

Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society



Volume 32 Issue #1

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

October 2007

Presidents Message

A New Year & New Challenges

We are looking forward to an exciting St. Lucie Audubon season! St. Lucie Audubon board members have been working diligently throughout the summer months even though the new season doesn't start until October. They have been planning for monthly programs, searching for interesting speakers and setting up field trips, birding classes and special events. Members of the board have also been keeping up with conservation issues; some have been working all summer to save gopher tortoises from being buried by development. We look forward to seeing all of our members and guests during this new season, and we encourage you to join us at our meetings and activities. We especially need your help at this time as we face new challenges.

Unfortunately, we start the year with several key vacancies. We have so far been unable to find a treasurer to take care of our finances. Our extraordinary conservation chair Harold Phillips has also had to return to New Zealand due to illness in his family. In addition, I have also had to tender my resignation as president, before the season gets under way, due to several health issues in my family. I am so disappointed that I will not be able to work with the remarkable people on our board and in our society, but I find it impossible to be able to fulfill the role at this time. We ask your help and support as we begin the process of filling these positions. We ask you to please think about serving your chapter in one of these roles or to recommend someone who may be able to fill one of the vacancies.

Please accept my sincere apology for not being able to continue as SLA president. I look forward to serving our chapter and our community in the future, and I am confident that our chapter will overcome these challenges and have an extraordinary year ahead. Please mark your calendar for our first meeting of the year - Thursday, October 4 - and help us get started!

Happy Birding!
Holly Tetzloff

Calendar of Events

Meeting:

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Bats, presented by Ken Geoli

Field Trip:

Saturday, October 6, 2007

Gordy Park in Fort Pierce

(see back page for details).

Upcoming Events

Plants for Attracting Butterflies and
Wildlife to Your Garden

Oxbow Eco-Center Lecture Series
Saturday, November 3rd at 11 am

This year's lecture series focuses on "**Living with Natural Florida**"; giving participants an opportunity to see why maintaining native habitats is so important.

Native plants have adapted to a particular region, including the climate, geography, and animal populations over thousand of years. These plants provide homes to wildlife and feeding grounds for birds and butterflies. They withstand harsh weather conditions better than exotic plants used in landscaping. Native plants also require less watering as they are adapted to our hydraulic conditions. Lawns and gardens comprised of non-native species are replacing our indigenous plants.

Come learn how you can create a beautiful native habitat on your own lawn and save money as Marc Minno presents his talk entitled, "Native Plants for Attracting Butterflies and Wildlife to Your Garden."



Please Remember to Recycle!

Meeting Place: Oxbow Eco-Center

5400 N.E. St. James Dr., Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
772-785-5833

1.7 miles south of Midway Rd./ 1.8 miles north of Airoso Blvd. on St. James Dr. (S. 25th St.)

Welcome New Members

Maurice Brock Julia Burak Paul Dayton
James Dunn Rhoda Farr Barbara Hatch
Greg Heller Arletta Kaler J. E. Lyons
Jeff-Carol Morse Philip Sydorko

Feathered Friends

By Dotty Hull

We have received several calls from area residents who have noticed a decline in the number of birds visiting their yards and feeders. We have also noticed this decline and also the absence of several species that were formerly regulars in our yard.

National Audubon Society recently published a pamphlet, "Wake Up Call", a State of the Birds Report for Summer 2007. It lists the top ten common birds in decline. Eight of those ten species are birds that were once plentiful in our area. Northern Bobwhites, Eastern Meadowlark, and Loggerhead Shrike are three that were seen frequently in our neighborhood and are seldom seen now.

It also gives suggestions on what we can do for the birds and for our future. Being proactive with your government officials to increase the amount of suitable habitat can support breeding. Support wetlands programs, including the Clean Water Act.

You can pick up a copy of this pamphlet at the October meeting or you can read about the twenty common birds in decline at <http://www.audubon.org/bird/stateofthebirds/CBID/browseSpecies.php>

JUNGLE CRUISE

1:00 PM Daily
See alligators, turtles & birds.
River Park Marina on Prima Vista Blvd.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED:

River Lilly 772-489-8344

*Beginning late October



2007-2008 Chapter Officers & Committee

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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.

Note: If date on address label is circled, it is time to renew membership.

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 _____

Thank You!

Special Thanks

Since the last issue of the *Laughing Gull*, the following generous folks have added their donations to our special gopher tortoise rescue fund:

- Nancy & Gordon Archer,
- Bob & Frankie Bangert,
- Dana & Joseph DeMarco,
- Patricia Dougherty & Hamilton McQueen,
- Stanley & Dorothy Greene,
- Tina & Paul Kutz, Catharine Leonard,
- Jeffrey & Pamela McLemore, Michael Moore,
- Dorothy Miller, Doreen Mitchell, Marylyn Mittleman, Lorraine & John Mullaney,
- Pat Pazara, Arden Peck & Carole Mushier,
- Lorraine & Thomas Poggis, Karen & Albert Raskasky, Cheryl Snow, Beatrice Stapleton,
- Holly & Larry Tetzloff, Mary Thoma,
- Marilynn Turner, and Lace & Walter Vitunac.

