



Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

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President's Message

"Observation - activity of both eyes and ears"- Horace Mann

For those who wish to improve their birding skills, learn to look and listen. We recognize birds with our eyes; looking for size, shape, color, wing bars, flight style, etc. and are by our line of sight. If we can identify birds with our ears our range is increased to 360 degrees.

The "wheep,wheep, wheep" of the Great Crested Flycatcher and the " teacher, teacher, teacher" of the Ovenbird are helpful. Some birds you can hear but can almost never find, such as the "woonk-ka-chunk" of American Bittern and the elusive Cuckoos.

Be sure to sign up for our Bird Identification Class at the Savannas State Preserve on Walton Road, Feb.21 & 28 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon and March7 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. Field trips are also provided which allow you to practice your newly acquired skills.

The field trip January 10,2009, to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and Viera Wetlands ,was very successful with over seventy bird species identified. Our next planned field trip to Green Cay Wetlands, February 7,2009, should also be an excellent one.

Attend our meetings and join our field trips. Thank you for your support.

Dan Walma

Calendar of Events

Meetings

Thursday, February 5th @ 7 pm

Dr. Julie Goldstein, "Indian River Lagoon Dolphin Health"

Thursday, March 5th @ 7 pm

Dr. Ken Meyer, The Swallowtail Kite

Field Trips

Saturday, February 7th

Green Cay Wetlands, Boynton Beach

Saturday, March 7th,

Heathcote Botanical Gardens, Fort Pierce

(more details.at meeting)

Meeting Place

Oxbow Eco-Center
5400 NE St. James Drive, Pt St. Lucie, Fl 34983

Located 1.5 miles south of Midway Road
/ 1.5 miles north of Airoso Blvd.

Upcoming Events

"Birdwatching Basics"

Feb. 21st and 28th 10:00 am. to 12:00 Noon
March 7th 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm



Classes will be held at:
Savannas State Preserve,
Walton Road, Port St. Lucie

Sign up today by calling Elsa Millard @
772-708-1638. \$30.00 per participant field trips included.

Wake-up Call Lecture Series

Oxbow Eco Center presents
February 7th * 11 am

"Trash to Treasure"

Come learn how to turn trash your into treasure with Deb
Krueger, Executive Director of the Re-Use Center.

This is a FREE event, just bring your coffee cup to enjoy
some shade grown coffee for the birds.

Feathered Friends

Submitted by Dotty Hull

We had a large turnout of people and birds for the field trip to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge where 73 species of birds were seen plus American Alligators, Nine-banded Armadillo and fresh road kill "Wild Boar." If you missed this trip be sure to join us for the trip to Green Cay.

Our list of bird species seen is as follows:

Common Loon--Pied-billed Grebe--Horned Grebe--
American White Pelican--Brown Pelican--Double-crested
Cormorant--Anhinga--American Bittern--Great Blue Heron--
Great Egret--Snowy Egret--Little Blue Heron--Tricolored
Heron--Cattle Egret--Green Heron--White Ibis--Glossy Ibis--
Roseate Spoonbill--Black Vulture--Turkey Vulture--Wood
Stork--Black-bellied Whistling-Duck--Snow Goose--
American Wigeon--Blue-winged Teal--Northern Shoveler--
Northern Pintail--Ring-necked Duck--Lesser Scaup--

Hooded Merganser--Red-breasted Merganser--Ruddy
Duck--Osprey--Bald Eagle--Northern Harrier--Red-
shouldered Hawk--Northern Crested Caracara--American
Kestrel--Common Moorhen--American Coot--Limpkin--
Killdeer--American Avocet--Greater Yellowlegs--Lesser
Yellowlegs--Western or Semi-palmated Sandpiper--Dunlin--
Short-billed Dowitcher--Laughing Gull--Bonaparte's Gull--
Ring-billed Gull--Herring Gull--Great Black-backed Gull--
Caspian Tern--Royal Tern--Black Skimmer--Rock Dove--
Eurasian Collared-Dove--Common Ground-Dove--Belted
Kingfisher--Red-bellied Woodpecker--Pileated
Woodpecker--Flycatcher(Genus Empidonax)--Eastern
Phoebe--Fish Crow--Tree Swallow--Northern Mockingbird--
Yellow-rumped Warbler--Palm Warbler--Red-winged
Blackbird--Common Grackle--Boat-tailed Grackle--Brown-
headed Cowbird.
Plus-----American Alligators, Nine-banded Armadillo and
fresh road kill "Wild Boar."



www.stlucieaudubon.org



Reserve your spot for these events by calling
Dotty Hull at 340-2226

Bud Adams Breakfast February 8th

The annual Bud Adams breakfast will be held on February 8. A full hot breakfast will be served and a bus tour of the ranch will be included. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. and caravan to the ranch. Cost is \$25 per person in advance. This is a very special trip so reserve early as it fills up quickly.

Painted Bunting Trip February 21st

Reserve now for a special trip to a beautiful private residence to view colorful Painted and Indigo Buntings. There is a charge of \$15 for this special trip that has a limit of 20 people. Meet at 8:00 a.m.



