


The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 56, Number 2, Summer 2006
Celebrating 93 Years of Conservation 1913-2006

Invasive Plants of the Northeast With Noted Author Peter Alden Wednesday, June 14, 7:30 p.m. Katonah Village Library

Peter Alden's slide presentation will teach the "dirty two dozen" and show horrifying pictures of devastation. What is the role of birds in the spread of invasive plants? What are the current laws? Should we and can we declare war on some species? Broken down by growth form (tree, shrub, vine, creeper, wild flower, grass, and freshwater aquatic) they are fairly easy to learn.

Peter Alden is an exceptionally knowledgeable, sought-after and entertaining speaker. He has organized many attacks on invasives around Walden Pond, the Old North Bridge and on his property by a river in Concord, Mass. He has authored and co-authored 15 books, including eight National Audubon Field Guides to 1000 plants & animals (i.e. New England, NY & Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, Florida, Southwest, Rocky Mountains, Northwest and California). Along with Dr. Edward O. Wilson, (author of *The Future of Life*) he initiated "Biodiversity Days" in Massachusetts in 1998 and ran the event for the state government for four years. In 2002, he oversaw the creation of the first-ever state database checklist of visible organisms - larger than 1 mm - comprising 15,000 species. Mr. Alden is a World Eco-tourism Designer, Naturalist Guide and Lecturer and has led nearly 300 cruises, safaris and land tours to 100 countries on seven continents. 



Peter Alden

President's Message

by John Hannan

Over the last two years many new members have joined our chapter. This is terrific. New people have joined the Board, assumed leadership roles in committees, and have donated countless volunteer hours on everything from trail maintenance to bird surveys. As I meet with these new members I often field questions on how the three tiers of Audubon's organizational structure relate. So, I thought I would devote a few lines to describing this relationship since it is important for everyone to understand.

Very simply put, the National Audubon Society has three tiers in its organizational model. Two, the National and State offices, are legally one non-profit entity, while the third, the chapters, are separate 501 (c) (3) non-profit entities. We use this model because it gives us a unique strength that few other environmental organizations possess: the ability to tackle national issues while structuring our campaigns to fit the distinctive nature of each state and local community.

We have chosen this model because of the complexity of our work. At the top of the organizational chart is our national office with scientists, researchers, policy experts, communications specialists, educators, and grassroots organizers, all

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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

6/3	7:30 a.m.	Birding by Ear With Jeanne Wafu/Muscot Farm
6/3	7:00 a.m.	Field Trip to White Memorial Nature Preserve
6/14	7:30 p.m.	Invasive Plants of the Northeast/Katonah Village Library
6/17	8:00 a.m.	Birding by Ear With Jeanne Wafu/Muscot Farm
6/26	7:30 p.m.	The Spectacular Birds of Ecuador/Bylane Farm
8/6	9:00 a.m.	Field Trip to White Flower Farm With Carol Gracie
8/20	7:00 a.m.	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

New Members Elected to the Board of Bedford Audubon Society

Our Annual Meeting was held on May 10. Three existing members, David Albano, John Askildsen and John Erickson will step down, after many years of service, for a period of one year as per our bylaws. We thank them for their support and timeless energy. Richard Becker, who is in charge of our impressive website, was elected to a second term, and three new members, Linda Burke, Walter Fowler and Helle Raheem, were elected to replace the retiring members. Ed Fehrs has resigned from the Board. We are grateful to Ed for his many years of service.

Following the Annual Meeting, Wildflower Expert, Photographer and BAS Board Member, Carol Gracie, gave a presentation on "Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast." Carol's stunning photos and in-depth knowledge of familiar and rare wildflowers gave the audience an incentive to go out there and "see for yourself." Her latest book, *Wildflowers in the Field and Forest*, co-authored with Steve Clemants, has just been published by Oxford University Press. 

