-7322.

### **The Wildlife of Mount Greylock, Adams, Massachusetts, Sunday, June 5, 7:00 A.M., Leaders: John Askildsen & Bill Wallace**

Mount Greylock, Massachusetts' highest point at 3491' hosts a large diversity of wildlife. Located in the Berkshire Mountains, it is a mere two-hour drive from the Westchester/Putnam area. From birds and butterflies to native wildflowers, we'll explore changing life zones that host different wildlife as we drive up the long access road to the summit. Starting at the base in New England hardwood forest, we'll travel through mixed coniferous and northern hardwoods and wind up at the summit in spruce fir forest.

We'll look for Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Blackpoll and Mourning Warblers, Hermit and Swainson's Thrushes and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, to name just a few of the highlight bird species. Among the butterflies, we'll look for various types of Fritillaries, White Admiral, Milbert's Tortoiseshell, and the rarely seen, Early Hairstreak. A variety of wildflowers will undoubtedly be found along the way.

### **Babes in the Woods at Westmoreland Saturday, June 11, 1:00 P.M.**

Westmoreland Sanctuary Director Steve Ricker will lead a leisurely hike to show us the secret places where the young animals, birds, and even plants are hiding. This is the time of year when the woods are truly alive. All ages are welcome. Please register by calling 914- 666-8448. This event is co-sponsored with Westmoreland Sanctuary.

### **"Damsels and Dragons" Field Trip at Bylane With Ed Lam (see related evening program) Sunday, June 12, 10:00 A.M.**

Ed Lam, noted author and illustrator, will lead us on a journey to find a variety of damselflies and dragonflies at Bylane Farm. Do you know the difference between an Ebony Jewelwing and a Band-winged Meadowhawk? Join us and find out as we search for some 30 species of "damsels and dragons" and, as a bonus, some of the 60 species of butterflies found at Bylane Farm. This is a follow-up field trip to Ed's Wednesday evening, June 8 program.

### **The "Planet's Oldest Music!"\***

**Saturday, June 18, 8-10 A.M., Muscoot Farm, Route 100, Somers, NY**

#### **Co-Sponsored with Westchester County Parks**

Learn to identify birds by their song with naturalist Jeanne Waful. Bring binoculars and a field guide. Why do birds sing? How do they learn their songs? Which bird has one song and which has more than 2000 songs? Which birds mimic other birds? Which bird sings two songs at the same time? Which bird sings first in the morning and last at night, and why?

Join us to hear the birds' varied songs and learn the answers to these questions and more. We will discuss two recent books: *Birdsong: A Natural History* by Don Stap (\*who gets credit for the wonderful phrase above) and *The Singing Life of Birds* by Donald Kroodsma. We'll learn some bird songs and talk about the best way for you to continue learning bird songs. For additional information call 914-864-7282 Westchester County Parks Dept.

### **Butterflies at Bylane Farm**

**Saturday, July 16, 10:00 A.M. With Bill Wallace and Tait Johansson**

Join Bill & Tait for a casual walk through the meadows at our own Bylane Farm in search of butterflies, where over 60 species have been recorded. The mid-summer palate of species includes Monarchs, Swallowtails, Fritillaries and the some of hard to identify family of "Skippers".

### **Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge With John Askildsen Sunday, August 21, leave Bylane at 7:00 A.M.**

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is bustling with wildlife in late summer. Simply put, it is a fabulous urban wildlife haven. A plethora of butterflies is busy nectaring in the meadows and garden, some birds are still tending to their young and many, such as northern breeding shorebirds and warblers, are already winging their way south. Herons and egrets will abound and Osprey and terns will be busy patrolling the extensive salt marshes. We'll sample "the Bay's" many natural wonders on this day. From birds to butterflies, it's all there for the viewing!

## PROGRAMS

*Please note that this program will now be at Bylane Farm.*

**Damsels & Dragons With Ed Lam (See Related Field Trip)  
Wednesday, June 8, 7:30 PM/Bylane Farm, 35 Todd Rd.  
Katonah, NY**

Eastchester resident, Ed Lam, noted author and graphic illustrator will guide us through the world of dragonflies and damselflies. Signed copies of his latest book, *Damselflies of the Northeast*, written and illustrated by Ed, will be available. Please note Ed's follow-up field trip at Bylane Farm is set for Sunday, June 12.

