

# The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 56, Number 3, Fall 2006  
*Celebrating 93 Years of Conservation 1913-2006*



## Sea of Sound - Capturing the Sounds and Images of Arctic Wildlife With David O. Brown

Wednesday, September 13, 7:30 p.m.  
Katonah Village Library

The Arctic is an ideal place to record the sounds of northern wildlife. Many species of acoustically active marine mammals live there, including beluga whales, narwhals, and bearded seals. Another advantage of recording in the Arctic is that the acoustic environment is relatively unaffected by human-caused sound. The noises of shipping, mineral exploration, military sonar, and shore-based machinery, pervasive in most of the world, are less pervasive in the far North. Mr. Brown will present a multimedia show of the birds and mammals of the Canadian Arctic and play recordings of the amazing sounds of the sea.

**David O. Brown** is a filmmaker and senior video producer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library. He was a member of the Cousteau team from 1984-1991, and operated an independent documentary film company from 1991-2001. His work has aired on *NBC*, *CBS*, *ABC*, *CNN*, *the Discovery Channel*, *Fox* cable and *National Geographic* television. His award-winning photographs have appeared in numerous exhibits and publications, including imagery for the Smithsonian's *Ocean Planet* display. He has authored a variety of articles, as well as two children's books, and served as a consultant for the National Geographic book, *The World's Wild Shores*.

In May 2005, David Brown and Marc Dantzker, curator of visual media at Cornell's Macaulay Library, set out on a three-week recording expedition to the Canadian Arctic. It was the first of a series of trips to gather images and sounds for the Lab's "Sea of Sound" project, a documentary on the use of sound in the marine environment. In addition to the Canadian Arctic, material has been gathered off the coast of Massachusetts, in the Gulf of Mexico and off the Hawaiian Islands. With funding from the National Science Foundation and the National Oceanic Partnership Program, the purpose is to create educational outreach material, in the form of a DVD and a website for classrooms and teachers as well as for the general public. The goal is to demonstrate the importance of sound in the marine environment. The DVD will be released in early 2007.



## President's Message: Migration Season Is in Full Swing Again By John Hannan

When writing this column, I was preparing for a vacation; when you read it you may have just returned from one. Many birds, though, have already been hard at work preparing for and embarking on their perilous semi-annual trek across the continents.

If you enjoy spending time along the shores of the Hudson or the Sound, you have already noticed our migratory guests' arrival. It began in mid-July when Spotted Sandpipers, small brown and white shorebirds whose constantly bobbing tails alert you to their presence, first appeared. On the Hudson it was followed by the first glimpses of Bald Eagles beginning to leave their nests up river and foraging in spots like Constitution Marsh.

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## The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Fall 2006, Volume 56, No. 3

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35 Todd Road, Katonah, NY 10536

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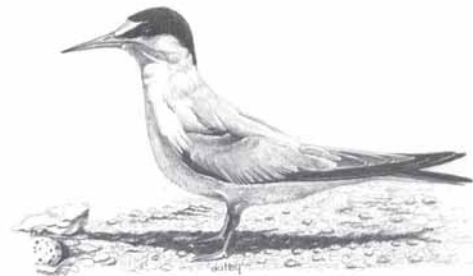
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### Our Mission

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

9/13	7:30 pm	<b>Sea of Sound - Capturing the Sounds and Images of Arctic Wildlife/Katonah Village Library</b>
9/29 - 10/1		Cape May, New Jersey
10/4	7:30 pm	<b>Rainforest Conservation, New Jungle Medicine, the Spice Trade and the South Beach Diet/St. Matthew's Church</b>
10/7	9:00 a.m.	Hawk Watch at Arthur Butler Sanctuary
10/14	7:00 a.m.	Field Trip to Lighthouse Point Park With John Askildsen and Walter Fowler
10/15	8:00 a.m.	Fall Foliage at the Shawangunks With Tait Johansson
11/4	7:00 a.m.	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge With Joan and Richard Becker
11/4		Seed Sale Pickup Day
11/8	7:30 pm	<b>Helpful and Harmful Ferns/Katonah Village Library</b>
12/6	7:30 pm	<b>DNA Bar Coding as a Method of Plant Identification/Katonah Village Library</b>



