

Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society



Volume 31 Issue #5

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

February 2007

Welcome to new members!

Arletta Kaler
Tina VanCamp
Patricia Siler
Ann Vogel
Catherine Barnes
Thomas Furtado
Linnette Yakinchuk
Rose McKenna
Henry Karson
John Ross
Patricia Fuller
William Harold
James Betzhold
Margaret Mills



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

Greetings from your president -

Well, as of January 15th the daffodils and forsythia have already bloomed in New York City! What is going to happen to these plants if they experience a hard freeze? If this keeps up, there won't be any reason for people in the north to come to Florida for the winter. That would cause a crazy economic situation...

In the same vein, I have heard of a species of bird that migrates to Scandinavia to reproduce. The timing of the migration and hatching of chicks coincides with the appearance of a specific insect which the birds use to feed the chicks. Guess what - the warming trend has caused the insects to arrive two weeks early, drastically reducing the food supply.

On the good side, GM has reintroduced an electric car, the Volt, which is similar to the totally electric EV1 (introduced and eliminated in the early 2000's - check out the excellent film *Who Killed the Electric Car?*). This new model has a small gasoline motor that will start and recharge the batteries when they run down. I'm going to visit a dealer and get more information.

January's speaker on Whooping Cranes was great. I think it is the first time we have had anyone speak in costume. Once the chicks have hatched in captivity, the people who feed them wear a large white garment with a whooping crane beak on one arm. Quite a sight, but it works to prevent bonding with humans.

From the quality and quantity of this season's speakers and attendance at activities, it is apparent that many good people are dedicated to animal conservation in our area. That to all of you for your involvement. See you at upcoming events.

Al Parmentier

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 Airosa Blvd on St. James Dr. (S. 25th St.)

Calendar of Events

February Meeting:

Thursday, February 1st at 7 p.m.

Africa presented by Larry & Holly Tetzloff.

February Field Trip:

Saturday, February 3rd

Bluefield Ranch in western St. Lucie County (see back page for details).

Other events of interest

"Wake Up Call" Lecture Series

Saturday, February 3rd;

11 am @ Oxbow Eco-Center:

Green Communities and Wildlife

Residential developments have a huge impact on natural resources and wildlife. Sustainable or "green" communities are being built throughout the United States with the goals of conserving wildlife habitat, creating healthy lifestyles, and promoting a sense of community. Buzzwords like sustainability, smart growth, low impact development, and conservation subdivisions are becoming more common place in the media and in town meetings.

Come learn how homeowners, developers and policymakers are becoming engaged in going green and creating sustainable communities with a presentation by Mark Hostetler, Saturday, February 3rd at 11:00 am.

Dr. Hostetler, an Associate Professor of the Department of Wildlife Ecology & Conservation at the University of Florida, conducts research on how small and large scale urban landscape designs affect wildlife distributions and has over fifteen years of experience in urban wildlife issues and growth management.

Conservation Corner

By Harold Phillips

Gopher Tortoises — Our chapter is making great progress in bringing about a Gopher Tortoise Rescue and Relocation Alliance in St. Lucie County. We have now received pledges of support from several conservation organizations. These include the Humane Society of Vero Beach, a local Office of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to animals, Pelican Island Audubon, the Savannahs Preserve and the Oxbow Eco-Center, along with the St. Lucie County Environmental Protection Department. Others will help us by being a listening and viewing outpost and will alert us when they become aware of gopher tortoises that are at risk by new development over their burrows.

The very first rescue took place in December in Vero Beach and was carried out by the Vero Beach Humane Society. We were invited to be present at the release of 29 gopher tortoises to their new home. It was a very successful rescue and undoubtedly saved the lives of at least 15 gopher tortoises that would have been buried and asphyxiated had it not been for their efforts and the cooperation received from the Fish and Wildlife Commission (FWC). As relocated gopher tortoise have to be corralled for between six and twelve months by a silt fence, along with other materials and expenses necessary for each rescue, we would like to appeal to you now for donations to help us get started with saving this threatened species as soon as possible. Please help us with this meaningful and worthwhile cause, thank you.

