



The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 57, Number 2, Summer 2007
Celebrating 94 Years of Conservation 1913-2007

President's Message:

By John Hannan

This letter marks the last "address" I will submit to our newsletter as Chapter President. As some of you know, our organizational by-laws have established term limits. I have come to the end of my third consecutive year as President and so am happily turning over the gavel to our current Vice President, Tony Ianniello.



Thanks, John, for a successful three years!

I think term limits are a tool every organization should consider as, especially in volunteer organizations, it enables leadership to really devote a great deal of energy to the organization confident that this will not be a life-long expectation placed upon them. It also ensures the organization develops new leadership and continues to grow and improve on its capacity to deliver on its mission.

I have been lucky enough to serve as Chapter President during three of the most exciting and vibrant years of Bedford Audubon's 94-year history. In this newsletter you will read about some of our recent great successes and innovative programs.

In the last three months alone we have finalized easement agreements with New York City's Department of Environmental Protection and with Westchester Land Trust that will ultimately ensure that all of our 550 acres of sanctuary, and many of Westchester Land Trust's, will always be preserved for vital habitat for wildlife and passive human recreation. We have also established an endowment that will ensure that we have the funds needed to manage and maintain our sanctuaries and properties.

Over the last three years our programs have grown as well. Many of you attend our monthly lectures and know the caliber of our speakers. Our program committee now regularly brings some of the world's top scientists and academics to address our community on issues ranging from global warming to invasive plants of the Northeast. And quietly our citizen science projects have grown in scope and depth. In this issue you will read about two of our most recent and successful projects: the wintering eagle monitoring project and the Bio-Blitz.

Now I am switching seats with Tony as he takes on the President's role and I can relax as Chapter Vice President. I think under Tony's leadership you will see our science and education programs continue on their current trajectory. We already have plans to expand our local Important Bird Area monitoring and to include some of the new sites we discovered during the Bio-Blitz. In addition to our regular monthly programs, look for special events where we will present our findings from these projects.

The last three years have been an enormously exciting time for all of us at Bedford Audubon. Many of the resources we now have had been recently donated to us and we had to establish organizational systems to ensure best use of them. All the volunteers and board members have worked tirelessly at this task and now we can enjoy the fruits of their labor.

You are part of a chapter that, with almost 100% volunteer effort, manages 550 acres of pristine wildlife habitat, organizes and executes major citizen science projects, conducts excellent field trips and educational programs, and collaborates with the other excellent non-profit and governmental organizations in our area working to improve our environment and the public appreciation of it. If you are not already actively volunteering with one of our committees, now is the time to join.

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Summer 2007, Volume 57, No. 2

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35 Todd Road, Katonah, NY 10536

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Our Mission

The mission of the Bedford Audubon Society is to promote conservation and protection of wildlife habitats in the northern Westchester and eastern Putnam region through education, advocacy, nature study, and birdwatching.



BAS CALENDAR OF EVENTS

7/25	9:30 a.m.	Nature Hike at Hunt-Parker Sanctuary With Tait Johansson
8/9	9:30 a.m.	Nature Hike at Hunt-Parker Sanctuary With Tait Johansson
8/18	7:30 a.m.	Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge With John Askildsen/Leave from Bylane Farm

FIELD TRIPS

Registration: Please register for all field trips (except where noted) with trip registrar, Milady Valdez, (914) 962-5474 or by e-mail to mvaldez@bedfordaudubon.org

JULY

**Nature Hike at Hunt-Parker Sanctuary With Tait Johansson
Wednesday, July 25, 9:30 a.m.–12 noon
Meet at Bylane Farm, 35 Todd Road, Katonah**
Our resident naturalist will lead a walk at Bylane focusing on butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies.

AUGUST

**Nature Hike at Hunt-Parker Sanctuary With Tait Johansson
Thursday, August 9, 9:30 a.m.–12 noon
Meet at Bylane Farm, 35 Todd Road, Katonah**
Our resident naturalist will lead a walk at Bylane focusing on butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies.

**Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens, NYC With John Askildsen
Saturday, August 18. Departure (car pool) from Bylane Farm at 7:30 a.m.**

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Queens, NY, is bustling with wildlife in late summer. 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 preparing for their journey south. Herons, egrets and Glossy Ibis will abound, and Ospreys and terns will be busy patrolling the extensive salt marshes. From birds to butterflies, it's all there for the viewing! Bring lunch and plenty of cold drinks. Also, bring boots and be prepared to join John for a walk in the mud at the East Pond! Return to Bylane will be around 4:00 p.m.



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It has been both a pleasure and an honor to serve as your President, and it will be a pleasure to continue to volunteer. As always, I invite you to get more involved with our work, and to come out on the trails with us and see what a wonderful world we live in. Thank you!



Reflections on the Bio-Blitz

By the "Spider in the Web" - Brian Bielfelt*



BAS Bio-Blitz
Coordinator &
Invertebrate Team
Leader.

What happens when you mix 165 scientists and volunteers, 11 sponsoring organizations, and 2000+ acres of land? You get an incredible blend of high-level science, enthusiasm – and fun! I'm talking about the first-ever Bio-Blitz conducted in Northern Westchester County, a comprehensive biodiversity study sponsored by Bedford Audubon Society and partners Westchester Land Trust, Westchester County Parks, The New York Botanical Garden, and WildMetro in addition to numerous other supporters. Not only did we survey more acres of land than any other Bio-Blitz has ever done; we also ex-

panded the traditional 24-hour period to 48 hours in order to cover the six selected nature preserves.

Now, most rational people would be overwhelmed by the size of the area to be surveyed in such a short amount of time. However, this was not the case. It was not the task that overwhelmed our participants, but the beauty and diversity of organisms found on the properties being surveyed.

The Bio-Blitz kicked off with a bang on Friday afternoon, June 1, with speakers U.S. Congressman John Hall, State Senator Vincent Leibell, State Assemblyman Adam Bradley, and philanthropist Shelby White, who, as a trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation, which funded the Bio-Blitz, made all this possible. In the evening, Dr. Allen Hershkowitz from the NRDC was the guest speaker.

Our scientists came from far and wide. We had professors from Hostos Community College, CUNY, Eastern Connecticut State University, the University of New Hampshire, and the University of Maine. There was an entomology student from Cornell University, a graduate student from Penn State's entomology program, and high-level experts from New York Botanical Garden, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, the American Museum of Natural History, New York DEC, the NYC DEP, and mammal specialists from WildMetro. Numerous high school teachers lent their expertise as well as equipment from as close as John Jay High School and as far away as eastern Long Island. All these scientists specialized in mammals and microorganisms, birds

and beetles, frogs and fungi, lichens and lilies, spiders and sedges. There were local naturalists, and others were just locals who wanted to learn.

Teams of 4-8 people surveyed Angle Fly Preserve, Bedford Audubon's Hunt-Parker Sanctuary, Guard Hill Preserve, Westchester Wilderness Walk, Leon Levy Preserve, and Ward Pound Ridge Reservation. The Trailside Museum at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation and the surrounding meadows served as a hub for the entire operation. Here the survey teams gathered before fanning out to the preserves; food was served in the large tent; scientists received samples in the Sugar House, other scientists studied specimens through microscopes set up in Trailside Museum, and yet another team entered all the data into a computerized database. This process is still ongoing – insects, in particular, are a very diverse group of organisms, so diverse, in fact, that many are still in the process of being identified. The final tally of species will not be available for some time. Educational walks and talks were continuous throughout Saturday and Sunday, including a birds-of-prey and falconry demonstration and a presentation of injured mammals by local wildlife rehabilitation experts.

Some of the most interesting and unusual species we encountered included a Spotted Turtle, Marbled Salamander, Black Bear (tracks), Blue Grosbeak, Purple Martin, *Mitrula lunulatospora* (fungi), *Dasyscyphus virgineus* (fungi), *Polyporus umbellatus* (fungi), White Admiral, Luna Moth, *Fagitana litera* (moth), *Abrostola ovalis* (moth), and *Carabus goryi* (beetle). The rarest find was in the insect category - a slave-making ant of the genus *Temnothorax* that has not been recorded in the NYC region before. We are continuing to add to the total number of species found. Check in with www.bedfordaudubon.org for updated totals.

