

The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 61, Number 1, Spring 2011
Celebrating 98 Years of Conservation 1913-2011

Bird Specimens Enthrall at AMNH

SEVENTEEN LUCKY BAS MEMBERS agree that “more than a million” would be the number of Thank Yous owed to Paul Sweet, Collections Manager of the American Museum of Natural History’s Ornithology Department, who gave our bird lovers a rare, behind-the-scenes tour at AMNH on February 9.

Indeed, “more than a million” is the number of specimens in AMNH’s collection of bird skins, skeletons, eggs, and other samples, with these specimens representing all continents and oceans and nearly 99 percent of all species.

Our group had its first views of filled bird skins in Paul’s fifth-floor office overlooking Central Park, where he popped open and removed a large, shallow drawer of bright, beautiful specimens from Vietnam, one of his own field trip arenas. He also gave a brief history of 19th century specimen collecting, touched on how AMNH records its samples, discussed taxonomy, and answered questions about the research expeditions in which he has participated. Then on to a maze of corridor-like rooms to be dazzled by drawer upon drawer of bird specimens—Old World and New World, many rare and even extinct species. Brilliantly-colored pittas, kingfishers tiny and kingfishers huge, kookaburras, motmots, and dozens more. Imagine the excitement of standing within inches of a tray filled with Ivory-Billed Woodpeckers! Paul gave a “show and tell” on the difference in the wing patterns of the Pileated and Ivory-Billed, and enthralled all with a display of the latter’s vivid and well-preserved underwings. Thrilled as the BAS group was by the bird specimens, members were also attentive to Paul’s introduction to the department’s research interests in phylogenetics, studies of speciation, molecular studies, and the biogeography of remote areas. “But basically,” smiled Paul, “it’s about evolution. We study how species evolve and change.” As a final treat, Paul led small groups to what Peter Becker described as the “ultimate insider’s view”—basement rooms where bins of live beetles devour bird carcasses to produce pristine skeletons for scientific study.



Over lunch at the museum café and before visiting exhibit floors (birds, of course!), conversation centered on the tour. “A once-in-a-lifetime experience. Extraordinary!” declared Jeanne Waful. As said, a million thanks to Paul Sweet for his generous gift of time and knowledge to BAS.

The Marty McGuire Scholarship*

The Bedford Audubon Society is pleased to announce the availability of scholarship funds to students in the school districts served by the organization. The funds may be used to promote student study or to underwrite part of a student project that will enhance student awareness and commitment to field oriented environmental studies. The scholarship funds of up to \$1000 may be used for course registration, materials, or other project-related expenses.

Eligibility requirements and an application can be found on the web at www.tinyurl.com/2011scholarship. Students must submit the application no later than April 15, 2011. Applicants will be notified by May 1 of the success of their application.

**This scholarship is named after Marty McGuire of Putnam County, N.Y., who died in a car accident in August of 2007. He was an active and enthusiastic young birder and naturalist filled with a love of nature.*

President’s Letter

While this winter’s storms continue to rattle windows and turn driveways into skating rinks, birders are dreaming of warm spring breezes and MIGRATION! April and May are the months we have waited for through all of the snow; two months filled with a dazzling display of colors and feathers we only get to see in our yards for a very brief period each year.

Warblers and other migrants have been in decline during the past decade. Old friends like Chestnut-sided and Black-throated Blue warblers are increasingly hard to find. When did you last see the Scarlet Tanager? Other perching birds (Passerines) will be streaming through our yards on their way to their breeding ranges in the northeast and Canada. Now is the time to plan for your chance to see wonderful birds that visit here, close to home, only briefly.

Watch our website, www.bedfordaudubon.org, for our guided opportunities to see and learn about birds and all things natural. Encourage your friends to join Bedford Audubon and help us protect the habitat our visiting friends need to sustain them during their stay.

Our bird friends that have historically called southern New York State home need natural and intact habitats in order to thrive and reproduce. As development continues in Westchester and Putnam counties, these critical habitats become increasingly endangered and hard to find. Our wildlife preserves contain a variety of habitats crucial to the survival of once common birds, mammals, amphibians, and the food they rely on. Come with us and visit them, appreciate their beauty, and help us protect them.

An exciting array of educational programs for the spring and summer are being developed to give our communities the opportunity to learn more about our vanishing natural world. Watch our website, sign up early, and enjoy the warmer weather with us.

