



LAUGHING GULL

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

Volume 32 Issue #8

P.O. Box 12474, Fort Pierce, FL 34979

May 2008

President's Message

It is apparent that many people went north early this year. Attendance was way down at the April general meeting. Richard Zambrano of Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission presented his study on terns and skimmers in South Florida. Recent weather events and development have decreased their numbers. It was also surprising to learn that a hurricane can nearly wipe out a species.

The annual election of officers was held. Dan Walma will be the new president and Ruth Neese will be vice president. The rest of the board will be returnees: Edie Schor, recording secretary; Mille Estersohn, corresponding secretary; Liz Dunleavy, treasurer; and Marti Mook, Margaret Seiler, and Hank Hull at-large board members.

Recently I completed a survey from National Audubon which included questions about our chapter's use of the www.audubonathome.org website. As we have not used it, Gale and I went online to check it out. We immediately found suggestions for helping two birds that visit our backyard – Brown Thrashers and Northern Flickers. Among the site's many resources you will find links to many suggestions and resources for Healthy Yards, Neighborhood Conservation, Helping Birds & Wildlife, Regional Resources, and Kidspace. I would like to urge everyone to explore this conservation resource.

It has been an honor and pleasure working with everyone for the last five years. We have accomplished much. St. Lucie Audubon established a relationship and home with Oxbow Eco-Center, rescued Gopher Tortoises, and enjoyed great field trips and a fantastic lecture series. My thanks to the board and membership for supporting our work during my three years as president. Please keep it up.

In closing I say continue enjoying the beautiful birds and spring weather while it lasts and see you at the May meeting.

Al Parmentier

Calendar of Events

Meeting: Thursday, May 1, 2008

“**Tips & Tricks to Attract Birds**” presented by Wyn Burns, Creature Safe Place. As a non-profit care facility, Creature Safe Place gives sanctuary and rehabilitation to wildlife that has been abused, abandoned, neglected or injured.

Field Trip: Saturday, May 3, 2008 @ Bear Point Sanctuary on South Hutchinson Island.

See back page for more details.

New Members

Mary Ann Conaway, Ann Slattery-Loveridge,
John Mansell, Eric Alexander, Dotty Saunders,
Angela Ooley, Duncan McLeod

Welcome!

Meeting Place: Oxbow Eco-Center

5400 N.E. St. James Dr., Port St. Lucie, FL 34983

A New Leaf, A New Bird

Submitted by Edie Schor

Don't think that your Audubon board members are taking the summer off. We are busy planning next year's programs and activities. We have in the works a contest with rewards. The contest sounds like fun but the reward promises even more fun.

In each *Laughing Gull* we will list three local birds that can be spotted in the interim when the newsletter is available and our meeting, the first Monday of each month that we meet.

Those successful birdwatchers who appear at the meeting will be chosen by lot for the **Rewards** program. Ruth Neese, our new vice president (of Treasure Coast Wildlife Center fame which entertains us with wildlife celebs most every meeting) has graciously offered a tour of her facility, something reserved for special friends of the Wildlife Center.

I, for one, will have to think about a new pair of binocs, the current ones just not strong enough to supplement the ones God gave me.

Environmentalist @ Home

By Gale Parmentier

Years ago this column reported on dishwasher soap: environmentally appropriate alternatives were hard to find and expensive. Use in our home proved cleaning power was not always reliable and definitely not worth the extra expense. At last, an eco-friendly dishwasher soap has appeared right on the grocery store shelves. New Palmolive eco+ does not require a special trip to a health food store, is **phosphate free**, is affordable, and really gets the dishes clean. Hallelujah! "Better for lakes and streams. Eco+ is formulated to reduce the harm posed by phosphate in waterways" appears right on the front label. Call Colgate-Palmolive at 800-338-8388 or go to www.palmolive.com and let the company know how much we care that green products are available to us.



