



The Bedford Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 51, Number 3, Winter 2002

President's Message: The Legacy of Mary Welsh Parker

Mary Welsh Parker of Katonah, long time member, friend and benefactor of Bedford Audubon Society, passed away at her home on the evening of Monday, October 22nd at the age of 109.

The next day, Tuesday, October 23rd, was an Indian summer's day, with warm breezes and blue skies. After arriving home from work, I took a walk up to the high meadow at Mrs. Parker's farm. As I sat in the field, which was seemingly ablaze with autumn color, I reflected upon Mrs. Parker and what I knew of some of her life experiences. At 109 years of age, she had lived through *three* centuries.

A relative once told me that Mrs. Parker's earliest ever recollection that she spoke of, was of being a young child and traveling to Washington, D.C., with her father to see the inauguration of President McKinley (1896-1902). What a different world it must have been then, and what a fascinating life she must have lived!

Morgan and Mary Parker arrived in Katonah in 1922, and established their residence to be known simply as "Bylane". This name is fitting because of the way their beautiful 280 year-old farm-

house hugs Todd Road like the two are made for each other. There is something different about Bylane, however, that separates it from many old houses of its day. Nestled in a valley with steep sides and surrounded by meadows and big trees, the approach to Bylane from Todd Road is like a drive back into time.

In 1991 I had the opportunity to visit with Mary Parker on one hot summer's day. As we sat on the terrace overlooking her gardens, meadows and ponds, she spoke about her property and the natural beauty of it all, and as I sat there sipping my cold lemonade, the sheer beauty of her farm intoxicated me.

At that point in Mrs. Parker's life she was almost completely blind. Yet she spoke about her little valley, which she called "Lorna Doone", with such familiarity and intimate detail, it was as though she was able nonetheless, to view it there with me at that very moment. She spoke about the property the way one would speak about their child whom they haven't seen in a long time.

No matter how long it had been since last visit, you would remember every detail about your child. Mrs. Parker loved Bylane very much. I heard it in her voice that day.

Bedford Audubon was a neighbor to the Parkers. Our 208-acre J. Ramsay Hunt Sanctuary adjoined the 120-acre Bylane, at the top of Katonah Ridge. In 1997, Mrs. Parker and her family made a decision that would change our community forever.

Mrs. Parker donated Bylane to Bedford Audubon in her life estate. As I sat in that high meadow, in the gloaming hours of the day, the last evening rays of sun pierced through the ensuing darkness. The valley and the ridge behind the house glowed of honey and amber in those rays. At that moment, a feeling of peace and happiness come over me. Why? I wondered. Then I remembered with a spirit of thanksgiving, that the very meadow I was sitting in, and the valley below me, would be preserved in perpetuity for everyone to enjoy because of Mrs. Parker's undying love for her home and community.

It is now our Lorna Doone.
God Bless Mrs. Parker.

John Askildsen
BAS President

Have You Volunteered Lately?

Bedford Audubon Society is made up of a group of dedicated volunteers who care about the future of our natural environment. If you have recently considered volunteering, please don't hesitate to give us a call. All are welcome. At Audubon, one's level of knowledge about the cause is much less important than one's commitment to the cause!

We are currently seeking a volunteer to fill a Board position of *Corresponding Secretary*. For this position, we require a person with basic computer skills and access to e-mail. Most importantly, as a Board member, you must be available for Board Meetings (the third Thursday night of the month).

We are also seeking someone to fill the position of *Newsletter Editor*. Computer knowledge and desktop publishing skills are preferred, but not mandatory. Please call John Askildsen at 914 232-1701 to inquire.

If you view yourself as more of a "committee person", we could use your help with programs, field trips, sanctuaries, and publicity.