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who can take on enormous national and international issues. Our scientists work with partners like BirdLife International on global as well as national bird conservation. Policy staff address the major environmental issues of the day such as protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, global warming, and restoration of the Long Island Sound and the Mississippi River. Our communication team builds awareness of these issues through our national magazine that reaches more than a million households and with a steady stream of press work and other outreach vehicles. Our education staff builds curriculum and develop ways these issues can be taught either in schools or at our centers all across the country. And finally, our grassroots staff package these issues so that local communities can take on a component of the work and achieve change at a local level.

Because we are a republic and no state or commonwealth is exactly alike, we have realized there is a need not only for a national office within Audubon, but also for state offices. Especially in times like these where the Administration in Washington seems to work nonstop to strip or destroy our most precious environmental laws, Audubon's state offices have been essential. Recently state capitals have produced legislation that stopped some of the destruction the White House is intent on leveling on our environment.

Audubon believes that the environment belongs to no political party, but only to those who desire to respect it, so our Audubon NY office has been able to work with both sides of the aisle, saving wetlands, shorelines, and other critical habitat by identifying state politicians who understand that people of all political stripes want healthy communities and environmentally sound legislation.


In addition, state offices work with local chapters to strengthen statewide campaigns, share resources, and enable chapters to do their work more effectively. State offices provide Audubon the ability to translate national priorities, be they science, education, or policy into tangible projects that local chapters can take on. In short Audubon's state offices transform the national findings and priorities into work that can be achieved at the state level.

But none of the findings, or work would go far without the help of the more than 500 chapters comprising more than 550,000 members that touch almost every single community across the country. Incorporated in 1913, Bedford Audubon was one of the first National Audubon chapters.

Chapters are the lifeblood of Audubon, each one becoming the local voice for sound environmental policy and education in the community. Chapters are the eyes and ears of citizen science, feeding scientists with thousands of hours of data collection and bird censuses. Working with state and national staff chapters make it possible to preserve vital habitat and learn how to better protect our environment.

Your chapter has made incredible contributions to our local community. For 94 years we have provided on-going monthly educational programs to the public, worked in schools to teach children the beauty and benefit of a healthy environment, and led field trips introducing our neighbors to the wonders of nature from as nearby as their backyard to as far away as Alaska. We are also land stewards, protecting and preserving more than 550 acres of its sanctuaries. Our sanctuaries are open to the public so they can learn how to use best practices in land management on their own properties and so they can observe the incredible bio-diversity our area will produce if our environment is treated with care.

So as you read this season's newsletter I encourage you to consider how you want to participate at the local level. Look at our citizen science programs, our field trips and our walks. Consider joining our science or education committees. Volunteer at the office or in the garden. If you are asked for financial support from any of the three tiers of the organization please consider contributing because we need healthy, vibrant offices at each of these levels if the whole organization is to succeed.

The National Audubon Society is now entering its second century while your chapter is closing in on its centennial. With that in mind I urge you to expand your involvement in this historic movement of individuals who have given us laws that saved countless animal species, helped in the creation of the National Wildlife Refuge and Parks systems, and continue to guide us in our appreciation and awe at the beauty of our natural world. If you are a national member, get involved in the activities of your chapter as well. If you have only been involved in the chapter think about getting more involved in the state and national programs. The more conservation we do, the better the world will be. As always, I thank you for all your support and look forward to working with you in the coming year. 

Sean Prokter, Bedford Audubon's scholarship winner just two years ago, attends Colby College in Waterville, Maine. An ardent young birder, Sean had the opportunity to join the search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Arkansas. Although the Cornell search team has so far not confirmed the nesting areas or the most recent previous sightings of the birds, they are not giving up and plan additional efforts in other states. What follows is Sean's account of his experience in his own words.

Searching for the Grail Bird

On January 3, 2006, I arrived at Cornell University's research station in the White River National Wildlife Refuge in east central Arkansas. The refuge was originally designed for wintering ducks which number in the millions, but I was there for a different reason—to assist Cornell in the Ivory-billed Woodpecker (IBWO) Recovery search project to try and find evidence of the bird's

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existence and hopefully to learn more about the bird's biology that might be of assistance when trying to help bring the species back from the brink of extinction.

