



LAUGHING GULL

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

Volume 32 Issue #5

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

February 2008

President's Message

Happy New Year to all! We celebrated our new year in the Flamingo area of Everglades National Park. The facilities were almost totally destroyed by 2005 hurricanes Katrina and Wilma. The lodge, restaurant, and gift shop have not reopened. Some of the campgrounds have renovated bathrooms. If you want to stay in the park, you must take in everything you will need. The thirty-eight mile road from the park entrance to Flamingo separated us thoroughly from the lights of Homestead and Miami – and made for great stargazing.

The fifty-two birds we identified certainly showed the diversity of this wilderness. The Flamingo area is the only place in the USA that two of the birds, the Short-tailed Hawk and White-crowned Pigeon, can be seen.

The Bud Adams Ranch Tour and Breakfast is coming up February 17th. If you have never taken this opportunity to see a Florida ranch, I strongly suggest you do. Bud is a great host and explains a lot of the history and modern techniques of relevant eco-farming.

See you all at the general meeting. *Al Parmentier*

Calendar of Events

Meeting: Thursday, February 7, 2008

“Hurricanes & Tsunamis” presented by Jim Egan of the Marine Resources Council, headquarters in Melbourne, FL, will present a program concerning our coastal environment and how it protects birds, other wildlife and marine life. He aided in the tsunami disaster in Asia and has recently returned from Indonesia.

Field Trip: Saturday, February 9, 2008

This month we have our choice of two field trips. Please see back page for details.

Meeting Place:

Oxbow Eco-Center

5400 N.E. St. James Dr., Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
1.7 miles south of Midway Rd. / 1.8 miles north of Airoso Blvd. on St. James Dr. (S. 25th St.)

Upcoming Events

Permaculture is Ecological Living

Oxbow Eco-Center Lecture Series
Saturday, February 2nd at 11 am

Permaculture, a design approach to creating sustainable homes by observing and replicating natural ecosystems. Permaculture designers work to maximize diversity and stress efficient energy planning for buildings and surrounding landscapes.

Guest Speaker Michael Panella lives by example as he diligently works to convert his own four acre home in Stuart into an example of ecological living. He has taught home composting for Martin County Waste management and practices what he preaches.

The presentation is free and open to the public on Saturday, February 2nd at 11:00 a.m. at the Oxbow Eco-Center located at 5400 N.E. St. James Drive in Port St. Lucie.

Bird Identification Classes

February 26th, March 4th & 18th.

Tuesday evening sessions from 7 - 9 pm.

Field trips Saturdays following the class by St. Lucie Audubon.

Cost is only \$30.00

Classes will be held at Oxbow Eco-Center
5400 St. James Drive, Port St. Lucie, FL 34983

For more details, call the Oxbow @ 785-5833.

New Members

Alexander Burnett, Raymond Erickson,
Carol Correnti, Pachael Thomas, Anita Cieslinski,
Judy Milan, Dr. James Smith, Judith Burrichter,
Roland Lasher, Normand Lemaire,
Randy & Mimi Swaringen

Welcome!

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
flbird40@bellsouth.net to sign up.



WIND TURBINES AND AUDUBON OF FLORIDA
By Edie Schor

If you're wondering about Audubon of Florida's response to the placement of wind turbines on Hutchinson Island and more specifically at John Brooks Park, you need to wonder no more. I am in possession of a letter dated December 20, 2007, addressed to Stacy Foster of FP&L Environmental Services at 700 Universe Boulevard, Juno Beach Florida 33408 from David E. Anderson, Executive Director of Audubon of Florida.

It's a four-page letter and somewhat dense for me to understand, let alone summarize. It states that Audubon is pleased to see Florida exploring alternative energy solutions in light of the global warming challenge. Since it would be the first such enterprise in Florida, it would be a model for the rest of the state. Audubon of Florida suggests, among other things, pre-siting wildlife surveys with a minimum duration of two years and a technical review committee composed of outside representatives such as federal and state wildlife agencies, conservation groups, and academic representatives to review the data.

The surveys need to be conducted with an eye to the special characteristics of those species who use this as a flyway. The letter states the concerns with certain species and the wading and roosting birds and their rookeries.