Walt Fowler, President

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Spring 2011, Volume 61, No. 1

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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

Please register with Joan E. Becker:
jebecker@bedfordaudubon.org or 914-232-4806

| | | |
|------|-----------------------|--|
| TBD | | Night of the Salamander |
| 3/9 | 7:30 P.M. | Hummingbirds: Feathered Gems/Katonah Memorial House |
| 3/19 | 9 A.M.-3 P.M. | Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge |
| 3/26 | 1-3 P.M. | Field Trip to a Vernal Poo at Hunt Parker Sanctuary |
| 3/31 | 10 A.M.-3:30 P.M. | Visit to the Bronx Zoo |
| TBD | | Calling All Toads |
| 4/7 | 10:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. | The Old Croton Aqueduct — Tour and Trail Walk |
| 4/13 | 7:30 P.M. | Creating a Native Garden: Using Nature's Processes/Katonah Memorial House |
| 4/16 | 7:15-8:30 P.M. | Dance of the Woodcock at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation |
| 4/26 | 9:00-11:30 A.M. | Fourth Annual "Walk for Drew" Nature Hike at Franklin Fels Sanctuary |
| 5/3 | 7:30-9:30 A.M. | Early-Morning Spring Bird Walk |
| 5/5 | 8 A.M.-3:30 P.M. | Bird Walk in Central Park |
| 5/9 | 7:00 P.M. | Book Club: <i>The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World</i>/Bylane Farm |
| 5/10 | 8 A.M.-1 P.M. | Field Trip to Garrett Mountain, N.J. |
| 5/11 | 7:30 P.M. | BAS Annual Meeting and Darwin, the Botanist/Katonah Memorial House |
| 5/13 | 8:30 A.M.-5 P.M. | Excursion to Bartholomew's Cobble |
| 5/14 | 7:30 A.M.-1 P.M. | Field Trip to Ferncliff Forest, Rhinebeck, N.Y. |
| 5/17 | 7:30-9:30 A.M. | Eary Morning Spring Bird Walk |
| 5/19 | 7:30-9:30 A.M. | Eary Morning Spring Bird Walk |
| 5/21 | 7:30-11:30 A.M. | Field Trip Doodletown Road |
| 5/24 | 7:30-9:30 A.M. | Early Morning Spring Bird Walk |
| 5/31 | 7:30-9:30 A.M. | Early Morning Spring Bird Walk |
| TBD | | Science in Action |
| 6/1 | 10:15 A.M.-3 P.M. | Innisfree Gardens, Millbrook, N.Y. |
| 6/4 | 3-4:30 P.M. | Babes in the Woods at Westmoreland Sanctuary |
| 6/8 | 7:30 P.M. | Butterflies and Their Gardens/Katonah Memorial House |
| 6/9 | 8 A.M.-2 P.M. | Excursion to Sterling Forest State Park, Tuxedo Park, N.Y. |
| 6/18 | 10 A.M.-NOON | "Dragonfly Road" |

New Spring and Summer Educational Programs

Explore Nature, Learn About Birds, Organic Gardening, Native Plants, Invasives & More

Please visit our website www.bedfordaudubon.org for more information about specific programs and times. You can also contact Tait Johansson at 914-232-1999 or email him at tjohansson@bedfordaudubon.org. Some upcoming "SURPRISES" will be announced on our website. Watch for them!

For Individuals & Families: **"Organic Vegetable Gardening"**

Get your hands dirty growing fresh, delicious veggies while learning about garden design, starting seeds, companion planting and more. Harvesting produce for your home table is included. Fridays or Saturdays, 9:30 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. March - October. Start date TBA. Fee \$250 for entire growing season. Please contact Cathy Clare at catmint@optonline.net.

For Adults:

"Propagation of Native Plants"—A learn-by-doing educational gardening series designed with the novice gardener in mind. Topics include: seed starting, seedling management, dividing and transplanting of native herbaceous material. Instructors will encourage plant and seedling ID with an emphasis on invasive seedling ID. Classes will be offered one day a week. Summer sessions will include soft wood cuttings, seed collecting and on-going ID of invasive seedlings. Sessions will begin approximately March 28 and run throughout the gardening season. Class fee and materials fee will apply. To learn more, please contact norr@bedfordaudubon.org. Please register by March 21.

"Birding 102 Series" With Tait Johansson
Wednesdays, April 13 through May 25 (Except will not meet on Wednesday, May 11)
Sharpen your birding skills! Topics will include identification by sight and sound, birding by habitat, optics, and more. Three classroom sessions and three field trips.
Fee: \$175. Limited to 8 people. Please register by April 6.

Quotes from students of Birding 101:

**As a neophyte in bird watching, who loves watching birds, I am grateful for the exposure to someone like Tait. A.C.*

**I appreciate an organization bringing in the less experienced members. Tait's gentle, patient generosity with his knowledge made this class special for me. L.J.*

**..... learning various baby bird sounds was worth the price of the class. R.A.*

"Dragons and Damsels" With Tait Johansson
Three Saturdays in July, learn identification and natural history of our local dragonflies and damselflies using indoor labs and outdoor walks. Bring binoculars. Fee: \$95. Limited to 8 people. Please register by July 1.

