



# LAUGHING GULL

## President's Message

From Ed Bowes

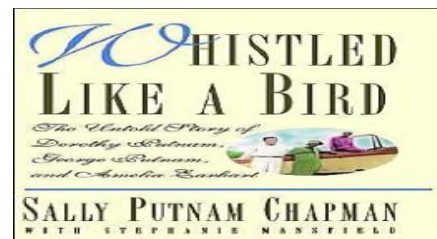


I need to thank several people for the success of the James Currie lecture in March. First and foremost, Liz Dunleavy for her huge efforts in planning and executing the event. Second, Hart Rufe for his generous sponsorship

donation. Third, everyone who helped make the event a success—Adella Blacka, Ellen Lynch, and John Imperato, our other sponsors, and members of our Board. I hope we can repeat the success next year.

## April Speaker: Grace Stock

Grace Stock will be giving a review of the book by Sally Chapman, *Whistled Like a Bird*. The book is partially fictionalized account of Dorothy Putnam, Sally Chapman's grandmother and the founder of the St. Lucie Audubon Society. Please come and listen to Grace recount episodes involving Dorothy, George Putnam, and Amelia Earhart.



## IMPORTANT DATES

### Bird Counts



**Christmas Bird Count:** St. Lucie County results posted <http://stlucieaudubon.org>



**Bird-A-Thon:** April 6 or 7, 2013. You have the option of counting one of those days. Register via email to [SLABirdathon@gmail.com](mailto:SLABirdathon@gmail.com)

### Special Events



**New! Photographing Wildlife Workshop:** April 20, 2013. Register with John Nelson at (772) 485-8129

## Feathered Friends by Ruth Neese

Brown Pelicans (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) are common near shore year-round residents in St. Lucie Co. Brown Pelicans are the only dark-colored pelican and the only one 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 chestnut-brown stripe on the posterior neck and a yellow-tinted forehead. Birds that are a solid dull brown color are this year's kids, aka juveniles or immatures.

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. Call a wildlife rehabilitator if you see a pelican in distress.



*Juvenile Brown Pelican*

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### Field Trip Report – West Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility Wetland



*Sora – Photo by Hart Rufe*

Dr. Dan Walma, a Certified Florida Master Naturalist, led this morning of birding at this popular wetland just east of I-95 in Vero Beach. Weather was perfect! The 12 participants enjoyed the birding and impromptu lessons on birds and nature that Dan always shares on his trips.

A total of 48 bird species were seen at the wetlands; add to that a Swallow-tailed Kite we saw on the drive from Port St Lucie to Vero Beach. We were also treated to the antics of several otters playing in the ponds and embankments at the wetlands.



## Conservation Corner by Ruth Neese Brown Pelican Deaths in Brevard County

Brown Pelicans are in the news again, but for the wrong reason this time. Three years ago, pelicans were removed from the Endangered Species List. This winter, the birds are back in the news because of a mysterious die-off in Brevard County.

Since January, more than 100 dead Brown Pelicans have been found in Brevard County between Melbourne and Merritt Island. Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) researchers reported the birds were emaciated and heavily parasitized. This means the deaths were not sudden; the birds experienced a period of declining health before they died.

As of March 14, 2013, FWC had not identified a causative agent for the pelicans' deaths. Researchers have assessed the environment for potential causes and have sent multiple lab samples to the National

Wildlife Health Center for testing. Botulism was suspected initially, but the birds died too slowly for botulism. Many test results are still pending.

Be on the lookout for ill or dead pelicans here in St. Lucie County. If the causative agent is an infectious organism, it could spread to other pelican populations. Please **do not handle sick or dead** pelicans! Leave that to the professionals. Citizens should report any dead or sick pelicans to FWC by calling the Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-3922 or online at [MyFWC.com/Bird](http://MyFWC.com/Bird). For local assistance, call Creature Safe Place at 772-468-6616 or the Treasure Coast Wildlife Center at 772-286-6200.

Remember, the health of our pelicans is linked to the health of our water and the Indian River Lagoon.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bruce Bardsley Memorial Bird-A-Thon

Hope you will join in the fun of participating in our Bird-A-Thon!! You pick the day, either April 6 or April 7, and do just as much birding as you feel like doing, anywhere in St Lucie County! You do not even have to leave your own backyard, or you can roam our beautiful county and bird your favorite spots. You are counting species, not the number of individual birds. Bird solo or bird as a team. Any number of people and any age group can participate!

Let your friends, family, and co-workers know you are participating and see if they will sponsor you as a donation to SLAS. There are prizes for the individual with the highest species count, team with the highest count, and for the individual or team that raises the most money. You only need \$5 in sponsorships to be eligible for the prizes. Forms are available at <http://stlucieaudubon.org>

Register with Dorothy Schultz ASAP at 772-349-6025 or by email at SLABirdathon@gmail.com Come out and have fun!