I was stationed there for two weeks, and each day (excluding the weekends), I awoke at 5:00 a.m. and was out in the field by 6:15 a.m. The rest of the day consisted of watches and searches for roost cavities and bark scrapings that appeared to have been made by an Ivory-bill. Watches involved a sitting of over one hour in an area where an IBWO may be found. Some days I would sit in a blind and do a watch for a total of four hours rather than for a single hour. The blinds were strategically placed in areas with a large vantage point. At the end of every day one hour before sundown, a time known as the magic hour, there was a watch that involved staying within sight of a roost cavity where an Ivory-bill may be nesting. The parts of the day that I was not doing a watch I was covering a selected area in search of good looking roost cavities and bark scrapings. Waypoints were always recorded in the GPS of every location where I conducted work.

Ivory-billed Woodpecker holes are slightly different than that of a Pileated Woodpecker (PIWO) hole. It is more oddly shaped and slightly larger than PIWO's nests. Bark scrapings are usually found on trees with bark tightly bound to the trunk of the tree. The scrapings are always horizontal and represent the feeding habits of the IBWO. They feed on grubs and other beetle larvae found feeding in the trees. When I would locate these sites, I would report the easting and northing of the waypoint, the aspect of the roost cavity or bark scraping, height of the waypoint on the tree, and the tree species. After working in the field until 6:30 p.m., the group would come back to the research station and input the data collected throughout that day into the computer.

The second week was just a continuation of the first week; however, I was asked to conduct some point counts and a day of playbacks as well. Point counts were conducted once every day. This consisted of documenting every individual bird detected within the vicinity of the count. The birds are separated on paper by ones recorded from 0 to 3 minutes 59 seconds and others detected 4-10 minutes. In addition to this segregation each individual was documented according to the approximate distance of first detection. The categories were 0-25 meters, 25-50, 50-75, 75-100, and over 100 meters. There was also a section for flyovers and any other comments. This was conducted at any location with a decent habitat and number of birds unless I was doing a watch at a blind in which the point count had to be conducted at that location. I always recorded precipitation, cloud cover, wind speed, and temperature. The wind speed was based on the Beaufort Scale, and if I recorded a value of 3 or more on the scale then the count could not be counted due to the high chance of misdetection.

The other type of study I had to do was a playback study. This involved playing four double knocks every fifteen seconds for

one minute. Double knocks are the sounds created by an Ivory-billed Woodpecker when it is banging its beak against a tree. The rapid tap-tap is distinct among *Campophilus* species, the genus that only the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is a member of in the United States. A waiting period of one half hour would follow. After the waiting period was completed a minute of "kent" calls were played and another waiting period followed. "Kent" calls are nasal-like and what Ivory-bills use to communicate. If nothing was detected, I would move on to a different location and do the same thing. I did this four times in one day. The time of when I played the double raps and "kent" calls was critical and had to be recorded to the second because Cornell Lab of Ornithology has numerous autonomous recording units dispersed throughout the Prairie Lakes region, the area of focus, and will pick up my playback.



Thea Fry & Denise Lee, Garden Co-Chairs, flank property manager, Tait Johansson, with a new Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*) for the garden.

The New Bylane Garden

by Nannette Orr

This past winter, the Garden Committee and Tait Johansson drew up plans for a garden renovation. In the beginning of May, Rosedale Nursery of Hawthorne, NY, put in the largest trees and shrubs, while the Garden Committee planted smaller shrubbery and perennial plants.

The new Bylane Garden will contain native plants that attract birds, butterflies and insects. Every effort will be made to remove invasives. A self-guided tour has been planned and will be in place shortly. The tour will highlight our new plant choices, as well as point out numerous native and non-native specimen plants in and around The Bylane Garden. As a model Audubon At Home site, we will be an ongoing resource where visitors can learn about making environmentally appropriate choices both at their homes and in their communities.