There are many other areas of the Society's activities that require additional assistance. We're not looking for experts; we're looking for members who want to get involved. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Quarterly Bulletin Winter 2002 Volume 51, No. 3

The Quarterly Bulletin, USPS #61 is published quarterly by the Bedford Audubon Society, Inc.
35 Todd Road, Katonah, NY 10536

Board of Directors 2001

John Askildsen - President, 232-1701; Steven Ricker - 1st Vice President, 234-2934; Jackie Jones - 2nd Vice President, 666-2057; Anne Vajsabel - Recording Sec'y., 845-229-1938; Jack Seirup - Treasurer, 232-4871; Drew Reynolds - At-Large, 232-5632; Donald Pachner - Conservation, 234-6618; Jim Utter - Conservation, 845-878-0081; David Albano - Education, 845-225-9567; Jonathan Powers - Finance, 764-4320; Ken Mirman - Hawk Watch, 277-5210; Jackie Bruskn - Membership, 9618903; Bill Wallace - Field Trips, 845-279-8858, John Erickson - Seed Sale, 273-6967

Committee Members

Ed Fehrs - Development, 273-3631; Joan Becker - Field Trips, 203-323-5137; Nelly Balloffet - Historian, 941-8166; Barbara Reynolds - Hospitality 232-5632; Jack Seirup - Hunt Sanctuary, 232-4871; Brenda Freeman-Bates - Programs, 763-9489; Pam Harper - Publicity, 234-5489; Steven Ricker - Seed Sale, 234-2934; Ginny Powers - Trip Registrar, 764-4320 (All telephone numbers are area code 914 unless otherwise indicated.)

Hotlines

New York City/Long Island Rare Bird Alert - 212-979-3070
BAS Hotline, Chapter Activities 914-232-1999
BAS Fax Number 914-232-5038
BAS Website: www.Bedfordaudubon.org
Our E-Mail address is:
Info@Bedfordaudubon.org

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.

PROGRAMS December 2nd Holiday Party and Slide Show, Sunday, 2-5 p.m. Katonah Village Library

Join the BAS Board and Committee members for a cup of cheer and a "Members Slide Show".

For years you've taken slides of your favorite nature scenes, wildlife excursions, parks, and backyard creatures. Now's the time to share them! The slides don't have to be great art.

Bring from one to ten of your favorite slides. If you have a favorite holiday treat or dessert you'd like to share, please bring that along, too. Let's get right into that wonderful Holiday spirit!

If you have any questions, call Jackie Jones 914-666-2057.

Wednesday, January 9th, 2002 7:30 p.m. Katonah Village Library "Owls by Night" with James Eyring

James Eyring, Assistant Director of the Pace University Environmental Center, located in Pleasantville, NY, is a master falconer and a licensed NY State wildlife rehabilitator specializing in birds of prey.

Jim will bring live owls including Great Horned, Barred, and Screech owls. This is a perfect program for adults and children, and precedes the daytime "owl prow!" with Michael Usai on Sunday, January 13th.

**Sunday
January 27th, 2002
11:00 a.m.
Breakfast With
The Birds**

At
Westmoreland Sanctuary
260 Chestnut Ridge Rd.
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549

Sit and enjoy hot chocolate and donuts as we participate in one of America's fastest growing activities - bird feeding and bird watching. Westmoreland has a large observation window overlooking a varied number of feeders. Bring your feeder and squirrel questions. The kids enjoy this program also. Bring binoculars if you can.

**Wednesday
February 13th,
2001 7:30 pm
Katonah Village
Library**

**A Walk Through
the Watershed
Is NYC's Drinking Water
Supply in Danger?
Wednesday,**

In a slide illustrated presentation, Marian Rose, president of Croton Watershed Clean Water Coalition, will lead us on a walk through the watershed. Her talk will describe some of the threats to the region's drinking water supply, and actions that we, the public, can take to protect our watersheds, wetlands and reservoirs. Bedford Audubon is a member of CWCWC.

**Sunday, February 24th,
2002, 10:00 am, Marsh
Sanctuary Museum,
Rt. 172, Mt. Kisco
"Preparing for the
Bluebirds' Return"**

Construct Your Own Bluebird house with mounting pole. Learn about the appropriate placement of Bluebird boxes, habitat requirements and more!