Least Tern by Daniel S Kilby

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On the Sound, Semipalmated Sandpipers began to appear on the low-tide mud flats of Marshlands Sanctuary and other inlets. These tiny visitors may have come from as far north as the Arctic Circle on their way to southern destinations like Chile and Brazil. Soon a plethora of other species will join these early birds, and our shorelines, parks, forests and backyards will be filled with a multitude of color and species diversity.

Many of the shorelines and open spaces in our vicinity have been designated by Audubon as Important Bird Areas. They are vital stopover and refueling points for these long-distance travelers who may only weigh one ounce but need the energy to fly as much as 2,400 miles non stop in a seventy-two-hour period.

Sites like Edith Reed Sanctuary or Ward Pound Ridge Reservation are essential to the survival of many bird species. They may be used for a day or a whole season, but each site is part of a global interlocking quilt of habitats that birds use for nesting, migrating, and wintering. If we fail to protect any of these individual pieces we break the pattern and endanger the birds' survival.

Because we are directly in the path of the Atlantic Migratory Flyway, our area witnesses two of migration's most striking and visible displays. One is the spring arrival of the songbirds, stunningly beautiful in their mating plumage. Some will nest in Bedford Audubon's sanctuaries and other local open spaces, others continue on northward.

The second, and perhaps the most exhilarating, phase of the migration season is the annual fall raptor display, which unfolds, among other places, at the Hawk Watch at Arthur Butler Sanctuary. The ridge on Chestnut Ridge Road in Mount Kisco sits high above Route 684, and for centuries raptors have used this aerial pathway as they head to wintering grounds as far south as South America. For many years, from early September until mid-November, knowledgeable volunteers and staff from area Audubon chapters have conducted hawk watches and raptor counts at the Butler Sanctuary, which has also been categorized as an Important Bird Area.

Some of us were awakened to the magnitude of migration through the film *Winged Migration*; others are old hands at watching the skies. No matter how long you have been observing the spectacular annual fall migration I am sure you will agree that it is a phenomenon not to be missed. For the passage of birds and butterflies, some of them to the southern tip of Argentina from the Arctic circle, has been going on since time immemorial, an example of the perseverance of instinct and nature. Increasingly, however, human interference is presenting obstacles to this ritual, mainly in the form of habitat degradation and eradication, and many species have declined dramatically.

Therefore, fall is a time for a renewed commitment to do our part in preserving these vital avian refuges, but also an opportunity to come out and enjoy the natural beauty of our Mid-Atlantic area and the wonder of the parks and other natural areas that surround us. I invite you to come to the Hawk Watch or participate in one of our field trips, attend a monthly program, or get involved in our citizen science programs.

If a festival is what you need, come on down to Audubon's Greenwich Center and attend Hawk Watch Weekend on September 16 and 17. The festival is timed to occur at the peak of the Broad-winged Hawk migration, when it is possible to see hundreds, if not thousands of these hawks soaring in kettles right above the Greenwich Center. During this period you are also likely to see Sharp-Shinned and Cooper's Hawks, Osprey, and Bald Eagles, along with harriers and kestrels passing overhead.

The last couple of months have once again emphasized what a fragile, uncertain world we live in, where nothing can be taken for granted. But one hope remains that if we are careful stewards of the environment and preserve the areas necessary for the birds to find food and rest on their long journeys, our children and grandchildren will be able to enjoy not only the amazing spectacle of the fall migration, but the same natural areas that provide us with recreation, serene landscapes, and immense joy. As we all shake off the summer season and enter the fall, dust off your binoculars and come out with us. We're ready to share the wonderful secrets of nature with you.



