

Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society



Volume 31 Issue #3

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

December 2006

Welcome to new members!

Mera Atkins
Dennis Durkee
Jeanette Granberg
Herbert Hoag
Juliet Lewicki
A Gauthier
William Lewicki
Barbara Reinecker



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.

President's Message

By Al Parmentier

I would like to give a big welcome back to our friends from the north, human and birds alike.

At last the beautiful weather is also back. I have no reason to be complaining after spending May through mid-August in the northern climes. Come and hear more about our adventure at the May 3rd general meeting when Gale and I are doing a presentation about our 15,144 mile RV trip through twenty-three states and Alberta.

I certainly would like to see more of our members attending our monthly meetings. We have had two excellent speakers already this season. This month will be no exception with a travelogue by Jack & Mary Dodge of their trip to Ecuador. It promises to be an exceptional program. Centrally located and well worth the trip on its own, the Oxbow Environmental Center is a great venue for our meetings. It is located at 5400 NE St. James Drive, just south of Midway Drive.

Our membership is increasing! The board would very much like help from current members with contacting the new people. At general meetings, we plan to hand out slips of paper with contact information for five new members. Your task would be to personally welcome them and invite them to our monthly meetings and field trips. You will find these lists at the welcome table. Please give us a hand.

Do you ever find that you might want a little more to do? How about volunteering for a board position for next year? We have nine monthly meetings and most positions don't require more than a few hours of work each month. We would love to have some new people working with us, plus your chapter needs you!

See you at the December meeting and have a great holiday season.

Al Parmentier

Meeting Place Location:

Oxbow Eco-Center
5400 NE St. James Dr.
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983
(772) 785-5833

Calendar of Events

December Meeting:

Thursday, December 7th at 7 p.m.

Ecuador film trip presented by Mary & Jack Dodge.

December Field Trip:

Saturday, December 9th, Vero Beach Wetlands (see back page for details).

Other events of interest

Mimicking Nature... From Lawns to Lakes

"Wake Up Call" Lecture Series

Dec. 2 * 11 am @ Oxbow Eco-Center:

Learn how to make your landscape work for you and the environment as Joe Gilio presents "Mimicking Nature ... from Lawns to Lakes" at the Oxbow Eco-Center.

As an environmental consultant, Gilio pioneered the successful establishment of storm water retention systems into lakes that mimic natural ecosystems. These more natural retention ponds, which include vegetation both around the pond and in the littoral zone, have proven to be effective at achieving very low nutrient concentration and a healthier system. Gilio will discuss what we can do to our lawns that will not only make them easier to maintain, but also how to help preserve the water quality of nearby wetlands, as well as the value of vegetation in retention ponds.

Birding Classes:

Tuesday evenings February 20th, Feb 27th and March 8th from 7-9 pm. Field trips Saturdays following the class by St. Lucie Audubon. Cost is only \$30.

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



Conservation Corner

By Harold Phillips

Welcome to Conservation Corner for December. Our wildlife refuges are under threat, again. In November, the US Fish and Wildlife Service announced plans to eliminate almost 90 positions even though our refuges are barely able to function because of personnel shortages, cut backs in educational programs and literature, using professionally qualified biological staff as volunteer coordinators instead of allowing them to do the jobs they are paid to do and qualified to do.

Pelican Island and Archie Carr and the Hobe Sound national wildlife refuges will lose managers and workers. This will likely put an end to public outreach and wildlife management projects. We have allowed funding wars to diminish our funds to the point that the parks that were paid for and created by President Roosevelt are now being closed for lack of staff to keep them open year round to the very persons they were created for.

If you disapprove of this, please write letters to the newspapers and write to your own Congresspersons.

St. Lucie Audubon Society is taking steps to stop the permitting for residential and commercial lot preparation that allows Gopher tortoises to become buried and paved over in return for higher permit fees. This practice must be stopped. A Gopher tortoise may take as long as six months to expire under these conditions. We are in the preliminary stages of application to become an approved relocation agency where the Gopher tortoise faces destruction or indiscriminate removal. We have members who have environmental qualifications and/or experience. If you are one of them, please call me at 772-879-2669. St. Lucie Audubon will value your input, advice and experience.

