



# Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

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## President's Message

Florida's shorebirds, beaches, coral reefs, sea grass beds and fishery could all be threatened if oil drilling takes place in the coastal waters of Florida. Why take this chance if a recently released report is correct? According to the report, Florida off shore reserves amount to less than a week's worth of oil.

Coastal oil drilling has been called dirty, dangerous and ugly.

The Florida Legislature is now being pressured by lobbyists with deep pockets, full of money from the oilmen, to lift the ban on drilling for crude oil in Florida's coastal waters.

The Florida State House passed a bill last year to allow offshore drilling, 3 miles and beyond, in state waters. The Senate may take up the bill soon.

Thousands of Floridians, on February 13, 2010, gathered on beaches and held hands from Pensacola to Key West and Miami to Jacksonville, creating human lines in the sand protesting oil drilling in Florida waters.

Your voice and actions can make a difference. The Audubon of Florida web site ([audubonofflorida.org](http://audubonofflorida.org)) has a sample message to send to your State Senators and State Representatives or you may contact Sen. Bill Nelson by phone 202 224 5274 or by the web [billnelson.senate.gov](http://billnelson.senate.gov).

Join the SLAS, attend our meetings, enjoy our field trips and invite your friends and neighbors.

Thank you for your support.

Dan Walma

## Calendar of Events

### April 15, 2010 Field Trip (Thursday) River Lilly Cruise Boat!

Our April field trip is something special...a late afternoon/early evening boat trip on the River Lilly. This will be on Thursday, April 15 and we need to be at the boat dock in River Park Marina on Prima Vista Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, no later than 3:45 PM. The boat departs promptly at 4:00 PM. Owners of the River Lilly are our own Audubon members, Deena and Dana Wade, and they will take us to the rookeries on the St. Lucie River where we will see hundreds of nesting birds! This is an experience you do not want to miss. The trip is open to all, but you MUST call Deena at 772-489-8344 to reserve a seat.

Cost is \$20 per person and Deena and Dana are generously donating the fees back to the St. Lucie Audubon Society in honor of the memory of long-time member Dotty Hull. Please, let's make this a full boat in Dotty's honor! Call Deena ASAP to reserve a seat. 772-489-8344.

### May Meeting: May 6, 2010 Speaker Greg Braun - Piping Plovers.

### May 8, 2010 Field Trip going to Fort Pierce/Sebastian State Park.

Meeting location for the Field Trip to be announced at the Membership Meeting.

April Meeting: April 1, 2010 Speaker Jennifer Cochran with the Loggerhead Marinelife Center

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)

## St. Lucie Audubon Field Trip to Vero Wetlands March 6, 2010

Twelve members participated in the Saturday morning field trip to the Vero Wetlands. The sky was cloudless, minimal wind and temperature from the low forties to the low sixties. We identified sixty species, en route and at the wetlands, plus an American Alligator and a Northern River Otter. Nesting Sandhill Cranes, Blue-winged Teal

engaged in a mating ritual, Green-winged Teal (smallest dabbling duck in North America) and an American Black Duck (a more Northern bird seldom in Florida) were seen. The complete bird list is available on the SLAS web site. [stlucie-audubon.org](http://stlucie-audubon.org)

Elections will be held at the April SLAS General Meeting. The candidates for 2010-2011 are: President-Ruth Neese, Vice President - Dorothy Schultz, Treasurer - Jay Wise, Recording Secretary - Adella Blacka, Coresponding Secretary - Liz Bardsley, Director-at-Large - Liz Dunleavy