"Butterfly Institute" With Tait Johansson
Three Wednesdays in August
Learn identification and natural history of our local butterflies with indoor labs and outdoor walks. Bring binoculars. Fee: \$75. Limited to 8 people. Please register by August 1.

For Elementary School Children: **"Adventures on Bylane Farm"**

Harvest crunchy, orange garden carrots in the vegetable garden. Pick sweet, juicy jewel berries. Create your own mini-worm farm where the "crop" is compost. Discover local wild bird species, such as bluebirds and hummingbirds. This is just a sampling of our green activities for kids who love the outdoors. Tuesdays: July 5, 12, 19, 26 or Thursdays: July 7, 14, 21, 28, at 9:30 A.M. - 12:00 noon. Fee \$120 for 4 sessions. Please register with Cathy Clare at catmint@optonline.net as soon as possible. Space is limited.

Other Events: **"Hike for Health"**

Sundays in June, 1:00 P.M. Hikes at the BAS preserves with naturalists Adam Zorn or Tait Johansson. Call 914- 232-1999.

Proposed Change to the Bylaws of Bedford Audubon Society

According to Bedford Audubon Society's bylaws, members must vote to approve any change to the bylaws. The Board of Directors wants strong two-way communication between the Board of Directors and the Advisory Board. That communication would be facilitated by having some of the Advisory Board members serve as full voting participants on the BAS Board of Directors.

Therefore, the BAS Board recommends the following change to the bylaws, Article VI: Advisory Board, Section 1. We recommend that the members vote to **DELETE** the following sentence, shown in italics:

Although they will not be counted in determining whether a quorum is present for the transaction of business, any member of the Advisory Board may attend and participate, without vote, in a meeting of the Board of Directors.

and then **SUBSTITUTE** the following for that deleted sentence:

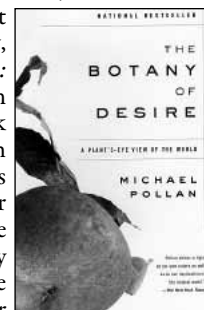
UP TO TWO MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY BOARD MAY BE ELECTED AS FULL VOTING MEMBERS OF THE BAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

Members will be asked to vote on this change to the bylaws at the annual meeting on May 11 at the Katonah Memorial House.



BBC News (News From the BAS Book Club)

Curious minds and lively thinkers are welcome at our next Book Club meeting, slated for Monday, May 9, 7:00 P.M. at Bylane. *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* by Michael Pollan is our choice for discussion. This bestselling work explores the nature of domesticated plants from the dual perspective of humans and the plants themselves. Pollan presents case studies that mirror four types of human desires that are reflected in the way that we selectively grow, breed, and genetically engineer our plants. (The apple reflects the desire for *sweetness*, the tulip for *beauty*, marijuana for *pleasure*, and the potato for *sustenance*.) The author genially narrates his own experience with each of the plants, which he then intertwines with their social history. For a further peek at this book and the author's novel perspective, visit <http://www.librarything.com/work/410>. Last year, PBS aired *The Botany of Desire*, a program about Michael Pollan and the book. See <http://www.pbs.org/thebotanyofdesire/> for more information about the program.



The Botany of Desire is sure to spark a spirited discussion. Please contact me with any questions and with your intention to attend. Elizabeth Royston, jroyst16@aol.com.



FIELD TRIPS

Unless otherwise indicated, please register with Joan E. Becker:
jebecker@bedfordaudubon.org or 914-232-4806.

Many trips meet at or leave by carpool from Bylane Farm, 35 Todd Road, Katonah. (From Route 35, take Route 22 north. Go ½ mile and turn right on to Todd Road. Follow to #35.)

Note: Each trip is given one of three levels of difficulty: Easy, Moderate, or Strenuous. Please discuss your level of mobility with the registrar to ensure that the trip is appropriate for you.

Night of the Salamander: Call List

The spring migration of our salamanders is a thrill to behold. On the right night, hundreds of these forest beauties make the overnight trek to vernal pools for breeding. The right night is hard to predict, however, it usually occurs on the first warm rainy evening after the return of the Eastern Phoebe. If you are interested in visiting Bylane's vernal pools to see this biological wonder, join our Night of the Salamander Call List. Enthusiastic nature lovers should wear boots, rain gear, and bring a flashlight and meet at Bylane at 8:00 P.M. To register, please call Nannette Orr at 914-232-3334 or email her at norr@bedfordaudubon.org. (E-M)

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens, N.Y.C. With Tait Johansson
Saturday, March 19, 9:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M. Carpool from Bylane Farm at 8:00 A.M.

