



Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

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President's Message

The conversation corner of the December SLAS newsletter had an informative article by Ed Bowes (Conservation Chair) on environmental pollutants. This carried on the theme of the presentation on detection of pollutants in the Indian River given at the November SLAS general meeting.

I recently read an article about feminizing male large and smallmouth bass written by Eric Hagesman. He notes that a nine year study by the U.S. Geological Survey found that up to 91% of male largemouth and up to 100% of smallmouth bass were intersex in the hardest hit area, the Southeastern U.S. The intersex bass were sampled in the Apalachicola, Savannah and Pee Dee rivers. Feminized fish may not be able to reproduce; this could drive the bass into extinction.

Hormones (estrogen from birth control pills), endocrine substances and pharmaceuticals flushed from our toilets into rivers appear to be the most likely

culprit. Agricultural run off loaded with growth hormones is also high on the list.

In September the EPA identified nine hormones in our water. At this time we have no idea what they might do to humans.

Hagesman closes his article with this thought. "We can hope that the thought of drinking water that turns male fish into females will spur us to clean up our rivers."

Federal regulators have now listed some drugs as contaminants in our drinking water and have now launched a nationwide survey to check for pharmaceuticals at water treatment plants,

Join SLAS to help clean up our environment not only to protect our wildlife but also protect ourselves.

Thank you for your support. Remember to renew your membership and pay your dues.

Dan Walma

Calendar of Events

Dr. Joan Morrison is arriving in St. Lucie County on February 4, 2010 to speak on "Caracaras" at the St. Lucie Audubon's Monthly Meeting. The Meeting is taking place at the Oxbow Eco-Center, 5400 NW St. James Dr., Port St. Lucie, at 7:00 PM on February 4, 2010. Dr. Morrison received her Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation from the University of Florida and has conducted research on Crested Caracaras in Florida since 1992. Previously, Dr. Morrison worked as a wildlife biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska, Colorado, Washington, and New Mexico. Currently a Professor of Biology at Trinity College in Hartford, CT, she teaches courses in Conservation Biology, Global Bio diversity, Environmental Science, and Avian Ecology. Her research program continues to focus on Florida's caracara population and an urban population of Red-tailed Hawks. Admission is free. Contact: Liz Dunleavy - 772-489-9050.

Bud Adams Ranch Breakfast, February 20th at 8 a.m. • \$25 per person.

Our annual trip to the ranch is almost full, which includes a full hot breakfast and a tour of the ranch. If you are interested in going please call Anjula Smith at 772-924-8778 for reservations. We will be meeting at the Home Depot parking lot, which is on the east side of I-95, Extension 129 Okeechobee Road at 7:30 a.m. We will caravan from there to the ranch.

Painted Bunting Trip, February 27th at 8 a.m. • \$10 per person.

This is a tour to a private residence to see Painted and Indigo Buntings. This trip is nearly full at this time, so if you would like to attend please call Anjula Smith at 772-924-8878 for reservations. We will meet in the Sears parking lot on St. Lucie West Blvd. at 7:30 a.m. and carpool from there.

February Meeting: February 4, 2010 Speaker Dr. Joan Morrison

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

Christmas Bird Count a Success

By Camille S. Yates

To those who participated in the 110th Christmas Bird Count, thank you for a huge success! This year, we saw 133 different species and counted 18,340 individuals. Of note were 2 rare sightings – 6 canvasback ducks and a great white heron, a broad-winged hawk, and a short-tailed hawk. We could not have done so well without the following 41 participants: Jane Brooks, Eve Hanson, David Melton, Dan Walma, Bill Horvath, Dylan Horvath, Liz Dunleavy, Terri Brown, Scott Godfrey, Mary Giles, Sandy Bogan, Mike Woodward, Amy and Mike Dahan, Julie Adams, Deena and Dana Wade, Bobbi and Walter

Deemer, John and Ann Dowset, Chuck Olson, Diane Goldberg, Liz Sapia, Marge and Norm Neuberger, Ruth Neese, Ed Bowes, Jennifer Piercy, Allie and Sam Comer, George Love, Priscilla Malley, Kathy Mayshar, Tom and Carol Hays, Billi Wagner, Hart and Jewel Rufe, and Phil and Julie Lounibus.