## Directions to Bylane

To get to Bylane Farm, take I-684 to exit 6. Go east on Route 35 for about 0.5 miles to Route 22. Go north on Route 22 for about 0.8 miles and turn right onto Todd Road for about 0.6 miles. Look for a white mailbox on the right with the address 35 Todd Road. The offices are on the left, but park in the small parking lot on the right. The office phone number is (914) 232-1999.

## Annual Meeting & Program May 11

By Tony Ianniello

At our annual meeting on May 11, four new members were elected to the Bedford Audubon Board of Directors. They have each been elected for a three-year term. We welcome Denise Carey, Stephen Carey, Carol Gracie and Nannette Orr for the upcoming year that will start on July 1.

There are not enough kind words and thoughts for the departing board members who will be ending their tenure in June. We thank them for their many years of unselfish support and timeless energy spent on behalf of the Bedford Audubon Society.

As per a recent change to our By-laws, they will take one year off as a board member. This does not mean that they need to drop any committee positions or any other capacity that they enjoy as part of our Society. In fact we welcome their continued support.

It is with great pride that we acknowledge Anne Vajsabel for her contributions to BAS in many ways over the years. Most recently as Chair of the Newsletter Committee, Anne is there to remind us that we are all part of her committee to get our word out to the members. The newsletter is our lifeline to our membership. She also sits on the Board of Directors as our Recording Secretary. And, what would our yearly Cape May trip be without her?

Bill Wallace may be excused from board meetings for the upcoming year, but we could not possibly let him get away from us for his support on field trips. Bill has always been there for us and we expect to see him continuing his search for butterflies and birds on our behalf. Thanks, Bill!

Don Pachner is our Risk Management Chair and a strong vocal presence for all our environmental and conservation issues. Don has always taken his work on the board personally, convincingly, and has always given his best on behalf of the organization. Thank you, Don, for your unflappable support.

Jack Seirup has spent many years at BAS as board member and guided us on our sanctuary development and maintenance. Without having to attend the monthly meetings, we may have to force

Jack to go to one of the sanctuaries he faithfully works on and actually enjoy himself! Thanks, Jack for all your efforts!

Jim Utter will also take a break from the board. Jim's work with our Conservation Committee is only a small token of what this man has done for the world! His energy is spent on conservation issues for a number of organizations and we are very lucky to have him as part of our family at BAS. Jim will continue to work with us. Thank you, Jim, for your persistent effort in conservation and your leadership in guiding us on our own environmental conservation path.

Rick Paris and his family will be relocating to Florence, Montana. Over the past year, as a new board member, and part of the field trip committee, Rick has gone out of his way to offer his help and photographs to assist in many of our promotional efforts to spread the word about our Society. His photography is on our web site and he has maintained an email list for all to enjoy. Best of luck to Rick and his family and please stay in touch!

### Program Highlights

The evening wasn't complete until Peter Alden, noted author, and well recognized conservationist, presented a slide show on biodiversity. Peter held the audience, some 50 members and friends, speechless with his witty and often hysterical presentation of a study of organisms larger than a millimeter in any given walk of life. A bio-blitz is an event to record every species of plant, bird or mammal in a given area at a given time by teams of volunteer scientists, naturalists, birders and the like. It seems to be catching on around the world. What better way to understand what happens in our own backyards when infiltrated by invasive species, chemicals or any other foreign substance?

## New York State Senate and Assembly Honor Audubon's 100th Anniversary

In celebration of the National Audubon Society's Centennial, New York State Assemblywoman Virginia Fields and State Senator Carl Marcellino introduced a joint resolution commemorating Audubon's 100 years of conservation excellence in New York State. Members of Audubon New York's Board of Directors joined with the sponsors and past recipients of the William Hoyt Environmental Award, Audubon New York's annual conservation excellence award, in the chambers of the Senate and the Assembly to celebrate a century of conservation accomplishment in New York State.

"This was truly a great day for Audubon, and we could not have asked for more thoughtful recognition by Assemblywoman Fields and Senator Marcellino," said David J. Miller, Executive Director for Audubon New York, the state program of the National Audubon Society. "Thanks to the leadership of representatives like Assemblywoman Fields and Senator Marcellino, we are proud to say that New York State has been at the forefront of bird

conservation and protection throughout history. We look forward to carrying on this conservation legacy, started right here in New York, for the next 100 years.”

“What a wonderful birthday present for Audubon. Our partnership with the Legislature and the Governor has never been more productive,” said Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Audubon New York. “It was an honor to be recognized yesterday in the Senate and the Assembly.” In his 2005 State of the State Address, Governor George Pataki also commemorated Audubon’s centennial.