Jamaica Bay is an amazing birding destination at any time of year. In spring, waterfowl use the marshes, beaches, and ponds as a stopover on their journey north. In addition to binoculars and lunch, bring boots you don't mind getting muddy. Return to Bylane at around 4:00 P.M. (E-S)

Field Trip to a Vernal Pool at Hunt-Parker Sanctuary With Paul Lewis and Tait Johansson

Saturday, March 26, 1:00 P.M.–3:00 P.M. Meet at Bylane Farm at 12:45 P.M. wearing boots.

Under the competent leadership of long-term BAS member Paul Lewis and naturalist Tait Johansson, we will visit the hidden treasures deep in the forest and learn about the vital importance of these seasonal wetlands as spawning areas for salamanders and other amphibians. This program is suitable for children aged 10 and above. (M)

Visit to the Bronx Zoo With Bird Enthusiasts Joan and Peter Becker
Thursday, March 31, 10:00 A.M.–3:30 P.M. Carpool from Bylane Farm at 9:00 A.M.

Experience one of the Tri-State Area's premier attractions! Come eyeball-to-eyeball with Laughing Kookaburras, Pink-cheeked Cockatoos, and Helmeted Curassows to name just a few of exotic the species you will ogle in the world famous House of Birds, the Sea Bird Colony, Aquatic Bird House, Birds of Prey Aviaries, and duck-filled Northern Ponds. And what zoo trip would be complete without visiting Madagascan lemurs, great bears, and snow leopards. Admission fee applies. (E)

Calling All Toads: Call List

When toads congregate on the right warm spring days, their trilling is as thrilling as are their exuberant mating rituals. The right day is hard to predict. Join this call list for a pleasant spring afternoon visit to learn about the fecund toad breeding pools. Meet at Bylane at 1:00 P.M. wearing boots! To register, please call Nannette Orr at 914-232-3334 or email her at norr@bedfordaudubon.org. (M)

The Old Croton Aqueduct—Tour and Trail Walk

Thursday, April 7, 10:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M. Spring walk follows. Carpool from Bylane at 9:30 A.M. or meet at the Ossining Community Center, 95 Broadway, Ossining, at 10:30 A.M.

The Croton Aqueduct is one of the great engineering achievements of the 19th century—a gravity-fed, masonry tunnel that brought New York City its first clean, plentiful water supply. Jean Horkans, our guide from the Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct, will introduce us to the wonders of this National Historic Landmark with a short video and talk followed by a private tour of the double-arch pathway, tunnels, and weir.

Then enjoy the fauna and flora of a spring walk along the Aqueduct Trail led by BAS naturalist Tait Johansson. (M)

Dance of the Woodcock at Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, Routes 35 and 121, Cross River With Tait Johansson

Saturday, April 16, 7:15 P.M.–8:30 P.M. Meet at the parking area just before the toll both inside the Reservation.

We hope to see this astounding annual ritual, where the American Woodcock, in his energetic love antics, "peents," struts, hurls himself into the evening sky and glides acrobatically down again, all to attract a mate. The event is strictly limited to 20 people. (E-M)

The Fourth Annual "Walk for Drew" Nature Hike at Franklin-Fels Sanctuary With BAS Naturalist Tait Johansson

Tuesday, April 26, 9:00 A.M.–11:30 A.M. Carpool from Bylane Farm or meet at Franklin Fels entrance on Lakeview at 9:30 A.M.

Join Bedford Audubon naturalist Tait Johansson for a walk through this lovely BAS sanctuary in North Salem. This walk is in memory of Andrew Reynolds, known to us as "Drew," who died suddenly on February 7, 2008. Drew was a long-time friend, member and supporter of Bedford Audubon, who surveyed and marked the trail system in the Franklin-Fels Sanctuary. Bring binoculars. (E-M)

Early-Morning Spring Bird Walk With Naturalist Tait Johansson

Tuesday, May 3, 7:30 A.M.–9:30 A.M.

Maple Avenue, Katonah (intersection of Reservoir Rd.)

Enjoy a morning walk with our expert naturalist and delight in the sights and sounds of the spring warblers and other songbirds. This walk caters to both novices and more experienced birders alike. Bring binoculars. No registration necessary. Rain will cancel the walk. (E)

Bird Walk in Central Park, N.Y.C. With Tait Johansson and N.Y.C. Birder Doug Kurz

Thursday, May 5, 8:00 A.M.–3:30 P.M. Meet at the northeast corner of 72nd St. and Central Park West at 8:00 A.M. or carpool from Bylane Farm at 6:35 A.M.