**Please send contributions
for Gopher Tortoise to**

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

Plasma Arc Gasification — At one of our future members meetings we will have an interesting presentation to explain how the plasma arc gasification process will work and eventually eliminate the St. Lucie County landfill as well as consuming the 1800 tons a day that is collected and delivered at the landfill. The program will explain just how the process works, how it was discovered from a project that was working on the heat shield of the shuttle for re-entry into the earth's atmosphere. We will hear about the chimney stack emissions and we will leave it to you to ask pertinent questions to determine if this is a relatively clean project and that it does not present similar problems to a coal burning power plant. At this time we believe that the advance in technology is able to meet our concerns about hazardous emissions. It is anticipated that by conserving the heat that will arise as a result of burning the refuse with large arc torches, enough electricity will be generated to run the plant and also supply electricity to the national grid. St. Lucie County Commissioners will be meeting soon and hope to enter into a contract early in 2007. It would be the largest waste disposal plant of its kind in the United States.

Green China — Do you know who is the seventh richest person in China? It is Shi Zhengrong, rated by Forbes magazine to have a net worth of 1.43 billion. Now that you know his name do you know why he is so wealthy? No he did not open a chain of McDonalds in China!

Shi is China's leading maker of silicon photovoltaic solar cells. The seventh richest man in China is a green entrepreneur! Shi thinks that renewable green power like wind, solar, and bio-fuels is going to be the growth industry of the 21st Century with his Company Suntech Power Corporation is well placed to take a leading position. Shi understands that China is going to have to go green. Its rivers and air are becoming polluted and China is now setting high standards for pollution control. Much of their business today is abroad, but as he sells more and brings the price down the Chinese market will open up and this may drive down the price of solar modules still further.

Guest columnist

By Nathaniel P. Reed

January 11, 2007

Florida can't wait for federal funding to act

The near collapse of the Hoover Dike, the need to keep a far lower lake stage to avoid a repeat of the New Orleans disaster puts Stuart and Martin County along with our friends at the Gulf end of the Caloosahatchee River in the unenviable position of having our rivers continued to be used as sewers.

The current situation is intolerable and the excuses for inaction are equally intolerable.

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The governor and the Florida Legislature must face the problem that federal dollars are going to be in short supply for many years, as the total expenses of the Afghan-Iraqi wars threaten the financial stability of our country.

We cannot wait indefinitely for federal funding to face up to major Florida environmental crises even if uninformed actions of the Army Corps of Engineers and South Florida Water Management District are the cause of many of our local and South Florida problems. I call your attention to the clear violations of the federal and state water quality acts. It is an environmental crime to discharge billions of gallons of polluted water down Lake Okeechobee's two outlets after serious miscalculations by the District and the Corps allowed the lake to become overfilled with rainwater and runoff.

The problems are great, but we have suffered through 40 years of studies, commissions, hand wringing and little action. I know from firsthand experience that several of the so-called Lake Okeechobee Study Committees were "stacked" and rendered meaningless reports designed to stall any and all effective corrective measures. Clearly, the solution not only to the gross pollution problems that have engulfed the St. Lucie and Caloosahatchee Rivers are:

The continuing pollution loads in the Okeechobee watershed must be become a priority for Department of Environmental Protection, Department of

Agriculture and Consumer Services, SFWMD and Department of Community Affairs. The buck has been passed back and forth. The failure of the state to come to grips with the tidal wave of phosphorus that threatens Lake Okeechobee with a Lake Apopka future is real. The time clock is ticking! I suggest the appointment of a highly competent, concerned individual, in the governor's office, enjoying both the governor's and the Legislature's confidence and support is the only way that the often conflicting views of the concerned agencies will ever be united in the common cause of significantly reducing the phosphorus loads entering Lake Okeechobee.

Storage.

If the lake must be managed at a lower level, then upstream and Everglades Agricultural Area storage must compensate for the loss of lake storage. It's as simple as that, but the District, DEP and the Corps have dragged their collective feet studying to death and failing to accept the fact that with a forced lower lake schedule, thousands of acre-feet of water must be stored or it will inevitably have to be released to the Atlantic and Gulf through the two blighted rivers.

Why can't the state examine the benefits of a third outlet and major reservoirs systems in the Everglades Agricultural Areas?

Ask yourselves: Are you willing to heed the commands of Big Sugar and ignore the stark fact of life that Okeechobee's excess water went and still goes south?

Yes, a third outlet and surface reservoirs will take up considerable amounts of land in the Everglades Agricultural Area, but the options are limited. If you comply with Big Sugar's intentions of blocking any consideration of a third outlet, then you turn your backs on your far more numerous coastal constituents who demand relief.