To learn more about the recognition, view copies of the resolution, as well as photographs from the event, please visit, <http://ny.audubon.org/news/050406.htm> or contact Sean Mahar (518-869-9731, [Smahar@audubon.org](mailto:Smahar@audubon.org))

### **Audubon At Home** By John Askildsen

The actions we take to improve the health and habitat of our backyard can have resounding, positive effects on wildlife, people and the entire health of the natural community. Audubon now has a powerful tool to engage millions of people in conservation at home. With funding from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Audubon has launched the Audubon At Home website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).

This website emphasizes and explains key concepts and provides concise action plans to facilitate the conversion of “backyards” into thriving habitat, good for wildlife and people alike.

Have you ever wondered what your property looked like before it was associated with a house? What plants and animals dominated the landscape 100 years ago? Where does your roof and driveway runoff flow? What kind of soil you have and how it has changed? Audubon At Home gives people the tool to answer these questions and ponder the importance of their ecological address—the components of the natural world that characterize where they live.

At Audubon At Home online, visitors will find a variety of useful tools:

- an interactive image that identifies 16 elements of a healthy yard;
- a long list of bird habitat necessities and resources;
- plant recommendations that address conservation needs for Audubon’s Watch-list birds;
- a section entitled “Keeping Wildlife Safe” with sound advice for making yards safe havens for wildlife;
- downloadable Action plans.

The five main principles of Audubon At Home are: establishing native plants, removing exotic invasive plants, reducing pesticides, conserving water, and protecting water quality. Following these five main principles can have far reaching effects on our backyards and our local environments.

For more information, visit the Bedford Audubon website and link to Audubon At Home from our homepage at [www.bedfordaudubon.org](http://www.bedfordaudubon.org).

(Portions of this article came from Audubon’s Chapter Networker Newsletter)

### **Bylane Bluebirds** By Sean Prockter

Last summer I was recruited by Bedford Audubon Society to monitor their 10 Eastern Bluebird nest boxes at Bylane Farm in Katonah. The Eastern Bluebird, *Sialia sialis*, is a species of thrush that requires nesting cavities in dead or dying trees. A nest box, in lieu of a dead tree, is an ideal situation for the bluebird that they readily accept near open fields. Approximately seven inches in length, they are handsome birds, with a blue back and head and a contrasting rust-colored breast. Their song is a cheerful, warble-like song.

The results of my monitoring project found that there were 4 nestings of bluebirds, in 3 boxes. Most of these “nestings” were repeat nestings by the same bluebird pairs. There were a total 16 fledged bluebirds and eight fledged Tree Swallows. Bluebirds can nest up to three times in a nesting season, from May through early August.

The biggest threat to the success of bluebirds is the presence of the European House Sparrow, a non-native, invasive and aggressive bird. The House Sparrow is commonly associated with human development, especially livestock barns. This species is known to not only evict bluebirds from nest boxes, but, given the opportunity they will trap and kill bluebirds and their chicks in the nestbox. Then, seemingly without a care in the world, they will build a nest right over their victims’ lifeless bodies. Bylane’s resident population of House Sparrows certainly had an impact on the resident bluebird population there. However I did my best to evict House Sparrows from nestboxes as soon as they tried to establish residency. As a result, I managed to only allow 2 House Sparrow chicks to be fledged compared to other years where several chicks were fledged.

For more information on the Eastern Bluebird and Bedford Audubon’s nestbox monitoring program, please visit the Society’s website at [www.bedfordaudubon.org](http://www.bedfordaudubon.org). I look forward to this year’s nesting season and the hopes for an elevated number of nesting bluebirds at Bylane!

As so often happens, an earth-shattering event began with something completely normal. Gene Sparling was simply out kayaking in the swamp when he got the first sighting of this Ivory-billed. Gene changed the course of ornithological history by making a choice to get involved and placed a call to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology alerting them to his discovery. This one call led to a year's worth of chain reactions, quietly mobilizing expert birders, scientists, academics, land conservation experts, government officials, and funders who verified the bird's existence and worked to preserve its habitat.

To me, this work is as inspirational as the re-discovery of the bird itself, and I hope will inspire each and every one of us to find our place to get involved.

The juxtapose of this week's wonderful news of a species coming back from extinction was the terrible news that our government is taking us one step closer to opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge up to oil drilling. Drilling that could easily drive other species towards extinction. And a precedent that opens the door to allowing drilling, mining and timber extraction from all public land, no matter how significant it is to environmental concerns.

