



LAUGHING GULL

President's Message

From Ed Bowes



Anyone with a smart phone should recognize the odd looking square above. It is called a QR code, which is an abbreviation for Quick Response Code. The QR code was invented in 1994 by Toyota to improve parts and inventory tracking. Now QR codes are everywhere!

Smart phones with the proper applications can decode the QR code to display text, pictures, or open a Web page

in the phone's browser. The QR code above opens the St. Lucie Audubon Web page in a smart phone browser. This code will begin appearing on St. Lucie Audubon publications and brochures to provide rapid access to our Web site. Quick access will permit people to see the range of activities our chapter offers and enhance opportunities for participation in chapter events.

IMPORTANT DATES

Bird Counts



Christmas Bird Count: December 14, 2013. Watch for more information!

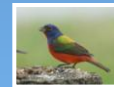


Bird-A-Thon: April 5 - 13, 2014. You have the option of counting one of those days. More details later.

Special Events



Adams Ranch Breakfast: Will be February 15, 2014. Watch for more information.



Painted Bunting Trip: Will be scheduled in 2014. Watch for more information.

Speaker: Sandy Komito, Thursday November 7, 2013

Join us at the Oxbow Eco-Center on St. James Drive in Port St. Lucie for Sandy Komito, who has the record for a Big Year—748 species! He is open to any questions you may have.



Feathered Friends by Ruth Neese

I believe the Eastern Screech Owl generates more bird ID questions than any other owl! Yet, it is the most common owl in this part of Florida.

Eastern Screech Owls are small, only 6 – 9 inches in height with an 18-inch wingspan. Like the Great Horned Owl, screech owls have ear tuft feathers, a large head, and a very short neck. This diminutive size and the ear tufts lead many people to assume an adult Eastern Screech Owl is a “baby” Great Horned Owl!

Eastern Screech Owls come in three color morphs—gray, red, and brown. The gray and red morphs are pictured

here. One, two, or three color morphs can be found in a single clutch of eggs.

These birds are nocturnal and are hard to see. They have very distinctive calls, which are not screeches. Instead, one call is an even-pitched trill used to communicate between family members. The other primary call is a shrill descending whinny used for territorial defense. Screech owls only “screech” when under significant duress, such as defending nestlings. So, the next time you hear a trilling song at night, look in the trees for an Eastern Screech Owl.



Eastern Screech Owls have more than one color morph.

Field Trip – Saturday November 9 with Capt. “Chop”



Captain Barry “Chop” Lege

Boat Ride Indian River Lagoon We are lucky again to have Capt. Chop Lege taking us on his pontoon boat for a trip on the Indian River for birding and updates on the state of the lagoon. Meet at the TIKI BAR in Downtown Fort Pierce no later than 9:45 am. Get there early to find a place to park and grab a bite to eat at the great Farmers Market held there each morning! Trip usually lasts 2½ hours. Seats go quickly, so please call me EARLY to reserve your seats! (Dorothy 772-349-6025)



Conservation Corner: Owl Prowls

By Ruth Neese

Most of you are familiar with the myriad ways of birding during daylight hours. There is casual birding, backyard biding, an organized field trip, searching for that “lifer,” and bird banding expeditions. These opportunities also exist for nocturnal birds, but a little more planning and effort are necessary.

One of the most popular outings for nocturnal birding is called an “owl prowl.” These excursions may be simply for the pleasure of locating owls in the wild or have a more scientific purpose, such as surveying the population or scouting out breeding pairs of owls. Regardless of purpose, there are some commonalities for all owl prowls.

First, expect the owl prowl to be scheduled on the night of the full moon. This makes it easier for humans to see and owls tend to call more on moonlit

nights. Start time is usually around dusk. There will be a trip leader who will play taped owl calls to tempt local birds to investigate the “intruder.”

Second, familiarize yourself with the vocalizations of the owls you are most likely to encounter in the wild. For this area, that means you should be able to recognize the calls of Great Horned Owls, Barred Owls, Barn Owls, and Eastern Screech Owls. Burrowing Owls are in the area, but are not nocturnal. Knowing what to listen for will give you a great head start!

Third, owl prowls typically occur most often during owl breeding season. In South Florida, owls began courtship in the fall and nest through the winter and early spring. You will have an opportunity to participate in one or more owl prowls with St. Lucie

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Audubon this year!

The owl prowls will be led by Billi Wagner and Tim Towles, both expert birders, and are for the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas survey. The Florida Breeding Bird Atlas needs your help locating Barn, Great Horned, Eastern Screech, and Barred Owls in St. Lucie County. Sunset on evenings before the full moon allow an early start and finish.

The first Owl Prowl is November 14, 2013. Location to be surveyed: where I-95 crosses the Turnpike, south of Route 70 (Okeechobee Rd) to Midway Rd., and between 11 mile Rd. and the Crossroads Commerce Park. The exact meeting place and time will be announced at the Nov. 7 meeting, or contact Dorothy Schultz that week. We will teach the owl calls. Plan for up to 3 hours in the field (you may leave at any time) and have dinner beforehand, or bring a snack along. In 2014 we will begin surveying other areas of the county. Be sure to sign up with Dorothy you can be notified if the trip is postponed due to weather.

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:**

Travel Made Easy by Ellen

Ed Bowes & Ruth Neese

**Treasure Coast Wildlife
Center**

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Board members may be contacted by email at 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: _____
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New membership: _____ **Renewal:** _____

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

Special Field Trips in March, April, and May 2014!!

Expert birders Billi Wagner and Tim Towles will be leading owl prowls here in St. Lucie County on full moon nights in March, April, and May of 2014.

Mark the full moons on your calendars and be ready to have a "hooting" good time birding for owls.



The September field trip to Hillmoor Lakes Park found 19 bird species.



Want to start learning your owl calls? Try visiting the Macaulay Library of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The Macaulay Library is the world's largest and oldest scientific archive of biodiversity audio and video recordings. The library's mission is to collect and preserve recordings of each species' behavior and natural history, to facilitate the ability of others to collect and preserve such recordings, and to actively

promote the use of these recordings for diverse purposes spanning scientific research, education, conservation, and the arts. The URL is <http://macaulaylibrary.org> Below are some links to owl calls to get you started.



Great Horned Owl

<http://macaulaylibrary.org/audio/22873>



Barred Owl

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Barred_Owl/sounds



Barn Owl

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Barn_Owl/sounds



Eastern Screech Owl

http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Eastern_Screech-Owl/sounds

Coming Attractions: December Field Trips & Speaker

**December Field Trip:
Saturday, December 7 car trip
to Everglades National Park.**
Trip will be to the main park, not
Shark Valley. Plan to leave Port
St. Lucie at 7 AM sharp. We will
be exiting the park between 3:30
and 4 PM. Be sure to sign up
with Dorothy Schultz 772-349-
6025.

**December Speaker: Thursday,
Dec. 5 at 7 PM at the Oxbow
Eco-Center in Port St. Lucie**

Dan Martinelli, Executive
Director of the Treasure Coast
Wildlife Center will be speaking
on the changes to our local
ecosystem caused by the addition
of non-native plants and animals.

“Natives vs. Exotics”



Mark your calendars!

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

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Fort Pierce, FL 34979