

# Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society



Volume 31 Issue #4

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

January 2007

## Welcome to new members!

Vernon-Anna Gerke

Sandra Gilfillan

Jaci Minton

Nicholas Sabetto

Frank Sheldon



## 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](mailto:flbird40@bellsouth.net) to sign up.

## President's Message

By Al Parmentier

Happy New Year to one and all! Once again, welcome back to our returning members.

Our December general meeting was very well attended. I don't know if it was the subject matter or returning members, but I suspect the former. Who doesn't like a good travelogue? Many thanks to Mary and Jack Dodge for an excellent presentation on their trip to Ecuador.

Here is an interesting tidbit to pass on to your children or grandchildren interested in dinosaurs. Dinosaurs are not extinct! They are thriving all over the world. Most paleontologists today agree that dinosaurs still roam the Earth in the form of birds. All the 10,000 species of birds living today are descended from a small meat-eating dinosaur that lived millions of years ago.

I have seen two films recently that I feel compelled to share. The first was Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, the second *Too Hot Not to Handle*. Both deal with global warming. Gale and I learned of the reality of the effects of global warming on our trip this past summer. The massive Columbia Glacier in Alberta is melting at an alarming rate and Glacier National Park will have no glaciers in 25 years or less. Getting closer to home, Mr. Gore tells us in his film that Florida from Lake Okeechobee south will be under water in less than fifty years if the melting of the ice of the Arctic and Greenland continues at the present rate. Check out [www.globalwarming.net](http://www.globalwarming.net) for information on the latest issues and ideas for individual actions to aid this vital situation.

There are many small things every American can do to slow and even reverse this phenomenon. Have you begun switching to the new fluorescent light bulbs? When using your air conditioner, raise the thermostat one degree. Lower it one degree when heating. Think globally, act locally.

Al Parmentier

## Calendar of Events

### January Meeting:

Thursday, January 4th at 7 p.m.

Whooping Cranes presented by Marty Folk with Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

### January Field Trip:

Saturday, January 6th

Merritt Island Wildlife Refuge, Titusville (see back page for details).

## Other events of interest

"Wake Up Call" Lecture Series

Saturday, January 6th;

11 am @ Oxbow Eco-Center:

### CRUISIN' ON ALTERNATIVE FUEL

Imagine the next time you fill up your car, pulling into a fast food joint or Chinese restaurant to get your fuel. More and more people are doing just that by converting their vehicles to run on biofuel. Learn how one man has declared his petroleum independence in a presentation.

Brian Quant, an organic vegetable farmer from Vero Beach, recently got started in his own type of fuel production by converting used French fry oil into diesel, and currently runs three vehicles off of it.

In his presentation, Quant will explain what people can do to get started in this alternative fuel, including needed vehicle modifications. He'll even have at least one veggie oil vehicle on hand so people can see first hand how it works.

### Meeting Place Location:

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

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

# Conservation Corner

By Harold Phillips

## A Letter to our Commissioner

Dear County Commissioner:

As County Commissioner you voted out the Florida Power and Light proposal to build a coal burning power station in St. Lucie County earlier this year. We thank you for that action.

Many of us thought that the contamination of our waters and harm to our health had been averted, but not so. F P & L have now decided to build a "bigger and better" dirty coal power plant on the shores of Lake Okeechobee near Moore Haven. Applications will be reviewed on a newly legislated fast track approval method. That means fewer checks and balances and less regard for pollution concerns and our health.

It does not auger well for the Everglades, Lake Okeechobee or our estuaries...or the 10.2 billion dollar clean up. All these areas including the Indian River Lagoon and the St. Lucie River will be impacted depending upon the prevailing winds of the day. The F P & L plant will shed tons of mercury across our area. It will burn hundreds of tons of coal 24 hours a day for 365 days a year for the next 40 or more years.

We may find that we are adding pollution at a faster rate than we can clean it up. As has been aptly stated by the Sierra Club, "Just as there are no clean cigarettes, there is no clean coal." Coal is a dirty power source that is unwelcome in most communities, and Lake Okeechobee is no different – it is unwelcome there and in the Treasure Coast, too.

Will you, as our leaders for St. Lucie County, please take whatever steps are available to you to prevent the siting of this coal burning operation on the shores of Lake Okeechobee and our backyard. Please help us to keep our citizens healthy and our air and water clean.

Sincerely,

Harold Phillips  
Conservation Officer  
St. Lucie Audubon Society

## www.goodsearch.com

Operation Migration is a non profit conservation organization devoted to saving the endangered Whooping Cranes in America and especially in helping them to learn the passage for their first ever migration to Florida. Each year they raise fledgling Whooping Cranes, teach them how to fly and how to follow a microlight aircraft that guides them to their winter feeding habitat in Florida. Each year the number of birds increases by ten or so juvenile Whooping Cranes. At one time they became so close to extinction that only about 14 birds remained alive.

Please help to raise funds by using the search engine called "Goodsearch.com". It is so simple to help raise funds for Operation Migration every time you use Goodsearch.com.