On the local level, we see habitat loss on an almost daily basis in places like the Route 22 corridor through Putnam County. As sprawl and development push into the Great Swamp that runs along that corridor, birds like the Rusty Blackbird, whose population has crashed by 97% in the last 40 years, continue to lose their last nesting and migratory stop over sites.

So if the re-discovery of the Ivory-billed and the work of the team that verified its existence inspire you as it has done me, please celebrate this gift by committing to get more involved with Audubon. Each person can find his or her place, whether it is simply calling in a sighting like Gene Sparling did, joining our teams monitoring local Important Bird Areas, helping in the office, protecting the lands around us, or donating funds to ensure our work proceeds successfully. In this, the 100<sup>th</sup> year of our Audubon Society's existence, we have a lot to celebrate, but lots more to do, so let's commit to doing it together. Let's learn from the stubbornness of the Ivory-billed who refused to give up, and as one caring community we too will succeed at whatever we set our minds too.

### **Bedford Audubon Promotes IBAs, Conservation, Through Birdathon**

The Bedford Audubon Society of upper Westchester and Putnam Counties has taken their Birdathon a step beyond the norm this year. The 92 year-old society will fine focus its Birdathon efforts by visiting IBAs in its region, specifically The Great Swamp and Ward Pound Ridge Reservation IBAs. While visiting the IBAs' critical habitats,

Birdathon participants will record the bird species that they encounter and submit the data to e-bird and other science-based repositories for IBA data. Data is critical to the IBAs for maintaining their IBA standing and of course to promote saving critical parcels of land within a given IBA.

Bedford Audubon plans to promote the fact that while fewer species will be found in using this unconventional Birdathon method, pledge levels made may be increased on a per species basis. A bonus of this entire endeavor is that fewer fossil fuels will be used in an effort to conserve valuable natural resources and national parks and prevent air pollution.

A detailed pledge letter describing the entire event was distributed to the Chapter's 1,700 members on April 19, with a Birdathon date of May 14. It is Bedford Audubon's hope that this change in course of this popular event will heighten members' awareness of locally threatened and important bird habitats, the need to document scientific data in those habitats in order to support the need for preservation of them through the IBA program.

### **Bedford Audubon Launches 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of Citizen Science Water Quality Monitoring Program**

**By John Askildsen**

In the spring and summer of 2004, Bedford Audubon Society launched a citizen science-based water quality monitoring program in cooperation with the County of Westchester. This project involved almost 30 Bedford Audubon Society volunteers who stepped forward to monitor three brooks in our area. The waterways which we monitored were the Mianus River at Miller's Mill Road in Bedford, the Mianus River at Middle Patent Road in North Castle, and Brady's Brook in Goldens Bridge, Lewisboro.

Briefly stated, the data collected this past season indicates that all waterways reported "good" water quality. Most streams met most of the ten characteristics that our volunteers monitored, although most streams monitored in our area did not meet acceptable phosphorus levels on a consistent basis. Small additions of phosphorus can have huge negative impacts on a water body. This is a direct effect that development can have on our local waterways.

It is Bedford Audubon Society's Water Quality Monitoring Committee's intention to continue monitoring our three streams in 2005. With a little bit of luck, we'll be able to monitor additional sites such as the Broad Brook in Bedford Hills, Angle Fly Brook in Somers, the Mill River in South Salem, and the Croton and Titicus Rivers in North Salem. The County of Westchester has indicated that it may begin monitoring lakes and ponds as well. Bedford Audubon looks forward to being involved in those programs.

To learn more about 2004's results and get a full copy of Westchester County's report, please go to our web site at [www.bedfordaudubon.org](http://www.bedfordaudubon.org). If you'd like to participate in this important citizen science project, consider joining our Water Monitoring Committee in 2005. Please contact John Askildsen at [jaskildsen@bedfordaudubon.org](mailto:jaskildsen@bedfordaudubon.org), or call at 914-232-1701, for additional information and to sign up. Everyone who joins will be fully trained in monitoring, so please sign up soon! It's still not too late!

## About Birds: The Yellow Warbler

By Tait Johansson

Many birders find warblers a difficult group of birds to identify. Fall, when warblers tend to have drab plumages, is the most challenging season for warbler identification. Even in spring, when their often colorful breeding plumages make them easier to distinguish, there are so many species moving through our area in such a short time (often high up in the trees), people can find themselves overwhelmed by warblers. Summer, when only breeding warblers are present, can be a good time to start really learning this group. A good one to start with is one of the most common and conspicuous of our summer warblers, the Yellow Warbler (*Dendroica petechia*).