Currently we have:

79 Fungi, 65+ Lichens, 557 Plants, 83 Birds, 21 Reptiles and Amphibians, 15 Mammals, 18 Fish, 60+ Spiders/Mites, 100+ Beetles, 200+ Butterflies and Moths, 50+ Flies, 100+ Wasps, Bees, and Ants, 34 Dragonflies, 250+ Other Invertebrates, and 20+ Micro Invertebrates, to date a total of **1652+ species**. The "Ultimate Bio-Blitz 2007" was an incredible experience for everyone involved, and we hope to be able to make this a regularly recurring event. Thank you for all your help!

*Brian Bielfelt was overall coordinator for the Bio-Blitz. He worked tirelessly for three months to make this event an enormous success.



Bedford Audubon Works With Partners to Preserve Hundreds of Acres of Habitat

By John Hannan

Many of you know that when Bedford Audubon accepted the gift of Bylane Farm, our office and research center, along with the adjoining sanctuary grounds from the Parker family, they suggested we sell a small portion of the land to create an endowment, which would ensure the property could be maintained and taken care of. We are very pleased to announce that an even better solution has been found. In March, Bedford Audubon entered into an easement agreement with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection to permanently protect and preserve 89 acres of our sanctuary that is situated in their high priority zone for watershed protection. Additionally, we have begun a series of easement agreements with the Westchester Land Trust to permanently protect even more of our adjoining sanctuary acreage while we take easement on some of their lands.

In short, this means is that three great organizations, two of them private non-profits and one a public governmental institution, are partnering to collectively ensure that more than 1,000 acres of critical watershed land and wildlife habitat right here in Northern Westchester are forever preserved and protected as open space. Moreover, due to the sale of the easement to the NYC DEP, not only was Bedford Audubon able to preserve more open space, it has provided us with a property and habitat maintenance endowment that the Parker family rightly knew we would need if we were to care for the land and property they gifted us.

These easements also guarantee that if either Westchester Land Trust or Bedford Audubon ever has to relinquish ownership of any of these properties for any reason, the land will remain protected. Originally, when Audubon received some of its properties, the gifts were focused on land for birds to nest in. We now live in a different world, where water quality protection and habitat and forest management are equally important, so by working together with two great partners we combine our collective expertise to best serve our community. As Westchester Land Trust's executive director, Paul Gallay, stated when we signed the first easement agreement, "If the progress we've been making is to stand the test of time, groups have got to work together to leverage one another's strengths. These reciprocal easements will make sure our preservation work does, in fact, stand the test of time."

This means that Bedford Audubon can now enter a new period where we have to worry less about raising money for property management and where we will be able to shift even more energy to program-related efforts. This is already happening in many ways. Those who participated in the recent Bio-Blitz saw this in the immense level of cooperation and partnership we experienced with Westchester County Parks, Westchester Land Trust, and all the other partner organizations that made the Bio-Blitz a huge success. As we move forward, you will see it in

expanded citizen science and education programs, greater conservation efforts, and an ever-increasing set of collaborations throughout this area to increase bio-diversity and make conservation a number one priority for everyone.



Lower Hudson Valley Wintering Raptor Monitoring Project

By John Hannan

This past winter Audubon NY provided your chapter with a \$3,000 grant to monitor raptor activity in the Lower Hudson Valley IBA area. The focus of our project was the Bald Eagle, a species that is experiencing growth in our area. The objective was to begin a long-term study conducted mostly by volunteers using proven scientific protocols to determine how many Bald Eagles are actually roosting in the lower Hudson Valley during the winter and how many may be nesting in the area. Once that is determined, the second objective is to provide landowners and other stakeholders with habitat management recommendations and, in the case of sites like county parks, recommendations on how to balance the issue of the public's desire to see these birds with the need to protect their roost and nest sites.

The eagle project began on January 27, 2007. We focused on three primary sites this year, namely Croton Point (CP), Croton Dam (CD), and George's Island (GI). These sites make a rough equilateral triangle. There were also three observations done at Iona Island and other sites.