**Please
Remember
to Recycle!**

www.stlucieaudubon.org

Feathered Friends

By Dotty Hull

Springtime is a beautiful time of year for wildlife watching. Outside our patio a pair of Northern Mockingbirds built a nest and now five nestlings. They are constantly bringing insects and berries to feed their seemingly insatiable appetites. They grow quickly and that nest will soon be quite crowded with 5 young birds in it. In the wooded lot next door we have a pair of Northern Cardinals making trips back and forth to a nest. It is interesting to watch the devoted parents constantly bring insects and berries to their young. Squirrels are also nesting in the top of a tree.

On the other side of the canal, Limpkins are calling to each other each morning and appear to be mating. Sandhill Cranes have just one youngster this year, which is a low number for that species.

Our spring flowers seem to be doing better than ever before. A gardenia bush is loaded with beautiful blossom, a pink hibiscus with extremely large flowers and a passion vine that has now covered the trellis to add to the enjoyment of our yard. It is amazing how the plants rejuvenate in the spring. Hopefully the drought is behind us and our plantings have recovered from the setbacks of the hurricanes. Enjoy your summer.

Lake Tozour Diaries

Submitted by Edie Schor

In light of the neighborhood changes after "Breakfast with the Birds" appeared in the April Laughing Gull, Lake Tozour begs a follow-up.

The Crane family (as in sandhill) has been totally devoted to their two upstarts, just eggs in the nest at last writing. I never see one without the other three. We humans could learn from these gorgeous parents. Never a day goes by that I don't see the entire entourage several times parading past my view. It's a sight to see the little guys frantically flapping their fledgling wings in imitation of their parents' graceful pirouettes.

The maple that was struggling to survive after Jeanne and Frances succumbed one night last week after the thunderstorm rolled through. Maybe that's what happened to the pileated woodpeckers. But no wonder they loved that tree. It had way too many soft spots only visible to us humans after its demise.

The pileated woodpecker has been supplanted by a red bellied woodpecker who plays his staccato song on the TV antenna as I absorb my coffee along with the morning newspaper. That's maybe what inspired Marconi and his wireless. Now that would make a wonderful story if it were true!

I thought the wood duck that landed on the chain link fence the morning after the storm was eyeing the pool in a much too prurient manner until the pump started gurgling and spewing out water. I suppose he hastened away to check out some other real estate after his maple had taken a tumble.

None of us heard that tree fall but we know it happened. Just ask the birds!

I could go on to tell you more tales involving frogs in the "john", the indigo snake sunning himself on the pool rocks, wild hogs disking the lawn, and squirrels, cardinals, and blue jays peacefully sharing the sidewalk fare. I think I'll save that for another time.

And thanks for listening!

Check out more inhabitants at www.laketozour.com

S.O.S * Save Our Society * S.O.S

Submitted by Edie Schor

Let this plea go out to all who support your local Audubon -- or those who thought you already were!!! It is we who are the first to respond to the wishes of the members and the needs of the local birds and the environment of St. Lucie County.

If you're like me, you thought when you joined National Audubon (if you receive the Florida Naturalist and the National Audubon, you're a member of National), you thought that also supports your local. And it does, but not like you would imagine. We need your support.

I would beg, plead, pray -- even get on my knees -- that everyone who reads this and hears about this chooses to support your local chapter, St. Lucie Audubon Society. That consists of \$15 (per person) membership dues. We want you to join National Audubon too but we receive very little from National, **much** less than \$15 per member. The monies we received this year have not covered our expenses for printing and mailing this newsletter.

But whether you have opted to receive your newsletter by email or simply downloading from our outstanding website, please write out a check for \$15 to St. Lucie Audubon because you support the work we do and the work we want to do. There is so much to be done here locally. We have made a dent, perhaps a huge dent, but we could do so much more.