Short-eared Owl by Daniel S. Kilby

## Bylane Garden Notes

By Nannette Orr

Abundant rain in June and July helped establish the new trees and shrubs in the Bylane Garden. This precipitation, accompanied by colder than usual days, may explain this spring's paucity of butterflies. However, bees remained busy pollinating our new natives, evidenced by heavy fruiting on Chokeberry (*Aronia melocarpa*), Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*), both the hollies (*Ilex opaca* and *I. verticillata*), and Cranberry Viburnum (*Viburnum trilobum*). Inexplicably, there is no fruit on the Arrowwood (*Viburnum dentatum*) even though the shrubs flowered nicely in May.

Spring migrants of note passing through in May were Greater Yellowlegs, White-crowned Sparrow, and Canada and Prairie Warbler. Some species that stayed to nest were Baltimore Oriole, Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireo, Eastern Kingbird and Gray Catbird, to name a few.

By late July, the Sweet Pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*) and Oswego Tea (*Monarda didyma*) were attracting Hummingbird Clearwing, Spicebush Swallowtail, and skippers such as Mulberry Wing and Silver-spotted Skipper. On August 1, a White M Hairstreak visited the Sweet Pepperbush, for only the second time ever at the Hunt-Parker Sanctuary. Monarchs and Eastern Tiger Swallowtails seem especially prevalent in our area this summer including at Bylane. Both species have been visiting our Swamp Milkweed (*Asclepias incarnata*), which seems to be more popular among butterflies than the Orange Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*). In July, a Gray Hairstreak butterfly was seen in our meadow for the first time. On sunny days, near the ponds and in the garden, dragonflies are always active. A Spangled Skimmer recorded in July was a new dragonfly species for the sanctuary. Others commonly seen this summer were Clamp-tipped Emerald, Common Whitetail, Widow Skimmer, Delta-spotted and Twelve-spotted Spiketail, Eastern Pondhawk, Blue Dasher, and Black Saddlebags.

Back in the garden, the Blueberry crop was light, due to the small size of the plants. However, Gray Catbirds enjoyed what they could get and have moved over to the Cranberry Viburnum and Gray Dogwood as fruit on these shrubs begins to ripen. By the end of August, fruit of the Flowering Dogwood and others was ripe and ready to be devoured by visiting fall migrants, such as thrushes, mimids, etc.

Many thanks to volunteers on the Garden Committee who helped with the garden this summer and especially to Thea Fry and Denise Lee for their leadership.



## Local Chapter Appeal

This fall, Bedford Audubon Society will begin another season of what we believe will be a fine lineup of educational programs provided by some of the best naturalists and guest lecturers available. We hope that you and our friends and neighbors in the community will join us to experience the joys and wonders of nature.

Our programs are always free and open to the public as part of our mission to promote environmental education. Historically we have relied on the dues of our local members to underwrite the cost of speaker honorariums, venue rental, announcement mailings, refreshments, and other program related costs.

All of the above costs have risen over the years making it more difficult to cover our expenses. A typical monthly program now costs just under \$1,000 to produce and promote.

We encourage everyone to support the work of Bedford Audubon by payment of local membership dues. BAS now receives only pennies on the dollar of dues that are sent directly to the National Audubon Society. This reduction in assistance from National Audubon increases the financial responsibilities of the local chapter. Please see the back of our newsletter for the local chapter membership form. As always, we thank you for your continued support of Bedford Audubon Society.



## Seed Sale 2006

By John Erickson

Bedford Audubon Society's annual wild birdseed sale event is fast approaching. Whether you buy one or many bags of seed, or if you are only now thinking about starting to feed the birds, this is the time to consider how many bags of seed you need. Buying wild birdseed from Bedford Audubon accomplishes two things. First, you are guaranteed HIGH quality seed that will surely delight your backyard feathered friends. Second, your money goes to support your local Audubon Chapter. Order forms will be mailed out in early September. Orders must be in by October 18. The pick-up date will be Saturday, November 4. If you don't receive an order form by the first week of October, call Steve Ricker at 914-234-2934 or print a form from our website. Bedford Audubon now accepts Visa and MasterCard.