### Sponsors Wanted!

St. Lucie County has a policy of charging non-profits for the use of county facilities.

Our cost is **\$45 dollars a month**, payable in advance. We are looking for sponsors to underwrite the cost of our monthly meetings at the 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 St. Lucie Audubon's monthly programs, please send checks to:

**St. Lucie Audubon Society**

**PO Box 12474**

**Ft. Pierce, FL 34979**

### We would like to thank our generous meeting sponsors:

Water Lily Cruises

Normand & MaryLou  
Lemaire

Robert Bangert

Lowell Sasser

### ST. LUCIE AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Board members may be  
contacted by email at  
[stlucieaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:stlucieaudubon@gmail.com)

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

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

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

*Thanks for your support.*

### Remember!

A St. Lucie County-specific bird checklist is available on our chapter Web site. The birds are listed in taxonomic order and the list indicates when you are most likely to see a particular bird in St. Lucie Co.

Visit  
<http://stlucieaudubon.org> to download the list. It's free!

### NEW! A second Wildlife and Nature Photography Workshop will be in April!

Demand was so great for the first Wildlife and Nature Photography Workshop that a second one is planned for April 20, 2013. Again, it is a joint venture of the St. Lucie Audubon Society and the St. Lucie chapter of the Florida Master Naturalists. The workshop will be held at the University of Florida's Agricultural Extension Office in Ft. Pierce. John Nelson will again be one of the instructors.

Space is limited to thirty people, so register early! Call John at (772) 485-8129 or email [floridaswildoutdoors@gmail.com](mailto:floridaswildoutdoors@gmail.com) to register.



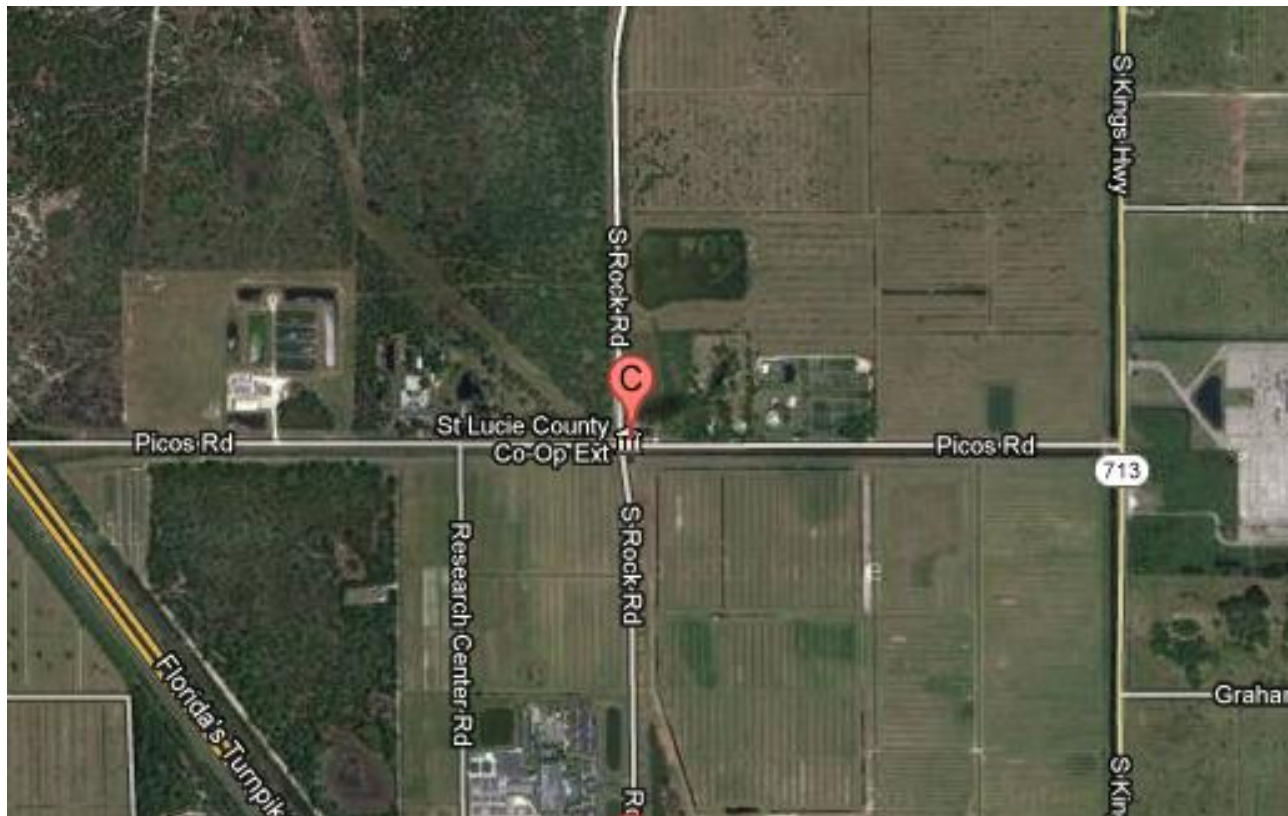
## Wildlife and Nature Photography Workshop A Big Hit

