

NOVEMBER 2020

VOLUME 46, ISSUE 2

St. Lucie Audubon Society

Fostering appreciation of nature in St Lucie County, Florida, since 1954



The Laughing Gull

President's Message

By Ellen Lynch

Our Chapter is moving forward this fall with meetings on Zoom and some interesting programs to come at our general meetings. Unfortunately, we were unable to have Dr. Richard K. Forester give his talk on "Herons of Florida" because his presentation is video based and the Zoom application is not compatible with video. But, lucky for us, we have reached out to Caroline Stahala from Audubon Florida and she will talk about "Birds and Hurricanes." Caroline is a PhD and works for Florida Audubon as the Shorebird Program Manager, Western Florida Panhandle. I'm sure this will be a great program for us.

All our members will receive an invitation to join the meeting via email along with the monthly newsletter. So, watch for your invitation in the same email as the newsletter.

A future presentation will be Samantha McGee from St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, Environmental Specialist, who will talk to us about the "Ecology and Management of the Amazing Red-Cockaded Woodpecker" in December. This sounds really interesting!

Also in December, we will hopefully have our annual Christmas Bird Count organized by Ed Bowes. Each individual who participated last year will receive a survey to ask them if they can participate again this year. With the virus still active, we want to ensure that everyone feels
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Photo by Dan Martinelli

Thursday, Nov. 5:
Speaker: Dr. Caroline Stahala

Dr. Caroline Stahala is currently a Program Manager for Audubon Florida's Coastal Seabird and Shorebird Program based in the Florida Panhandle. Caroline is working with academic, government, non-governmental organizations (NGO) and local communities to improve the conservation outlook for our local coastal birds. Before starting with Audubon in 2014, Caroline worked with a number of various bird conservation projects including endemic parrots in the Caribbean. Caroline has a Bachelor's of Science in Biology from The University of North Carolina, a Master's of Science in Zoology from North Carolina State University and a Doctorate from Florida State University in ecology and evolution.

Scheduled Field Trips Canceled until further notice. Watch our website for pop-up trips. We hope to be able to resume our trips soon!

<https://www.stlucieaudubon.org/field-trips>

"I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in order." ~ John Burroughs



The Laughing Gull

President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

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safe participating in the count. We may not be able to provide that wonderful pizza party, but the count is done by individual zones and by individual vehicles, so that should be a safe way to get it done. If you did the count last year, we will be emailing you a survey to complete. Please watch for the survey. We have not set a firm date yet, but if we have enough participation, we can do this! The date will be between Dec. 14 and Jan. 5. If someone is new and wants to join in, please let Ed Bowes know by contacting him via stlucieaudubon@gmail.com.

Our Board is also discussing the possibility of holding one Adams Ranch fundraiser in late March or early April. We will be talking with the Adams Ranch folks to get their opinion as to the viability of this event. Hopefully we can offer one session and make a little money for our treasury this year.

We have all be energized by seeing the wonderful migrants coming back to our area. There have been multiple sightings of kingfishers, kestrels, and some Blue-winged Teal ducks. Some warblers are also showing up. If you see anything new or interesting, please feel free to post your sighting on our Facebook page to share your love of birds! See you on Zoom!



Chapter Dues

The year for local chapter dues runs January to January. Dues can be paid by check or credit card on our Web site: <http://stlucieaudubon.org>

- Individual: \$25
- Family (2 or more people): \$30
- Sponsor: \$50
- Patron: \$100

The Laughing Gull

Photo by Ed Bowes

Citizen Science

BY ED BOWES

Our chapter was well represented on October 17th for the Global Big Day. We had 21 participants with 33 completed checklists. Participants reported 113 species of birds and over 2000 individual birds in St. Lucie County! Way to go!

Although it is time to start planning the 121st Christmas Bird Count, National Audubon has left the decision to participate up to each count circle. As Ellen mentioned, please watch for a survey link in your email from me, Ed Bowes, at slacbc2010@gmail.com if you participated in last year's count.

Matthew Anderson and Kirk Fusco have volunteered to represent us at the St. Lucie Co. STEM events again this year and provide us with three winners for our Grace Stock Conservation Awards. This annual event will be held virtually this year, and our awards will also be given at our general meeting on Zoom either in February or March. Watch for more information on our website.

Fall migration means it is almost time for **Project Feederwatch!** This seasonal bird count sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology begins November 14th and runs until April 9, 2021. Participants count birds that visit feeders or food plants in their yards for two days each week. The numbers are then reported to the Cornell Lab. If you feed birds in the winter, please consider participating! Visit <https://feederwatch.org>

Nature's Notebook is part of the USA National Phenology Network. This program uses citizen scientists to track changes in local plants, insects, and animals that could result from climate change. Why not collect some data while you are out birding? For more information and to join Nature's Notebook, visit this [link](#).

St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

President – Ellen Lynch

Vice President – Ed Bowes

Treasurer – JoAnn Stillman

Recording Secretary – Kathy Mayshar

Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

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Conservation Chair – Diane Goldberg

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Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

Board members may be contacted by email at stlucieaudubon@gmail.com

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

Some participants in the October Global Big Day in St. Lucie County were treated to the spectacular site of Roseate Spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*) in breeding plumage. There are only two “big pink birds” seen in this part of Florida, and the most common is the Roseate Spoonbill (the other is a rare Caribbean Flamingo). All Roseate Spoonbills have white neck, upper back, and upper breast feathers with varying shades of pink on the wings and lower portions of the body. During breeding season, a brilliant carmine patch develops on the wing-and tail-coverts. Juvenile spoonbills lack this bright wing patch and begin life with feathers on their head. As birds approach maturity, they lose the head feathers and birds of breeding age have bald pale green heads.

Spoonbills possess a uniquely shaped bill that looks like a large spoon or spatula. They feed by sweeping the partially open spoon back-and-forth in a semicircle through shallow water in search of small prey items. When prey contacts the spoon, the bill snaps shut in a process called “tactolocation.” Roseate Spoonbills feed in all types of water—fresh, brackish, and salt—as long as the water is less than 12-inches deep. Primary food items are small fish, crustaceans, and aquatic insects.

Breeding season begins in November in South Florida and typically lasts until March. The birds nest in or near a colony on small islands or in trees overhanging water. Spoonbills are known to abandon their nests with significant human disturbance, including heavy boat traffic. Florida lists these birds as a Species of Special Concern due to habitat degradation and human disturbance issues. So, if you see Roseate Spoonbills in the wild, *especially* in a breeding colony, please keep a respectful distance and maintain quiet. We do not want to lose the “Flame Bird!”



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Field trips are on hold at this time.

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, December 3rd via Zoom

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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