To Register call Ginny Powers @ 914 764-4320 by Wednesday, 2/20. A \$20.00 fee will cover costs for all materials, including boxes, poles, etc.

**Wednesday,
March 13th, 2002,
7:30 pm,
Katonah Village
Library
"What's the Buzz?"
with Francis Bowen**

There are thousands of species of bees in the world. Come and learn about a few of them, from Honey Bees to the dreaded Killer Bees. Francis Bowen has been designated as National Beekeeper of the year for the North American continent. His slide program will teach us about the value of bees in your garden, and he promises we can learn not to be afraid of bees as we learn about their habits and lifestyles.

**Mark Your
Calendars!**

The 5th annual *Great Backyard Bird Count* will take place February 15 through February 18, 2002. The GBBC is one of the Citizen Science projects sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

What do you need to do? Simply count the birds in your backyard, local park, or other natural area on any or all of the four count days. You can spend as little as 15 or 30 minutes a day. All of the information is collected over the Internet.

Last year a total of 4,555,411 individual birds were counted across the United States, representing 442 species.

Want to know more? Go to <http://birdsource.cornell.edu/> and click on Great Backyard Bird Count under BirdSource Projects. Bird with a purpose!

**Do You
Like GREAT
COFFEE
and Protecting the Birds?**

**14 oz. Shade Grown Coffee Beans
For sale Regular \$10 &
Decaffeinated \$11**

**Support the Bedford Audubon
Society**

**For pickup
instructions Call Steve Ricker
(914) 666-8448**

2000 Breeding Bird Atlas

by Jeanne Waful

Let me tell you about the Breeding Bird Atlas, because it is one of the most fun things I have ever done. The Atlas is a project of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, in cooperation with Cornell University Department of Natural Resources, New York Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society of New York.

Right now, volunteers in New York State are working on the state's 2nd Breeding Bird Atlas. The first one was done from 1980-1984. The current one started in 2000 and will go through 2004. Volunteers are assigned a nine-square mile block and have to figure out what types of birds breed in that block.

I must admit—I was intimidated at first and wondered what I had gotten myself into, but it really wasn't THAT difficult. Instead of just identifying birds, I had to learn about and observe their behavior. I watched mockingbirds displaying their white patches to "stir up" insects to feed on. I learned that a male goldfinch flies in a large circular path around its nesting area. I saw a fledgling wood thrush being fed by its parents and a fledgling scarlet tanager sitting on a branch with its father.

And after years of trying to learn bird songs from tapes, I finally learned most of them. It is true that they're easier to learn in the field—at least, it was for me.

In addition to the birds, I saw all kinds of wildlife. One morning

three coyote pups were playing in a field with one always keeping a lookout. Once, a weasel popped up.

There are still blocks available to be surveyed. So if you have some time—preferably in the early morning and mostly in June and early July— and want to have some fun, I highly recommend it. You can call our 2000 Atlas Regional Coordinator, Michael Bochnik, at 237-9331, or e-mail him michael.bochnik@cibasc.com and he'll get you started.

(Jeanne Waful is a member of Bedford Audubon Society and an enthusiastic participant in field trips and programs in addition to monitoring her Atlas block)

Membership Options Now Available

Did you know that several membership mailing options are available to you?

Members may request that:

- Their name and contact information not be shared with outside organizations.
- No NAS mailings be sent other than the Chapter newsletter, the magazine and one renewal notice.
- They receive no phone calls from NAS to solicit donations.
- No magazine be included with their membership.

Members may make these requests by calling our office at (914) 232-1999, or e-mailing us at membership@bedfordaudubon.org.

Fundraising Committee

Our Annual Appeal letter will be arriving in your mailbox soon. In addition to scheduling programs and field trips, Bedford Audubon works very hard throughout the year to preserve open space and educate the public about the virtues of doing so.