One of the big disappointments from the recent elections is that Amendment # 3 was passed. This makes Florida the only state in the nation requiring 60 percent voter approval for a citizen initiative. This means that a minority of only 41% of the voters can defeat any proposed changes in our Constitution. This amendment was designed specifically to prevent the Hometown Democracy plan from receiving voter approval in 2008. Hometown Democracy will eventually prevail. It will prevent each county in Florida from changing their comprehensive plans piecemeal according to the whim and needs of hungry developers that sometimes are not even from the same county whose comprehensive plan they are determined to change. Hometown Democracy will take the discretion to allow deviations from the well-considered comprehensive plans of County Commissions and place that responsibility in the hands of the electorate.

Please examine the concept of Hometown Democracy with a view to supporting it by helping St. Lucie Audubon Society obtain signed petitions.

Grace Kedziora Sea Turtle Mother

Sea Turtles were the topic for our excellent speaker at our November meeting. Brian Weinstein from Florida Power & Light Company. Thank you for a very informative and interesting presentation.

It is with sadness that we recently learned of the death of Grace Kedziora, Sea Turtle Mother for South Beach in Fort Pierce. Grace Kedziora was fondly known as "Turtle Mother" for her extensive work with sea turtles, died recently in Anchorage, Alaska. Until recently Grace was a long time resident at South Beach, Hutchinson Island. Grace was 78 years of age.

Grace joined the "Turtle Mothers", a group that keeps records of turtle nesting from the previous night, rescues their hatchlings when they often wander to the road and the street lights, instead of heading straight to the sea. Grace had been helping sea turtles and their hatchlings for more than 15 years.

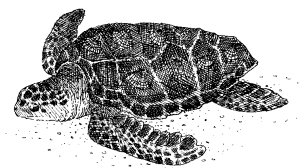
Her five children came to South Beach the first Saturday in November and joined with about 50 of her friends to celebrate her life for the sea turtles in a memorial service at the beach where she rescued thousands of hatchlings and escorted them to the ocean. She was a board member of the Conservation Alliance and a volunteer for the Marine Resources Council. Grace at one time lived for many years in Cuba and her children all have Spanish names as she felt sure they would return to the Island one day.

Through a special National Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the National Oceanic program a grant has been given for almost \$200,000 to implement programs that will improve sea turtle nesting habitat after the damage caused to the beaches and landscape by the hurricanes of 2004. Much of the natural vegetation and coastline along the beach of Brevard County were damaged and changed. The Funds will go to Brevard County. Part of the funds will go towards dimming artificial light sources now visible from the beaches. The light interferes with sea turtle nesting and can cause hatchling sea turtles to become disoriented and then travel towards the A1A road instead of heading to the ocean as soon as possible. Hatchlings are very vulnerable to prey on their short 50 yard journey to the sea.

To find out how you can help my reducing distracting lighting, if you live at the beach, contact:

paula.berntson@brevardcounty.us about the turtle-friendly program and how you can tint your windows to help the sea turtles and increase energy efficiency at the same time.

It is a shame that Grace Kedziora did not live one month longer to learn of the \$200,000 grant for sea turtles it would have surely have brightened her last days as a small recognition of her great work.



Environmentalist @ Home

by Gale Parmentier

Would you like to contribute a little cash to endangered birds every day? Here is a way you can, while doing something you probably do most every day. It will not cost you one penny!

GoodSearch was launched in 2005 by Ken and JJ Ramberg to direct toward organizations trying to make our world a better place just a fraction of the \$6 billion generated annually by search engine advertisers. This new search engine (powered by Yahoo) donates 50% of its revenue to the charities designated by its users.

We are suggesting **Operation Migration**, founded in 1994 “to promote the conservation of migratory species through innovative research, education, and partnership.” This group pioneered the use of ultralight aircraft to teach migration routes to birds raised in captivity. In the first five years of the Whooping Crane Recovery program, approximately 60 birds have been taught a migration route between Wisconsin and Florida.

