



LAUGHING GULL

President's Message

From Ed Bowes



February is going to be a very busy month! In addition to our general meeting and great field trip, there are multiple special events all happening on the same day. On February 15, please attend or help with:

- **The Adams Ranch Breakfast**—A tour of the Adams Ranch in SLC that includes a wonderful breakfast and benefits our chapter.
- **Party in the Park**—A celebration on conservation at the Ft. Pierce Inlet State Park from 10 AM to 4 PM
- **Walk on the Wild Side**—A speed walk relay and photo contest in Stuart from 9 AM to 6 PM that benefits all local Audubon societies.

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: Amy Marques, Thursday February 6, 2014

Amy will be speaking on "Fine Art Bird Photography." An avid bird and wildlife photographer, Amy has won several photography awards. These included the *Audubon Magazine* Photo Award in 2010 and the Nature's Best Winland Smith Rice International Award in 2011. Her winning Nature's Best photo hung in the Smithsonian in 2011.



Feathered Friends by Ruth Neese

It has been quite a year for exotic visitors to North Florida. A Snowy Owl was spotted in Little Talbot State Park off Jacksonville December 28, and the stunners just kept coming! There have been Snow Buntings in Huguenot Park and a Harlequin Duck at Ft. Clinch State Park in Fernandina Beach.

Harlequin Ducks breed in Alaska, extreme western Canada, and along the Labrador coast. Normally, these ducks winter no further south than the New England coast. To have one this far south is very unusual.

Normally found along turbulent rocky coasts or in

fast-moving mountain rivers, Harlequin Ducks dive for fish, crayfish, and other marine invertebrates. They forage for food at or near the bottom of rivers, streams, and shorelines. The calm, relatively warm North Florida waters must seem very strange to this visitor! The species is listed as Threatened in Maine and as Endangered in Canada, although there has been some recent population increase.

If you can make the trip to Fernandina Beach, stop at Ft. Clinch to see if this very special “snowbird” is still in residence.



Harlequin Duck

Photo by Larry Brooks

Field Trip – Saturday February 8 to Lakeside Ranch STA



Lakeside Ranch STA

John Nelson will be our leader on this trip to a new STA in western Martin County called “Lakeside Ranch STA.” Audubon of Martin County (AoMC) has partnered with the South Florida Water Management District in providing guided tours of this wetland.

We will be driving impoundments around the wetland. A \$5 donation is requested for AoMC from each person participating in the field trip. Details will be provided at the February General Meeting.

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



Conservation Corner: New Fertilizer Ordinance

By Ruth Neese

.On January 7, 2013, St. Lucie the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) unanimously passed a new, more restrictive fertilizer ordinance. The St. Lucie Audubon Society had been urging the passage of this law for several years. The ordinance takes effect **June 1, 2014** and is designed to limit nitrogen and phosphorus runoff into local waterways and the Indian River Lagoon. Limiting fertilizer runoff is viewed as the first step to helping restore the Indian River Lagoon.

Specifics of the new ordinance include:

- Fertilizers containing nitrogen and phosphorus cannot be applied between June 1 and September 30.
- Fertilizers cannot be applied during flood, tropical storm, and hurricane watches or warnings.
- Fertilizers containing phosphorus cannot be

applied without a certified field test demonstrating a soil phosphorus deficiency.

- Fertilizers containing nitrogen must contain at least 50% slow-release nitrogen.
- Fertilizers containing phosphorus must meet the state definition of “low phosphorus.”
- Fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus must be applied at the lowest rate necessary to correct nutrient deficiencies.
- Golf course landscaping must be done under state-approved best management practices.

A round of applause to all the individuals and conservation organizations that fought to get this ordinance passed by the BOCC! This is a win for OUR lagoon! The next challenge is getting a similar ordinance passed by the city of Port St. Lucie.

Continued...

(Continued)**2013 Christmas Bird Count**

This is a quick synopsis of the Christmas Bird Count conducted on December 14, 2013. The teams in the eastern portion of the count circle had to cope with rain during much of the day, but we had a good count despite the weather.

- Total species counted: 112
- Total individual birds counted: 18,000
- Total time in the field: 90 hours
- Total distance covered (by foot, car, boat & golf cart): 488 miles
- Highest species count: Turkey Vultures 5000
- Other high counts:
 - Black Vultures 1500
 - Common Grackle 1200
 - White Ibis 1000
 - American Kestrel 137
 - Bald Eagle 10
 - Eastern Screech Owls 9
 - Barred Owls 4
 - Crested Caracara 3
 - Ring-necked Ducks 10
 - Magnificent Frigatebirds 5

Another heartfelt thank you to everyone who participated in this year's count!

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
Hart & Jewel Rufe

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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,
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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 beautiful Northern Harrier from the MINWR field trip. Photo by Richard Lynch.

Coming Attractions: February Field Trip & Speaker

March Field Trip: Saturday, March 8, 2014 to Paleo and/or Teague Hammocks in SLC.

This trip will be lead by Luke Napodano & Dorothy Schultz. Be prepared to walk uneven dirty and grass trails that can be wet. Size is limited to 12! Contact Dorothy Schultz 772-349-6025.

Painted Bunting Trip, Saturday March 1.

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

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

We will have TWO speakers! Billi Wagner will present the Florida Breeding Bird Atlas and its importance. Then John Nelson will speak on wildlife videography.



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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