**Your Purchase Helps Fund Bedford Audubon Projects.**



## Pesticide Ban

Greg Butcher, National Audubon Society's Director of Bird Conservation, has praised the EPA for banning the use of the deadly pesticide carbofuran. "By resisting intense lobbying pressure to keep the dangerous chemical on the market, they have ensured that millions of birds will no longer need to suffer and die simply because they came into contact with farms that used carbofuran, or contaminated water and wildlife with the chemical," he said. The Agency has indicated that it would not re-register carbofuran for any purposes. While intended to kill bugs, millions of birds have died collaterally. There will be a four-year phase-out period for six minor crops totaling less than 2 percent of current use. The Fish and Wildlife Service once said, "there are no known conditions where carbofuran can be used without killing migratory birds."

To read the full press release, log on to [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org).



### Another Victory Over Pesticides

A federal judge has restored pre-2004 standards requiring the Environmental Protection Agency to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before licensing pesticides.

Ruling that the Bush administration "plainly violated" the Endangered Species Act, U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour in Seattle, recently overturned a 2004 regulation that streamlined approval of pesticides by eliminating reviews by wildlife officials responsible for protecting rare animals and plants.

The ruling was a victory for nine environmental groups that sued the U.S. Interior Department two years ago.



Least Bittern by Daniel S. Kilby

## FIELD TRIPS

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

### Cape May, New Jersey

#### Friday, September 29 - October 1.

Once again Bedford Audubon Society will lead a trip to one of the foremost birding areas on the East Coast - indeed of the world — to witness the spectacular annual fall migration. Every year, during periods of northwest and west winds, raptors as well as large numbers of shorebirds, waterfowl, seabirds and passerines (perching birds), on their way to southern wintering grounds, are steered towards the coast and subsequently funneled down the peninsula to the Victorian seaside town of Cape May. When the migrating birds arrive at the southern tip of the state, the 13-mile expanse of Delaware Bay causes most species to hesitate before venturing out on the next stage of their migration. This provides a unique opportunity to watch a wide variety of bird species, up close. Sixteen species of hawks migrate through Cape May, and late September through mid-October is the time of peak raptor diversity. A daily and annual raptor count is tallied throughout the fall, and exceptional totals are recorded each year. In addition to birds, butterflies and dragonflies can be seen in abundance. Whether you are an experienced birder or naturalist or a novice, this is an experience not to be missed.

Please register for this field trip with Ginny Powers at (914) 764-4320, who will provide details regarding accommodation and time of departure. A number of rooms have been reserved at a comfortable motel close to the Hawk Watch.

*Deadline for reservations is September 10. Full payment required by September 15. Deposits are refundable with a \$25 service charge per room if cancelled two weeks in advance of arrival date. Cancellations after September 15 will be charged one night's fee. Bedford Audubon Society now accepts VISA and MasterCard.*

### Hawk Watch at Arthur Butler Sanctuary, Chestnut Ridge Road, Mount Kisco

#### Saturday, October 7, 2006, from 9:00 a.m.

Join Bedford Audubon Society and Saw Mill River Audubon Society for a day of hawk watching at Butler Sanctuary. Walter Fowler, one of our newest board members, will represent Bedford Audubon Society and be at hand to help identify migrating hawks and other species. A short, but moderate trail leads up to the hawk watch from the parking lot. At the top is a set of bleachers for easy viewing. We should expect to see the tail end of the Broad-winged Hawk migration, American Kestrels, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks. Late October typically brings Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawk migrations.

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**Field Trip to Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven, Ct.  
With John Askildsen and Walter Fowler  
Saturday October 14, leaving Bylane Farm at 7:00 a.m.**  
The park is one of the most popular spots for bird watching along the East Coast. Each fall and spring, thousands of songbirds and birds of prey are seen in the migratory oasis along Morris Creek. Come spend a leisurely day bird watching along the Long Island Sound. Bring lunch.

