



# Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

VOLUME 34 • ISSUE XI • DECEMBER 2009

## President's Message

### Bird Watching Economics

Birding is the second most popular hobby in the United States; gardening is number one.

Florida has well over 3 million birders, both resident and non-resident, according to the addendum to the National Survey of fishing, hunting, and wildlife associated recreation.

Money spent by Florida birders, for equipment [binoculars-spotting scopes-cameras-field guides-electronic callers and bird identifiers-camping], for trips [transportation-food-lodging], for bird feeding [bird houses-feeding stations-bird seed , suet etc.], averages about \$720.00 per participant.

Florida birders spent over 2 billion dollars on their hobby. This has a ripple effect throughout the economy, impacting employment, household income, employment income, and industrial output and tax revenue.

It is unwise for the state to close recreation areas, which attract birders. Why be " penny-wise and pound-foolish".

We need your help. Use the application form printed in the newsletter to join the St. Lucie Audubon Society.

Thank you for your support.

Dan Walma

## Calendar of Events

### Upcoming Field Trips

If you have never been to Everglades National Park, now is your chance!

We will meet at the Winn Dixie parking lot in Pt. St. Lucie ( corner of Pt. St. Lucie Blvd. and Bay-shore Blvd. near entrance to Turnpike)....we need to leave that parking lot NO LATER THAN 6:30 am....please be there before then! We are carpooling, but please plan ahead who you will carpool with. We will take turnpike south to the last exit and follow signs to the Park. It is approx. 2&1/2 hour drive to the Park entrance from PSL. We are going to the main Park...NOT to the "Shark Valley" area. Once in the Park we will stop at the Coe Visitors center to get brochures and bird-list and proceed. . We will be exiting the park at approx. 3:30-4:00pm ( If your car chooses to leave earlier or later, you certainly may!) . Bring food and drinks;

there are no concessions in the park. ( But there are bathrooms!!). No gas in the Park....make sure you have a FULL tank. Entrance fee to Park is \$10 per car. I will have maps and more info at the December meeting ( and the topic of the speaker at that meeting is "The Everglades"! )....Let me know if you are joining us or if you have any questions.... Dorothy ( cell # 349-6025)

January 9th Field Trip....Merrit Island NWR....details will be in January Newsletter...trip will be lead by Hart & Jewel Rufe.

**Reminder:** Bird Identification Classes are January 14th, 21st and 28th, 2010 to be held at Oxbow Eco-Center from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Please call Liz Dunleavy at 772-489-9050 to make reservations.

**Change of Date:** The Christmas Bird Count date has been changed to January 2, 2010.

December Meeting: speaker ????????????????

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)

## Report on November 14 Field Trip to Sta-5

We had to get up early and we had a bit of a drive, but without a doubt we were well rewarded on our trip to STA-5!! What an exciting day of birding we had...on a perfectly sunny and cool day!!

Margaret England of Hendry Co. Audubon checked us in and our caravan of 6 cars were the 1st to proceed along the impoundment roads of the vast wetlands. Tropical Audubon and Caloosa Audubon also had groups there. Ms. England intermittently checked in on us to see what birds we had seen and she kept us apprised of the locations of other interesting sightings being made that day. The tour finished to close to 1 p.m., but a few of our group were allowed to stay on a little longer to check out another area of the wetlands, where they found the elusive Cassin's Kingbird and Western Kingbird. That day, 2 new 1st time sightings were made at STA-5 (not by our group)...a Wilson's Phalarope and a Blue-headed Vireo.

Thank you to our members Hart, Jewel and Dan for your guidance.; we are lucky to have such wonderful teachers in our chapter. A donation was made to Hendry Co. Audubon on behalf of our chapter in thanks for the efforts their volunteers put forth in making the STE-5 bird tours perfect for the novice birder to the most experienced birder.

