

APRIL 2023

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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

Some of you have probably already heard that the National Audubon Society has made a decision on whether to keep the Audubon name. The National Audubon Society will remain just that.

The NAS Board of Directors has announced that they will keep the organizations name moving forward. The evaluation considered many factors to determine how the decision would impact NAS's mission to protect birds and the places they need long into the future. Based on the critical threats to birds that Audubon must urgently address and the need to remain a non-partisan force for conservation, the Board determined that retaining the name would enable NAS to direct key resources and focus towards enacting the organization's mission. They have also pledged \$25 million over the next five years to expand our diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging work. Our local Board will discuss whether we will continue to use the Audubon name here, as independently incorporated entities, each chapter has the autonomy and authority to make decisions in respect to their naming as best serves their local needs. Let your leaders know how you feel; you can contact us by email via stlucieaudubon@gmail.com

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

The Laughing Gull

Thursday, April 6:
Presenter: Emily Surmount

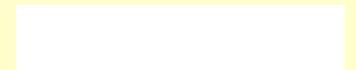
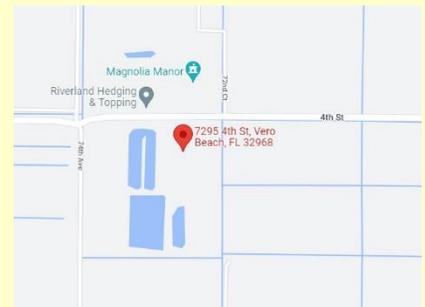
“The Buzz About Lagoon-Friendly Landscaping” by Emily Surmount, Native Plant Garden – Project Manager, Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Preserves. Join us to learn about the success of a native plant pollinator garden.

Field trip: Egret Marsh Stormwater Park
Monday, April 3, 2023
Sunset Bird Walk—7:00 – 8:15 PM

Leader: Alexis Peralta

Details: Trip limited to **20 people**—currently 6 spots available. Address: 7295 4th Street, Vero Beach, FL—put this in your GPS. Easy ¾ mile walking loop, but restrooms are limited. More details on our Web page: <https://www.stlucieaudubon.org/field-trips> Any questions contact Kathy Mayshar at 772-359-9108.

Visit this Link to [register](#).



“In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt.” ~ Margaret Atwood

President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

Election of Officers

As our season is winding down, it is time for the elections of officers. We are now announcing the nominees for officers to begin on June 1, 2023 until May 30, 2024.

President: Ellen Lynch

Vice President: Ed Bowes

Treasurer: JoAnn Stillman

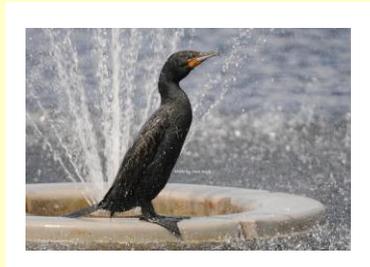
Recording Secretary: Holly DeMarco

Director-At-Large: Wayne Landry

If anyone else would like to run and include your name as an officer, you may now do this by contacting us using this email:

stlucieaudubon@gmail.com

The vote will be held at our general meeting in May.



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

Optical aids make for better birding and dolphin-spotting from shore. There has been discussion of choosing binoculars here before. However, for some kinds of observation—scanning the waterfowl far out on a lake, studying shorebirds on a wide-open mudflat, or checking out that hawk perched on a distant snag—even the best binoculars won't do the trick. That is when you need a spotting scope. A spotting scope allows you to ID distant birds and learn details you would never notice with binoculars.

But how to choose a spotting scope? Start with your budget; what can you afford? Top quality spotting scopes can cost \$2000 or more. However, serviceable scopes can be had for less than that. Keep two things in mind when choosing a scope—whether you want fixed or zoom eyepieces and the quality of the glass. Buy a scope with the best quality glass you can afford. And don't forget the tripod! You will need a tripod that adjusts smoothly and easily while remaining steady in the wind. Much more information on choosing a spotting scope [here](#).

Looking for a project not related to birds? There is a webpage for that! All federal level citizen science projects can be found at <https://www.citizenscience.gov/#> There are several federal projects active in Florida at this [link](#).

And don't forget about state-level citizen science projects! FWC has several options for participation, too. Just click this [link](#). Be a citizen scientist!

Want to build a nest box for your favorite cavity-nesting bird(s)? Visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology [NestWatch](#) web page. There are plans for dozens of nest boxes, from ducks to Great Crested Flycatchers. The site includes information on siting your nest box, excluding predators, and preventing unwanted guests, like bees, wasps, and squirrels. You can even learn how to become an official NestWatch citizen scientist!

St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

President – Ellen Lynch

Vice President – Ed Bowes

Treasurer – JoAnn Stillman

Recording Secretary – TBA

Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

Program Chair – Adella Blacka

Birding Adventure Co-Chair – Doris Brookens

Conservation Chair – Diane Goldberg

Membership Chair - Carol Pembroke

Events Chair – Harriet Scott

Public Relations – Ruth Neese

Directors at Large – Adella Blacka, Kathy Mayshar, John Nelson

Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

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

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

I believe the Eastern Screech Owl generates more bird ID questions than any other owl! It is the most requested bird identification when our chapter appears at events. Someone always has a photo of a “baby owl,” and they want to know what kind of owl it is. Yep, you guessed it, adult Eastern Screech Owl. “Screechies” are the most common owl in this part of Florida. Yet due to their small size and excellent camouflage, they are seldom seen.

Eastern Screech Owls 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!

Eastern Screech Owls come in three color morphs—gray, red, and brown. The red and gray morphs are pictured on the right. Immature birds are covered in gray or white down.

These birds are nocturnal and are hard to see. The photo of a screech owl in a pine tree illustrates their camouflage capabilities. They have very distinctive calls, which are **not** screeches. Instead, one call is an even-pitched trill used to communicate between family members. 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.

So, if you want to see a screech owl, listen for a quiet, trilling song at night. Look in that direction, especially if there is an exposed perch near a light. These owls take advantage of the insects attracted to lights, so they will hunt near porch lights and street lights. I have seen them hunting from the tops of my bird feeders and the chiminea! Just keep your eyes and ears open at night to spot one of our little owls.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

TBA

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, May 4, 2023

“Birding and a Photographic Journal”

Speaker: Lorraine Sulik-Morecraft

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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