



LAUGHING GULL

President's Message

From Ed Bowes



I want to thank everyone who participated in this year's Christmas Bird Count! The weather was mixed, and some teams had rain, but the count was a success. The team covering Area 3, Hart Rufe and Liz Dunleavy, saw 72 species and scored the highest species count. Every team did a great job and tallied some beautiful birds. Species sighted included Crested Caracara, Bald Eagle, American

Oystercatcher, Painted Bunting, and Yellow-crowned Night Heron. A special thank you to Dana and Deena Wade for counting Area 5 along the North Fork by boat.

Another thank you to everyone who contributed food and their time to making our potluck dinner after the Christmas Bird Count a success. Here's to next year!

IMPORTANT DATES

Bird Counts



Christmas Bird Count: Full report coming soon!

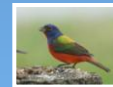


Bird-A-Thon: April 5 - 13, 2014. You have the option of counting one of those days. More details later.

Special Events



Adams Ranch Breakfast: February 15, 2014. Cost \$25. Register with Maryellen McGarry 772-359-5416.



Painted Bunting Trip: March 1, 2014. Cost \$10. Register with Maryellen McGarry 772-359-5416.

Speaker: Sam Fried, Thursday January 2, 2014

Sam will provide a talk with amazing pictures about the birds and animals in Ecuador's Cotopaxi National Park in the Andes Mountains, plus the natural beauty and laboratory of evolution, the Galapagos Islands. The talk will also showcase Peru's spectacular Machu Picchu.



Feathered Friends by Ruth Neese

It's winter in Florida and that means we are being treated to the presence of hundreds of what birders call LBBs. I have heard this acronym translated as Little Bitty Bird and Little Brown Bird. An LBB is one of those warblers that zooms across your view so fast you do not have time to identify the bird!

One of the very common LBBS in St. Lucie County is the Palm Warbler (*Setophaga palmarum*). During breeding season, this warbler has distinctive yellow facial markings and a rusty red cap. During the winter, it is just another drab, streaky, quick LBB that can challenge your skills. Here are some ID

tips for you.

First, Palm Warblers are tail-bobbers; their tails pump up-and-down almost constantly. Second, these warblers have yellow undertail coverts. That means the feathers underneath the tail near the body are yellow. The yellow color can sometimes extend up to the belly. Finally, you often find Palm Warblers foraging for insects on the ground in open areas like parks or your lawn. So, now I am sure you can identify at least one of Florida's "confusing fall warblers!"



Palm Warbler in Winter Plumage

Field Trip – Saturday January 4 to Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge



Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge

Avid and expert birders Hart and Jewel Rufe have again volunteered to lead this trip to Merritt Island NWR. This trip usually includes a stop at Viera Wetlands also. Hart will go over the details at our Jan. 2 meeting.

Plan on meeting at the Home Depot on Okeechobee Road in Fort Pierce by 6:30 a.m. on Jan. 4, and we will carpool from there. Bring snacks and beverages.

Leave a message on Dorothy's cell phone if you plan on coming on this trip (772-349-6025)



Conservation Corner: The Crosstown Parkway

By Ruth Neese

You may have noticed the news articles in the local paper announcing final federal approval for the bridge across the North Fork associated with Port St. Lucie's Crosstown Parkway. It seems that the feds have approved the route that is most environmentally destructive for part of the Savannas State Preserve called Halpatiokee. This portion of the preserve runs along the north fork of the St. Lucie River between US 1 north of Walton RD in Port Saint Lucie and the North Fork of the St. Lucie River.

This property was purchased with your tax dollars via CARL and *Florida Forever* funding.

Halpatiokee contains some of the last sub-tropical hammocks along the North Fork that were to be preserved to help maintain the health of the river. The land was not purchased as a cheap and easy bridge footing for the City of Port St. Lucie (Route 1C highlighted in yellow). Five other potential routes for the Crosstown Parkway exist and all those options are less environmentally destructive. The St.

Lucie Audubon Society, the Conservation Alliance of St. Lucie County, and other local conservation groups have opposed using Halpatiokee as a bridge footing since the idea was first voiced by the City of Port St. Lucie.

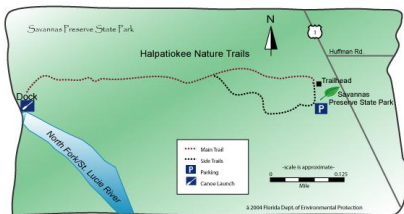
A public comment period is open **until December 30, 2013**. Please contact Cathy Kendall at the Federal Highway Administration and Patricia Roebing in the Port St. Lucie City Engineer's Office to voice your opposition to this proposed route for the Crosstown Parkway. Contact Cathy Kendall at cathy.kendall@dot.gov. Contact Patricia Roebing at 772-871-5176 or PatR@cityofpsl.com. To mail comments to the City Engineer, send them to: City Engineer's Office, Building B, 121 SW Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, FL, 34984. Sample email comments follow:

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I am against using route 1C to complete the Crosstown Parkway. I strongly object to placing a bridge footing in a park purchased with public tax dollars to preserve a fragile ecosystem. There are five other routes available for completion of the Crosstown Parkway, all of them less damaging to the ecosystem contained in Halpatiokee Park. Mitigation property remote from the area concerned in no way compensates for the loss of this ecosystem or for the potential detrimental effects on the health of the St. Lucie River.

Please alter the text above to personalize your comments. You might even want to include remarks about the City of Port St. Lucie acquiring additional debt when city finances are already groaning under bad debt. **PLEASE** send in your comments by December 30!



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 and other donors:

Alto & Dorothy Adams
Randy & Mimi Swaringen
Travel Made Easy by Ellen

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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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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.



A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher from the Christmas Bird Count.

Coming Attractions: February Field Trip & Speaker

February Field Trip: Saturday, February 1 to STA-5 in Clewiston, FL.

This trip will be lead by expert birder Sam Fried. At STA-5 we drive in a caravan around the water impoundments. Tour is usually done before noon. Contact Dorothy Schultz 772-349-6025.

Adams Ranch Breakfast, Saturday February 15.

Contact Maryellen McGarry to register—772-359-5416.

February Speaker: Thursday, February 6 at 7 PM at the Oxbow Eco-Center in Port St. Lucie

Avid wildlife photographer and birder Amy Marques will be speaking on how to capture fine art bird and nature photography.

“Fine Art Bird Photography”



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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St. Lucie Audubon Society PO Box12474
Fort Pierce, FL 34979