### Lifetime Members of SLAS

Dan and Donna Walma

Bob Bangert

Bob and Liz Dunleavy

Hart and Jewel Rufe

### \*\*\* 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  
Sampala Farms

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

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

President	Dan Walma	oculusdw1@aol.com
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Membership Chair	Peggy Silletto	Jpsilletto@aol.com
Special Events Chair	Anjula Smith	anjula7@aol.com
Field Trip Chair	Dorothy Schultz	edsdks@bellsouth.net
Conservation Chair	Ed Bowes	eddie-ruth@msn.com
Education Co-Chairs	Terri Brown	tmbrown761@bellsouth.net
Bird ID Classes	Liz Dunleavy	DunZippy@aol.com
Hospitality Chair	Judith Whittemore	wilbarwhit@bellsouth.net
Chapter Historian	Judy Gersony	jagersony@hotmail.com
Webmaster	Mary Dodge	mary@jackmaryetc.com

## Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

Can you name the major state-funded conservation program in Florida? It is Florida Forever, which succeeded Preservation 2000 in 2001. Through Florida Forever, the state has protected 53,600 acres of springs and springsheds, 5190 acres of shoreline, 300,000 acres of sustainable forest, and 158,700 acres of working agricultural land. However, there remain many valuable lands, watersheds, estuaries, and ecosystems in need of protection.

Florida Forever relies on state funding for making purchases, and in this economic downturn, state funding is in jeopardy. Our Agricultural Commissioner, Charles Bronson, recently condemned the purchase of land through Florida Forever that expanded Paynes Prairie Preserve. Commissioner Bronson contended the money

could be better spent on other things. There are many in the state legislature with similar opinions. Shortsightedness at the state level would jeopardize the Indian River Lagoon Blueway project, a Florida Forever priority in St. Lucie Co.

My belief is that preserving land that provides potable water, sustains wildlife, and supports the reproduction of marine life is more crucial to the people of Florida than diverting preservation funds to some other purpose. Sustaining wildlife insures a generally healthy environment and supporting marine life promotes tourism and sustainable fishing. Governor Charlie Crist has earmarked 50 million dollars for Florida Forever in 2010. Write your state legislators and demand that funding for Florida Forever projects remain intact.

## Quick Takes

by Paul J. Baicich

Gyrfalcons and many other raptors are known to return to the same nest sites over long periods and many generations, but until recently nobody knew how long this activity could persist. As part of a study of 13 gyrfalcons nests in Greenland, scientists have discovered a gyrfalcons nesting site that is at least 2,500 years old.

Researchers used radiocarbon dating of guano and nest debris to determine that one nest in Kangerlussuaq (in central-west Greenland) is surely more than 2,500 years old. Three other nests in the area are more than 1,000 years old.

## 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.*

# Feathered Friends

## Inside This Issue

### PAGE 1

President's  
Message

### PAGE 2

Officers &  
Committee  
Chairs

### PAGE 3

Membership  
Application

Conservation  
Corner

Submitted by Ruth Neese

This is the first of a two-part series on our nation's national symbol, the Bald Eagle. Florida has a large resident population of Bald Eagles; in 2009 the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reported 1340 nesting pairs. Interestingly, it is nesting behavior that makes South Florida Bald Eagles unique.

Eagles begin gathering nesting material in late September or early October and persist in nesting behavior through May, much longer than eagles in other parts of the U.S.! The FWC defines Bald Eagle nesting season as October 1 through May 15. Egg laying may begin as early as October or as late as April; later nests are usually the result of a failed first clutch. Although nests may be constructed in any large tree, 75% of eagle nests in Florida are built in living native pines. Nearly all nests are found 1.8 miles from water and are located within a territory encompassing approximately 1.2 square miles. A breeding pair

may maintain up to five nests within that territory.

Most clutches in Florida are laid between December and January and consist of two sequentially laid eggs. Average incubation period is 35 days. Nestlings in Florida fledge at 11 weeks of age and remain with their parents for an additional one to two months before dispersing northward in late spring. Keep your eyes open, you just might see one of Florida's special eagles!

## New! CLASSIFIED ADS Birders Items Only!

**FOR SALE: Zeiss Classic Binocular, 10/40 like new, three sold in last 2 weeks on E-Bay \$640.00 - \$900.00, asking \$550.00. Can be seen at the next SLAS general meeting in April or call 772-595-8988.**

address to  
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