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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

Happy New Year Everyone! We have entered a new year and some people make resolutions to themselves this time of the year. I know there is always room for improvement, but personally, I think I would rather make a different kind of resolution.

How about we make some resolutions, as a chapter, to welcome new members from different backgrounds by reaching out to our Hispanic and Black communities and discover mutual interests in conservation and education? Whenever I ask people if they like birds, I always get a positive response, and I find it interesting that people of all ages and backgrounds enjoy seeing and learning about our local birds. It might seem difficult to find a way to reach our minority communities, but let's start thinking about how to make that connection. I think we can make a difference in 2022 with your ideas and commitment to start making inclusion one of our New Year's Resolutions.

I think a New Year also is a good time to count your blessings and thank the many people in our lives that have made our last year successful. I want to thank our Board of Directors, who have kept us going during last year's difficult pandemic issues. The teamwork they have shown over the last 12 months was excellent, and it continues today. I am very proud to have served as your President and found that our team is

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Photo by Dan Marinelli

Thursday, Jan. 6:

Presenter: Sam Fried

“Birds of the Columbian Andes” by Sam Fried. World traveler, Sam Fried, will present his beautiful photographs from one of his special trips to Colombia. He has many interesting stories to tell and the details of his fantastic trip.

Field trip: McCarty Ranch Preserve

Thursday, Jan. 27, 2022

7:30 – 10:30 AM

Leaders: Doris and Steve Brookens

Details: McCarty Ranch Preserve is a 3,000+ acre preserve owned by the City of Port St Lucie. It is largely old Florida pinelands with 3 manmade lakes.

We will spend most of our time birding by car along the paved entrance road. Target species include Eastern Towhee, American Robin, Pine Warbler, and Downy Woodpecker. Perhaps we will be fortunate enough to locate Eastern Bluebirds, a county rarity spotted here. See important details at the link below!

Visit this Link to [register](#).

“No matter how few possessions you own or how little money you have, loving wildlife and nature will make you rich beyond measure.” ~ Paul Oxton



President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

the best I have ever worked with in my professional life. Thank you Ed, Kathy, Jan, Carol, JoAnn, Doris, John, Adella, Matthew, Diane, Ruth and Mary!

As of this writing, our Christmas Bird Count has successfully been completed and Ed is collecting the data from each of the zones in our County. Since we did not get together afterwards to share stories and highlights, we anxiously await a report from Ed about the number of species and any unusual birds that might have been located. Perhaps we can hear the results at our next general meeting on January 6th. Please mark your calendar for this meeting because we may hear the results from Ed, and enjoy a wonderful program from our friend and super-birder, Sam Fried, who will share his pictures and experiences in his presentation, "Birds of the Colombian Andes."

See you in January!



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

Florida has many opportunities for participating in citizen science! A number of these are available through the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). FWC has two levels of participation available. One level requires volunteering your time and interning with biologists; this is aimed at college students. The other level allows participation by just sharing what you see and experience when you participate in outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, biking, bird watching, fishing, boating, photography or sitting in a backyard or on a park bench. You can report sightings of certain animals, gather survey information on specific species, or call FWC hotlines to report fish kills, sick wildlife, red tide, or right whale sightings.

To get more information or to participate, visit the FWC [“Get Involved”](#) webpage and look for the phrase citizen science as a hyperlink. That will take you to an explanation of citizen science and links where you can access information about sightings, surveys, and hotlines. Take a look and become a citizen scientist today!

Adams Ranch Tour

WE'RE BACK! Our annual fundraiser of breakfast and a tour of the Adams Ranch, known for its conservation efforts as well as its Braford cattle breed, is one of our most popular events. We had to cut back last year but have a full schedule this winter. You'll want to be sure you're on board for a hot breakfast that will would satisfy a ranch hand and a tour of the bird-filled fields and ponds.

There are three Saturday trips—Jan. 22, Feb. 19, and March 5th. The cost is \$40 per person. Space is limited to 70 adults on each day. Sorry, no children younger than 14. The tour in an open-air bus will be held rain or shine, so dress for the weather.

Reserve your spot [here!](#) Don't delay, these trips sell out fast!

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Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

So New Year's Day has passed, but do remember the first bird that you saw for the year 2022? I was lucky enough to score one of the more elusive birds. My first bird of 2022 was an Eastern Screech Owl, the most common owl in Florida.

Eastern Screech Owls (*Megascops asio*) are small, only 6 – 9 inches in height with an 18-inch wingspan. Like the Great Horned Owl, screech owls have ear tuft feathers, a large head, and a very short neck. This diminutive size and the ear tufts lead many people to assume an adult Eastern Screech Owl is a “baby” Great Horned Owl!

Almost any habitat will do for this adaptable little owl. They can be found in rural, suburban, and urban landscapes as long as there are trees and cavities or nest boxes to roost in. They cannot survive without the presence of trees.

Their diet varies widely. Eastern Screech Owls prey on small mammals, such as rats, mice, and moles, but are agile enough to prey on bats! Their diet also includes insects, earthworms, frogs, lizards, and small birds.

Eastern Screech Owls come in three color morphs—gray, red, and brown. The red and brown morphs are shown in the photos. The color of the parent birds does not predict the color of the youngsters. One, two, or three color morphs can be found in a single clutch of eggs.

These birds are nocturnal and are hard to see. They have very distinctive calls, which are not screeches. Instead, one call is an even-pitched trill used to communicate between family members. The trill is what alerted me to the presence of my “first bird.” The other primary call is a shrill descending whinny used for territorial defense. Screech owls only “screech” when under significant duress, such as defending nestlings. To hear these calls, visit this [link](#) from All About Birds. Listen for the trills and whinnies when you are out at night under the oaks. You might score an owl, too!



Photo by Ed Bowes

Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022

St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park—limit 7

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, Feb. 3, 2022

“Fiefdoms, Adultery, and Cooperation in the Brown-headed Nuthatch”

Speaker: Jim Cox

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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