

Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society



Volume 31 Issue #7

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

April 2007

New Members

Dr. Anthony Pierce
Thomas Evans
Franklin Lindsey
Della Vallete
Elisabeth Roithner
Sarah Cooke
Joe Smith
Nancy Lombardo
Fred Pearsall
Linda Rothery
Patty St. Germain
C. G. Harris

President's Message

By Al Parmentier

By the time you have receive this newsletter, a wonderful thing will have happened. The St. Lucie Audubon Society will have directed and assisted with the relocation of several gopher tortoises. An incidental take permit was issued to Symphony Builders for The Greens of Gator Trace development site. This meant the builder had permission to bury the tortoises alive. Symphony allowed us to go onto the property, capture the tortoises, and move them to a new location donated by members of our society. Kudos to everyone involved from planning to execution of this event, especially Harold Phillips.

The gopher tortoise is now listed as a threatened species and needs our help. Many people have been very generous and donated to our fund for this project. The April 5th general meeting will host a silent auction. Items of value over one hundred dollars will be accepted.

Are you a computer junky at home and a little bored? Do you have web site construction skills? Our society is in need of a webmaster. If you would like to help, please contact me at 772-489-6176. We also need two persons willing to be Recording Secretary or Corresponding Secretary (skills with Microsoft Word and e-mail on your computer are necessary). Please contact Liz Dunleavy (nominating committee) at 772-489-9050.

Al Parmentier

Calendar of Events

April Meeting:

Thursday, April 5th at 7 p.m.

"Ospreys of Pelican Island National Wildlife

Refuge" An Exploration into the Life of the Fish Hawk presented by Bob Montanaro.

April Field Trip:

Saturday, April 7th

Annual Picnic, Savannas Preserve Port St. Lucie (see back page for details).

Special Thanks

Thank you, and thank you again, to the following for donations to the gopher tortoise rescue fund received as of March 12th: Jason & Vanessa Bessey, Dorothy Brennan, Terri Brown, Andrea Cavanaugh, Beatrice Clemente, Alexander & Dolores Cook, Michael & Amy Dahan, Liz & Bob Dunleavy, Sally Erkel, John Ford, Mary Ann Friese, Robert Friese, Michael & Patricia Frey, Stanley & Dorothy Greene, K. Hammel & J. Patterson, Robert & Margaret Hanlon, Wilfred & Sylvia Hill, Jane Lewis, Leslie Lucat, Jean McKean, Elsa Millard, Nancy & Ben Osking, Al & Gale Parmentier, Cynthia Petrillo, Harold & Ann Phillips, Kathryn Prestage, Richard Prince, Mary Rudek, Hart & Jewel Rufe, Edie Schor, John & Loretta Stafford, Lace & Walter Vitunec, Daniel & Donna Walma, Maryiln Waugh-Stinnette, Frank & Lee Whitridge, and Susan & Stanley Winters.

The **Wynne Building Corporation** has given our society several grants for environmental preservation in the past. We are especially pleased to receive a very generous donation for the gopher tortoise rescue fund which will cover the costs of the required silt fencing at the relocation site and more.

Meeting Place Location:

Oxbow Eco-Center

5400 NE St. James Dr., Port St. Lucie
(772) 785-5833



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 fbird40@bellsouth.net to sign up.

Other events of interest

"Wake Up Call" Lecture Series
Saturday, April 7
11 am @ Oxbow Eco-Center:

RETROFITTING YOUR HOME TO BE GREEN

Jacque Walker with Solar Energy Systems will discuss the various ways you can retrofit your home to be more energy efficient and healthy for you and the planet.