More than 200 species of birds pass through this amazing metropolitan oasis on their migratory routes each spring and fall, and we hope to see and hear a substantial number of them. Bring a bag lunch or buy lunch at the Boathouse Cafe. (E)

Field Trip to Garrett Mountain, N.J. With Tait Johansson

Tuesday, May 10, 8:00 A.M.–1:00 P.M. Carpool from Bylane at 6:45 A.M.

The 568-acre Garret Mountain Reservation is situated more than 500 feet above sea level and provides sweeping views of northern New Jersey and the New York City skyline. It features two trails and a beautiful pond and is an excellent site for migrating songbirds, especially warblers. (M-S)

Excursion to Bartholomew's Cobble With Botanist Carol Gracie

Friday, May 13, 8:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M. Carpool from Bylane at 7:30 A.M.

The Cobble is a beautiful reserve of about 200 acres along the scenic Housatonic River in the southwest corner of Massachusetts (Berkshire County). The Reserve is known for its profusion of wildflowers and ferns. The soil is underlain by marble, so species that we don't often see in Westchester are common there—among them maidenhair spleenwort, walking fern, hepatica, and columbine. Bartholomew's Cobble is a National Natural Landmark. The trip is restricted to 12 people. Bring lunch and hiking boots. (M)

Field Trip to Ferncliff Forest, Rhinebeck, N.Y. With BAS Birder Ryan MacLean

Saturday, May 14, 7:30 A.M.–1:00 P.M. Carpool from Bylane at 6:15 A.M.

Our focus will be on flycatchers and warblers, including Cerulean, Northern Parula, and American Redstart, plus other passerines as we explore this 192-acre forest preserve. The tower at the Mt. Rutsen summit is a good place to enjoy the spring panorama. Bring binoculars, snack/lunch. (M)

Early-Morning Spring Bird Walk With Naturalist Tait Johansson
Tuesday, May 17, 7:30 A.M.–9:30 A.M. Maple Avenue, Katonah (intersection with Reservoir Rd.)

Enjoy a morning walk with our expert naturalist and delight in the sights and sounds of the spring warblers and other songbirds. This walk caters to both novices and more experienced birders alike. Bring binoculars. No registration necessary. Rain will cancel the walk. (E)

Early-Morning Spring Bird Walk With Tait Johansson

Thursday, May 19, 7:30 A.M.–9:30 A.M. North County Trailway at Route 118, Yorktown

Enjoy a morning walk with our expert naturalist and delight in the sights and sounds of the spring warblers and other songbirds. This walk caters to both novices and more experienced birders alike. Bring binoculars. No registration necessary. Rain will cancel the walk. (E)

Field Trip to Doodletown Road, Route 9W, Stony Point, N.Y. With Tait Johansson

Saturday, May 21, 7:30 A.M.–11:30 A.M. Carpool from Bylane at 6:30 A.M. Doodletown Road is part of the Bear Mountain State Park and is known as one of the best places in our area to find Hooded and Cerulean Warblers as well as many other songbirds. Enjoy the walk up the rugged trail past the ruins of a “lost civilization.” (M-S)

Early-Morning Spring Bird Walk With Tait Johansson

Tuesday, May 24, 7:30 A.M.–9:30 A.M. Bylane, 35 Todd Road, Katonah
Enjoy a morning walk with our expert naturalist and delight in the sights and sounds of the spring warblers and other songbirds. This walk caters to both novices and more experienced birders alike. Bring binoculars. No registration necessary. Rain will cancel the walk. (E)

Early-Morning Spring Bird Walk With Tait Johansson

Tuesday, May 31, 7:30 A.M.–9:30 A.M. Angle Fly Preserve, Route 139, Somers

Enjoy a morning walk with our expert naturalist and delight in the sights and sounds of the spring warblers and other songbirds. This walk caters to both novices and more experienced birders alike. Bring binoculars. No registration necessary. Rain will cancel the walk. (E)

Science in Action: Call List

Visit a bird banding station to witness the wondrous joy of a bird in the hand. BAS is participating in the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS). Banding takes place once every ten days and depends on distinct weather requirements. Put your name on a call list to witness good science, from June–first week in August. Check our website, www.bedfordaudubon.org/banding to learn about the previous two years banding programs. To register before June 9, please call Nannette Orr at 914-232-3334 or email her at norr@bedfordaudubon.org. To register after June 9, please call Tait Johansson at 914-232-1999 or email him at tjohansson@bedfordaudubon.org. Expect muddy conditions. (M-S)

Innisfree Gardens, Millbrook, N.Y. With Carol Levine

Wednesday, June 1, 10:15 A.M.–3:00 P.M. Carpool from Bylane Farm at 9:00 A.M., return by 4:00 P.M.