We hope you will share our enthusiasm by visiting us often. Please remember we need volunteers to make this garden thrive. If you can help us by assisting us in the garden or by your financial support, please contact Denise Lee 244-0614 or Thea Fry 232-5655.



About Birds: The Ruby-throated Hummingbird

By Tait Johansson

A route of evanescence
with a revolving wheel;
A resonance of emerald,
a rush of cochineal;
and every blossom on the bush
adjusts its tumbled head, —
the mail from Tunis, probably,
an easy morning's ride.

-Emily Dickinson, "The Humming Bird"

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) is our most distinctive bird. With the exception of a few other hummingbird species that occur in our area only very rarely, it's impossible to confuse this species with any other bird. About the only organisms one may mistake for a hummingbird are the clear-wing moths (*Hemaris* spp.), large moths with chunky bodies and rapidly moving wings that nectar at flowers during the day in much the same manner that hummingbirds do. A good look at a hummingbird, however, will reveal a long, fine, pointed bill, and iridescent green plumage on the upper parts, whitish below, and on the adult male, a stunning iridescent ruby-red patch on the chin and upper throat, called a "gorget".

This tiny (about 3^{3/4} inches long, with a 4^{1/2} inch wingspan) bird spends much of its time foraging on the nectar of various flowers, some of which have evolved specifically to be pollinated by hummingbirds. Some favored species in our area include wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), bee-balms (*Monarda* spp.), and trumpet creeper (*Campsis radicans*). When feeding at the large, tubular flowers of the trumpet creeper, in order to get at the nectar available at the very back of the inside of the flower, this species sometimes has to go so far inside the bloom that it is almost completely enveloped, with only its tail still sticking out. Besides nectar, hummingbirds eat many minute insects, and they will often visit the sap wells drilled by the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) to feed on the sap of various tree species.

Favored breeding habitat is open deciduous woods, with an ample supply of appropriate flower species and may include suburban backyards, as long as there are sufficient flowers and scattered deciduous trees. During mating season in May and June, the pugnacious male hummingbirds are sometimes shockingly violent with one another, in fights often trying to jab at each other's eyes with their sharp little bills. The female builds the nest herself out of bits of lichen and spider webs and raises the young entirely herself.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are generally only present in our area from May to October, with most wintering in Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America south to Costa Rica. One of the most notable facts about this impressive bird is that at least some Ruby-throats fly all the way across the Gulf of Mexico in their

northward migration, from the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico to the northern Gulf Coast. This journey of up to 500 miles takes a hummingbird about 18-22 hours of straight flying. This is after fattening up to sometimes twice the normal body weight of 2^{1/2} - 3 grams.



Indian Pipe

Summer Ghost of Forest

By Carol Gracie

While enjoying a summer walk in the cool of the forest, your eye might be drawn to something white on the ground, especially in the deep shade of pines, oaks, beeches, or hemlocks. A quick glance could lead you to believe that you've found a strange fungus, but a closer look will show that it is a true flower, albeit an unusual one. This white apparition has appropriately been called ghost flower, corpse plant, or more commonly, Indian pipe. Indian pipe is descriptive of the shape of the plant with its flower curved downward so that it faces the ground. The scientific name, *Monotropa uniflora*, is also appropriate meaning "once-turned, single flower." Each stalk bears just a solitary flower that turns upward after pollination and remains that way as the fruit develops. It has also been known as bird's nest for the appearance of its mass of short, blunt roots and ghost flower and corpse plant, referring to the white, waxy appearance of the plant. Indian pipe is a plant that lacks the green pigment called chlorophyll. Chlorophyll is necessary for photosynthesis, the process whereby plants manufacture their own food (photosynthate) in the presence of sunlight. Without chlorophyll, Indian pipe is unable to produce its own food and therefore has no need for true leaves which are replaced by small scales along the stem. It is able to inhabit the darkest areas of the forest where sunlight is in short supply. Plants may grow as a single stem or in clumps of up to 20 stems, but they are not generally found in large numbers.

