

# Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society



Volume 31 Issue #8

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

May 2007

## 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.

## President's Message

By Al Parmentier

The season is quickly coming to an end and so is my term in office. It has been an interesting and exciting two years for our chapter. We have had an excellent and diverse group of speakers and presentations. The bequest from Evelyn Murphy will provide us with a fantastic facility for all venues in the future at the Oxbow Eco-Center.

Our association with the Oxbow Eco-Center has been perfect. The birding classes have been well attended there. I hope they can continue.

I hope that we will be able to continue with a film series and be involved with future tortoise rescues.

I would like to thank my board. Because of their hard work, the speaker series and public events were all well attended. The tortoise rescue went well, and thanks to the membership and public, we had the funds to do the job correctly. A special thanks to Harold Phillips for securing professionals and proper documents to make the rescue a success and legal. For a bird organization, we did very well. Last, but certainly not least, thank you members for your support.

See you all in the fall.

**Al Parmentier**

## Calendar of Events

### May Meeting:

Thursday, May 3rd at 7 p.m.

"Up & Down with Birds & Parks" An adventure presented by Al & Gale Parmentier.

### May Field Trip:

Saturday, May 5th

Bear Point Sanctuary

(see back page for details).

## Special Thanks

Donations to the gopher tortoise rescue fund continue to arrive. This month's special thanks for contributions received as of April 10<sup>th</sup> go to: Bob & Frankie Bangert, William Barclay, Terri & Paul Brown, Sam & Allie Comer, Evelyn Crowhurst & Elizabeth Conk, Charles & Rose Donaldson, Claudia Levi, Karen Martin, Gebbina Meijer-Morel, Peter Potoski & Jacqueline Kowalczyk-Potoski, Myrtle Salter, Benjamin Shore, and SC Garden Club.



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.

### Meeting Place Location: Oxbow Eco-Center

**(772) 785-5833**

**5400 N.E. St. James Drive \* Pt. St. Lucie, FL  
34983**

1.7 miles south of Midway Rd. and 1.8 miles

## 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**

## Environmentalist @ Home

by Gale Parmentier

### How "green" are your purchases?

Have you ever wondered about organic certification? Is that 2'x4' really from a sustainably logged forest? Will a new washing machine actually cut energy and/or water use?

The National Green Pages of Co-op America is an excellent source for green businesses and tips on living green. Go to [www.coopamerica.org](http://www.coopamerica.org) to search or browse its directory.

Get green living, purchasing and investing resources you can use—including a copy of the National Green Pages, when you become a member. Annual memberships begin at \$20. You can join online, by phone (1-800-58-GREEN), or by mail (Co-op America, ATTN: Membership, 1612 K Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006). I am a member and recommend the directory and newsletters highly.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Thank You!

## www.goodsearch.com

Please use "Goodsearch" everyday as your favorite search engine and especially make sure the "favorite charity" is properly listed as "Operation Migration" and continues to be listed properly each time you use it. If it defaults then no funds go to the cranes.

Every time you use Goodsearch it raises money for ours and your Whooping Cranes.

It sounds too good to be true, but it isn't, just ask the Whooping Cranes at Operation Migration!

The first chicks for the 2007 migration are just being hatched now. Please help them to make their first migration to Florida, we don't have much time they have to leave for their first ever migration in October! It will take them close to 60 days, and we need your donations to preserve their habitat and feeding and resting stops along the way. Help to save the whooping cranes stop over areas from development now, if we lose that then we lose the whooping cranes too.

If you or someone you know would like to make a financial donation for Operation Migration please contact them directly, their address is listed in the attachment.

St. Lucie Audubon Society supporting the whooping cranes

<http://www.goodsearch.com/GetInvolved.aspx>

## Membership Chairperson needed for 2007-08

A volunteer is needed to maintain the St. Lucie Audubon Society membership list. Duties include monthly updating of computer member list and printing of labels for monthly mailing. Call Dotty Hull 340-2226 for more information about this much needed volunteer job.