With noted botanist Carol Levine as our guide, we will explore Dutchess County’s 150-acre Innisfree Garden, where the ancient art of Chinese landscape design has been reinterpreted to create a unique American garden. We will enjoy streams, waterfalls, and terraces while strolling from one three-dimensional picture to another. Carol is an author and a long-time instructor at The New York Botanical Garden, Bartlett Arboretum & Gardens, and the University of Connecticut. Bring a picnic lunch. Modest entry fee. (M)

Babes in the Woods at Westmoreland Sanctuary, Chestnut Ridge Road, Bedford Corners

Saturday, June 4, 3:00 P.M.–4:30 P.M.

It is the time of the year when the forest is alive with young animals, birds,

and plants. Participants will enjoy a hike with Westmoreland Sanctuary Director Steve Ricker as he shows us places where the young ones are hiding. All ages are welcome. Please register by calling 914-666-8448. FREE. (E)

Excursion to Sterling Forest State Park, Tuxedo Park, N.Y. With Tait Johansson

Thursday, June 9, 8:00 A.M.–2:00 P.M. Carpool from Bylane at 6:30 A.M. The 21,935-acre Sterling Forest State Park is one of the largest contiguous forests in New York State. It is a nearly pristine natural refuge for a large variety of species including hawks and songbirds, mammals, many rare invertebrates, and plants. A special attraction is its population of breeding Golden-winged Warblers, which we will make a special effort to see. Cerulean Warblers also breed here. Bring lunch. (E-M)

Save the date!

“Dragonfly Road” With Ed Lam

Saturday, June 18, 10:00 A.M.–12 noon at Bylane Farm.

A fascinating talk will be followed by a walk in the meadows of Bylane to look for dragonflies and damselflies. Attendance is limited so please register early.

PROGRAMS

*All programs are free and open to the general public.
The monthly lectures are held at the wheelchair accessible
Katonah Memorial House, 71 Bedford Road, Katonah.
Please do not block the Fire Department access.
Park alongside the meeting house side of the driveway.*

Hummingbirds: Feathered Gems With Gina Beebe Nichol

Wednesday March 9 at 7:30 P.M.

With 340 species known in the world, hummingbirds are the second largest family of birds after flycatchers. These tiny aeronautic marvels have the ability to hover, fly backward, and migrate long distances. The physiological capacity of hummingbirds to raise and lower their heart rate and body temperature to survive cold nights is unmatched in the animal world.

This program illustrates the amazing adaptations of these glittering gems and describes their fascinating life histories. Vivid photographs of hummingbirds in North, Central, and South America tell the story of how these birds survive in habitats that range from tropical jungles to the forests of the Andes Mountains.

Gina Beebe Nichol has been a naturalist and a birder for more than twenty-five years. She has worked at the Yellowstone Institute in Wyoming where she studied animal behavior and has also conducted mountain lion studies in the Jim Sage Mountains in Idaho. She began leading eco-tours for Audubon Nature Odysseys in the early 1990s in Greenland, the Pacific Northwest, and Baja California, and in 1995 Gina founded Sunrise Birding, LLC, which offers private and small group bird watching and wildlife tours around the world.



Creating a Native Garden: Using Nature’s Processes With Larry Weaner

Wednesday, April 13 at 7:30 P.M.

The use of native plants in public and private gardens is becoming increasingly popular, but knowing how to use native plants in coordination with ecological patterns and processes is not so well understood. In this presentation, well-known landscape consultant Larry Weaner will use a series of

case studies to explore techniques for gracefully integrating native plant compositions and ecological processes into the residential landscape.

Larry Weaner has been a practicing professional landscape consultant since 1977. His projects have spanned more than ten states and have been featured in national and international publications (including *The New York Times*). In 2009 one of Mr. Weaner's projects received the top three annual awards from the Association of Professional Landscape Designers and a Gold award from the Perennial Plant Association.

BAS Annual Meeting & Election of Directors Followed by Lecture: Darwin, the Botanist: A Lesser Known Aspect of Darwin's Work With Dr. Robbin Moran

Wednesday, May 11 at 7:30 P.M.

After *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, Darwin wrote several books on botanical subjects such as fertilization of orchids, climbing plants, the different forms of flowers on plants of the same species, and the power of movement in plants. These books contain hundreds of original observations that are fascinating by themselves and provide support for evolution and natural selection. For example, Darwin was the first person to show that some plants digest insects.



Photo by John Mickel

Dr. Robbin Moran is the Curator of Ferns and Lycophytes at the New York Botanical Garden. He has published four books including *A Natural History of Ferns* and over 80 scientific papers on fern systematics involving the classification, evolution, and geography of ferns. He served as the main writer, editor, and organizer for the fern volume of *Flora Mesoamericana*, the largest fern flora ever written.