Here is what you need to do. Go to www.goodsearch.com. In the “Who do you GoodSearch for” box, enter “operation migration”, click Verify, then search the web as you normally do. Anytime you wish, you can check the \$ donated. You will see it grow for every search you do.

Membership Renewals

Chapter memberships extend from October through May. Chapter members may use the coupon below to renew membership for 2007.

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 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 _____

NEED A GIFT IDEA??

Please consider a gift of tickets to the Bud Adams Birding Breakfast. Sunday, February 11, 2007

Tickets are \$20 per person and include a wonderful breakfast and a bus tour on the ranch. For reservations, call Dotty Hull at 340-2226.

Feathered Friends

by Dotty & Hank Hull

Christmas Bird Count

In the late 19th century, people engaged in a holiday tradition known as a Christmas “Side Hunt.” Men would choose sides and go into the fields with their guns and the group who brought in the most dead birds and animals was the winner. Around the turn of the 20th century, many observers and scientists were becoming concerned about declining bird populations. On Christmas Day in 1900, early Audubon ornithologist Frank Chapman proposed a new holiday tradition of a Christmas Bird Census that would count the birds instead of hunting them. Mr. Chapman and 26 others held twenty-five Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) that day. Most counts were held near the population centers of north-eastern North America although others ranged from Toronto, Ontario to Pacific Grove, California.

On Christmas Day in 1918, one unnamed man counted 54 species in St. Lucie County’s first Christmas Bird Count. Thirty years later the second St. Lucie County CBC was held on December 29, 1948 when 68 species were seen by 4 unnamed participants. St. Lucie Audubon Society’s chapter was not chartered until 1954.

The 107th CBC will be held between December 14, 2006 and January 5, 2007. Our chapter’s CBC will be held on December 16th. A few more experienced birders are needed for this year’s CBC. Call us at 772-340-2226 if interested.

Christmas Bird Count December 16

The 2006 Fort Pierce Christment Bird Count will be held on Saturday, December 16. Teams are ready to count the birds in their territories and will partake of the traditional After Count Turkey Dinner. Gale Parmentier has volunteered to cook the turkey again this year but we are asking if some of our members could donate a covered dish. Plan to deliver it to the Oxbow Eco-Center by 5:00 P.M. on Dec. 16. It is much appreciated by the team of 35 birders who have been out all day counting birds in the county.

Bud Adams Birding Breakfast Correction

Bud Adams Ranch Breakfast will be held on Sunday, February 11, 2007. We will meet at Ft Pierce Home Depot at 7:30 a.m. and caravan to the ranch. Cost is \$20 per person includes a wholesome breakfast and a bus tour of the ranch. Call Dotty Hull at 340-226 for reservation. Limited seats available.

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December 7th Meeting

Mainland Ecuador has hundreds of species of birds and is a joy to travel, according to Jack and Mary Dodge, who will be sharing their 2005 trip at the December meeting. There are close-ups of many of the colorful and unusual birds and other creatures, including a herd of llamas and several prehistoric-looking hoatzins. Mary was a journalist for Scripps and Jack was a broadcaster, including being the morning voice of WQCS for several years. They have been bird watching for almost 25 years and love traveling to non-urban destinations, esp. if there are birds or ancient civilizations involved. You can see information on their trips Ecuador and elsewhere on their web site, <http://jackmaryetc.com>

December 9th Field Trip

This month our field trip will take us Vero Beach Wetlands, where we hope to see several duck species, wading birds and raptors from the boardwalk that winds through the wetlands.

We will carpool from the Fort Pierce Home Depot on Okeechobee Rd. and Jenkins Avenue. Meet in the parking lot just off Jenkins Road. If you wish to meet us at the wetlands take I-95 north to S.R. 60 and turn east to the first traffic signal, which is 90th St. Turn right and go to the end of the paved road and turn left. The entrance to the wetlands is on the right.

River Cruises

See the 'Real Florida' 1 P.M. — Mon. - Sat. 1 1/2 hrs. * 1:30 P.M. — Sunday 2 1/2 hrs

Bird watching Cruise * 4 P.M. Wednesday

Prima Vista Marina

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to St. Lucie Audubon.

Rivergate Park- Midport * Call River Lilly @ 489-8344

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

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