Fire Fest and Earth Day

Thanks to chapter volunteers, Audubon is spreading interest and sharing knowledge with the young. St. Lucie Audubon is participating in two upcoming events for children (of all ages!). The first is Fire Fest, which is a joint effort of the Savannas Preserve State Park (Walton Road) and Division of Forestry. Children learn about the importance of prescribed burning to maintain suitable habitat for wildlife as well as other aspects of nature and the environment. *Fire Fest is from 10:00 to 3:00 on Saturday, April 14th.* The second event is Oxbow's annual Earth Day celebration. Participants learn about caring for the Earth and all of its inhabitants by visiting various booths and playing educational games. *The Earth Day celebration is from 10:00 to 3:00 on Saturday April 21st.* Our society will have a booth at both events, featuring a game for children and chapter information for adults. **If you would like to volunteer at either of these events, sign-up sheets will be passed around at our next general meeting on April 5th or call Gale Parmentier at 772-489-6176. We hope to see you there, either as a volunteer or as a visitor to our booths.**

JUNGLE CRUISE

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



BIRD WATCHING CRUISE

4:00PM Wednesday (seasonal)
Experience Bird Island & see several hundred nesting birds!
Rivergate Park/ Midport Rd.

RESERVATION REQUIRED: River Lilly 772-489-8344

GOPHER TORTOISE HOT LINE

888-404-3922

If you have reason to be concerned for the safety of Gopher Tortoise in St. Lucie County, if their habitat is soon to be developed, or there are Gopher Tortoise burrows on the site, obtain the correct address, the legal description if possible, and call the Gopher Tortoise Hotline **888-404-3922.**

Remember the best place for Gopher Tortoise is on the site where they now live, relocation is a last resort to save lives. It is expensive to relocate Gopher Tortoise, about \$1,000 for each one. **If they are not safe, or may not be safe please call the hotline and refer to St. Lucie Audubon Gopher Tortoise Initiative.**

HOT LINE 888-404-3922

THE ULTIMATE POWER OF SOCIETY LIES IN THE PEOPLE.

*Hometown Democracy is a simple matter of :
5 X 5 X 5...*

Lets get it started and lets get it over.
Get five petitions signed, ask each of those people, until five of them have committed to getting five more people to sign. Simply train your five people well so they will do the very same. Please thoroughly explore this excellent web site, www.FHD.com or 866-779-5513.
If you do not see anything familiar, or if you do not think this is happening in your area and you live in Florida, then you do not need Hometown Democracy. If you happen to live in St. Lucie County, or especially the City of Port St. Lucie then we need Hometown Democracy and we need you to help us NOW!

Operation Migration

Please help to raise funds by using the search engine called "Goodsearch.com."

For every search you make, Goodsearch.com contributes one penny to the charity of our choice, Operation Migration.

So, instead of going to Google or another search engine, go to www.goodsearch.com and help the Whooping Crane make a comeback!

www.goodsearch.com

Membership Renewals

Chapter memberships extend from October through May. Chapter members may use the coupon below to renew membership for 2007. **If you haven't paid your dues for 2007, please use the form below.** You may contact our Treasurer, Richard Prince @ 466-1733 to check on your status.

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 _____

Feathered Friends

by Hank & Dotty Hull

Purple Martins are the largest swallows in North America. In Florida the adult and sub-adult martins arrive in late January or early February and begin building their nests a few weeks later. In the western United States, martins nest in trees using old cavities that were excavated by woodpeckers and other cavity nesting birds. In the east, martins have become almost totally reliant on manmade housing, usually aluminum or wooden houses with compartments. In summer after the young have matured, the birds return to South America where they spend the winter.

For many years Purple Martins have nested in our backyard in a house mounted on a pole overlooking a canal. The martins generally have filled the 8 room house, producing as many as 35 young birds each year. This year several birds had returned to the house when in early February a gust of high wind sent the martin house flying off its pole, smashing onto the ground. Later that evening, the martins returned and flew around the top of the pole searching for their home. The following night when the birds returned, Hank walked outside to put the damaged house on a wooden stand, thinking the birds might use it until we could get a new house in place. The birds flew around Hank and flew into it before he could get to the stand.

We now have two new martin houses. One was given as a birthday gift to Dotty and another was donated by a dear friend who is very active in martin conservation. Friends Hart and Jewel Rufe spent several hours installing the two houses. The reward was the sight of martins entering the houses just minutes after they were in place.