Another concern mentioned is the use of public conservation lands for the use of privately-owned utilities. County- and state-owned conservation lands are approached frequently for non-conservation uses which are in the public interest such as schools, fire stations. Even using these lands for these purposes detracts from the conservation value of these lands and supporting such use for private use sets a precedent for other conservation lands throughout the state.

The last concern mentioned is in the event of dune erosion what protections will be necessary. It would be appropriate for FP&L to describe coastal erosion challenges and the mitigation necessary.

The letter concludes by stating Audubon of Florida does not think the issues are beyond resolving and looks forward to working with FP&L on this project. Audubon wants to ensure a successful project with minimum impacts on natural systems. Audubon of Florida believes that renewable energy has a crucial role to play in our state's future.

We, of the St. Lucie Audubon Society, will try to keep our members up to date. Please visit our website where we will post what we learn as this issue progresses. Since many of our members are here during the winter months and we don't publish *The Laughing Gull* in the summer, please keep tuned in to the website.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if nature and humans (and aren't we part of nature anyway) could live in a mutual admiration society? We can dare to dream the impossible dream.

St. Lucie Audubon Society Merritt Island Trip,
January 5, 2008 By Hart Rufe

Thirteen participants braved intermittent rain showers, and were rewarded with outstanding observations of Roseate Spoonbills; a very close Bonaparte's Gull; numerous White Pelicans; a side-by-side comparison of Greater Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, Herring, and Ring-billed Gulls and Caspian Terns; excellent views of all the expected herons and egrets; and ended with almost in the hand Scrub Jays. The Scrub Jays would come within about two feet of the peanuts offered, but never made the leap into the participants' hands. At one point there were six Eastern Towhees, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, White-eyed Vireo, Palm and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, House Wren, and Mockingbird, all vying for attention at the same time in response to the pishing tape used to attract them. The group finished with a total of 89 species for the day. Definitely a successful trip! For a complete list of birds seen visit <http://www.stlucieaudubonsociety.org/docs/080105Merritt.htm>

Feathered Friends
By Dotty Hull

February is a good month for spotting birds that are here during the winter months only. Some of you have reported seeing wintering birds in your yards such as Painted and Indigo Buntings. Visiting area parks can be rewarding too. Hart Rufe and a friend were birding west of Fort Pierce and saw 2 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers on the corner of Carlton Rd. and S.R. 70. They also found an unusual sighting of Least Flycatcher on Carlton Rd. Read about it online at <http://www.stlucieaudubonsociety.org/sightings.htm>. The Carlton Road and Germany Canal Road area makes a nice morning drive with a chance to see many species of birds. Go west on S. R. 70 to Carlton Rd. and turn south. Germany Canal Rd. intersects Carlton in a few miles.

Membership Renewals

Chapter memberships extend from October through May. Chapter members may use the coupon below to renew membership for 2008. 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 _____



**Please Remember
to Recycle!**

Websites of Great and Grave Importance

By Edie Schor

Whew!!! There is so much knowledge coming down the information highway these days that sometimes it's hard not to feel bombarded and overwhelmed. And to add to that, I've got some more. But these are ones that are making a difference in our own backyards and front yards by maintaining, enhancing, or creating environments where hopefully the wildlife we enjoy can find habitat and thrive so future generations can enjoy them as much or more than we do.

THE MARINE RESOURCES COUNCIL <http://mrcirl.org>

Jim Egan, our featured speaker for February 7, is the Executive Director of this council and one of the most sought-after speakers on the Treasure Coast -- and other places I'm sure. Once you're at the home page, click on some of the drop-down menus, particularly "About the Lagoon" and "Newsletter".

Jim will be leading a field trip February 9th, the Saturday after his presentation at Oxbow. We will visit areas where improvements are in progress. These improvements are challenging citizens and government to understand that our approach to the environment we love can benefit flora and fauna and ourselves.

SPOIL ISLAND PROJECT INDIAN RIVER LAGOON <http://www.spoilislandproject.org>

From 1953 to 1961, the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway was created by dredging a 12-foot-deep channel in the Indian River Lagoon. The spoil from the dredging created 137 spoil islands throughout the 156 miles and 4 counties of the Indian River Lagoon. Indian River County has the most islands (55), followed by Brevard (41), St. Lucie (34), and Martin (7) counties.

There are bird counts that are done on these islands by Dana Moller, Estuarine Ecologist. **And he needs volunteers to help -- which means you and me.** I've gone along a couple times and what a treat. On his website you will find info how you can volunteer and help Dana do these counts. And there's lots more to read and learn. Use the drop-down menus and take a full tour.