In summer, Yellow Warblers inhabit extensive open shrubby areas, especially wet ones. Shrub swamps and overgrown fields are favorite haunts, and their breeding territories can even extend into backyards with sufficient dense shrubbery. Here they build a beautiful little nest from silvery plant fibers, often those of milkweeds. Although they do sometimes hide from the birder in dense cover, the openness of their habitat usually makes Yellow Warblers easier to see than warblers that inhabit tall trees and dense woods.

Like most warblers, this is a small bird, roughly the size of a chickadee, albeit with a shorter tail. Its bill is of the thin, sharp kind that typifies most small insect-eating birds. When it comes to plumage, the Yellow Warbler is aptly named. Although many warblers have at least some yellow on them, the adults of this species, with the exception of some fine chestnut streaking on the breast of the male, are all yellow. Yellow Warblers are sometimes confused with male American Goldfinches, our other common bright yellow small bird, and another species that often frequents shrubby habitats. With a good look, though, goldfinches are readily distinguished from Yellow Warblers by their black wings, black cap, and thick, stubby pinkish bill.

The song is a high, sweet, rhythmic series of notes often rendered "Sweet-sweet-sweet-I-am-so-sweet!" with the first three notes all on the same pitch, thereafter descending until the final note, higher than any of the previous notes. This song is highly variable, though, with some versions of it

very hard to distinguish from certain song variants of Chestnut-sided Warbler (*Dendroica pensylvanica*).

Yellow Warblers are among the earliest of our summer birds to leave us, starting their migration to their wintering grounds in Central and South America in the latter part of July, having only arrived in our area at the end of April or so. Thus it is one of the Neotropical migrants that spends the least time here on its breeding grounds, and the Yellow Warbler's inconspicuous departure is one of the earliest foreshadowings of autumn.

## Great Swamp IBA Monitoring Program Launched

Our last issue announced our intention to begin a volunteer monitoring program for the Great Swamp, a local Important Bird Area (IBA). Well, we are happy to report this effort has begun. Working with our good friends the Waterman Bird Club and the Friends of the Great Swamp, Bedford Audubon is part of an initiative that may prove to be the blueprint for volunteer monitoring projects across the state.

During February and March our working group identified more than 35 potential sites we can monitor. Each site was chosen because it may provide habitat for either species at risk, threatened, endangered, or NYS responsibility (where NY State holds responsibility for a significant proportion of the population). Since March teams of birders, comprised of experts and novices, have been out scouring these locations to record early migrants and returning nesters. Each team tries to record as much data as possible including number of each species seen, type of habitat they were spotted in, weather conditions and temperature so we can gain a full picture of the habitat needs of each species.

Up in Dutchess County our friends from Waterman Bird Club recently had a great morning recording Wood Ducks, Black and Turkey Vultures, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Pileated Woodpecker, Blue-headed Vireo, Louisiana and Northern Waterthrushes, and White-throated Sparrow to name just a few of their list.

Meanwhile a group of Bedford Audubon volunteers working the North transect of the Ice Pond along the Clough Preserve in Putnam County had a spectacular raptor morning recording no less than four Osprey, one Red-shouldered, one Sharp-shinned Hawk, one Cooper's Hawk, and three Red-tailed Hawks. Non-raptor species included Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Warbling Vireo, two Common Loons, Blue-winged Teal, Pine Warblers, Black-and-white Warbler, and Great Blue Heron.

In our next issue we will provide details on how you can access the first few months' data collection. But right now is a great time to become an active participant in the study. For more information about the project or how you can volunteer e-mail us at [info@bedfordaudubon.org](mailto:info@bedfordaudubon.org) or call the office at 914-232-1999.

## Membership

Yes, I would like to join the Bedford Audubon Society. My "Chapter only" membership will help support local conservation efforts, programs, and sanctuaries. \*(Send this form with a check made out to the **Bedford Audubon Society**).

Please check your membership category.

New Member or Renewal    \$20     Supporter    \$50  
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I wish to make an additional donation of \_\_\_\_\_

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**Mail to:** Bedford Audubon Society, 35 Todd Road, Katonah, NY 10536

**Enter your e-mail address here** and we will add you to our e-mail list for alerts on programs, field trips, and other items of local interest. We will not give out your e-mail address to any other organization.

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**\*Does not include membership in the National Audubon Society**

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