To learn more about Purple Martins go to <http://purplemartin.org/>

EARTH DAY 2007

Saturday, April 21st * 10am - 3pm

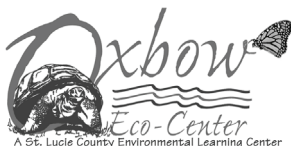
Oxbow Eco-Center

Nature Hikes * Wildlife Shows

Reggae Music

"Salute to Nature" Parade

FREE ADMISSION



5400 NE St. James Drive
Port St. Lucie, FL 34983

Conservation Corner

By Harold Phillips

For 70,000 years, the gopher tortoise has lived in complete harmony with the Florida environment. Unfortunately, in the past 70 years, their approximate lifetime, they have become prey to human development. It is well that each one of us does not know if our home is built over a burial ground for the gopher tortoise.

We have a site in Fort Pierce that has at least 11 gopher tortoises on it. A developer has obtained an Incidental Take Permit (ITP). There is nothing incidental about this permit or the motive behind it. The developer will go on site within the next ten days to clear acreage. The bulldozers will legally kill the gopher tortoises by burying them alive. After live burial, gopher tortoise can survive for months before eventually succumbing to asphyxiation. Long before that happens, the habitat above them will be paved over.

St. Lucie Audubon has been able to help the developer change their mind and agree to a humane relocation site. Fish & Wildlife is now processing this—we cannot imagine that FWC will deny our request. We have relocation sites and we have willing owners waiting to accept the tortoises. We do not have the money to do this. Even if all the helpers' time is volunteered (almost all of it will be), we need money for silt fencing, equipment hire, skilled management of the removal and relocation, and other hard cost expenses. However, funds are starting to be received to help us.

Advising and supporting us will be professional wildlife biologists, Drs. Jon Moore and David Cox, Ray and Patricia Ashton (founders of the Gopher tortoise Conservation Initiative), St. Lucie County Environmental Resources Dept., the Oxbow Eco Center, Carissa Kent of Winter Park who has attended the only two previous rescues in Florida, Ilka Daniel, the Outreach Director for the Humane Society in Vero Beach, along with Audubon and conservation group volunteers.

To all those people who have sent us donations and offered us their land for gopher tortoises, we thank every one of you. We have had four persons whose families are offering us homes for threatened tortoises that totals 248 acres in St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties. That can save more than 500 tortoises with ample space for their offspring to find burrows.

You can help by understanding that we face a challenging task in a limited timeframe by supporting our effort. The close proximity of the golf course dictates that most digging will be done by hand to avoid disturbing golfers. It may also dictate that we need to wear tin hats!

We can rescue and save the gopher tortoises at this Fort Pierce site if we can maintain the cooperation of the developer. Please mail your check to St. Lucie Audubon, PO Box 12474, Fort Pierce, Florida 34979. If you have already sent us assistance in anyway we thank you and appreciate all the concern and support you are giving us.

Welcome fellow birders!

As part of the State of Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), Bureau of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas (CAMA) in Fort Pierce, I wish to thank you for your interest in volunteering to help manage the Spoil Islands in the Indian River Lagoon. In order to properly manage the southeast aquatic preserve district, CAMA focuses on the unique resource of each aquatic preserve. In this case we are focused on coastal wading bird habitat of the Spoil Islands. Human-related activities (including recreational, educational, and preservation "enhancement" of the Spoil Islands), can potentially affect bird habitat and species diversity. In order to properly manage these islands without negatively effecting coastal wading bird habitat; it is necessary to monitor bird activity within the aquatic preserve on a regular basis. Each month, I can accommodate 1-2 people on our 19 ft. boat. The entire bird survey consists of monitoring 39 designated Spoil Islands in St. Lucie and Indian River County (Ft. Pierce South Causeway to 17th Street Causeway in Vero Beach). Volunteers can meet me at the FDEP/CAMA office in Fort Pierce, or at a public boat launch. The entire bird survey can be done in 1 full day or 2 half-days on weekdays, depending on volunteer availability. CAMA will supply everything including: drinks, binoculars, sunscreen, safety equipment, data sheet, and Sibley's field guide (volunteers are welcome to bring their own personal items/equipment as well). Each new volunteer will receive a "Spoil Island Project" T-shirt for helping out with the survey! Please send me an email of the day(s) and month(s) you are available to do the bird survey, and I will accommodate volunteers on a "first come-first served" basis. If you have already signed up for a specific month and day, please disregard this message. If you have any questions, please call my office.