My final plea: Become aware of the opportunities of re-watering Florida Bay by recreating natural flows in the C-111 basin in south Dade County. Rarely has an opportunity of such magnitude been available for everglades restoration.

I urge you to understand the opportunity, and ignore the expense of acquiring the needed land — move this project ahead. It is an opportunity that comes rarely to a member of the South Florida delegation.

Reed is a businessman and conservationist whose family founded Jupiter Island. He formerly served on the SFWMD board.

2006-2007 Chapter Officers & Committee Chairs		
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Mark Your Calendars

NOTE: the February 11th Birding Breakfast at the Adam's Ranch has been sold out!!!

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

Environmentalist @ Home

by Gale Parmentier

Shade Grown Coffee

This month's suggestion comes from Terri Brown, our hard working Secretary and Education Chair.

The delicious shade grown and organic coffees served at Oxbow have introduced us all to the concept that we can support the Earth with our purchases and enjoy good taste too. Terri recommends The Roasted Bean, a Micro-Roastery located in south Florida, where you can purchase flavored shade grown, organic, and fair trade coffees. In fact, the brochure lists forty-nine flavors plus the option to create your own flavor combination!

There are three stores in Davie, Weston, and Pembroke Pines. More conveniently from the Treasure Coast, you can visit www.theroastedbean.com, send an e-mail message to sales@theroastedbean.com or call 888-294-8886 for mail orders.

Everyone is welcome to contribute suggestions for environmentally appropriate activities or purchases. Contact Gale Parmentier at force8gale@comcast.net or call 772-489-6176.

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 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 _____

NatureFest 2007

At the Manatee Center
Saturday, February 24 * 10 am—4pm

Join the Manatee Observation and Education Center for its 11th Annual Outdoor / Nature Appreciation Event. The day's activities include kayak demonstrations, photography, exhibitors, food, and more. Call 772-466-1600 ext 3071 for more information.

The Brilliance of Birds Exhibit

The Society of the Four Arts will unveil a 40-year body of work from the world's foremost bird sculptor on February 17, 2007 entitled "The Brilliance of Birds: The Sculpture of Grainger McKoy". The exhibition features more than 40 major sculptures representing individual birds, flocks of birds in flight, and individual feathers in extreme detail.

The exhibition will run from February 17 until April 14, 2007 at The Society of the Four Arts. The gallery is located at 2 Four Arts Plaza in Palm Beach and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 AM to 5 PM and Sundays from 2 PM to 5 PM. Admission is \$5 for non-members and free for members and children 14 and younger. For additional information, contact the gallery at (561) 655-7226.

***Perhaps we could get a group to go together.
Call Dotty Hull at 340-2226 if interested.***

Feathered Friends

by Dotty & Hank Hull

Birds in America's Great Backyard

America's Great Backyard Bird Count will take place on February 16 -19, 2007. Join with thousand of others to find out how many birds are being seen in your area and across the continent this winter. By participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count, you help document where birds are, and track changes in their numbers compared to previous years, helping scientists paint a picture of the state of birds this winter. For more information, and to view results, go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc>. Internet access is necessary to record the birds you see.

- No Fee or registration required
- All ages and skill levels welcome
- Track results in real time online
- Count in your backyard, balcony, schoolyard, park, wildlife refuge
- Be a part of the network

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.



PROJECT FEEDER WATCH

Project Feeder Watch needs your help to keep track of the birds at your feeders this winter. The project runs through April 6, 2007. For more information, or to sign up go to www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw/

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February 1st Meeting

An African Journey presented by Larry & Holly Tetzloff.

February 3rd Field Trip

Bluefield Ranch in western St. Lucie County located on S.R. 70 near the Okeechobee County line. A variety of natural habitats supports a diverse population of wildlife and plant species. Steve Fousek, Environmental Lands Specialist, will meet us there to lead us on the trail. Many birds species can usually be seen driving west on S.R. 70 in the morning. This promises to be a very special trip.

We will leave the Fort Pierce Home Depot on Okeechobee & Jenkins Rds. at 7:30 a.m. from the NE parking lot, which is located just off Jenkins Rd.

BIRDING CLASSES

February 20th, Feb 27th and March 6th. Tuesday evening sessions from 6:30 pm - 8:30 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.

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