

MARCH 2023

VOLUME 48, ISSUE 6

# 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 buzzing this time of the year. We are doing our fundraising, manning booths for community events, and enjoying birding adventures and interesting programs at our general meetings at Oxbow Eco-Center. We advocate for the Earth's Diverse Ecosystems and have done so since 1954. Our latest push is to get petitions signed so that the Right to Clean Water in Florida can be put on a ballot to ensure the State will work to provide all Floridians with clean water.

I want to thank all our volunteers who came out to help with our booth at NatureFest on February 25. The event at the Manatee Observation & Education Center in Ft. Pierce was well-attended. We stayed busy with visitors playing our "Place the Bird in the Correct Habitat" game. We had an added draw because our booth was across from the Treasure Coast Wildlife Center birds of prey display.

Our next two general meetings will be special in that we have three winners of our Annual Grace Stock Conservation Awards coming to tell us about their STEM project. The winners were chosen by our member, Matthew Anderson, as he was a judge at the County STEM competition. The three winners are:

First Place: Nachbi Pierre (\$100)

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*Photo by Dan Martinelli*

Thursday, March 2:

Presenter: Samantha McGuire

“Dolphin Spotter—A New Land-Based Citizen Science Project.”  
Samantha McGuire, Master’s Marine Science, Graduate Research Assistant, FAU Harbor Branch Ocean Discovery. Come and learn how this project fills a gap in scientific knowledge. **This meeting will be in person and via Facebook Live.**

Field trip: T. M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area

Fellsmere, FL

Thursday, March 16, 2023, 8:00 – 12:00 PM

Trip Leader: Doris & Steve Brookens

This will be a driving tour of the Stick Marsh Critical Wildlife Area and T. M. Goodwin WMA. We will meet at the St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park Visitor Center. There are directions and more information at the registration link below. Questions? Contact Doris at (717) 576-7876 or email [dorisbrookens@gmail.com](mailto:dorisbrookens@gmail.com)

Please register on our Web page:  
<https://www.stlucieaudubon.org/field-trips>

***“In nature, nothing is perfect and everything is perfect. Trees can be contorted, bent in weird ways, and they’re still beautiful.” ~ Alice Walker***



# President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

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Second Place: Coralie Rich (\$75)

Third Place: Aiden Hong (\$50)

We look forward to their award presentation and hearing about their projects. Please come to our General Meetings on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and April 6<sup>th</sup> to meet them and give them some encouragement to save our environment.

Thanks!



## 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 hard to believe, but spring migration is upon us! It's time for the American Goldfinches to return, briefly, and for the hummingbirds to leave us. Our migratory bird population will be northbound, and St. Lucie Co. is a stop on their journey. It's also time for our local population of songbirds to start nesting. The Red-bellied Woodpeckers have their red bellies, so Northern Mockingbirds singing at 2 AM cannot be far behind!

Now would be a good time to invest in a pair of good binoculars (or upgrade your existing optics). The National Audubon Society publishes the [Audubon Guide to Binoculars](#) on its website. This guide describes binoculars with a price range and good viewing for every user. The guide lists recommended binoculars by price range. Costs range from \$4000 (Swarovski) to a budget \$250 (Celestron). Take a look in preparation for spotting those departing "snowbirds."

**Project Feederwatch** started November 1<sup>st</sup> and runs through April 29<sup>th</sup>! You can count the birds that visit your backyard feeders all winter and report these counts to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. There is a fee of \$18 to participate for the 2022-2023 season. For more information and to join, visit this [link](#). There is still time to participate!

The Great Backyard Bird Count happened over President's Day weekend. It was a four-day global event. So far, a total of 7493 bird species have been reported on 315,700 checklists! The United States recorded the most checklists (191,634), followed by India (49,919) and Canada (26,834). Some countries only had single-digit numbers, including Albania with one lone checklist. For a full report, visit [Explore 2023 Data](#).

### St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

President – Ellen Lynch

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Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

Board members may be contacted by email at [stlucieaudubon@gmail.com](mailto:stlucieaudubon@gmail.com)

## The Laughing Gull

# Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

Photos of a Great Horned Owl nest have recently been popular in our Facebook Group. The Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) is one of the most common owls in North America, and can be found year-round from Central America to the tree line in northern Canada. Great Horned Owls are nocturnal, but exhibit crepuscular behavior. This means they are most active at dusk and dawn. However, they may hunt at any time of day, even during daylight hours. When you think of a “hoot owl,” this is the bird—a Great Horned Owl’s call is a series of 4 to 5 hoots.

Great Horned Owls are large birds, ranging between 18 to 25 inches in length, with a wingspan of 39 to 57 inches. Females are larger than males, and larger birds are found in colder climates. Our owls in St. Lucie County tend to be on the smaller end of the scale. Plumage also varies by geographic location. Here in South Florida, Great Horned Owls are usually mottled tan to brown in color, though some birds will show more gray plumage. Further north and at higher elevations (think presence of snow), these owls show whiter plumage and can be quite pale.

Of course, Great Horned Owls have two prominent ear tufts, which are feathers, not horns. The ear tufts bear no relationship to the location of functional ears and can be laid flat, giving the owl a rounded head. Like other owls, Great Horned Owls have a facial disc. This disc is notably smaller than that of the Barn Owl, meaning Great Horned Owls use their vision more when hunting. They also have large yellow eyes and broad, rounded wings.

Great Horned Owls can be found hunting in suburbia, as well as more rural areas. They can sometimes be spotted hunting by the artificial lights in large parking lots or streetlights. Look for these owls in Fort Pierce Inlet State Park, Savannas Recreation Area, Indrio Savannas Preserve, and along roads in the western portion of St. Lucie County.



## Coming Attractions

### **FIELD TRIP**

Monday, April 3, 2023

Sunset Bird Walk at Egret Marsh Storm Water Park

### **GENERAL MEETING**

Thursday, April 6, 2023

“The Buzz About Lagoon-Friendly Landscaping”

## We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

*St. Lucie Audubon Society*

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