Month	Searches	Est. Amt. Raised
June	20	\$0.20
July	1216	\$12.16
August	2878	\$28.78
September	3787	\$37.87
October	10390	\$103.90
November	8362	\$83.62
December	4596	\$45.96
<b>Total</b>	<b>31249</b>	<b>\$312.49</b>

\* Totals as of 12/20/06

## Just a Note

By Harold Phillips

Supporters of a massive water resources bill that would have provided \$1.2 billion for restoration and cleansing of the Indian River Lagoon was declared "officially dead" last week.

Supporters from many organizations both conservation, County, and business related, have been lobbying and steadily working away for the past six years. Again the bill has lapsed as the final legislative session ran out with a failure of the House and the Senate to agree on their different versions of the bill.

April Gromnicki, a lobbyist for Audubon of Florida who backs the legislation as does our Chapter, said "Another two years wasted."

This is another prime example of taxpayers money being wasted on hundreds if not thousands of hours of meetings and lobbying all to end up in the hands of our DO-NOTHING CONGRESS.

## **Save the oceans, or else paradise is lost**

By Nathaniel P. Reed  
Palm Beach Post Commentary  
Sunday, December 03, 2006

For the first Earth Day, cartoonist Walt Kelly drew a poster featuring his most well-known character. It showed Pogo, a possum who lived in the Okefenokee Swamp, standing in front of a trash-filled forested wetland. Above him in large block letters was what was to become a decidedly memorable phrase: "We have met the enemy and he is us."

Three decades later, Mr. Kelly's words still resonate, especially here in Florida. The millions of Floridians who love to swim, surf, fish, kayak, scuba dive or just soak up the sun along our coasts need to be on the alert: We're ruining paradise.

We've all noticed the alarming changes over the years, the plummeting fish catches, the algae blooms, the dead marine life washed ashore and the mounting number of beach closings.

The culprits, as Mr. Kelly observed, are us: unwise coastal development, pollution, overfishing, global warming and ineffective government management.

There's a lot at stake. No state is more dependent on its coastal and ocean resources than ours. And it's not only our environment that is threatened; it's also our livelihoods and our economy.

Florida is one of the most popular travel destinations in the world, and in 2005 alone, tourism generated more than \$60 billion and created more than 944,000 jobs. Recreational fishing expenditures alone that year exceeded \$8 billion.

Fortunately, there is hope. More and more residents are all too aware of the threat to our coasts, and more and more of them are poised to do something about it. A new report from the National Resources Defense Council, "Florida's Coastal and Ocean Future, A Blueprint for Economic and Environmental Leadership," documents the challenges we face and lays out a comprehensive blueprint for action. Issued in September by 20 national, state and local conservation, civic and recreation groups, the report features a six-step recovery program to bring our coasts and ocean back to health.

First, the report calls for tighter controls on coastal development. It's been 20 years since our state Legislature introduced our current coastal-protection policies, and many of them are outdated. We've learned a lot over the past two decades about environmentally friendly development, and that doesn't include rebuilding in sensitive coastal areas that will be washed away again by the next hurricane.

Next, we have to drastically cut the pollution that degrades

our waters, and maintain, if not improve, water quality standards. Pollution is killing our reefs and sea grass beds and fouling once-clear springs. Florida law and rules currently treat agriculture with velvet gloves and allow major industries decades to remedy chronic water quality violations. As development in our coastal areas intensifies, our pollution control policies need to get stronger, not weaker.

We need to keep coastal drilling away from our economically valuable beaches. Offshore drilling is a dirty business, and it would pose an unacceptable threat not only to our state's "beachonomics," but to our sea grasses, wetlands, bays, reefs, beaches and sand dunes - and the wildlife that depend upon them. Congress must establish permanent drilling restrictions that protect the Florida coast.

Overfishing has to stop, and we must do a better job protecting our marine and coastal ecosystems. Once-abundant fish in the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico, including red snapper and a variety of groupers, are now classified as overfished, or severely depleted. Meanwhile, coastal development, dredging to "renourish" beaches, and agricultural runoff also threaten the reefs, sea grasses and mangroves that provide key habitat for fish.

Florida already is bearing the brunt of global warming. For example, during the past 70 years, the average sea level in South Florida has risen about 9 inches, contributing to coastal erosion and the degradation of wetlands and mangroves. And scientists recently have found strong evidence that rising sea temperatures increase the intensity of hurricanes. Our state should be on the forefront of combating global warming pollution by dramatically cutting its dependence on coal and oil, promoting cleaner transportation options, and developing safe, clean renewable energy, especially solar energy. After all, ours is the Sunshine State.

Finally, the report found that our state government lacks the organizational focus to meet the challenges we face. Our coastal and marine programs are scattered across multiple departments, commissions, water management districts, planning councils, and municipal and county governments, and too often the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. We need one coordinating office working for the governor to provide unified leadership.

It's been more than 30 years since Walt Kelly prodded us with that provocative message. It's not too late to take heed, but the hour is getting late. Fortunately we have the know-how and technology today to clean up our coasts and protect the next generation. But we need the final ingredient: political will.