**Reduce!
Recycle!
Reuse!**



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Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

I recently received a forwarded email from an entity called the Environmental Voice of Southwest Florida (EVSWF). This email news-list was formed by members from Peace River Audubon and Caloosahatchee Riverwatch. I am not sure if the email originated with EVSWF or with an individual who sent it to that news-list, but the content referred to using pulling hooks to remove gopher tortoises from their burrows for relocations. The email author implied that the result was often serious maiming or death for gopher tortoises and that the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) ignored the damage caused by hooking tortoises. This email serves as a reminder to investigate all extreme claims made in print, whether electronic or hard copy.

Yes, modified pulling hooks are one removal method the FWC permits for use by authorized gopher tortoise agents. However, permit guidelines clearly state that pulling hooks *may not be* the only method employed for removing gopher tortoises from burrows. The guidelines also require an applicant to have used a pulling hook to capture a minimum of 10 tortoises a year for four years with no injuries or fatalities before a permit is issued (references are required). Details are available on the FWC Web site at http://myfwc.com/permits/Protected-Wildlife/apps/GopherTortoise_PermitRevisedRequirements.pdf. Therefore, anyone maiming or killing gopher tortoises using a pulling hook is most likely not permitted and the activity should be reported to FWC law enforcement immediately. There is no mention of this in the email.

The email author also implied that it is easy to crack or split a gopher tortoise shell or pull off a leg using a hook. These assertions are absolutely false. The average human must use a large hammer or drill in order to crack a gopher tortoise shell! These shells are incredibly hard and very difficult to crack. Modified pulling hooks have no point, barb, or other means of penetrating flesh, therefore, the hook would slip off before a leg is torn off. Perhaps what the email author witnessed was someone using a hook to remove tortoises crushed by digging equipment.

The email author failed to mention the two major human-mediated causes of gopher tortoise injury and death—cars and domestic dogs. Since incidental take permits have been eliminated, more gopher tortoises are killed by vehicle impacts than any other human contact. When struck by a

3000-lb. car or truck, a tortoise shell splits easily. Domestic dogs take a great toll on young tortoises—large dogs are capable of puncturing or cracking the shells of small gopher tortoises, causing infections and crippling or killing the tortoise. Yet the email author did not call for a ban on cars or for mandatory fencing of dogs, both more of a threat to gopher tortoises than pulling hooks.

Any removal method—pulling hooks, bucket traps, or digging—can be abused. You can help by knowing the regulations and being aware of gopher tortoise activity in your area. You can report poaching or abusive removal activities to the FWC Division of Law Enforcement for South Region A at (561) 625-5122.

Membership Application

A one-year chapter membership extends from January to January. You may use the coupon below to begin or renew your membership.

SLAS is now offering a Chapter-only annual membership for those who want to financially support their local chapter. The following dues options apply:

- Individual: \$20 per year**
- Family: \$25 per year**
(for 2 or more people in same household)
- Sponsor: \$50 per year**
- Patron: \$100 per year**
- Lifetime: \$500**

Each local membership includes a subscription to the monthly newsletter "The Laughing Gull". You may receive "The Laughing Gull" via standard mail or electronically via email. Please indicate your preference below.

Please make checks payable to and send to:

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

New membership: _____ **Renewal:** _____

Please send my "Laughing Gull" by:

Email _____ or **Standard mail:** _____

Thanks for your support.

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Meeting: Thursday, February 5th @ 7pm

Dr. Juli D. Goldstein has been actively involved in the marine mammal field for the last 7 years. She has completed extensive training courses and veterinary externships that focused exclusively on the husbandry, care, assessment, and medical treatment of stranded and captive marine mammals. She is a graduate and now serves as an instructor for the MARVET veterinary training program. In addition she has trained at many marine facilities including the Marine Mammal Center in Sausalito, California, Dolphin Quest Hawaii and Oahu, as well as the Shedd Aquarium in Chicago, Illinois. She has been an active member of the Harbor Branch's Marine Mammal Research and Conservation group since 2003 and serves as an on-call veterinarian for the National Marine Fisheries (NMFS) Southeast Stranding Network. Dr. Goldstein has also provided specialized veterinary services for the last 5 years of the Indian River Lagoon Live Dolphin Health and Risk Assessment Project, and has published in several peer-reviewed journals on research data related to the health of marine mammals. She currently serves as the on-site clinical veterinarian, Assistant Research Professor, and attending clinical veterinarian for the HBOI/FAU Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

Field Trip: Saturday February 7th

This month's field trip will be to Green Cay Wetlands in Palm Beach County. The wetland features 1.5 miles of elevated boardwalk featuring interpretive signs about the habitat. The Nature Center includes a lecture hall, gift shop, and live animals in an extensive exhibit room that highlights wetland attributes.

There is a website giving information about this wonderful place at the following web address.

http://www.pbcgov.com/parks/nature/green_cay_nature_center/

If time allows we will also stop at Wakodahatchee Wetlands. Some of us will be going to lunch at Green Tomatoes and everyone is welcome to join in. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. in front of the Sears (Kmart) store in St. Lucie West in the parking lot closest to the street.



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St. Lucie Audubon
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Fort Pierce, FL 34979

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