The BAS annual meeting and election of BAS Directors will be held prior to this evening's lecture. A list of candidates will be posted on our website prior to the meeting.

Butterflies and Their Gardens With John Himmelman

Wednesday, June 8 at 7:30 P.M.



Bedford Audubon is pleased to welcome back John Himmelman, the butterfly and moth expert, who will answer many of the questions being asked about the lives of butterflies. Some topics covered are: butterfly families and species, life cycles, finding butterflies, and creating butterfly habitats. The photos in this presentation were taken in and around the speaker's home in Connecticut. He will also include a short section on moths.

John Himmelman is an author, illustrator, photographer, and naturalist. He is a co-founder of the Connecticut Butterfly Association, past president of the

New Haven Bird Club, past president of The Nature Connection, and past president of the Killingworth Land Trust. For many years he has lectured and led many trips throughout the country in search of various flora and fauna. Some of Mr. Himmelman's books will be available for sale and signing.

About Birds—Bald Eagle Monitoring

By Tait Johansson

Bedford Audubon recently published the results of the fourth year of monitoring roosting Bald Eagles in Westchester and Rockland counties by Bedford Audubon citizen scientists. As in previous years, we collected

data at three main locations: George's Island Park, New Croton Reservoir, and Verplanck. The Verplanck observation site afforded views of two roost sites, which were monitored simultaneously.

We registered a decline in the total number of roosting eagles at all sites in 2010 compared to 2009, with the numbers at the two main sites—New Croton Reservoir and Georges's Island—down 39.8% and 23.2% respectively. It is unlikely, however, that this decrease reflects any real decline in this species numbers, even regionally; the fluctuation was most likely just a result of the milder temperatures we experienced last year. More eagles could spend the winter further to our north where there presumably was more open water where they could forage, thus making migration farther south (to areas like the Hudson Valley) unnecessary. But even in a "down" year such as this, our numbers show some significant concentrations of wintering Bald Eagles using the Lower Hudson Important Bird Area. Single-day high counts for these places were 32 at New Croton Reservoir on 1/18/10 and 29 at George's Island on 1/14/10.

The report can be viewed on our website at www.bedfordaudubon.org/eagles/2010eagles.pdf.

The fifth monitoring season is currently under way. Already the harsh winter conditions in January and February have brought an impressive number of Bald Eagles to our area, indicating a general increase in the number of roosting eagles in the Hudson Valley.

BAS Scholarship Winner Studies the American Chestnut



William Dingee, a senior from John Jay High School, was the recipient of Bedford Audubon's 2010 Marty McGuire Scholarship. Under the auspices of the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Dingee undertook research this past summer on efforts to restore the American chestnut tree. His research is being considered for publication in a scientific journal.



Dear Bedford Audubon Society:

I would like to extend my most sincere of thanks to you for your generosity in supporting my research over this past summer on "Efforts to restore the American chestnut tree through the use of transgenic plant technologies." Without your help, this experience simply could not have been a possibility for me. This research project represented one of the most important personal and intellectual experiences I have had in my High School career, and an important introduction to the world of real scientific research. This has been a tremendous opportunity for me, and I am forever grateful for your contributions.

Here is the abstract of my research:

The American chestnut, a tree of extreme ecological and environmental importance to the eastern United States, was effectively wiped out in the first half of the 20th century by the chestnut blight, a disease caused by the East-Asian fungal pathogen *Cryphonectria parasitica*. The objective of my study was to optimize the protocols for the genetic transformation of American chestnut somatic embryos as part of an ongoing effort to restore this tree through the use of transgenic plant technologies. Differences in efficiency of transformation and tissue health were monitored over variable periods of exposure to *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* (co-cultivation) on a desiccation plate to determine the treatment that would result in the highest efficiency of transformation with the least tissue damage. Results indicate that a 12-hour treatment, significantly shorter than the current protocol of 48 hours, produces transformation efficiency comparable to that of any of the other treatments, with greater tissue health retained. It is suggested that this 12-hour treatment, upon verification of results by further study, be employed in future transformation experiments with American chestnut.

—William Dingee



Trip Highlights



Dressed for winter weather, the group stands in front of Great Point Light

Photo by Tom Griswold

Thirteen BAS members, tour coordinator Nannette Orr, and trip leader Tait Johansson enjoyed an “Extreme Nantucket Birding Experience,” January 14–17. The group toured much of the island, including Great Point, by 4x4 vehicles. Thanks to cooperative winter weather we counted 101 species. All participants enjoyed great views of Ross’s Goose, Grasshopper Sparrow, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls. A rare Sedge Wren was heard by some of the group.