Before he leaves office, Gov. Bush has a historic opportunity to set Florida on a course to truly protect its coasts by initiating this six-step program. Then, Charlie Crist should make full implementation of this coastal and oceans recovery program a top priority of his administration.

*Nathaniel P. Reed, a conservationist and businessman, is a longtime Florida resident.*

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## Environmentalist @ Home

by Gale Parmentier

### Recycled coffee logs for your fireplace, all natural renewable energy!

Java-Log, the world's only coffee firelog, was invented in 1998 by Canadian Rod Sprules, when one evening at his home, he conducted an experiment using dried coffee grounds from his coffee maker filter, combined it with candle wax, and then compressed it with a pen into an old cigar tube. It burned so well that he made prototypes in a loaf pan and gave it to friends to try ... the rest is history! Coffee grounds have 25% more energy capacity than wood. Java-Logs are now made with recycled coffee grounds mixed with soybean oil and produce less residue, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and creosote than burning wood. The packaging is 100% recycled material. Each log burns for three hours and produces no chemical odor.

You will find a great read about the invention and manufacturing at [www.java-log.com](http://www.java-log.com). This product can be purchased locally at Publix, Albertsons, and Walgreens.

### 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.

### Mark Your Calendars

**January 20th**  
Party in the Park

**February 11th**  
Birding Breakfast at the Adam's Ranch  
8 am—\$20 per person  
Reservations 340-2226

**February 24th**  
Painted & Indigo Bunting Trip  
\$5 per person - Reservations 340-2226

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 \_\_\_\_\_

## Birdwatching River Cruise

Every Wednesday - 4 pm  
\$20 inc. tax



Cruise the North Fork of the St. Lucie River on this narrated sunset cruise. Focus on birds and other wildlife. A portion of proceeds goes to support St. Lucie Audubon Society. Reservations required, 772-489-8344.

### BIRDING CLASSES

February 20th, Feb 27th and March 8th.  
Tuesday evening sessions from 7 - 9 pm.

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

Cost is only \$30.

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.**



### THE BEST BEAK

Let's get 'em while they're young! Audubon's booth at Oxbow's Enchanted Trail Eco-Holiday Celebration on December 9 was a winner! Children played a game to learn how birds' beaks are adapted to the foods they eat. In the game, The Best Beak, children used different tools representing birds' beaks to try to "eat" different foods. They discovered that a net-like beak, such as a pelican's, worked best for scooping up fish (rubber balls in a tub of water). A hummingbird's straw-like beak was the best tool for sipping nectar (colored water in a vase). And an insect-eating bird's small pointy beak is well adapted for plucking up small insects (rice tucked in the bark of a log). It was gratifying to see that some children could identify some of the birds pictured on our display board. We probably met some of Audubon's future members! The game was constructed by Education Chair, Terri Brown, and was adapted from a Project Wild/Flying Wild activity. Members and volunteers who worked the event were: Terri Brown, Gale Parmentier, Liz Dunleavey, Kristin Brown, and Mark Freel.

## Feathered Friends by Dotty & Hank Hull

### Grasshopper Sparrow

January 13 Special Event Field Trip

The Grasshopper Sparrow, *Ammodramus saviannarum* ranges from the Atlantic coast to California and from southern Canada to southern Florida, Arizona and Mexico. It is one of our most obscure birds. It usually keeps well hidden in the depths of the grass, and when pursued it flies only when nearly trampled. The Florida race of the Grasshopper sparrow, *A. s. floridanus* resides at Kissimmee Prairie State Preserve. Its courtship, nest building, and rearing of young are carried on in a grass-world of its own, well hidden from human eyes. Its song so closely resembles the sounds of the grasshopper that many do not recognize it as a bird song.

Our October speaker, Paul Miller, invited our society to visit the Kissimmee Preserve on January 13 when the staff will be banding Grasshopper Sparrows by flushing the birds into mist nets. We will carpool to the preserve from the Fort Pierce Home Depot parking lot on Okeechobee Road and Jenkins Road. **Meet at Home Depot at 7:30am.** It is about 50 miles to the preserve and driving time is about 1 hour and 15 minutes. Please make your reservations for the trip as soon as possible by calling Dotty Hull @ 340-2226

### Bud Adams Birding Breakfast

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 340-2226 for reservations. Limited seats available.

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## **January 4th Meeting**

**Whooping Cranes** presented by Marty Folk with Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission

## **January 6th Field Trip**

Hart and Jewel Rufe will lead our January 6 field trip to **Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Titusville**. January is the best month to visit Black Point Drive since there are many duck and wading bird species present at this time. Most of the outing will be driving around Black Point drive, with a couple of short walks through wooded areas. It takes one hour and forty-five minutes to get to the refuge so the outing will last until early afternoon.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the NE corner of the Home Depot parking lot in Fort Pierce. This is just off Jenkins Road and far away from the store. We will carpool from there. If you ride with someone else, please contribute to the driver's gas expense.

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## ***Laughing Gull***

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

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