We rely heavily on member's donations to fund these efforts on your behalf. Please consider Bedford Audubon when making your end-of-year contributions.

Monthly Programs Begin

As you read through our Newsletters, we hope you have noticed that we have changed back to our original schedule of monthly programs.

For several years we had held bimonthly programs. Our decision to return to monthly meetings was based on the interest shown by our members and friends. Our programs also provide an opportunity for each of us to spend time with a group of like-minded people who have an interest in learning about our environment and sharing observations and concerns.

So please join us as often as you can. Bring family and friends. Our programs are open to all. See you at the next meeting!

About Birds

by John Askildsen

Editor's Note: With this issue we are restoring a popular column on birds and birding, which ran in the BAS Newsletter during the late 70's through the mid 80's, when it was written by past President Allen Kurtz. We hope you will enjoy our new version "About Birds"!

Finches at Your Feeder

With the ritual of winter bird feeding, comes the perennial question, as to whether the little red finches at your feeder are house finches, *carpodacus mexicanus*, or the more sought after purple finch, *carpodacus purpureus*.

In order to sort out this situation, we look for some obvious field marks and, if possible, distinctive vocalizations made by both species. The rule of thumb is that, because house finches are so successful, if you have a good-sized flock (5 to 25+ individuals) of noisy red finches at your feeder, you can probably count on them being house finches. Purple finches typically visit feeders in our area in ones and twos, but sometimes as many as five or six will quietly appear at your feeder.

House Finch

A relatively slim-looking bright orange-red finch, its call note is a clearly audible "weet-weet, weet-weet". A visiting flock of this species will mill and flutter about your feeders, sometimes evicting one another off perches to get a crack at glomming up seed. Their assertive or aggressive tendencies make them less popular than the purple finch. On the male, look for a distinctly brown back, with orange-red coloring on

the eyebrows, forehead, and chin to lower chest. Well-defined brown streaking runs from the chest, flanks and belly to the vent. The female is all grayish-brown, with streaking on the undersides and no red coloration at all.

House finches will readily nest in almost any man-made structure, including, barns, garages, under awnings and in hanging flower baskets. They are common during the breeding season in our region.

Purple Finch

This portly-looking bird is retiring at the feeder, being easily bullied by house finches. The call note is a musical "pik". This note is given singularly, and can easily be missed in the wind or in the background behind the din of birds calling and cavorting at your feeder. The male of the species is a rich, raspberry-red *all over*. The head shape is somewhat bulbous in contrast to that of the house finch's (which is more flat-headed in appearance) and he lacks any streaking on the chest. The female purple finch is boldly marked with a brown cheek patch and contrasting white eye-line. The chest and under parts are heavily streaked in brown. Both sexes of this species show a heavy, conical bill, and a short, deeply notched tail, as compared to the house finch's thinner bill and longer tail

Purple Finch is a common nester of the north woods, preferring mixed coniferous-deciduous woods to completely coniferous forest of northern New York and New England. They rarely nest in our region, preferring areas far away from human activity during the breeding season.

Browse BAS Web Site for Field Trips & More

by Don Pachner, Webmaster

BAS is fortunate to have a new volunteer List Master Richard Becker, who has joined our board after working on the Theodore Roosevelt Sanctuary website committee and membership committee. Richard has put his formidable skills to work on our new email list serve, which keeps those who subscribe current about upcoming meetings, field trips, programs and special events, such as the seed sale.

Last minute changes and reminders are emailed to subscribers, although it is an announcement ONLY list so it will NOT clutter your email box! Richard has also volunteered to keep our programs and field trips schedule current on the web site. Actually, he has a special connection to our field trips: I'd like to congratulate Richard and our Field Trips coordinator Joan Becker on their recent marriage...they first met on a BAS butterfly walk in Ward Pound Ridge Reservation!

You can subscribe to our new email list by browsing www.bedfordaudubon.org and filling in your email address in the Yellow Box, then clicking on the Join Now! button.