Except for the project coordinator, Brian Bielfelt, this was an entirely volunteer supported effort. Hence our protocols were not always perfect, but for the majority of the project observers recorded not only the age and number of birds, but also the amount of ice on the water, temperature, and cloud cover. Regular surveys took place on Tuesday and Saturday evenings until late March. All three sites had simultaneous counts on these evenings. On two occasions, there were not enough volunteers to observe at CP; however, counts continued at the other two sites. The observations during this period focused on roosting eagles, although observers separately noted eagles that moved out of the area.

Over the course of a month of regular counting of roosting eagles, an average of 30 eagles per day, with a low of 10 and a high of 45, were found in the monitored area. In addition, between 1 and 10 eagles were seen flying away from the roosts to other places each day. Moreover, Iona Island averaged five roosting eagles in three days of observations. Twice another 5-10 eagles were seen around Camp Smith shortly before dusk.

An inverse relationship between the number of eagles seen and the temperature recorded was noted. The eagles may be using secondary roosting sites on the colder days. Another possibility is that they feed later in the day when it is cold and return to the roost at or shortly after dark. As the study progressed, the aver-

age temperature increased, and the average number of eagles decreased.

When looking at the relationship between the amount of ice and the total number of eagles seen, there was no apparent correlation. Even when New Croton Reservoir nearly froze over, there was no decrease in the number of eagles roosting there nor did more show up at CP or GI. In addition, cloud cover had no effect on the total number of eagles seen.

This year, CP was a feeding and a staging area rather than a roost site. However, this may change in years of colder weather. In the preliminary observations, between two and five eagles were around the Point early in the morning. There is one observation of an adult and one juvenile remaining in the area late into the evening.

The most exciting news was the discovery of a pair of eagles building a nest in the observation area. This highlights the effectiveness of citizen science projects like this. Because we could mobilize volunteers for an extended survey period, we discovered this previously unknown nest in the lower Valley. We immediately turned our finding over to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Endangered Species Unit, and we are happy to report that they continued monitoring the nest and that a young eagle hatched. Due to the sensitivity of nesting sites, and the extremely high mortality rate raptors experience in their first year of life we are not publicly identifying the site; but rest assured that properly protected, the eagle population stands to grow in the Hudson Valley!

It is important to continue monitoring Bald Eagles for conservation reasons, but also because this awesome bird and national symbol occupies a very special place in the public consciousness. The devastating effects of DDT in the 1970s were first noticed after a conspicuous decline in Ospreys, Peregrine Falcons, and Bald Eagles. Although these birds suffered to a point of near extinction they may have saved other, smaller species from severe impact, since the effects of DDT would have taken longer to manifest themselves in these organisms. The Bald Eagle has made a successful comeback and may be removed from the list of endangered species; but risks remain that new dangers may face this majestic creature, and vigilance is more crucial than ever.

Bedford Audubon has made a commitment to continue this project and other strategic IBA monitoring throughout Westchester and Putnam Counties, as this area supports a “watch list” of birds. Please consider joining us either as a bird counter, data collector, or in some other role. We can teach the skills, and it is a great way to get out in the field. Contact John Hannan at 914-232-1999 or email info@bedfordaudubon.org.



A Memorial Bench for the Bylane Garden

The Bedford Garden Club graciously chose our Bylane Garden for a beautiful stone bench. This was made possible by funds donated to them in memory of their past member and former president, Marion Hvolbeck Woodward. Tragically, along with her husband Clarence (Clancy), Marion was killed in a 2005 car accident. Marion was an ardent gardener and respected horticulturist who greatly enjoyed bird watching. The inscription *Here shall the wild bird sing*, which is carved into the bench, is from the poem *Woodman Spare That Tree* by George Pope Morris.

The Bedford Audubon Society is extremely thankful for this donation. Later this year, there will be a formal dedication of this bench.