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, our first Wildlife and Nature Photography workshop was conducted at the Manatee Observation and Education Center. The workshop was co-sponsored by St Lucie Audubon, the St. Lucie Chapter of the Florida Master Naturalists, and the Manatee Observation and Education Center.

Twenty-four photographers registered for the event while another 40 were put on a waiting list for a future workshop. Our instructors were Mary White and John Nelson.

Mary is an award winning nature photographer that has won numerous awards and had her work shown at the A.E. Backus museum. John Nelson is a wildlife videographer and produces educational videos for environmental non-profits. His video footage of the Loggerhead Shrike will be included in an upcoming episode of National Geographic's "World's Deadliest" television series.

A second Wildlife and Nature Photography Workshop has been scheduled for April 20, 2013. Due to parking problems in downtown Ft. Pierce, the workshop location has been moved to the University of Florida Agricultural Extension Office at 8400 Picos Road, Suite 101, Ft. Pierce, FL. This location is west of I-95 off of Kings Highway. Contact John Nelson at (772) 485-8129 for more details.



## Species Seen on the Indian River West County Wastewater Facility Field Trip—March 9, 2013

Mottled Duck	Sora
Blue-winged Teal	Common Gallinule
Northern Shoveler	American Coot
Ring-necked Duck	Sandhill Crane
Lesser Scaup	Wilson's Snipe
Hooded Merganser	Laughing Gull
Pied-billed Grebe	Ring-billed Gull
Wood Stork	Caspian Tern
Double-crested Cormorant	Mourning Dove
Anhinga	Belted Kingfisher
Great Blue Heron	Loggerhead Shrike
Great Egret	American Crow
Snowy Egret	Fish Crow
Little Blue Heron	Tree Swallow
Tricolored Heron	Gray Catbird
Cattle Egret	Northern Mockingbird
Green Heron	Common Yellowthroat
Black-crowned Night-heron	Palm Warbler
White Ibis	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Glossy Ibis	Savannah Sparrow
Black Vulture	Northern Cardinal
Turkey Vulture	Red-winged Blackbird
Osprey	Common Grackle
Bald Eagle	Boat-tailed Grackle



## **Links to Audubon of Florida News**

### **Links to stories on the Audubon of Florida News Blog:**

#### **Florida Gulf Ecosystem Priorities for the RESTORE Act:**

[http://fl.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/audubon\\_gulfrestoration\\_march2013.pdf](http://fl.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/audubon_gulfrestoration_march2013.pdf)

#### **First Tamiami Trail Bridge Opens:**

<http://audubonoffloridanews.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Tamiami-Trail-One-Mile-Bridge-March-2013.pdf>

#### **Audubon Advocates for Increased Water Conservation in South Florida:**

<http://audubonoffloridanews.org/?p=13287>

#### **Audubon has been Protesting HB 1121, which Legalizes Feral Cat Colonies:**

<http://audubonoffloridanews.org/?p=13340>

### **Other News of Interest:**

#### **Puzzling Manatee and Pelican Deaths in Brevard County:**

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/os-manatee-pelican-lagoon-catastrophe-20130323,0,7737998.story>



## Coming Attractions: April Field Trip & May Speaker

**April Field Trip: Saturday, April 6 or Sunday, April 7, 2013 for the 2nd Annual Bruce Bardsley Memorial Bird-A-Thon**

This event is a bit different! The Bird-A-Thon is similar to a walkathon in that it features participants who look for and record different species of birds and sponsors who pledge an amount of money for each species identified or simply donate to a participant. You can enter as an individual or team. Prizes will be awarded for the

most species identified in each category. More details on registration will be available at the March meeting. Email [SLABirdathon@gmail.com](mailto:SLABirdathon@gmail.com) or call Dorothy to register—772-349-6025.

**May Speaker: Thursday, May 2 at 7 PM at the Oxbow Eco-Center**

Anita Neal, County Extension Director

Bugs & Insects



*Mark your calendars!*

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*Help our chapter save printing and mailing costs by signing-up for the email newsletter. The newsletter can then be printed out if you prefer to read it offline. To request the email version, send your name and email address to [eddie\\_ruth@msn.com](mailto:eddie_ruth@msn.com)*

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Fort Pierce, FL 34979