



Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

VOLUME 33, ISSUE VI

MARCH 2009

President's Message

The January field trip to Merritt Island was a success. The weather was ideal. More than 80 species of birds were identified. A combined total of 23 birders and birdwatchers participated in this trip. To me the highlight of the trip was the American Bittern posing, along a canal, at the waters edge.

Hart and Jewel Rufe lead the February field trip to Green Cay Nature Center and Wakodahatchee Wetlands. When Hart and Jewel lead field trips birdwatchers become birders. The weather was good, over 20 participated and over 70 species of birds were identified. Sora are usually secretive and hide in the vegetation but this time they were very cooperative and allowed many photographs.

You have one more chance, this year, to take part in Hart and Jewel Rufe led birding field trips. They will be leading Bird Identification Class field trips. Sign up for the class and become a birder.

Thank you for your support.

Dan Walma

Calendar of Events

Meetings

Thursday, March 5th @ 7 pm

"Dr. Ken Meyer, The Great White Heron and The Swallowtail Kite

Thursday, April 2nd@ 7 pm

Dr. John Moore, Update on the Gopher Tortoise

Field Trips

Saturday, March 7th,

Vero Beach Wetlands, Vero Beach Florida

Saturday, April 4th,

Annual Picnic Gordy Park, 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
And 1.5 miles north of Airosa Blvd.

Upcoming Events



Guided Nature Walks
at Oxbow Eco Center
Saturdays Mornings
at 10:00am * FREE

GET YOUR LAUGHING GULL BY E-MAIL

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. To sign up, send your name and email address to

newsletter@stlucieaudubon.org



**Reduce!
Recycle!
Reuse!**



www.stlucieaudubon.org

Trip Report for St Lucie Audubon Society Field trip to Green cay and Wakodahatchee

Twenty participants joined leaders, Hart and Jewel Rufe, in journeying to Green Cay Nature Center in Boynton Beach and Wakodahatchee Wetlands in Delray Beach, on Saturday, February 7. Both birding destinations are waste water treatment facilities operated by Palm Beach County and feature extensive boardwalks through well maintained wetlands. Both locations attract birders, photographers, nature lovers and family groups because birds, alligators, turtles, iguanas, occasionally snakes, and sometimes on rare occasions for lucky observers, bobcats, can be seen easily and observed "up close and personal." Our group saw all but the bobcat on our trip. Particularly exciting for most participants were the number of elusive Soras seen at very close range, the colorful Purple Gallinules, the ubiquitous Green Herons, the several nesting Great Blue Herons and Anhingas with tiny just-born chicks, and the massive alligators. The day concluded with the hungry birders enjoying an all-you-can-eat feast at the Sweet Tomatoes restaurant in West Palm Beach on the way home. That may have been an even bigger hit than the birding. The following is a composite list of all the 57 species of birds seen by, or reported by, the group participants.

Mottled Duck	Forster's tern
Northern Shoveler (female)	Eurasian Collared Dove
Blue-winged Teal	(at Sweet Tomatoes)
Green-winged Teal	Mourning Dove
Pied-billed Grebe	Rock Pigeon (seen en route)
Anhinga	Belted Kingfisher
Double-crested Cormorant	Downy Woodpecker (female)
Black-crowned Night Heron	Red-bellied Woodpecker
Great Blue Heron	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Green Heron	(at Sears Essentials)
Little Blue heron	Pileated Woodpecker
Tricolored heron	(at Loxahatchee by one group)
Cattle Egret (seen en route)	Fish Crow
Great Egret	Northern Rough-winged
Snowy Egret	Swallow
Least Bittern (2 observers)	Tree Swallow
Glossy Ibis	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
White Ibis	Gray Catbird
Wood Stork	Northern Mockingbird
Black Vulture	European Starling
Turkey Vulture	Common Yellowthroat
Osprey	Palm Warbler
American Kestrel (seen en route)	Pine Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	Prairie Warbler
Limpkin	Yellow-rumped warbler
Sora	Northern Cardinal
Common Moorhen	Painted Bunting (female)
Purple Gallinule	Boat-tailed Grackle
American Coot	Common Grackle
Ring-billed Gull	Red-winged Blackbird
	Sandhill Crane (seen en route)

Feathered Friends

*Submitted by Dotty Hull
A note from Steve Fousek, St. Lucie County
Environmental Resources Department*

After contacting FWS Law Enforcement in Miami regarding an eagle carcass, I learned that there is a pending statewide case regarding migratory birds killed by electrocution.



Law Enforcement would like us to collect and report any instances of migratory birds that may be injured or killed near power lines, solar arrays, etc. They will arrange to have the birds sent to the Oregon Lab for forensic evaluation. Bodies should be placed on ice or frozen as soon as possible. The birds may show outward signs of burns on feet or feathers, or may not indicate any cause of death. If a migratory bird is found underneath a power line, Law Enforcement wants to know about it.