Thanks to the new division of labor presented by Richard's time and energy, Don is working on creating a more functional conservation section and a transparent redesign of the website that will make coordination behind the scenes more effective and efficient. Watch for additional enhancements coming in the next few months! If you subscribe to the email list, you'll hear about them before you read this newsletter!

Audubon Fall Council Meeting

by Anne Vajsabel

Eight members of the BAS Board attended the fall meeting of the Audubon Council of New York State during the weekend of October 12-14. Twenty-three of the state's thirty-two chapters were represented at the semi-annual event held in Pawling over a beautiful autumn weekend. John Askildsen, Jim Utter and Bill Wallace led field trips for attendees, introducing members to the Great Swamp in Putnam County, the Patterson Environmental Center and the Pawling Nature Preserve.

The Council meetings provide an opportunity for all chapters in the state to get together and exchange ideas, get updated on state programs, conservation issues, and the work of various statewide committees.

At Saturday evening's dinner, the guest speaker was Mamie Parker, the acting Regional Director of the Northeast U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Ms. Parker charmed the crowd with her uplifting message of success through cooperation. It was a productive weekend, and we all agreed it was time well spent communing with our fellow Auduboners.

October: A Busy Month

by Anne Vajsabel

October was a busy month for BAS Board members. During the first weekend, we enjoyed great a trip to Cape May, NJ, along with a wonderful group of our Chapter members. We were fortunate this year that the Cape was buffeted by winds from the north that ush-

ered a cold front into the area just as we arrived. We were thrilled to be greeted by waves of birds who came into town right after we did, along with the cold front. Warblers and hawks were everywhere! It was a birder's dream.

The next weekend was spent at the Audubon Council of New York's fall meeting. We spent time with other chapter members and the staff of Audubon New York. Ideas were exchanged and we shared information about many ongoing Audubon projects.

Our Membership Committee then worked on the following Sunday at Westmoreland Sanctuary's Fall Festival in Mt Kisco. Each year we run the refreshment stand at the festival. We meet many families and spread the word about Bedford Audubon while serving hot dogs, snacks and drinks.

The final weekend was devoted to our annual Bird Seed Sale pick-up day. It's another chance for us to meet our members. We enjoyed seeing old friends (some of whom have been supporting our seed sale for over ten years!) and meeting new ones. A common theme among many of our bird-feeding friends is "What do you do about those squirrels?" Our solution, "Buy them their own seed."

For us, October means Audubon!

Shop at Home

Do your holiday shopping with Bedford Audubon on-line! Visit our website and click on "Shop with BAS". You'll find all of your favorite nature items: books, optics, gifts and more. You'll be glad you clicked in to www.bedfordaudubon.org.

Birdwatching Workshops for Beginners

This winter and spring, BAS will sponsor a series of evening sessions entitled "Birdwatching Workshops for Beginners". Veteran BAS birders, Tait Johansson and John Askildsen, will cover all the basics of bird identification, and birding as an activity. Find out about binoculars and telescopes, field guides and the good birding locales in our area. Each evening workshop will cover a different group of birds, at a manageable pace and understandable level. Then a field trip will follow to observe birds in the field that were studied in the preceding workshop. Details and cost per session are still being worked out. If you're interested in signing up, call John Askildsen at 914-232-1999, or e-mail him at jaskildsen@bedfordaudubon.org. You will be contacted with the details when they are available.

PUTNAM COUNTY 4-H FAIR

Participating in the Fair over the years has enabled us to meet many of our Putnam friends and members. We heard wonderful stories about their bird feeders, their butterfly gardens, and the lands they are striving to preserve for open space and wildlife habitat.

It was truly a joy to watch the children at our "Please Touch" table as they studied the various objects. Snakeskins and turtle shells were popular, as were the wasp nests. Our thanks go to Westmoreland Sanctuary, which provided many of the items on the table.

Field Trips

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge Sunday, December 9th, 7:30 a.m.

