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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

Our Chapter is busy with the Adams Ranch Fundraising Tours this winter. January has sold out, and February, March Tours are filling up fast. These tours are one of a kind and only our Chapter has this partnership with the Adams Family each year. We thank them for their generous gift so that our Chapter can have a healthy financial standing and work to bring the appreciation of land conservation and local birds to our county.

Our Board of Directors has decided to hold our general meeting on February 3rd on Zoom. We are going to make future decisions on a month-to-month basis depending on the COVID community spread data. Our speaker for February is very special. Mr. Jim Cox, from Tall Timber Research Center in northern Florida, will speak about his favorite bird, the Brown-Headed Nuthatch. His topic is listed as, "Fiefdoms, Adultery, and Cooperation in the Brown-Headed Nuthatch." What an interesting topic! You will receive an invitation to join in when we are close to the date. "See" you there!

Ed Bowes has shared some news from the recent Christmas Bird Count. He reports that 2 rare birds were sighted in Area 10. The birds are a Broad-Winged Hawk and a Yellow-Breasted Chat. Special paperwork is being done to back up the sightings for these two birds.

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

Thursday, Feb. 3:

Presenter: **Jim Cox**

“Fiefdoms, Adultery, and Cooperation in the Brown-Headed Nuthatch”
by Jim Cox. Jim is the statewide expert on these amazing songbirds, and he will discuss his latest research.

Field trip: St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park
Wednesday, Feb. 9, 2022
5:30 – 10:30 AM

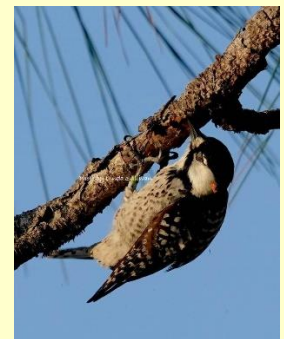
Leaders: Samantha McGee, Park Biologist

Details: The early birder will get the bird! The target species is The Red-cockaded Woodpecker. The early start is to permit being in place 30 minutes before sunrise. The woodpeckers typically emerge from their nest cavity at sunrise.

You must be prepared to climb in and out of the bed of a pickup truck using a step ladder and to ride on hay bales. See important details at the link below! Plus an additional field trip on Feb. 17!

Visit this Link to [register](#).

“Time spent amongst trees is never wasted time.” ~ Katrina Mayer



The Laughing Gull

President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

He also reports a reduction in sightings of passerines, the smaller birds like warblers.

Matthew Anderson, our Science Advisor, has reported that he will try again to entice lesser terns and black skimmers to nest on Tern Island. Last year the effort was not successful, but he is leading the way to make another effort. He will be calling for volunteers to help clear the island of weeds and debris that has accumulated over the last year. If you are interested in helping, keep a watchful eye on our website for the call for volunteers. This will probably take place in late February. This is an outdoor activity and will be a safe way to work together for the benefit of our birds.

Our Birding Adventures co-chairs Doris Brookens and Kathy Mayshar, have provided us with a wonderful variety of opportunities to learn and enjoy different habitats while birding locally. Please check out our listings on our website and pick one (or more) to participate. Happy Birding Friends!



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

It's time to plan for participating in the 25th Great Backyard Bird Count! This global bird count takes place annually on President's Day weekend. That means this year's count runs from February 18 to 21. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days that weekend at one or more locations—it's your choice! Keep track of the kinds of birds you see and how long you watched.

- Make your best estimate of how many birds you saw of each species. For example, 5 Northern Cardinals, 3 American Crows. Huge flocks may be a challenge, but your best guess is still valuable.
- Enter your list(s) online at www.BirdCount.org. Put in a new checklist: --for each new day --for each different location --for the same location, same day, if you counted at a different time of day You can start entering bird lists at midnight local time on the first day of the count, anywhere in the world.

For all the details, visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website at <https://gbbc.birdcount.org/>.

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!

St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

Florida hosts several species in the mimidae family of birds, also known as mimids. Birds in this family are notable as excellent songsters and mimics. Species in the family found in Florida include the Northern Mockingbird, Gray Catbird, and the Brown Thrasher.

Brown Thrashers (*Toxostoma rufum*) can be a challenge for birders to spot. They are secretive and prefer to forage on the ground in dense, tangled shrubbery and they will freeze if they spot you. Your best strategy is to walk slowly while listening for the sound of something rummaging through leaf litter. I have heard Brown Thrashers called “long-tailed mulch throwers” in jest.

Brown Thrashers spend most of their time on the ground, and their brown plumage serves as excellent camouflage. Their upper parts are a rich brown, the underparts are whitish and heavily streaked with brown, and they have a long brown tail. There are two black and white wing bars, and these birds have yellow eyes. The bill is heavy and slightly downcurved. The bill is used to sweep through leaf litter and other detritus on the ground to uncover insects.

Like their relative, the Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrashers disclose their large repertoire by singing a wide variety of song types, especially in breeding season. It can be difficult to tell the difference between a mockingbird and thrasher by ear. Remember this clue, Brown Thrashers pause between song segments while Northern Mockingbirds sing continuously.

Brown Thrashers seldom venture very far from dense cover, and they retreat to this cover when startled. Approach potential thrasher habitat quietly and be patient. Just listen for the sound of something tossing dry leaves around and it will most likely be a thrasher.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022

Joe Overstreet Road & Landing

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Sunset Birding at the C-23/24 Reservoir

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, March 3, 2022

“Protecting & Monitoring Shorebirds during Coastal Construction Projects”

Speaker: Niki Desjardin

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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