



# Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

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## President's Message

What is a birder ?

To be counted as a birder, an individual must have taken a trip one mile or more from home for the purpose of observing birds or closely observed and tried to identify birds around the house.

This definition is from the Birding in the United States addendum to the 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation, which was amended July 2009 and recently released.

There were 48 million birders, 16 years of age and older, in the United States. That is 21 percent of the population. The lowest participation rate by age was the 16 to 34 with 8%-13% and the highest the 35 to 55 plus with 23%-27%.

The higher the income and education level the more likely one is to be a birder. Those with less than high school participated at 12% while those with a college education had a participation rate of 28%.

The average birder is age 50, has better than average income and education, 54% are female [ men are hunting and fishing], and lives in an urban area in the south.

Does this fit the profile of a St. Lucie Audubon member? How can we increase interest in the younger age group?

Invite your friends and neighbors to attend our meetings and join our field trips. Thank you for your support.

Dan Walma

## Calendar of Events

### Field Trips

#### November 14----Field Trip to STA-5 Clewiston

\* Please note, this field trip is the 2nd Saturday, not the 1st Saturday, after our November St. Lucie Audubon Meeting.

This field trip will be a tour of the STA-5 ( storm water treatment area) near Clewiston, south of lake Okeecho-bee. The area is considered a "hotspot" in S. Florida birding. The Audubon of Hendry Co. leads the tour and will meet us at the entrance gate to STA-5 at 8:30am. The tour lasts about 3 hours. We will drive around one of the large water cells. Carpooling is thus strongly encouraged to limit the # of cars impacting the area.

It takes 2 & 1/2 hours to get to STA-5, so we must leave EARLY to get there for the start of the tour. We will meet at the Winn-Dixie shopping center in Pt St Lucie, near the Pt St Lucie entrance/exit to the Turnpike and be ready to leave that parking lot by 5:45am. ( instead of 6am)...if you are late we will have to leave without you. I will have directions for you there ( and will also have them at the November meeting)... We will take the turnpike south to Southern Blvd and then head west.

The only bathroom at STA-5 is a port-o-let. Bring plenty of water and something to eat....and most important, please make sure you have a full tank of gas....we will not have time to make any stops on the way down there and we will be in a very rural area. Wear a hat and sunscreen too !

Tours at STA-5 are by reservation only....we have 20 spots reserved for our St Lucie Audubon group. Most of those 20 spots have filled up..there are just a few left, so if you are interested please leave me a message with your name and phone#. You can reach me (Dorothy) at 349-6025....if you had signed up and cannot make it, please let me know ASAP so I can give your spot to someone else.

### Upcoming Field trip.....Dec 5

#### The Everglades National Park.

You have lived in Florida HOW LONG and have never been to the Everglades ???!...now is your chance for a FULL day of birding in the Everglades. This will be a carpooling trip and details will be in the Dec. newsletter.

November 5th Meeting: speaker Dr. Beth Falls, 7 p.m.

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

[www.stlucieaudubon.org](http://www.stlucieaudubon.org)

## Global Warming Legislation

Climate change poses an imminent danger to the survival of many species of birds and wildlife and the integrity of the ecosystems on which they depend. Recently over 100 of Audubon's state offices and local chapters endorsed a letter to the Senate requesting that they pass climate legislation that includes crucial funding to protect wildlife and natural resources from the ever-growing threat of climate change. Thanks to all for supporting this critical initiative!

While the letter is a great step in the right direction, it is essential that we continue to let our senators know that we strongly support climate legislation that provides for 5% of total revenues generated through the cap and trade program to go toward natural resources adaptation. A legislative approach to conquering climate change is not complete without provisions that help our wildlife survive a warming planet.

These funds would increase the coffers of the Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act, the Endangered Species Act and other successful conservation programs. They would provide much needed resources to National Wildlife Refuge managers as they battle invasive species and other refuge threats that will only be exacerbated by climate change. Research, monitoring and education need to increase as

well. A 5% dedication of funds to address the impacts of global warming will allow us to protect and expand crucial habitats and more thoroughly understand the effects that a climate change has on wildlife.

This fall, the Senate will take up global warming legislation. Now is the time to voice your support for increased adaptation funding. A quick call or email to your senators will help us build public demand for strong climate legislation and increased funding – 5% -- for wildlife. To reach your senator please call the U.S. Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121, or find your senator's contact information online at [www.senate.gov/general/contact\\_information/senators\\_cfm.cfm](http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm). If you prefer to send an email, you can do that at your senator's web site or through Audubon's Action Center, [www.audubonaction.org](http://www.audubonaction.org). Tell your senators that you want:

- Strong climate legislation this year to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Legislation that protects birds, wildlife, natural resources and ecosystems by dedicating 5% of revenues for wildlife adaptation.