Dana Moller, Estuarine Ecologist
Southeast Aquatic Preserve Field Office:
 3300 Lewis Street Fort Pierce, FL 34981
Phone: (772) 429-2995 x23
Suncom: 240-2995
Cell phone: (772) 579-0446
Suncom: 240-2999
Fax: (772) 429-2999



* FDEP requires all volunteers to complete a "Volunteer Application-Agreement" for our records prior to volunteering for the FDEP. Volunteer forms can be faxed, mailed, or picked up from our FDEP/CAMA office in Fort Pierce upon request. Completed forms can be returned by the same methods.

One In Eight Of World's Birds Facing Extinction

By Steve Connor, Science Editor

The Independent – UK 3-8-4

One in eight of the world's birds - more than 1,200 species - faces extinction because of a crisis affecting habitats, according to a report today.

About 12 per cent of the 10,000 known bird species are seriously threatened and of these 179 are critically endangered with a serious possibility of imminent extinction, according to a survey by BirdLife International.

Some 400 species of endangered birds are still waiting for conservation action three years after they were formally identified as being in serious danger, the charity says.

But in its State of the World's Birds 2004, BirdLife International also describes how nearly a quarter of the globally threatened birds - 280 species - have begun to benefit from protection measures introduced by governments and conservation bodies.

In 4 per cent of these species, the benefit has already resulted in "significant" improvements in the outlook for birds that would otherwise almost certainly become extinct, it says.

Nevertheless, the wider prospects for the world's birds are not good, said Michael Rands, the organisation's chief executive. He added:

"State of the World's Birds presents firm evidence that we are losing birds and other biodiversity at an alarming rate."

The survey found that about 80 per cent of the globally threatened birds - 966 species - have populations below 10,000 individuals with 41 per cent (502 species) below 2,500 individuals.

BirdLife found that 77 threatened species of birds were teetering on the edge of existence with populations of fewer than 50 individuals capable of breeding.

"The state of the world's birds is deteriorating. This signifies deeper problems in our environment and in the way we look after our world," the report says.

The BirdLife survey was carried out by more than 100 organisations from around the world, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It is the most extensive review of bird habitats and numbers, and has demonstrated a global problem of major proportions, said Leon Bennun, the senior editor of the report.

"State of the World's Birds shows that birds are excellent environmental indicators, and what they are telling us is that there is a fundamental malaise in the way we treat our environment," Dr Bennun said. Despite the pessimism, there are some signs of success. For instance, BirdLife has identified more than 7,500 areas in the world covering 170 countries that are important conservation sites where measures can be introduced to preserve viable breeding populations and important migratory routes.

Among those species that have benefited from recent conservation measures co-ordinated by BirdLife are:

* Four species of lowland forest bird - the dwarf olive ibis, the maroon pigeon, the Sao Tome scops owl and the Sao Tome oriole - have benefited from preservation measures introduced on the island of Sao Tome on the west coast of Gabon.

* The short-tailed albatross, which was thought to be extinct until it was rediscovered on Torishima off Japan. Now there are about 1,200 breeding pairs as a result of measures to limit long-long fishing in the region.

* The Vanuatu megapode, a chicken-like bird found only on the Pacific island of Vanuatu, which was almost extinct until an awareness campaign was launched among local people to prevent over-harvesting of eggs.

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<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/environment/story.jsp?story=499000>

February 25, 2007

Fish & Wildlife Commissioners,
Tallahassee, Florida

Dear Commission members,

Re Gopher Tortoise Management Plan

St. Lucie Audubon Society is an active member of the recently formed gopher tortoise relocation initiative in Indian River and St. Lucie Counties. We have over 400 active members, and we are a Chapter of Audubon of Florida. We are also a part of the National Audubon Society.

We are currently engaged in a humane relocation to save eleven gopher tortoise at a site in St. Lucie County where the owner has obtained an Initial Take Permit.