The 32 participants in Bedford Audubon’s and Westmoreland Sanctuary’s January 23 outing to the Croton Dam were in for a rare treat. Several Bald Eagles flew overhead soon after we arrived, then suddenly one juvenile swooped down and grabbed a Common Merganser. It flew low over the ice with its heavy prey and then landed not far from the dam. Within minutes, 14 other eagles, adults and juveniles, flew in from everywhere trying to partake of the meal. Spotting scopes provided excellent views of the scene.



Pamela Geismar and her son, Asa, at Croton Dam.

Bonnie Barrett and Peter Becker were among the birders who enjoyed a bright winter excursion to Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx on January 30. Led by BAS board member Adam Zorn, the trip yielded an impressive number of waterfowl, a cooperative Merlin, and two Long-eared Owls. After a too-brief visit to the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, our hungry birders went to nearby City Island for a great lunch at the Black Whale.



Young Birders Flock to Bylane

They came with high spirits, a firm agenda, and ubiquitous binoculars ever ready to spot a soaring Red-tail or shy Fox Sparrow. On the morning of January 22, a flock of teen birders, accompanied by parents and adult mentors, made their way to Bylane from points across the state—from Rochester to Manhattan to Northport—for the annual meeting of the New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC).

Bedford Audubon was happy to lend its Bylane facilities for the day, with our board vice president, Joan Becker, providing a warm welcome, lunch, and plenty of refreshments, plus a conference room set for the adolescents to take care of IBB—important birding business.

NYSYBC, for birders in New York between the ages of 10 and 19, is a special project of the New York State Ornithological Association. The club’s mission, says 16-year-old president Benjamin Van Doren of White

Plains, is “to provide community, friendship, and fun for young people who have a passion for wild birds and their habitats.”

The day kicked off with a local birdwalk led by BAS naturalists Tait Johansson and Arthur Green; the teens declared a Rusty Blackbird at Dean’s Bridge the “spot” of the morning. Back at Bylane and warmed by hot chocolate, club members tackled an agenda that included an annual field trip sched-



Benjamin van Doren (far left) conducts the meeting of NYSYBC at Bylane.

Photo by Mary Batcheller

ule, scholarship program, election of officers, and plans for the World Series of Birding and the Super Bowl of Birding, among other items. An entertaining highlight of the afternoon was a lively, visual game of “Name That Bird.”

Adult supervisors, parents, and especially the teens expressed sincere thanks to Bedford Audubon for its hospitality before embarking on an ideal wrap-up to their day: late-afternoon birding with Tait and Arthur that yielded 64 Bald Eagles at George’s Island Park.

See www.nysyoungbirders.org to learn more, lend support, and perhaps connect your own adolescent to this lively, worthy organization.

Bylane Revitalization Plans Keep Moving Forward

By Carol A. Cioppa

Many changes are continuing at Bylane. Our library collection is growing and with the help of accomplished carpenter Peter Becker and Bonnie Barrett’s talented husband, JB, the former bedroom of one of Mrs. Parker’s daughters will become an additional small library space.

The renovation of the adjacent tiny public powder room by carpenter Harlan Miller is also progressing nicely. A “real” drywall partition and a pocket door have replaced the louvered door that provided limited privacy. All we need is a new sink and toilet and a pretty mirror to complete the space. Any donors?

On the recommendation of Advisory Board President Susanne Durst, an engineer toured the house and reviewed the heating needs. A new boiler may be required.

Our windows were reviewed by an expert from Marvin Windows. Some of the old, hand-made glass panes had been substituted for new ones, which make it possible to look out the windows with binoculars (not possible through the old panes). These are not energy efficient, so we will design an interior energy panel that can be removed and replaced easily from inside in winter and summer. Meanwhile, the windows are in need of both inside and outside restoration. We are currently looking for someone who would like to donate their expert time or funds for this project.

Our front entrance hallway is getting a real facelift by painter Peter Lancute. Once finished, it will complement our wonderful rag runner. Be prepared for a new experience when you come through the front doors this spring.

Last and not least, carpet tiles have been selected and will be installed in the offices and the small library through a generous donation by Tandus Flooring. We are in need of two-drawer file cabinets, some counter tops (something “Green”) and cabinets that will sit on the counters to hold our stationery and other supplies. Donors please?



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 **MasterCard/VISA credit card information** below.)

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We hope that you will show your support for our incredible array of local programs—conservation and education projects that exemplify the goals we all believe in—by making a tax-deductible member's gift.

Whether your gift is a renewed membership, a first-time enrollment, or pledge of additional support, your generous donation is greatly needed and appreciated.

Thank you!
 Walter Fowler, President

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