



LAUGHING GULL

President's Message

From Ed Bowes



It's chapter election time! Our current officers have served well, but it is time for a change. We need a nomination for a Recording Secretary, a new Special Events Chair, and a Field Trip Co-Chair. Please be thinking about this for the April meeting.

The current slate is:
President: Dorothy Schultz
Vice-President: Ed Bowes
Treasurer: John Imperato

Corresponding Secretary:
 Marc Rosenthal
Directors-at-Large: Ellen Lynch, Ruth Neese, and Jim Silletto.

One final reminder to please pay your local chapter dues for 2014. Our chapter receives only a few hundred dollars from National Audubon each year, so your local chapter dues are **critical** to our chapter's finances. Thank you!

IMPORTANT DATES

Bird Counts



Christmas Bird Count: Brief state summary inside.



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

Special Events



Adams Ranch Breakfast: See you next year!



Painted Bunting Trip: See you next year!

Speaker: Amanda Phillips April 3, 2014

Amanda is the Public Information Officer for the South Regional Office of the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission. She will be speaking about the mission of FWC and how FWC serves conservation. She can also answer your wildlife law enforcement questions.



Feathered Friends by Ruth Neese

One of the “birds of spring” in St. Lucie County is the beautiful Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*). A very striking shorebird bird, with very long, thin red legs, this stilt has distinctive black and white markings. The face, back, and hind neck are black, while the throat and underparts are white. There is also a white “dot” near the eye and a long, straight black bill.

Black-necked Stilts can be found in shallow wetlands with sparse vegetation. This includes salt ponds, mudflats, flooded lowlands, and human-maintained shallow ponds. They forage in the shallows for a variety

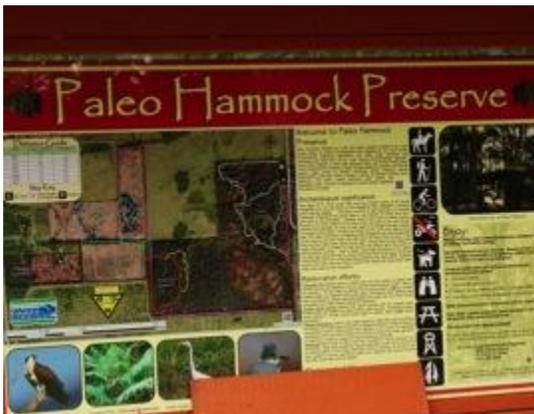
of aquatic invertebrates and fish. Their diet includes crawfish, brine flies, brine shrimp, beetles, and tadpoles. As birds of shallow wetlands, stilts are vulnerable to pesticide and heavy metal poisoning from polluted runoff.

Black-necked Stilts come to South Florida to breed. They nest on the ground, often on surfaces just above the water line. A pair produces a single clutch containing 1 – 5 eggs. These birds are semi-colonial when nesting, and will attack predators en masse. Watch for these birds and their nests this spring!



Black-necked Stilt

Field Trip – April 5 – 13: Bruce Bardsley Bird-A-Thon



Paleo Hammock, one of many St. Lucie Co. preserves to visit during the Bird-A-Thon!

It's time for the Bruce Bardsley Bird-A-Thon again! You can participate by registering with Dorothy and raising at least \$5.00 in sponsorships. Then, on **one day** from April 5 to April 13, bird anywhere you like in St. Lucie County. This includes the feeders in your yard!

There are prizes for the most species seen for individual and team. If you participate, this year we also ask that you consider helping with the Breeding Bird Atlas. Just note any evidence of bird breeding activity. The details and sponsorship forms will be available for you at the April meeting and on our Web site at <http://stlucieaudubon.org> Happy birding!



A Special Thank You to Bud Adams

By John Imperato

Alto “Bud” Adams, Jr. is pictured giving information about his ranch and cattle to visitors at the Saint Lucie Audubon Society outing in February. A lifetime member of the local Saint Lucie Audubon Society (SLAS), Bud is noted for his hospitality and generosity. Each year, Bud and his family make the ranch available to the SLAS for a fund-raising tour and breakfast. The tour included a visit by Bud at breakfast and a personal meet-and-greet in his on-site museum.

Bud has authored a new book that is available at his museum. While the SLAS tour was there, he offered to autograph any copy sold. Bud then donated 100% of the proceeds to the SLAS. The SLAS and St. Lucie County are blessed to have such a wonderful rancher in our midst.

The Adams Ranch is managed in harmony with the environment and is committed to preserving the native Florida environment and wildlife found on the ranch. Best management practices are used to deliver a chemical and pollution free environment. Bud and his family are known for the award winning Braford cattle they developed, which are heat tolerant and better adapted to the South Florida environment. The native vegetation preserved on the ranch fosters abundant wildlife and Bud has won numerous conservation awards.

St. Lucie County is fortunate to have a rancher with such vision and drive for preservation of the natural environment. The St. Lucie Audubon Society is lucky to have Bud as a friend and benefactor. The SLAS Board and members want to thank Bud and his family for their ongoing support!

Conservation Corner

by Ruth Neese

The preliminary statewide summary from the Florida Christmas Bird Count is in! A total of 8998 species were counted with a total of 1,900,000 individual birds! Some of the species with the highest counts were:

Over 200,00

- American Coot

Over 100,000

- American Robin
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Tree Swallow

Over 20,00

- Palm Warbler
- Yellow-rumped Warbler
- Redheaded Duck
- Ring-necked Duck
- Lesser Scaup
- Red-breasted Merganser
- Double-crested Cormorant
- White Ibis
- Black Vulture
- Turkey Vulture
- Laughing Gull

Rarities included Common Eider, Black Scoter, Black Rail, American Golden Plover, Ash-throated Flycatcher, Western Kingbird, Lapland Longspur, and a Tricolored Munia.

I never cease to be amazed by the variety of avian life that passes through Florida!

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

Travel Made Easy by Ellen

ST. LUCIE AUDUBON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President – Ed Bowes

Vice-President – Dorothy Schultz

Treasurer – John Imperato

Recording Secretary – Adella Blacka

Corresponding Secretary – Marc Rosenthal

Director-at-Large & Program Co-Chair – Ellen Lynch

Program Co-Chair – Grace Stock

Field Trip Chair – Dorothy Schultz

Special Events Chair – Maryellen McGarry

Hospitality Chair – Judith Whittemore

Director-at-Large & Conservation Chair – Ruth Neese

Director-at-Large & Parliamentarian – Peggy Silletto

Director-at-Large – Jim Silletto

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: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

New membership: _____ **Renewal:** _____

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.



Immature White Ibis at Paleo Hammock Preserve during the March field trip.

Coming Attractions: May Speaker

After May, our meetings and programs are on hiatus for the summer. **Our first meeting will be October 3, 2014.**

In the meantime, enjoy your summer! Get out and bird, or take a cruise on the River Lilly. The River Lilly cruises the St. Lucie River most days until July. Call 772-489-8344 to make your reservations.

Keep your eye on our Web site for updates from Hart Rufe via “The Hart Beat” and our Conservation Chair, Ruth Neese.

Visit <http://stlucieaudubon.org> or our Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/StLucieAudubonSociety> to keep updated during the off-season.

May Speaker: Thursday, May 1 at 7 PM at the Oxbow Eco-Center in Port St. Lucie

Jim Oppenborn

“Creating Fish (and Bird) Habitats”



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