**Fall Foliage at the Shawangunks  
With Tait Johansson**

**Sunday, October 15, leaving Bylane Farm at 8:00 a.m.**  
Sam's Point Dwarf Pine Ridge Preserve, off Route 52 near Ellenville in Ulster County, contains the best examples of ridgetop dwarf pine barrens in the world. It is part of the 90,000-acre Northern Shawangunk Mountains, the cliffs, summits and plateaus of which form a unique landscape of extraordinary ecological significance. Home to nearly 40 rare plants and animals, the Northern Shawangunks represent one of the highest priorities for conservation in the northeastern United States. Depending on the group's ability level, we will pick a route that offers beautiful views of fall foliage, but allows everyone to participate. Bring lunch and good walking shoes. A \$5 parking fee per car will be charged.

**Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge  
With Joan and Richard Becker  
Saturday, November 4, leaving Bylane Farm at 7:00 a.m.**

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is one of the premier places to watch birds in the USA. Even in late fall the refuge is a "Birders' Mecca." We are sure to see lots of ducks and geese as well as some grebes on the ponds and in the bay and late lingering shorebirds. Wintering landbirds, such as the White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Juncos, will be present. The new visitor's center is open. Check it out! Bring lunch.



## **PROGRAMS**

**Rainforest Conservation, New Jungle Medicine, the Spice Trade, and the South Beach Diet  
With Ethnobotanist Mark Plotkin, Ph.D., President of the Amazon Conservation Team  
Wednesday, October 4, at 7:30 p.m.  
St. Matthew's Church, Cantitoe Street, Bedford**

While newspapers teem with stories on rainforest destruction, innovative approaches that combine ancient shamanic wisdom and 21st century western technology are yielding concrete conservation results. The combination of biotechnology and biodiversity offers great promise in terms of the development of novel therapeutic compounds. This talk takes a historical approach to the discovery, utilization, and protection of rainforest resources, and shows how our long-

term interactions with this most fascinating of forests has led to everything from the birth of capitalism to some of our newest dietary trends.

**Ethnobotany** is the study of the relationship between plants and people, including the complex relations between plants and cultures.



**Dr. Mark Plotkin** is one of the foremost ethnobotanists in the country. In November 2005 he was featured in *Smithsonian* magazine together with 34 other people, including Bill Gates, Steven Spielberg, Yo-Yo Ma, Frank Gehry and Maya Angelou, who have made a profound difference and broken new ground in their respective fields over the course of the magazine's 35-year life. This was an acknowledgement of Mr.

Plotkin's lifelong dedication to the conservation of the Amazon rainforest, its people, their culture and in particular the shamans – tribal elders – who hold an intimate knowledge of the forest and its plants and their medicinal value.

In 1993 he published *Tales of a Shaman's Apprentice: An Ethnobotanist Searches for New Medicines in the Amazon Rain Forest*, which is in its 25<sup>th</sup> printing and has been translated into five languages, a wake-up call to the world to preserve the medicinal plants of the Amazon and their unexploited potential for curing diseases. In 2000, Mark Plotkin published *Medicine Quest: In Search of Nature's Healing Secrets*, which focuses on the medicines of the future that will be derived from natural products being investigated today.

In 1995 Mark founded the Amazon Conservation Team (ACT) whose mission is "to work in partnership with indigenous people in conserving biodiversity, health, and culture in tropical America." The priority of the organization, headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, is to "safeguard the biological diversity of the Amazon and other ecosystems of tropical and sub-tropical America" recognizing "the inextricable link between the survival of the forest and the survival of the local forest culture - its "biocultural" diversity."

In 2002 ACT was one of only eight individuals and organizations to receive the United Nations Environmental Programme's prestigious "Global 500 Roll of Honour" for outstanding contributions to the protection of the environment.

