



# LAUGHING GULL

## President's Message

From Ed Bowes



Spring weather just makes you want to stretch, like the Merlin in the photo. The promise of new growth and new life is exhilarating and worthy of expanding horizons. Spring is also a time to stretch yourself in other ways, to challenge yourself with new endeavors that expand your range of interests or broaden your mind.

Participating in chapter

activities provides many opportunities to stretch your horizons. Birding trips allow you to expand your view of wild Florida. Knowing about wild Florida helps you challenge those who want to degrade the environment. Stretching is invigorating, so stretch your legs birding, stretch your mind learning about our local environment, and stretch your commitment to St. Lucie Audubon.

## IMPORTANT DATES

### Bird Counts



**Christmas Bird Count:** Full report coming soon!

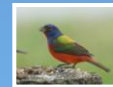


**Bird-A-Thon:** April 5 - 13, 2014. You have the option of counting one of those days. More details later.

### Special Events



**Adams Ranch Breakfast:** See you next year!



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

## Speakers: Billi Wagner and John Nelson March 6, 2014

Billi Wagner will be speaking about the current Florida Breeding Bird Atlas survey effort and how you can be involved. John Nelson will show some of his videos, including one of a Loggerhead Shrike that was recently used by National Geographic.



## Feathered Friends by Ruth Neese

One of our smaller winter visitors is the Yellow-throated Warbler (*Setophaga dominica*). I have had one appearing regularly in my yard for a month. Note the namesake bright yellow throat patch and distinctive black face connecting to stripes on the sides. The black is offset by a white eye stripe and white ear patch.

The Yellow-throated Warbler is considered a “southeastern” warbler because its breeding range encompasses the southeastern U.S., excluding south Florida. These beautiful birds do winter here in South Florida and can be seen foraging on trees for insects. They creep along branches and

trunks, probing cracks and crevices, often head down! These warblers will also come to bird feeders in the winter for high fat foods—suet, sunflower hearts, and mealworms.

On a positive note, these warblers are expanding their breeding range northward, into the Midwest and Missouri. The birds had retreated from this range in the early twentieth century for unknown reasons. It is good to know that they are coming back!



*Yellow-throated  
Warbler*

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### Field Trip – Saturday March 8 to Paleo and/or Teague Hammock



*Paleo Hammock Preserve*

Let's do some birding right here in St. Lucie County! These are natural areas great for birding and photography. We will be walking grass and dirt trails that are sometimes wet and muddy and uneven, so dress accordingly.

We are limiting group size to 12. We will meet at the small grass parking lot in front of Paleo Hammock on Carlton Rd by 8 am. Please plan ahead to carpool, since the parking area is VERY tiny!

Luke Napodano and Dorothy Schultz will lead this trip. Leave a message on Dorothy's cell phone if you plan on coming on this trip (772-349-6025)



## Conservation Corner: Florida Breeding Bird Atlas

By Ruth Neese

Have you heard of the *Florida Breeding Bird Atlas*? It was a survey conducted from 1986 to 1991 to determine which birds were actually breeding in Florida. This massive project was a collaborative effort by Audubon Florida (then Florida Audubon Society), Florida Ornithological Society, and Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). The *Breeding Bird Atlas* (BBA) was published in 1992 with original authors of: Herbert W. Kale II, Bill Pranty, Bradley M. Stith, and C. Wesley Biggs. The BBA survey confirmed that 196 species of native birds and 39 species of non-native (exotic) birds were breeding in Florida.

The same organizations are repeating this massive effort. A new survey for the BBA-2 started in March 2012 and will continue until 2016. Volunteers and paid staff use a grid-based

survey of the bird species breeding in Florida. The grid used for this project is based on US Geological Survey 7.5 minute topographic quadrangles (quads) and each quad is broken into six survey blocks of 11 square miles. Geographers systematically dispersed 1027 blocks over Florida so that their centers are 7.5 minutes apart in latitude and longitude. The new data will be compared to data from the first BBA. The USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center is publishing the data online.

The BBA-II QUAD goal is to find at least 95% of the number of breeding species in each quad as was reported on BBA-I. Much of the “easy” work has been completed in St. Lucie County, leaving the more difficult birds to locate. These

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include owls, rails, and the more elusive passerines. **The owl prowls and bird ID classes being conducted by SLAS this year have the goal of furthering the data gathering for the BBA-II.** Therefore, our bird ID classes are being conducted in the field this year.

**The Bird ID Class Schedule is:**

Field Trip #1: March 8 6: 30 AM at the St. Lucie County Regional History Center

Field Trip #2: March 15 4:30 PM at the Education Center of the Savannahs Preserve State Park

Field Trip #3: March 22 7:00 AM Location TBA

Owl Prowls: On or near the night of the full moon in March, April, and May

Cost for the Bird ID Class series is \$25.00 per person. Bring binoculars and a bird guide and dress for possible wet or uneven terrain. More details are available on our Web site

<http://stlucieaudubon.org>

Join us in supporting this vital science project!

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

*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.



Blue-winged-Teals from the Lakeside Ranch STA field trip. Photo by Hart Rufe.

## Coming Attractions: February Field Trip & Speaker

### **April Field Trip: The Bruce Bardsley Memorial Bird-A-Thon**

There will not be a single guided field trip in April. Instead, you pick a day the week of April 5 – 13 to bird in St. Lucie County.

The goal is to count as many species of bird as possible! More details at the meeting.

### **Painted Bunting Trip, Saturday March 1.**

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

### **April Speaker: Thursday, April 3 at 7 PM at the Oxbow Eco-Center in Port St. Lucie**

#### **Amanda Phillips**

Public Information Officer from the FWC

“What Do You Know About the FWC?”



*Mark your calendars!*

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