THE INDIAN RIVERKEEPER <http://www.indianriverkeeper.org>

There's hardly a month -- or sometimes a week -- that goes by that we don't see Kevin Stinnette's name mentioned somewhere in the newspapers. His dogged perseverance in protecting and promoting the health of the lagoon is to be feared by his adversaries -- and rightly so. His philosophy in on track and a model to be emulated when it comes to defending the long-term benefits and defeating stopgap measures for the quick fix to our most treasured possession, the Indian River Lagoon. Our grandchildren will thank him.

And let's not forget our own website and my personal favorite! Ta dah!

ST. LUCIE AUDUBON SOCIETY <http://www.stlucieaudubonsociety.org>

I wasn't kidding in the last newsletter about how great our own website has become. Mary Dodge has accomplished an

astonishing feat by bringing us into the 21st century. There is so much to learn and places to go that I doubt I can do it all EVER! Check us out at least every week. We have big ambitions for what we hope will become the last word on bird and environmental concerns in St. Lucie County. And the links are invaluable. One of them is of course the National Audubon site.

St. Lucie Audubon Webmaster

Mary Dodge responded to our call for a webmaster and has been working hard to make our society's website a place for our members to find information about events and information about important environmental issues. She has set up a page for members' photos of birds taken in St. Lucie County or a SLAS event. To submit a photo it must be a clear and preferably in .jpg format. Send it to Mary at mary@jackmarvetc.com.

There are also new pages for trip reports and sightings.

<http://www.stlucieaudubonsociety.org>

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Sweet, Sweet, Sweet.
Tweet, Tweet, Tweet.

The birds in the branches made a ring.
O how beautifully they all did sing.
With full-throated ease they sang for me.
Melodies that linger in my memory.
From a swinging perch I heard a Towhee.
Reminding me; Drink your tea! Wrink your tea!
A Red-winged Blackbird sings joyfully.
Cher-o-kee-e, Cher-o-kee-e.
An Ovenbird under deep cover
calls: Teacher! Teacher! Teacher!
A Barred Owl on cue
Asks: Who cooks for you?
A Yellow Warbler I could not see
Piped; Chee-chee-chee-ah-we.
The Eastern Meadowlark's repeating rhyme
Springtime, sing time. Springtime, sing time.
A Wood Thrush's haunting lament; Too-oo-tull-oo.
I wept; Me too, me too, me too.
Though God created all things great and small
I love his bird songs most of all.

By Michael Chiramonte



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Meeting: Thursday, February 7, 2008

"Hurricanes & Tsunamis" presented by Jim Egan

Field Trip: Saturday, February 9, 2008

This month you will have a choice of two field trips. One will go to Green Cay Wetlands in Boynton Beach, Palm Beach County. This is a wonderful created wetlands with lovely boardwalks and an abundance of birds to see at very close range. There are great photography opportunities so bring your camera if you wish. Some of us will have lunch at nearby Sweet Tomatoes Restaurant, a salad, soup and dessert buffet. Discount coupons are available in the Sunday Tribune coupon section. We will have some extras available. After lunch, we will go to Wakodahatchee Wetlands, which is near Green Cay.

Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the parking lot nearest the street in front of the Sears Essentials store (former K-Mart) on St. Lucie West Blvd. Park in the lot near the street, farthest from the store. We will carpool and caravan to the wetlands. Those who do not wish to stay for lunch should either drive themselves or be in a car that will leave after Green Cay.

The other field trip will be led by Jim Egan. We will visit areas where improvements are in progress. These improvements are challenging citizens and government to understand that our approach to the environment we love can benefit flora and fauna and ourselves.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Home Depot parking lot, Okeechobee and Jenkins Roads, northeast corner of their lot. Park in the lot near the street, farthest from the store. We will carpool and caravan.

Bud Adams Ranch Breakfast

The Breakfast at Bud Adams Ranch will take place on **February 17th at 8:00 a.m.** This is an opportunity to enjoy a wonderful breakfast in one of the prettiest parts of the ranch and have a bus tour of other places.

Tickets are \$20 per person and must be reserved and paid for in advance. This event fills up fast so reserve early.

Call Dotty Hull at 772-340-2226 to reserve tickets.



Laughing Gull

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