Indian pipe is not parasitic upon nearby trees as are some other achlorophyllous plants (e.g., beechdrops), but rather fulfills its nutritional needs through the services of an intermediary, a mycorrhizal fungus. The fungus forms a connection with both with Indian pipe and with nearby trees and transfers some of the pho-

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tosynthate it derives from the tree roots to the Indian pipe. Experiments using radioactive isotopes of carbon and phosphorus injected into trees have shown that the marked carbon and phosphorus are taken up by the Indian pipe, thus documenting that it is, indeed, transferred by the fungus. Before this process was well understood, non-green plants which were known not to have a direct connection to other plants (as with Indian pipe) were thought to obtain their nutrients from non-living organic debris on the forest floor. They were termed saprophytes, meaning plants that get their nourishment from decaying organic matter. The term saprophyte is now obsolete, and plants such as Indian pipe and others that obtain nutrients in the same manner are called mycoheterotrophs or epiparasites. They appear to be parasitic on the fungi as no benefit to the fungus from its association with the Indian pipe has been discerned.

The plants are small, growing to 4-10" tall with flowers that are about ¾" long. They may be found in flower anytime from June to September. The entire plant is white with the occasional blush of pink. The stems are fragile, breaking easily and turning black when damaged. A gel-like sap is said to have been used medicinally by Native Americans for treating eye problems. Once pollinated, the flowers turn upright and the plants turn brown. Little is known about the pollination of Indian pipe, but bees and skipper butterflies have been observed to visit them. The ovary develops into a woody capsule with five slits through which the tiny seeds are shaken out. The seeds germinate when the proper fungus is available in the soil. Like the minute seeds of orchids, they contain only a trace of endosperm and must rely on the fungus to obtain the nutrients necessary for growth. The dried plants can be seen in the forest even into the next spring.

Indian pipe has one relative in the same genus, pinesap (*Monotropa hypopithys*), which differs in color, being yellow to red, and in having several flowers per stem. The genus *Monotropa* was at one time placed in its own family, the Monotropaceae, and alternatively in the Pyrolaceae along with spotted wintergreen, pipsissewa, and shinleaf. Recent molecular evidence has shown all of the above to be members of the Ericaceae, the family that includes blueberries, cranberries, and rhododendron. Members of this family have long been known to be dependent on relationships with mycorrhizal fungi to obtain some of their nutrients.

Indian pipe is a species with what is termed a disjunct distribution. That is, it is found in parts of the world separated by great distance from its other localities. In this case, Indian pipe is found throughout most of North America (excluding the drier, desert areas), in temperate Central America extending into northern South America, in China, Japan, and the Himalayas. This odd distribution may be the result of long distance wind dispersal of its dust-like seeds or it may reflect an original contiguous distribution at the time that the Bering land bridge existed.

Enjoy looking for these interesting flowers over the next season.



Stone Barns Farm

Eighteen BAS birders ventured out on Sunday, April 30 on what was to become a beautiful spring day at Pocantico Hills' Rockefeller State Park Preserve and Stone Barns Farm.

A decent number of spring migrants had moved in to the region, such as a Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Baltimore and Orchard Orioles, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Louisiana Waterthrush, Warbling Vireo and a whole lot more, making this Bedford Audubon trip a wonderful visit to one of Westchester's most beautiful settings.

Our visit to Stone Barns Farm included a guided tour and a delicious lunch prepared by their culinary staff. The setting for this portion of the trip was no less stunning than the previous walk at the adjacent Rockefeller State Park.

Everyone remarked on how much fun each person had. This event will go down as another successful BAS field trip for sure.



FIELD TRIPS

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

Birding by Ear - Early Morning Bird Walk With Bird Song Specialist, Jeanne Waful.

Saturday, June 3, 8 a.m.

Muscot Farm, Route 100, Somers

Sponsored by Friends of Muscot Farm

Meet at the picnic tables between the Reception Center and the Concession Stand. Bring binoculars, if possible. Suitable for experts and beginners alike. Jeanne will lead us on a leisurely two-hour walk to hear and see the songbirds of the preserve. Information (914) 864-7282.