Many, many thanks to all for your support.

BIRD WATCHING CRUISE

4:00PM Wednesday (seasonal)

Experience Bird Island & see several hundred nesting birds! Rivergate Park/ Midport Rd.



RESERVATIONS REQUIRED:

River Lilly 772-489-8344

*Beginning late October

Conservation Corner

By Harold Phillips

Welcome to Conservation Corner as we start out on a new St. Lucie Audubon Society season.

Since March when our Chapter first became concerned about the needless killing of the gopher tortoise we have rescued and successfully relocated over 62 tortoise. During our efforts and our involvement the State Department of Fish & Wildlife Commission have agreed to adopt a new policy that now prevents the issue of a take permit. There will be no more killing of the gopher tortoise for money, by the State of Florida starting from August 1st 2007. We have raised over \$15,000 for the rescue and preservation of the Gopher Tortoise, and we thank all of you for your generosity for responding so generously. This money will be used specifically for the rescue and welfare of the gopher tortoise in our area. We still need you to observe and advise us when gopher tortoise are seen living on residential lots.

Florida birds are in decline. The National Audubon Society has reported that our "common birds" are losing ground. Bird habitat is declining as we build more parking lots, more malls, more houses, all of this involves paving over our green spaces and sometimes even our wetlands.

Now there are years in the Christmas Bird count where common birds like the Red Winged Blackbird are no longer seen. Other birds on the decline are the Eastern Meadowlark, the Loggerhead Shrike, and the Greater Scaup. Please make a special effort this season to try and spot these birds and if you do please let us know.

Other birds in decline include the American Kestrel, American Bittern, Black Skimmer, Clapper Rail. The Northern Bobwhite, Rusty Blackbird, and even the little Blue Heron.

"These are birds that we expect to see in our communities and our neighborhoods, and are not those of the highest conservation focus", says Julie Wraithmell, wildlife policy coordinator with Audubon of Florida in Tallahassee.

A US District Judge, John Antoon II rejected arguments from the US Fish and Wildlife Service that it needed more time to conduct five year reviews of listed birds on the Endangered Species Act due to money and staff shortages. Florida with more than 100, has the third highest number of federally listed species in the nation. The service has a backlog of 89 species, some have not been reviewed in decades. The judge agreed to allow the Service three years to catch up with their reviews and work backlog. The Florida Homebuilders Association tried to have the judge only allow one year before species listed would be removed from the list, the judge rejected this request. Builders are trying to have the wood stork removed from protection in Florida.

Finally here are some of the Energy independence ideas that Congressman Tim Mahoney is trying to bring about. To make Florida a leader in alternative energy using Cellulosic ethanol, or ethanol produced from citrus and other non-corn products, such as willow branches grown for the purpose.

He is advocating the reduction of emissions to reduce Global Warming, legislation that decreases our dependence upon foreign oil. Also for more investment in solar energy and wind power in our State.

We have many excellent speakers coming to present their programs to you starting with our October meeting at the Oxbow Eco-Center. We hope that you will come and enjoy them. We appreciate all of you who turn out to our meetings rain or shine. This season some of our field trips will compliment the Thursday lecture and or presentation and we hope that this will be educational and enjoyable and will give you all more pleasure in attending.

Every penny counts!

The whooping cranes are still needing our help. We can give without giving by "good searching". GoodSearch.com is a search engine that donates about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. You use it just as you would any search engine. Goodsearch.com is powered by Yahoo!, so you get great results. Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter **Operation Migration** as the charity you want to support.

With just 100 of us searching five times a day will raise about \$1800 in a year without ever spending a penny! Be sure to spread the word!

Please visit www.GoodSearch.com

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Just as Luminaries advertised for volunteers, so is St. Lucie Audubon. Harold Phillips, our former Conservation Chairman, is in New Zealand with his very ill son. Therefore, we are in desperate need of a Conservation Chairperson. Information to St. Lucie Audubon members of environmental conservation issues is the most important task; thus, acquiring the numbers needed to support the good issues and defeat the bad ones. These involve Port St. Lucie, Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, State of Florida, some national and international issues. An example, Harold asked the developers at Cloud Grove, who are rebuilding the reservoir, to maintain access for the snail kite resident; he also asked Audubon of Florida to help oversee it (a St. Lucie County issue). Because Dr. Jon Moore and Vero Beach Humane Society and St. Lucie Audubon's relocation efforts, The Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission amended the gopher tortoise regulation that allowed builders to bury them alive for a sum of money to one for relocation (a Florida state issue). Please volunteer and help continue this important environmental work.

Laughing Gull

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



Get your Laughing Gull by email

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.

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