SLAS count for the day was 71 species...List is below (19 members attended)

- |                              |                            |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Fulvous Whistling Duck    | 2. Gadwall                 |
| 3. American Wigeon           | 4. Mottled Duck            |
| 5. Blue-winged Teal          | 6. Northern Shoveler       |
| 7. Ring-necked Duck          | 8. Lesser Scaup            |
| 9. Ruddy Duck                | 10. American White Pelican |
| 11. Double-crested Cormorant | 12. Anhinga                |

- |                                    |                                   |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 13. American Bittern               | 14. Great Blue Heron              |
| 15. Great Blue Heron (White Morph) | 16. Great Egret                   |
| 17. Snowy Egret                    | 18. Little Blue Heron             |
| 19. Tricolored Heron               | 20. Cattle Egret                  |
| 21. Green Heron                    | 22. White Ibis                    |
| 23. Glossy Ibis                    | 24. Roseate Spoonbill             |
| 25. Wood Stork                     | 26. Black Vulture                 |
| 27. Turkey Vulture                 | 28. Osprey                        |
| 29. Snail Kite                     | 30. Bald Eagle                    |
| 31. Northern Harrier               | 32. Sharp-shinned Hawk            |
| 33. Cooper's Hawk                  | 34. Red-shouldered Hawk           |
| 35. Red-tailed Hawk                | 36. American Kestrel              |
| 37. Peregrine Falcon               | 38. Sora                          |
| 39. Purple Swamphen (exotic)       | 40. Purple Gallinule              |
| 41. Common Moorhen                 | 42. American Coot                 |
| 43. Limpkin                        | 44. Killdeer                      |
| 45. Black-necked Stilt             | 46. Greater Yellowlegs            |
| 47. Lesser Yellowlegs              | 48. Least Sandpiper               |
| 49. White-rumped Sandpiper         | 50. Dunlin                        |
| 51. Long-billed Dowitcher          | 52. Wilson's Snipe                |
| 53. Caspian Tern                   | 54. Eurasian-collared Dove        |
| 55. Mourning Dove                  | 56. Common Ground Dove            |
| 57. Belted Kingfisher              | 58. Red-bellied Woodpecker        |
| 59. Eastern Phoebe                 | 60. Cassin's Kingbird             |
| 61. Western Kingbird               | 62. Loggerhead Shrike             |
| 63. Tree Swallow                   | 64. Northern Rough-winged Swallow |
| 65. Northern Mockingbird           | 66. European Starling             |
| 67. Palm Warbler                   | 68. Red-winged Blackbird          |
| 69. Common Grackle                 | 70. Boat-tailed Grackle           |
| 71. Brown-headed Cowbird           |                                   |

### \*\*\* 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  
Deena and Dana Wade - "River Lilly"  
Ed Bowes & Ruth Neese  
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Billi Wagner**

### www.stlucieaudubon.org

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

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## Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

A question about disposal of unwanted prescription medication at the November meeting prompted this column. What do you do with unwanted medication? First, call your pharmacy; there may be a prescription take-back program in place. Second, call the St. Lucie County Solid Waste Authority (772-462-1768) to find out when there will be a prescription drop-off day. A drop box for unwanted medication is in the St. Lucie Co. Sheriff's Office lobby on Midway RD. Third, you may dispose of the medication in your household trash if you follow these guidelines:

- First, never flush medication down the toilet or pour it down a drain!
- Leave the medication in its original container, but mark out the name and prescription number.
- For pills or capsules, mix with a liquid like water, soda, or vinegar to dissolve the pills. Replace the cap and tape down with duct or packing tape.
- For liquids, mix with an unappetizing substance like used coffee grounds, cat litter, or a strong spice (turmeric, chili powder). Replace the cap and tape down with duct or packing tape.
- After the above actions, place the bottles in a non-opaque container (margarine tub, whipped topping container), anything that you cannot see through. Tape the lid on the container with duct or packing tape, then place the container in a separate garbage bag before adding it to your household trash.
- Never handle chemotherapy medications with your bare hands and never put these drugs in your household trash. Chemotherapy medications are considered hazardous waste and must be handled as such.