Please send in your checks **now** for our year which begins this fall while it is still fresh in your mind. **We need you and we're hoping you need us!!!**

If you're not interested in details, read no further, but in support of my plea consider these numbers for the last year: \$427.00 Local dues collection, 407.63 Contribution from National = **\$834.63** Total dues. Contrast this with Newsletter Expenses: 863.20 Postage and Permit, 631.00 Printing and Labels = **\$1,494.20** Total Newsletter Operations.

So, please, the next time you take out your checkbook, write one for \$15 to St. Lucie Audubon and fill out the coupon in this newsletter to show your support that this area needs and deserves.

Sunny Day Websites

Rainy day or sunny day, here are some websites to entertain you.

One of our members who graces our lives every winter, Hart Rufe, is a leader wherever he goes evidently. Hart led our field trips this past winter to Merritt Island and Green Cay Wetlands.

Google <http://conserveland.org/features/hartrufe>. This particular article is entitled *Pennsylvania Land Trust Association Honors Judge William Hart Rufe with 2008 Lifetime Leadership Award*.

We can't wait for next year, Hart!!!

What's New @ www.stlucieaudubon.org

If you click on *Links* on the homepage and scroll on down to *Ornithology*, you will feel overwhelmed by the selection. I might suggest Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology as a place to start and spend either five minutes or an entire day.

This particular site will be invaluable (a big hint here now) in locating some birds that will be "participating" in our **Rewards** program next year.

Happy Hunting (of the binoc variety of course)!!!

Membership Renewals

Chapter memberships extend from October through May. Chapter members may use the coupon below to renew membership for 2009. Please mark **RENEW** on your check.

SLAS is now offering a Chapter-only annual membership option for those who want to financially support their local chapter. The annual cost is only \$15 per year, which includes a monthly subscription to our "Laughing Gull" newsletter. Please make checks payable and send to:

St. Lucie Audubon Society, P.O. Box 12474, Ft. Pierce, FL 34979

Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

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"Tips & Tricks to Attract Birds" presented by Wyn Burns, Creature Safe Place.

Field Trip: Saturday, May 3, 2008

We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at Bear Point Sanctuary on South Hutchinson Island for a morning of birdwatching on the Indian River Lagoon. Spring migration will be nearing its end but we may still see some late warblers and other birds in the mangroves. The Bear Point overlook will usually have some early morning wading birds such as egrets, ibis, herons, Roseate Spoonbills and Wood Storks.

To get to Bear Point, take Seaway Drive from U.S 1 in Fort Pierce across the south bridge. When you get almost to the ocean, turn right on A1A and go south about 1 mile and Bear Point is on the right. There is a sign for it and a parking area. We will go to the overlook area first and then take the short trail back toward the Indian River Lagoon.

BIRD WATCHING CRUISE 4:00PM Wednesday (seasonal)

Experience Bird Island & see several hundred nesting birds!

FRIDAY SUNSET CRUISE Departs @ 4:30pm

Relax & enjoy as we meander down the St. Lucie River. Catch a glimpse of Bird Island.

JUNGLE CRUISE 1:00 PM Daily

See alligators, turtles, birds and more.

Boat departs from two locations: River Park Marina & Rivergate Park.

RESERVATION REQUIRED: River Lilly 772-489-8344

Audubon Print Drawing

**Don't forget – time to
purchase tickets** for the
beautifully
framed Audubon
print of the
Pileated Wood-
pecker.



The winner will
be selected at
our May 3rd general meeting.
Good Luck!



Creature Safe Place Wish List

Bird Seed

Wet Cat Food

Your donations will be greatly appreciated.



Laughing Gull

St. Lucie Audubon
P.O. Box 12474
Fort Pierce, FL 34979

Get your Laughing Gull by e-mail

Do the **"Green Thing"** and help our chapter save printing and mailing costs by getting your newsletter by email. No special program is needed to open it, and you can print it out if you prefer to read it offline.

Send your name and email address to newsletter@stlucieaudubon.org to sign up.

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