Audubon has always spoken for birds, wildlife and their habitats, no matter the threat. Now is the time to speak out for strong climate legislation and the resources we need to protect the birds and wildlife we love.

### \*\*\* SPONSORS WANTED \*\*\*

St. Lucie County has a new policy of charging Non-Profits for use of County facilities.

Our cost is \$45.00 per month payable in advance. We are looking for sponsors to underwrite the cost of using Oxbow-Eco-Center.

In return we will acknowledge individual or company names in our Newsletter several times during the ensuing year. If you are interested in sponsoring SLA's ongoing program please send checks to :

**ST. LUCIE AUDUBON,  
P.O. BOX 12474,  
FORT PIERCE, FL 34979**

**Thanks to the Following Sponsors  
John and Nettie Brolman  
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Bill Wagner**

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#### ST.LUCIE AUDUBON SOCIETY 2009 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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## Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is revising state rules applying to the listing and protecting of endangered and threatened species. This would normally make a conservationist twitch, but this time, rules revision will be good for Florida wildlife! Three major changes are the focus of the revision.

First, Florida currently has a three-tiered system for listing imperiled species—endangered, threatened, and species of special concern. Florida listings for endangered and threatened species do not match federal listings, creating confusion at the state and local level. The proposed revisions would eliminate the three-tiered system and create a single list of Florida's Imperiled Species. The new Imperiled Species list would include all species currently listed at any level and set the state-designated threshold for listing at the current mark for species of special concern. All state-designated Imperiled Species would be treated equally from a regulatory and management standpoint.

Second, all species with a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) designation of threatened or endangered would automatically be listed as imperiled. A separate state-level review would no longer be required. FWC has indicated this change would immediately add approximately 16 species to Florida's list. One beneficiary of this change would be the gopher tortoise, which the USFWS has listed as endangered in the western portion of its range and may soon be declared threatened in its eastern range.

Third, emphasis will be on management plans for State-designated Imperiled species with the goal of preventing the species from being listed at the federal level. In other words, the goal of management is stabilizing species population, not merely identifying declining populations. Management plans must address species biological status; conservation objectives; recommended management action; recommended regulations or incentives; and anticipated economic, ecological, and social impacts of implementing or not implementing the recommended conservation actions. Listing and delisting of State-designated Imperiled species would require scientific review by a Biological Review Group tasked with determining whether the species in question meets the most current ver-

sion of Guidelines for Using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria and Guidelines for Application of IUCN Red List Criteria at Regional Levels. The report generated by the biological review is subject to a minimum of three independent scientific reviews. These independent reviews would help eliminate subjective staff review and the potential for political and monetary influence on the listing process.

Adding new species and increasing the level of protection afforded Imperiled species in Florida will be good for wildlife. However, I expect resistance to the revised rules from developers and owners of rural land who want to sell their development rights. Incidental take permits are still included in the proposed rules, though with stringent requirements. Concerned citizens will need to follow the process and support the implementation of these new rules.

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## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send my "Laughing Gull" by:

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*Thanks for your support.*

# Feathered Friends

Submitted by Ruth Neese

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Membership Application

Conservation Corner

I was thrilled to spot my first American Kestrel (*Falco sparverius*) in late afternoon October 6. These small raptors remind me that cooler weather will eventually arrive in South Florida, despite recent temperatures in the 90s! Most kestrels seen in St. Lucie county are migratory birds traveling from Canada and the Northern United States to wintering grounds in the southern U.S. and Mexico.

American Kestrels are the smallest falcon in North America, living and breeding from Alaska, through Canada and the United States, down into Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. This includes Florida, where the birds breed in Central Florida along the Lake Wales ridge. I once saw a breeding pair nesting in a dead tree at Bok Tower Gardens in Lake Wales. American Kestrel populations have been increasing recently, and are listed as a "species of least concern" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

American Kestrels are one of the few sexually color dimorphic raptors, meaning males and females have different plumage colors.

Male kestrels have slate blue-gray secondary wing feathers, a rufous tail with a black sub-terminal band, and black banding on the underside of the wings. Females are larger than males and have rufous coloration on the wings, backs, and tails. Females' tails have multiple dark brown or black bands instead of the one band present in males.

As a small raptor, American Kestrels hunt small prey. They forage for grasshoppers, dragonflies, mice, moles, and lizards from perches on power lines, dead trees, or roadside signs. Wintering kestrels will also hunt small birds such as sparrows, warblers, and wrens. It is common to see kestrels perched with Mourning Doves on power lines; the kestrels are identifiable by their "no neck" look in silhouette.

Recent research using kestrel DNA indicates American Kestrels are not genetically related to the European Common Kestrel and others in that family. Instead, the American Kestrel appears most closely related to the Peregrine and Aplomado Falcons, having genetically diverged from European kestrels during the Ice Ages. So this winter, look up for a small, Ice Age falcon hunting grasshoppers from roadside perches!

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