Field Trip to White Memorial Nature Preserve With John Askildsen**Saturday, June 3, departing Bylane Farm at 7 a.m.**

The 4,000-acre White Memorial Nature Preserve is located in the Litchfield Hills in Western Connecticut, approx. 1^{1/2} hours from Katonah. The Preserve has a boardwalk across the Bantam River and is home to a plethora of water birds and passerines.

Bring lunch and mosquito spray.

Reservations required.

Birding by Ear - Early Morning Bird Walk With Bird Song Specialist, Jeanne Waful.**Saturday, June 17, 8 a.m.****Muscoot Farm, Route 100, Somers****Sponsored by Friends of Muscoot Farm**

Meet at the picnic tables between the Reception Center and the Concession Stand. Bring binoculars, if possible. Suitable for experts and beginners alike. Jeanne will lead us on a leisurely two-hour walk to hear and see the songbirds of the preserve.

Information (914) 864-7282.

Field Trip to White Flower Farm With Carol Gracie**Sunday, August 6, departing Bylane Farm at 9 a.m.**

White Flower Farm is located on Route 63 in Litchfield, Connecticut, about 1^{1/2} hours from Katonah. Since 1950, it has been an active nursery and mail order company supplying plants, including native species, to homeowners and large establishments all over the country. White Flower Farm maintains five acres of display gardens, open to the public free of charge.

We'll have lunch at one of the area's excellent restaurants.

Registration required.

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens, NYC With John Askildsen**Sunday, August 20. Departure (car pool) from Bylane Farm at 7:00 a.m.**

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens, NY, is bustling with wildlife in late summer. It is truly a "birder's Mecca." Hosts of butterflies are busy nectaring in the meadows and garden.

Some birds are still tending to their young and others, such as northern breeding shorebirds and warblers, are already winging their way south. Herons, egrets and glossy ibis will abound and ospreys 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!

Bring lunch. Registration required. 

PROGRAMS**Invasive Plants of the Northeast With Noted Author, Peter Alden****Wednesday, June 14, 7:30 p.m.****Katonah Village Library, 26 Bedford Rd., Katonah**

Peter Alden's slide presentation will teach the "dirty two dozen" and show horrifying pictures of devastation. What is

the role of birds in the spread of invasive plants? What are the current laws? Should we and can we declare war on some species. Broken down by growth form (tree, shrub, vine, creeper, wild flower, grass, and freshwater aquatic) they are fairly easy to learn.




Xavier Muñoz Contreras

The Spectacular Birds of Ecuador With Xavier Muñoz Contreras of Neblina Forest Birding Tours, Ecuador
Monday, June 26, 7:30 p.m.**Bylane Farm, 35 Todd Road, Katonah**

The small South American nation of Ecuador boasts an incredible 1,600 plus bird species. This is primarily due to the country's diverse habitats, with the Pacific Ocean on the west, the Amazon basin in the east and the Andes Mountains running down the center of the country.

Mr. Muñoz Contreras will give a slide show presentation about the unique bird life of Ecuador and neighboring South American countries; he will introduce the audience to antpittas, hummers, and many other colorful and exotic species inhabiting this stunningly beautiful region.

Xavier Muñoz Contreras, a native of Ecuador, joined Neblina Forest as a partner in 1994. The organization promotes Ecuador's avifauna and its wilderness through a variety of bird watching tours. In 2000, operations were expanded to Peru, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Uruguay and Colombia. Mr. Contreras wife, Mercedes Rivadeneira, is the General Manager of the company. Mr. Muñoz Contreras is a Founding Board Member of the Jocotoco Foundation, which, since 1997, has developed a network of six reserves totaling over 12,000 acres of conserved endangered habitat in Ecuador. He is a graduate of the Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial in Quito, Ecuador. 

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
 Contributor \$100 Patron \$500

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 _____

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.

Referred by: _____

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

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