**Helpful and Harmful Ferns  
With Dr. Robbin Moran  
Curator of Ferns at the New York Botanical Garden  
November 8, at 7:30 p.m.**

**Katonah Village Library, 26 Bedford Rd., Katonah**  
Ferns interact with people in both helpful and harmful ways. *Azolla*, the mosquito fern, is the world's most important fern economically because it is used as a fertilizer in the rice paddies of southern China and Vietnam. Several ferns are eaten in the fiddlehead stage, while the young leaf is unfurling. Ostrich fern fiddleheads are popularly eaten in the eastern North America and are the largest export crop of New Brunswick, Canada. Ferns, are also used in construction, such as tree fern trunks in the tropics, and for making baskets, as is done with the rachises of *Lygodium*, a climbing fern. In Vanuatu, tree fern trunks are carved into stylized figures and used in grade ceremonies marking a person's advance in society. But not all interactions of ferns and people are helpful. Bracken is the "Lucretia Borgia" of the fern world because it contains many toxins, poisonous not only to people, but also to livestock and insects, causing death in diabolical ways. Eating bracken fiddleheads is associated with a high incidence of stomach cancer. *Salvinia molesta*, a floating fern, is one of the world's worst aquatic weeds. A species of climbing fern (*Lygodium microphyllum*) smoothes the ground vegetation in cypress swamps in southern Florida, and its climbing leaves carry occasional ground fires up into tree crowns. The four-leaf clover fern (*Marsilea*), called "nardoo" in Australia, is responsible for the deaths of some of Australia's most famous explorers.



Photo by Mickel

**Dr. Robbin Moran** is Curator of Ferns at the New York Botanical Garden. In October 2004, he published a book with Timber Press, *A Natural History of Ferns*, which has received the Garden Writers Association Media Silver Award. The book will be available for purchase at the lecture. He is the author or coauthor of over 70 papers and four books about ferns, including *Fern Grower's Manual, Revised and Expanded Edition*, published by

Timber Press. Dr. Moran served as the main writer, editor, and organizer for the fern volume of *Flora Mesoamericana*, which treats the ferns of Central America and is the largest fern flora ever written. He has taught fern courses in Costa Rica, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, and traveled widely in Latin America, Thailand, and Taiwan. During summers Robbin co-teaches *Tropical Plant Systematics*, a six-week long course in Costa Rica sponsored by the Organization

for Tropical Studies. He also serves as an Associate Editor for *Brittonia* and the *American Fern Journal*.

**DNA Bar Coding as a Method of Plant Identification  
With Kenneth M. Cameron, Ph.D.  
The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Program for Molecular Systematics Studies,  
The New York Botanical Garden  
December 6, at 7:30 p.m.**

**Katonah Village Library, Bedford Road, Katonah**  
The familiar black and white bar code label that is present on most commercial products can also be used to differentiate species of plants from one another. Such a genetic identifier is known as a "DNA bar code." The advantages of a DNA bar code include the possibility of identifying an organism from only a small fragment of tissue rather than requiring the entire organism. It also works at all stages of life, from seed to adult, and can unmask look-alike species.

Dr. Cameron's lecture will focus on the groundbreaking research into plant DNA bar coding exemplified by the more than 50 different species of *Vanilla* (Orchid family) from around the world. Each *Vanilla* species has a unique DNA sequence, and these DNA bar codes allow for easy identification of the plants from just a small fragment of leaf, stem, or fruit tissue. The same technique is now being evaluated for its application in identifying the native and naturalized flora of the northeastern United States. It is also used in other fields including ornithology and entomology to differentiate between species and to determine evolutionary history and relationships between species.

**Dr. Ken Cameron** is recognized as an authority in the field of molecular plant systematics, especially as applied to the taxonomy and study of evolution within the orchid family as a whole, and the orchid subfamily *Vanilloideae*, in particular. He has a talent for presenting scientific concepts in a manner that is easily understood by the layman. Dr. Cameron has published more than 50 scientific papers, books, and popular articles (Natural History, 2004) on orchid biology and other topics. He has been on the scientific staff of the New York Botanical Garden since 1998 and is currently the Director of its Molecular Systematics Studies Program.



### 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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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