We support the upgrading of the gopher tortoise to threatened and we understand that during the past twelve months a conservative estimate shows that at least 160,000 gopher tortoise have been killed, mostly due to take and burial practices, some legal and some illegal. At this rate, were it allowed to continue, it is estimated that the gopher tortoise will be extinct inside of 15 years. The permitting of bury and take, while legal, is at the same time cruel and inhumane. Our efforts are supported by the Humane Society of Vero Beach as well as the Society for the prevention of cruelty to animals in Jensen Beach, Florida.

Our organization has to train volunteers, hire experienced personnel, pay large sums of money for materials, particularly silt fencing for impoundment plus additional costs after re-location for timely management.

We particularly want to see the cessation of the issue of Initial Take Permits, money should not be the criteria for obtaining permission to kill gopher tortoise. Mitigation has proved to be a dismal failure in Florida, many times their is no audit trail that is available to the public to ensure that the money is actually invested in suitable gopher tortoise habitat in the same County. Also there are no funds allocated to allow for management and follow up of the lands that are purchased.

As far as volunteer organizations such as ours, St. Lucie Audubon Society needs to be able to participate in this humane relocation permit program knowing that there is a mechanism for re-imburement of our costs, at the present time estimated at approximately \$2,000 per gopher tortoise rescued, and assuming we can acquire trained volunteers at no cost for their time. We seek some re-assurance on this matter at your earliest possible time. Our efforts are supported by Audubon of Martin County and the Pelican Island Audubon Society.

We request that you change the management plan towards saving gopher tortoise instead of allowing development of sites containing gopher tortoise without re-location. from development, where it is not possible or feasible for them to stay on their natural and historic habitat that they be allowed to be re-located to acceptable and proven safe recipient sites.

We request that regulations be included that enable organizations such as ours and any others involved in humane and professionally managed recovery and re-location to be reimbursed for our efforts and hard costs, including 6 months of management after re-location.

We ask for your understanding and consideration of our request. We will be very pleased to answer any questions you have in regard to our efforts and the cooperation we have established with the local governmental agencies, the local community, and concerned conservation and animal rights groups in our area. We appreciate the assistance and help we are receiving from you staff at your local offices in Vero Beach and West Palm Beach.

Sincerely,
Harold Phillips - Conservation Officer
for the Board of St. Lucie Audubon Society.

Phone 772-879-2669
e-mail kiwihowick@adelphia.net

2006-2007 Chapter Officers & Committee Chairs

President	Al Parmentier alparm@comcast.net	489-6176
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Corresponding Secretary	Gale Parmentier force8gale@comcast.net	489-6176
Treasurer	Richard Prince Derap@bellouth.net	466-1733
Bird Education Classes	Wren Underwood underwoe@stlucieco.gov	785-5833
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Field Trip Chair	Hank Hull HankHull@hotmail.com	340-2226
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April 5th Meeting

"Ospreys of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge" An Exploration into the Life of the Fish Hawk presented by Bob Montanaro.

April 7th Field Trip

Our Annual Picnic and April Field trip will be held at **Savannahs State Park on Walton Road** in Port St. Lucie. Park biologist, Gregg Kauffman, will take us on a special hayride field trip, with our picnic to follow. Bring a covered dish and your own table service. Be sure to keep your food in a cooler since there is no refrigeration available.

Meet at the Education Center at the park at 9 a.m. The park is located on the north side of Walton Rd. between Lennard Rd. and Indian River Drive. The phone number at the park is 398-2779. This is a great trip so hope to see you there!

Inconvenient Truth **Showing at the Oxbow Eco-Center**

Presented by the St. Lucie Audubon

St. Lucie Audubon Society will be presenting *An Inconvenient Truth*, Al Gore's Academy Award-winning film on global warming. The showing will take place on Thursday, April 26th at 7:00 pm at Oxbow Eco-Center. The Oxbow Eco-Center is located at 5400 N.E. St. James Drive, Port St. Lucie

This event is open to the public with no admission charge.

Laughing Gull

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P.O. Box 12474
Fort Pierce, FL 34979

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