The FWS contact for counties south of Palm Beach is David Pharo (305-526-2610 ext 29). For Palm Beach County and north, it is Janet Rider (352) 429-1037 ext 308. For you Gulf-coasters, I guess you would contact the Fort Myers office (John Elofson 239-561-8144).

Thanks
Steve Fousek

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Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

An email notice regarding the Great Backyard Bird Count prompted me to explore the Audubon Society Web site. Two items caught my attention—the *2007 WatchList* and *Common Birds in Decline*. Some of you may be familiar with *Common Birds in Decline*, a listing of backyard birds that have declined in population since 1967. Both lists use Christmas Bird Count data for population estimates. To my dismay, several St. Lucie County bird species appeared on *Common Birds in Decline*:

- Northern Bobwhite—down 82%
- Eastern Meadowlark—down 72%
- Loggerhead Shrike—down 71%
- Common Grackle—down 61%
- Little Blue Heron—down 54%



I still see Loggerhead Shrikes, Common Grackles, and Little Blue Herons at my house, but it has been more than five years since a Bobwhite or Meadowlark graced my yard.

Despite those startling numbers, the birds on the *2007 WatchList* are even more at risk. The *WatchList* uses a red-yellow-green classification system to indicate priority of conservation need. Most of the *Common Birds in Decline* have a “green” status, meaning there are problems, but population levels are not critical. “Red List” birds are critically imperiled and in need of immediate conservation action. Habitat loss is the primary reason for declining populations, but invasive species, climate change, and lingering damage from 20th Century plume hunters also affect population levels. Unfortunately, there are “Red List” birds St. Lucie County, too. These are:

- Mottled Duck
- Black Rail
- Reddish Egret
- Florida Scrub Jay

Audubon has designated the Reddish Egret, Black Rail, and Florida Scrub Jay for immediate action.

What can you do? First, learn what the important bird habits are in St. Lucie County. Second, work with conservation organizations and elected officials to protect critical wetlands, scrub, and pine flatwoods. Third, keep an eye on politics; Port St. Lucie is known for annexing rural land for housing development with minimal attention to environmental impact. Fort Pierce has begun a similar annexation program. Let your elected representatives know you want adequate protection of wildlife habitat in St. Lucie County, not mitigation in another county. Fourth, do not plant invasive species, such as Brazilian pepper, umbrella tree (*Schefflera*), Surinam cherry, or oyster plant. Finally, remember that resources we consume here in the United States may have come from another country that destroyed migratory bird habitat in order to sell us consumer goods. Remember to reduce, reuse, and recycle!

www.stlucieaudubon.org

From your webmaster ...

Check out the nifty Bald Eagle photo on <http://stlucieaudubon.org/photos.htm>, contributed by new SLAS member Dorothy Schultz. And don't forget to share your local bird photos and sightings through our web site. <http://stlucieaudubon.org>

Considering new binoculars. You may find this consumer-oriented web site interesting to compare a wide range of brands and styles, <http://www.thebinocularsite.com/>

The long-time birding web site www.birdingpal.org has added the our website to its listing of Local Information on its Florida page.

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, March 5th @ 7pm

Dr. Ken Meyer, The Great White Heron and The Swallowtail Kite

Ken Meyer has directed research on birds in Florida and beyond for 21 years. He obtained his B.S. in Zoology from the University of Maine, Orono, in 1978 and his Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1987. After serving as a post-doctoral associate in the University of Florida's Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation and as a research biologist with the National Park Service in Big Cypress National Preserve, Ken founded the nonprofit Avian Research and Conservation Institute (ARCI) to focus on rare, and especially, unlisted species of birds to support management and conservation planning. These studies, in the southeastern US and Latin America, have addressed questions about population ecology and demography, breeding biology, habitat requirements, limiting factors, migration, and over-wintering biology. His study subjects have included Swallow-tailed Kites, Short-tailed Hawks, White-crowned Pigeons, Wood Storks, Jabiru Storks, Snail Kites, Great White Herons, Red-cockaded Woodpeckers, Yellow-headed Parrots, and King Vultures. Since 1998, Ken has held an adjunct position as Associate Professor in UF's Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation, where his activities include supervising his own graduate students, who have used some of ARCI's projects as the focus for M.S. and Ph.D. research; advising other graduate students; and collaborating with colleagues on ecological studies of birds.

Field Trip: Saturday March 7th Vero Beach Wetlands

This month's field trip will be to Vero Beach Wetlands. It is located just off I-95 at the Vero Beach exit. Meet at Home Depot in Fort Pierce at 8:00 A.M. Home Depot is located at Okeechobee. Rd. and Jenkins Rd.



Laughing Gull

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