John Askildsen Receives Lifetime Achievement Award By Tony Ianniello

The June meeting was very special for all in attendance, as we honored John Askildsen for his lifetime of dedication to Bedford Audubon Society. John Hannan, board president, presented John with The Audubon Society's *Audubon Birds of America*. This volume displays all 435 of Audubon's brilliant hand-colored engravings in exquisite reproductions taken from the original plates of the Audubon Society's archival copy of the rare Double Elephant Folio.



John Hannan and John Askildsen.

John is arguably the youngest of our most senior members, and will undoubtedly remain as part of Bedford Audubon's past and future history. Best wishes, John, in your new home, and a sincere Thank You for your selfless dedication to Bedford Audubon Society.



Many Thanks to all Our Bio-Blitz Friends!

Bedford Audubon extends a heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who made Bio-Blitz 2007 such a success.



Tent.

Our partner organizations:
Audubon New York
Audubon Greenwich
John Jay High School
The New York Botanical Garden
Somers Land Trust
Westchester County Parks
Westchester Land Trust
WildMetro

Our scientists, naturalists, the steering committee, volunteers.



Paul Gallay, Executive Director,
Westchester Land Trust.

Our principal sponsor:
First and foremost, we offer special thanks to Ms. Shelby White and the Leon Levy Foundation for their generous donation and continuous support of the environment.



Ms. Shelby White, Trustee of
the Leon Levy Foundation at
the opening ceremony.

Our appreciation goes out to the following for their support in providing donations of refreshments and numerous items used in the labs, and for their assistance in transporting our scientists to all field locations:

Arroway Chevrolet of Katonah, NY
Ms. Eunice Cheung
John Jay High School of Cross River, NY
Pepsi Bottling Group of Somers, NY
Sandra Santana of EMSL Analytical, Inc. of New York City, NY
Seth Schultz of The Louis Berger Group, Inc. of New York City, NY



Special thanks to Beth Herr and her associates at Westchester County Parks for all their help at Bio-Blitz 2007.



Sean Mahar, Audubon N.Y.'s
Assoc. Dir. of Conservation at
the opening ceremony.

We would like to thank US Congressman John Hall, NY State Senator Vincent Leibell, New York State Assemblyman Adam Bradley, County Legislator Ursula G. LaMotte and Warren 'Chip' Mathews, Deputy Commissioner of Westchester County Parks, Recreation & Conservation for taking the time out of their busy schedules to join us for the opening ceremony.

We are very proud of having accomplished this large-scale endeavor, and meeting our goal of documenting the area's biodiversity, contributing to expanded conservation programs, and refining habitat management for critical species. We feel confident that the data collected in this study will be an invaluable resource for future planning and preservation efforts in Northern Westchester County.



Dianna Smith, Fungi Team Leader with *Polyporus Umbellatus*.



BAS Director Dr. Linda Burke, Aquatics Team Leader & John Jay HS Environmental Science Teacher.



BAS Tait Johansson, Bird Team Leader.

We are very grateful to Allen Hershkowitz, Senior Scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), who donated his time to give the keynote address at our opening ceremony. NRDC is one of the leading environmental research and advocacy organizations.



James Eyring of Pace University Environmental Center with Barred Owl during his Wild Birds program.



Dr. Robynn Shannon, Plant Team leader with Aquatics Team members, Garrett Crow (hat), Prof. of Botany at Univ. of New Hampshire & Steve Glenn, researcher at Brooklyn Botanic Garden.



Maggie Ciarcia, local animal rehabilitator, during her presentation.



Ted Gilman, of Greenwich Audubon with Dr. Vladimir Ovtsharenko and Dr. Julie Trachman.



BAS member volunteers Tricia O'Donnell, Laura Jaffe and Joan E. Becker at the data entry area.



Lori Shapiro, Penn State U. graduate program scholar and Harry Zirlin, beetle experts in the ID lab.



Bedford Audubon Membership

Yes, I would like to join the Bedford Audubon Society. My local chapter membership will help support local conservation efforts, programs, and sanctuaries. (Send this form with a check made out to **Bedford Audubon Society** or **fill in the MC/VISA credit card information below.**)

Please check your membership category.

- New Member or Renewal \$30 Supporter \$50
 Gift Membership \$30 Contributor \$100
 Student \$15 Patron \$500

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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.

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