Lifetime Members of SLAS

Bob Bangert

Liz and Bob Dunleavy

Hank and Dotty Hull

Dan and Donna Walma

*** 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
Treasure Coast Wildlife Center
Billi Wagner**

www.stlucieaudubon.org

ST.LUCIE AUDUBON SOCIETY 2009 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

President	Dan Walma	oculusdw1@aol.com
Vice President	Ruth Neese	eddie_ruth@msn.com
Recording Secretary	Adella Blacka	ABLACKA@gmail.com
Corresponding Secretary	Millie Estersohn	milliern@comcast.net
Treasurer	Jay Wise	Lindyjay@bellsouth.net
Directors-at-Large	Terri Brown	tmbrown761@bellsouth.net
Directors-at-Large	Peggy Silletto	Jpsilletto@aol.com
Directors-at-Large	Ed Bowes	eddie-ruth@msn.com
Parliamentarian	Peggy Silletto	Jpsilletto@aol.com
Newsletter	Pat Bounds	wwalter3@bellsouth.net
Program Co-Chairs	Grace Stock	5Stillbirding@peoplepc.com
Program Co-Chairs	Liz Dunleavy	DunZippy@aol.com
Membership Chair	Peggy Silletto	Jpsilletto@aol.com
Special Events Chair	Anjula Smith	anjula7@aol.com
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Bird ID Classes	Liz Dunleavy	DunZippy@aol.com
Hospitality Chair	Judith Whittemore	wilbarwit@bellsouth.net
Chapter Historian	Judy Gersony	jagersony@hotmail.com
Webmaster	Mary Dodge	mary@jackmaryetc.com

Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

St. Lucie County Growth Management staff and the Western Lands Study Project are beginning implementation of the Western Lands Study Scope of Services (WLSSS). This project began in August 2009 in conjunction with the University of Florida with the purpose of developing a plan for sustainable agriculture in St. Lucie Co. that respected private property rights while promoting rural lifestyles and environmental conservation. As reported in the WLSSS, there are seven key elements in the process:

1. Consideration of a natural (or green) systems plan.
2. Resolving the definition of open space in agricultural developments.
3. Transportation and other services to rural lands.
4. Assessment of programs that utilize the transfer of environmental credits or development rights.
5. Use of ecosystem payments for rural landowners that provide needed environmental services.
6. Economic and land value analyses of alternative rural land uses.
7. Significant public participation through educational forums and the Western Lands Assembly.

The next educational forum is scheduled for February 11 and the Western Lands Assembly is scheduled March 6. If you want a voice in the future of growth and land conservation in St. Lucie Co., please attend these sessions! The county commissioners are doing their best to plan for a sustainable green future. Failure of this process could have disastrous consequences, like Port St. Lucie annexing all land south of Midway and west to the county line. Make your voice heard in favor of a sustainable future for St. Lucie Co. The details are available on the county Web site at http://www.stlucieco.gov/growth/western_lands.htm

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

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Address: _____
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Please send my "Laughing Gull" by:
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Thanks for your support.

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Conservation Corner

Feathered Friends

Submitted by Ruth Neese

Have you noticed more Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) in your local pond or canal? According to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Glossy Ibis population has increased, and more birds are breeding on Florida's east coast. The Glossy Ibis is the most widespread ibis species in the world, with populations found on every continent except Antarctica. Despite its range, the Glossy is a recent arrival in North America, first recorded in the late 19th Century. It is presumed to have arrived from Africa in much the same way as Cattle Egrets. The first breeding population was recorded in Florida in the 1920s.

The Glossy Ibis is a wading bird, preferring shallow freshwater ponds, canals, marshes, and swamps. It eats by probing mud and soft soil with its long downward-curling beak. Foods include worms, gastropods, snails, crayfish, frogs, toads, small fish, seeds, and grains. In breeding plumage, the Glossy Ibis is a very colorful bird. A mature adult has iridescent chestnut feathers on its head, neck, chest, and underparts with lower back, wings, and tail covered in metallic shades of bronze, purple, and green. We are approaching breeding season now, so watch for the dull brown Glossy Ibis to transform into a magnificent shining wader marching along St. Lucie Co. canals.

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