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

Search the beaches and bays for newly arrived winter birds, ducks, hawks, finches and more. Bring lunch, binoculars, and warm clothing.

Croton Point Park and Other nearby Areas Wednesday, December 12th, 9 a.m.

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

Jackie Jones will lead this mid-week field trip while we look for eagles, waterfowl, and winter birds at the Croton Point Nature Center feeders. This will be a half-day trip

Christmas Bird Counts starting December 14

Local counts include Peekskill, Greenwich=Stamford, and Putnam County. If you are interested in participating in one or more of them, please leave a message at 914-232-1999

Winter Hike at J. Ramsay Hunt Audubon Sanctuary, Katonah Saturday, January 12th at 9a.m.

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

Join Tait Johansson for a two to three hour hike around the 300-acre Hunt Sanctuary. Bring binoculars and wear sturdy shoes or hiking boots.

Let's Go on an Owl Prowl! Sunday, January 13th at 8a.m.

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

Join Michael Usai on a field trip follow-up to our January 9th program. This is a daytime trip to search for wintering owls such as Great Horned, Barred and Saw-Whet Owls. Bring lunch and binoculars.

Winter Birding in the Hamptons January 19-20

Registration and information:
John Askildsen @ 914-232-1701

The Hamptons offer a great deal of good winter birdwatching. From the pounding surf at Montauk, to the quiet backwoods of Southampton, we'll check it all for its avian wonders.

Catskill Bald Eagle Winter Weekend Friday evening, February 1 through Sunday midday February 3rd

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

See 25 to 75 Bald Eagles, with John Askilden, from the comfort of your own car! Great accommodations at an authentic Victorian Inn in Glen Spey, NY. Great food, beautiful scenery, terrific company. Single rate is \$145 per person; Double rate is \$110 per person double occupancy. Rate includes lodging, wine and cheese Friday evening, and all meals Saturday through Sunday lunch.

President's Weekend in Delmarva Saturday, February 16th through Monday, February 18th

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

Winter on the Delmarva Peninsula brings the possibility of Rough-legged Hawks, Short-eared owls, and Tundra Swans. Search for these and other feathered friends with Jackie Jones, as we visit Bombay Hook, Deal Island, and Blackwater Swamp. Many of us think that the marshes are at their most beautiful at this time of year!

Marshlands Conservancy/Read Sanctuary/Greenwich Point/ Audubon Center of Greenwich Sunday, February 24th, 8 a.m.

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

This is a full day trip with Bill Wallace, as we visit as many of these local sanctuaries as time allows. Bring lunch. Car-pooling will be encouraged.

Wolf Conservation Center, South Salem, NY Sunday, March 3rd, 2p.m.

Registration: Ginny Powers
@ 914-764-4320

Steve Ricker leads this trip held jointly with Westmoreland Sanctuary. There will be a \$5.00 admission charge at the Wolf Conservation Center, where visitors will be given a 45-minute multimedia presentation on the history, mythology, biology, social structure and ecological importance of the work. Following the program, you will be given the opportunity to observe the resident wolves.

New Member Application

I would like to join the Bedford Audubon Society (a chapter of National Audubon).

Send this form with a check made out to the
National Audubon Society, Bedford Chapter.

Please check the membership category.

___ Introductory \$20, ___ Two year membership \$35, ___ Senior Citizen (65+) \$15, ___ Student \$15

I wish to make an additional
donation of _____

I do not wish to have my name or contact
information shared with outside organizations.

Name_____

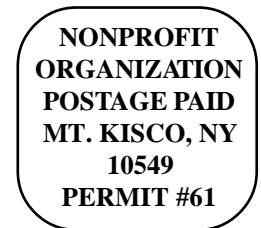
Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

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

Chapter Code ROO

Bedford Audubon Society, Inc.
35 Todd Road
Katonah, NY 10536



Place Mailing Label Here

Serving Communities in Northern Westchester and Eastern Putnam since 1913