### 2006-2007 Chapter Officers & Committee Chairs

President	Al Parmentier	489-6176	<a href="mailto:alparm@comcast.net">alparm@comcast.net</a>
Vice President	Liz Dunleavy	489-9050	<a href="mailto:DunZippy@aol.com">DunZippy@aol.com</a>
Recording Secretary	Terri Brown		<a href="mailto:tmbrown761@bellsouth.net">tmbrown761@bellsouth.net</a>
Education Chair			
Corresponding Secretary	Gale Parmentier	489-6176	<a href="mailto:force8gale@comcast.net">force8gale@comcast.net</a>
Treasurer	Richard Prince	466-1733	<a href="mailto:derap@bellsouth.net">derap@bellsouth.net</a>
Bird Education Classes	Wren Underwood	785-5833	<a href="mailto:underwo@stlucieco.gov">underwo@stlucieco.gov</a>
Membership Chair	Dotty Hull	340-2226	<a href="mailto:fbird40@bellsouth.net">fbird40@bellsouth.net</a>
Field Trip Coordinator	Hank Hull	340-2226	<a href="mailto:hankhull@hotmail.com">hankhull@hotmail.com</a>
Program Chairs	Grace Stock	871-2882	
	Liz Dunleavy	489-9050	
Conservation Chair	Harold Phillips	879-2669	<a href="mailto:kiwhowick@adelphia.net">kiwhowick@adelphia.net</a>
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Directors at Large	Bob Carey	879-7488	
	Mary Lou Hughes	464-2489	
	Hank Hull	340-2226	

## Conservation Corner

By Harold Phillips

This is the last Conservation Corner until next October, the start of our new Audubon season. I will do my best to make sure this article is one well worth your time reading.

You will remember one of our Chapter's many successes of this past season was the rescue of the Bell South Utility Pole and having it handed, free of charge, to the property owners, along with one new baby screech owl inside the pole when it was moved. Since the pole was re-erected in the yard of the owners the screech owls have reared at least one baby that has now fledged. Also now they are busy redecorating the pole cavity, refreshing it with clean materials, all hopefully being done for the next clutch of eggs due to be laid any day now. Meanwhile the downstairs unit (cavity) is occupied by squirrels that have a nest, while the top apartment is being checked out by crows and pileated woodpeckers.

Red tide continues to plague our coastlines, especially on the west coast of Florida. Red tide may have killed 26 manatees whose bodies were found in Lee County waters in the past few weeks, tests to confirm this will take several weeks. Red tide is caused by a bloom of the single-celled alga *Karenia brevis*, this contains a powerful toxin that kills fish and other marine life. When manatees come up for air they inhale the toxin at the water's surface. They also eat seagrasses that have absorbed the toxin.

Forty manatees have died in Lee County in less than three months. Across our State of Florida 72 deaths on manatees have been reported from toxic poisoning. Another major cause of manatee deaths is boat injuries; some also die from cold stress.

During April a bald eagle near the Wal-Mart nest which is active, was found in a distressed state lying on the ground at the St. Lucie County landfill. The Bald Eagle was rescued by the St. Lucie County staff from our Environmental Resources department, Fish and Wildlife Service came and captured it and have it in rehabilitation.

There is good news to report, it has a damaged wing, appears to be an adult eagle, is likely to heal and be able to start re-learning how to fly again in about three months. Hopefully inside of six months it will be fully recovered and ready for release. It will be released in a wooded preserve area near to where it was found. We will keep you informed in the Laughing Gull of its progress and recovery.

The Gator Trace Greens Gopher Tortoise rescue and relocation has ended with St. Lucie Audubon saving 20 tortoises from certain death and from the cruelest manner imaginable. The tortoise at their new home are doing well, they are already digging some new burrows and showing good signs of acceptance at their new permanent home. We have plans to assist the owners of the property to plant out more forage including some varieties of their favorite food, including some of the cactus family.

We have some excellent programs, speakers, and field trips in the planning for our next season. Some field trips will

directly relate to the topic of our speaker on the previous Thursday.

We hope that by doing this it will make both gatherings even more interesting for you, and that it will also encourage those who come to our meeting to also join us on our field trips and vice-versa.

We hope you all have a very enjoyable summer and remember to keep a look out for ant gopher tortoise that may be at risk and call the gopher tortoise hotline number

**GOPHER TORTOISE HOTLINE \*\*\* 1-888-404-3922**

April 6, 2007—*WKMG LOCAL 6 NEWS*

### Road project buries tortoises alive

MAITLAND, Fla. -- The U.S. Humane Society said Thursday that gopher tortoises are being buried alive during the construction of a new interchange in Central Florida.

The Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority has authorized construction of the new Maitland interchange on the west side of Orange County, but U.S. Humane Society officials said that helpless tortoises hiding in underground burrows up to 40-feet deep are being entombed by concrete in the process.

"They're immobilized, they can't get out of the burrow, and it can take them up to one year to die, one biologist has told us. It could take them that long to die of suffocation, dehydration or starvation. It's an absolutely excruciating kind of death," Jen Hobgood of the U.S. Humane Society said.

The gopher tortoise has been uplisted to threatened-species status and destroying their habitat will be illegal by September at the earliest, Local 6 News reported.

But the Expressway Authority paid the state more than \$225,000 for an incidental take permit, which allows it to legally kill or bury the tortoises to create the roadway.

"We followed all of the rules that were set up by the state. We didn't create the laws. We didn't create the permits. We didn't create the conditions. We just followed the conditions that were enacted by the state, by the Fish and Wildlife Commission," Mary Brooks of the Expressway Authority said.

Companies with the special permits don't have to do anything to protect the tortoises, such as relocating them to a safer habitat.

"Any government ought to hold itself to a higher standard than the bare-minimum standard. Because you can bury alive gopher tortoises, doesn't necessarily mean you should," Orange County Commissioner Teresa Jacobs said.

Some citizens are concerned that the authority could have better spent its money saving the tortoises rather than destroying them.

"I don't think it's appropriate for a public agency to be using toll money to kill off imperiled species without the consent of the public," Rebecca Eagan said.

A world renowned tortoise expert, who lives in Oviedo, said as many as 50 other species will suffer as well.

"They should be keeping their head low for a few years while they regroup and get some more responsive administration," Peter Pritchard said.

Orange County Mayor Richard Crotty, the chairman of the board for the authority, declined to discuss the issue.

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### **May 3rd Meeting**

**"Up & Down with Birds & Parks"** Presented by Al & Gale Parmentier. Last summer Al & Gale Parmentier traveled 15,144 miles with their camper trailer to 23 states plus British Columbia and Alberta. They collected 22 stamps in the National Park passports and identified a large number of birds for folks with advanced beginner skills. This special 3-month trip will be shared by photographs and tales of adventures.

### **May 5th Field Trip Bear Point Sanctuary**

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at **Bear Point Sanctuary** parking lot on South Hutchinson Island. DIRECTIONS: From U.S. 1 and Midway Rd. go north on U. S. 1 to Seaway Dr. in Fort Pierce. Go east on Seaway Dr. (A1A South) to the inlet and turn south continuing about 2 miles on A1A South. Bear Point Sanctuary is a short distance past Ocean Village on the west side of the road.

**NEWS RELEASE**

April 11, 2007

**Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission**

### **Ocala man arrested on gopher tortoise charges**

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) officers arrested an Ocala man Tuesday on 13 gopher tortoise charges.

Richard Leonard Mann, 41, of 7425 SW Highway 40, faces six counts of possession of gopher tortoises, six counts of taking gopher tortoises, and one count of attempting to sell gopher tortoises. All charges are second-degree misdemeanors that carry a maximum penalty of \$500 fine and 60 days in jail for each count.

Mann was a passenger in a car stopped by Ocala Police Department officers about 4 p.m., Tuesday on NW 4<sup>th</sup> St., off Martin Luther King Ave. In the car was a green bag filled with six gopher tortoises – five were alive and moving around, the sixth was dead.

Ocala PD officers called FWC Officer Washburn Wear and Lt. Gregg Eason to deal with the live wildlife cargo. Wear charged Mann with the violations, and Ocala PD officers took him to jail, where he was booked on the 13 charges.

Gopher tortoises are an imperiled species in Florida and are currently in the process of being reclassified from species of special concern to threatened.

A Marion County wildlife rehabilitator took the five surviving tortoises to her facility Wednesday afternoon and will give them health checks before FWC biologists release the tortoises into appropriate habitat. To report wildlife law violations, call FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at (888) 404-3922. The number is toll-free and open 24 hours, seven days a week. Callers may remain anonymous, and may be eligible for a reward if their information leads to an arrest.

# ***Laughing Gull***

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

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