So, what counts as household hazardous waste, and what do you do with it? St. Lucie County considers household hazardous waste to be anything that is corrosive, reactive, toxic, or ignitable. This includes all fluorescent light bulbs, most household cleaners, pool chemicals, bleach, oil-based paints, motor oil and other petroleum-based products, solvents, pesticides, mothballs, all batteries, the list goes on! Residents of St. Lucie County may drop-off household hazardous waste for free during regular hours at the Solid Waste Authority Baling and Recycling Facility. The facility also accepts batteries and old electronic equipment including computers and peripherals, televisions, telephones, and radios. Regular hours are Monday to Friday 7:00 AM to 4:15 PM and Saturday 7:00 AM to 12:15 PM. Drop-offs are limited to 100

pounds of dry material or 5 gallons of liquid. A detailed brochure is available online at [http://www.stlucieco.gov/solid\\_waste/hh\\_hazard\\_waste.htm](http://www.stlucieco.gov/solid_waste/hh_hazard_waste.htm). The city of Port Saint Lucie hosts two free household hazardous waste drop-off days a year. Call 772-871-5100 to get the date of the next drop-off opportunity. Battery recycling is also available at all Wal-Mart locations, all St. Lucie Tire & Battery locations, and some Radio Shack stores.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection estimates the average Floridian has 100 lbs. of hazardous waste at home! What can you do to reduce the amount of hazardous waste in circulation? Primarily by choosing safer products. Look for products labeled "chlorine-free", "water-based", "citrus-based", "no dyes or perfumes", "biodegradable", "ammonia-free", "phosphate-free", and "non-petroleum based." Most household cleaning can be accomplished with white vinegar and baking soda. Use toxic products, like pesticides and paints, sparingly and carefully. Get the Solid Waste Authority brochure for more details to help you protect our environment from household hazardous waste.

### 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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**New membership:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Renewal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please send my "Laughing Gull" by:  
**Email** \_\_\_\_\_ or **Standard mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Thanks for your support.*

# Feathered Friends

Submitted by Ruth Neese

Good news from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service jumped off page one of today's newspaper—the Brown Pelican has been removed from the threatened and endangered species list! The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) lists the Brown Pelican as a species of Least Concern—good news indeed. These birds were originally threatened with extinction by feather hunters, prompting the creation of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge in Sebastian, FL in 1903. The most recent threat came from DDT, a pesticide that interfered with calcium deposition in eggs, causing weak eggshells that cracked under a parent bird's weight. Brown Pelicans are still federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Lacey Act. A monitoring program will be in place for 10 years to track pelican populations.

Brown Pelicans are common near shore year-round residents in St. Lucie Co. Brown Pelicans are the only dark-colored pelican and the only pelican that dives from the air into the water to catch its food. November signals the start of breeding season for our local pelicans, and sexually mature birds will develop a chest-

nut-brown stripe on the posterior neck and a yellow-tinted forehead. Eggs are typically laid in December in a flat, stick-built nest that is part of a colony. Eggs hatch approximately 30 days after being laid. Hatchling Brown Pelicans have no feathers or down, instead they have bare purple skin. Down slowly grows in, flowed by dark brown feathers. Juvenile Brown Pelicans are all brown in color while mature adults have a white head and neck.

Brown Pelicans are notorious for mobbing fish cleaning stations and begging for scraps. It is very important that fishermen do not feed these birds fish bones. The unprotected bones can become snagged in pelicans' pouches, causing punctures and tears along with pain and debilitation. When Brown Pelicans "steal" bait from line fisherman and are caught on the hook, encourage fishermen to reel in the bird and remove the hook like they would from a catch-and-release fish instead of simply cutting the line. Cutting the line without removing the hook condemns the bird to pain, line entanglement, and eventual death by starvation or strangulation. Remember, Brown Pelicans are indicators of the health of our near shore habitat, so let's be good neighbors.

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