

DECEMBER 2020

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St. Lucie Audubon Society

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



The Laughing Gull

President's Message

By Ellen Lynch

Finally, the last month of this terrible year has come. We all are looking forward to having a vaccine available and our lives going back to normal. I am sending you my warmest wishes for a healthy holiday this month and my greatest wishes for a "normal" New Year!

Eva Ries, past President and County employee has some news for our members only. "The St. Lucie County Environmental Resources Department is seeking 2-3 St. Lucie Audubon Society volunteers available 2 times a week (weekday mornings), 2-4 hours a day, for a minimum 8-week commitment. Volunteers will assist the county's field coordinator with an avian conservation project at county sites. Volunteers should be able to walk some distances, watch and listen for birds, record information to assist the Field Coordinator, and abide by state/county field work standards and laws applicable to Listed Species. Training and expectations will be provided to volunteers prior to working in the field. Volunteers must complete and return county background check (at no cost) forms prior to beginning volunteering." Anyone interested can contact Eva at: www.OneMoreGeneration.org or email at: avian@onemoregeneration.org She can also be reached by phone: 404/388-6887. This sounds like a great opportunity for our members and I hope we can help with this project by having a few volunteers come forward. Please consider being a part of this team!

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

Thursday, Dec. 3:
Speaker: Samantha McGee

Samantha McGee, St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, Environmental Specialist I, on the *Ecology and Management of the Amazing Red-cockaded Woodpecker*. The meeting will be via Zoom beginning at 7 PM. Check the newsletter email for the Zoom link.

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 think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want.” ~ Andy Warhol



The Laughing Gull

President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

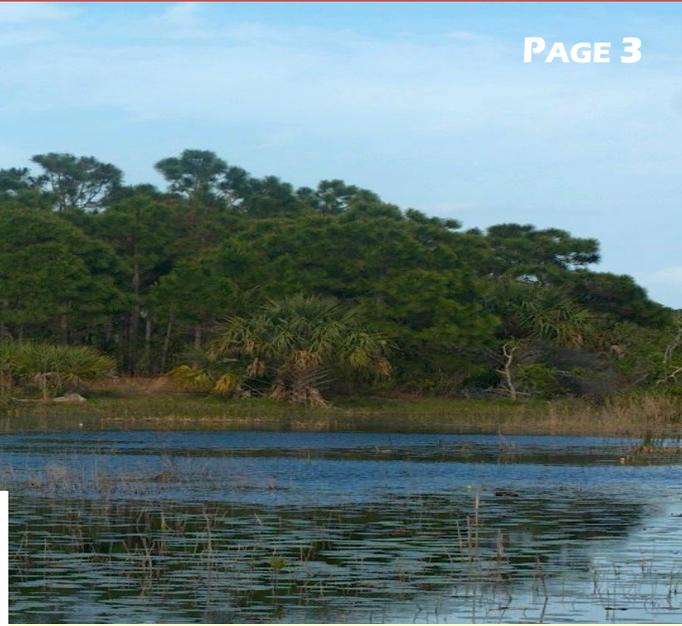
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National Audubon and Florida Audubon have begun a new initiative for all Audubon chapters. It is a new commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Audubon has made these ideals a strategic importance.

“Protecting and conserving nature and the environment transcends political, cultural, and social boundaries. Respect, inclusion, and opportunity for people of all backgrounds, lifestyles, and perspectives will attract the best ideas and harness the greatest passion to shape a healthier, more vibrant future for all of us who share our planet.”

It is my hope that our chapter will begin discussions on how to increase diversity of our membership and supporters in the New Year. We can begin by reaching out to anyone you might meet or know who loves nature (and birds) in your life. We want to share our passion and expand our reach in all our diverse communities.

Keep safe and healthy please!



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

Time for the Christmas Bird Count!

It's that time again—time for the 121th annual Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC)! The CBC is conducted between December 14 and January 5 each year, and the St. Lucie Audubon Society count will be held **Saturday, December 19, 2019**, rain or shine. The count begins just after sunrise and lasts for a minimum of 8 daylight hours. Nocturnal birding, or owling, is optional for any team that wants to look for nocturnal birds on count day. Sorry, no pizza party this year.

Since the CBC began over a century ago, it has relied on the dedication and commitment of volunteers. You do not have to be an expert birder to participate on a count team. If you would like to join a CBC team, contact our local compiler, Ed Bowes via email at slacbc2010@gmail.com or via phone at 772-607-4028. Participate in the CBC and contribute to science that has been helping birds for over 100 years!

Florida has approved a native plant license plate! The Florida Native Plant Society (FNPS) worked very hard to accomplish this goal. The license plate will help fund the mission of FNPS. The catch is that a minimum of 3000 license plates must be pre-ordered before production will begin. To see a sample plate and place an order, visit this [link](#).

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

Program Chair – Kevin Hinkle

Birding Adventure Co-Chairs – Adella Blacka, Doris Brookens

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Membership Chair - Carol Pembroke

Events Chair – Harriet Scott

Public Relations – Ruth Neese

Directors at Large – Adella Blacka, Roger Laliberte, John Nelson

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

Any field trip to the Indrio Savannas or Sheraton Scrub is an opportunity to look for a threatened bird—the friendly Florida Scrub Jay (*Aphelocoma coerulescens*). Still officially listed as “threatened,” current population estimates state there are 7700 to 9300 birds. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service estimates the population declined 25 to 50 percent during the 1990s alone, primarily due to habitat destruction and fragmentation by humans.

Florida Scrub Jays have very narrow habitat requirements—dry oak scrub that undergoes periodic burning. This habitat was already limited to coastal ridges, the Lake Wales Ridge, and scattered paleodunes. Human development and fire suppression have further impinged on habitat availability. Saving postage-stamp habitats that are distant from each other creates habitat fragmentation, which decreases population numbers and connectivity. Fire suppression degrades available habitat.

Unlike Western Scrub Jays, Florida Scrub Jays are cooperative breeders and live in groups ranging from a single breeding pair up to extended families of eight adults with varying numbers of juveniles. Fledglings remain with the breeding pair as “helpers,” forming a cohesive family structure. In order to breed, a scrub jay must find a suitable breeding territory and a mate; lack of available breeding sites limits reproductive success. Scrub jays breed from March through June and produce an average of two fledglings per pair.

Though omnivorous, insects form a major part of the scrub jay diet, as do acorns and nuts. The birds are noted for collecting and caching thousands of acorns every year. By the way, it is illegal to feed these friendly birds, so do not be tempted. Just enjoy the view.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Field trips are on hold at this time.

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, January 7, 2021 via Zoom

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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