

DECEMBER 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

Here we are in December and our winter birds are easy to find and enjoy. We will be participating in the Christmas Bird Count on 12/16, please consider joining in. If interested, please contact Ed Bowes via email [slabc2010@gmail.com](mailto:slabc2010@gmail.com) to get a special zone to count the birds that day. We are also having a fun PIZZA PARTY that evening at 5 pm at the Oxbow Eco-Center to socialize and tell our adventures that day. Who found the most birds? Who found a unique bird? How many vultures were there at the St. Lucie Co. Dump?

We will serve you choices of pizza and some drinks, and maybe Christmas Cookies. We have had to postpone these socials for a while due to Covid issues, but we are back celebrating the day at Oxbow. See you there!

I hope you have taken advantage of the birding adventures offered on our website. There will be more added to the list soon. Keep an eye on the list for future birding trips.

It is also time to remind you that our annual dues need to be renewed. Anyone who paid this fall is covered through 2024, but if you have not yet renewed, please do so soon. The dues we collect help us to pay bills and create exciting activities for your enjoyment.

(continued on page 3)

### Inside This Issue

President's Message	1
Field Trip and Speaker	2
President's Message (cont.)	3
Chapter Dues Schedule	3
Citizen Science	4
Officers & Board Members	4
Feathered Friends	5



# The Laughing Gull

## Thursday, Dec. 7:

**Presenter: Jason Fischer**

“Around the World with Disney Conservation” presented by Jason Fischer, PhD. Conservation Program Manager for terrestrial wildlife projects with Disney Conservation. His work involves supporting international avian conservation efforts.

**Field trip: Green Cay Nature Center  
Wednesday, Dec. 6, 9:00 AM – 12 noon  
Trip Leaders: Kathy Mayshar  
12800 Hagen Ranch RD, Palm Beach Co.**

Meet at the entrance to Green Cay Nature Center. Easy walking  
Easy walking on a boardwalk through wetlands. There are  
Restroom facilities on site. Potential species include herons,  
bitterns, gallinules, warblers, swampshens, and Purple Martins.  
**Limit 25 people.**

Questions? Contact Kathy at 772-359-9108 or email  
[cmectvtfl@gmail.com](mailto:cmectvtfl@gmail.com)

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

***“Wherever there are birds, there is hope.” ~  
Mehmet Murat Ildan***





# President's Message (continued)

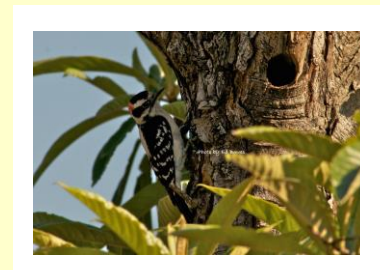
BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

We participated in the IRL Science Festival recently by manning a booth. The children who visited our booth got to play the "Match Game" with bird pictures and names. You would be surprised how many youngsters actually know a lot of birds and their names! It is something to see their interest in our wildlife. Many thanks to Wayne Landry, Jan Nuhn, Adella Blacka, and Ed Bowes for their work at the event.

As a chapter we are looking into sponsoring a Young Birders Club with St. Lucie Co. Oxbow Eco-Center partnering with us to provide space for meetings and activities. We thank Matthew Anderson, our Science Advisor, for leading the way to establish this program.

I would like to wish you all a peaceful and joyful holiday this December. I wonder if anyone will get a new pair of binoculars or an ID bird book from Santa this year. Happy Holidays Everyone!



## 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

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, hunters would engage in a holiday tradition called the “Christmas Side Hunt.” The hunter who brought in the largest number of feathered and furred quarry won the hunt. This toll on bird populations became a concern for early conservationists. Beginning on Christmas Day 1900, ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, an early officer in the then-nascent Audubon Society, proposed a new tradition, a “Christmas Bird Census.” Now, 124 years later, it is almost time for that Christmas Bird Count!

The St. Lucie Audubon Society Christmas Bird Count will be held on **Saturday, December 16, 2023**, rain or shine. The center of our count circle is the intersection of Okeechobee and S. Jenkins Roads. There are 10 zones to be counted by teams of at least two people. If you want to participate in the count, please contact Ed Bowes, via email at [slacbc2012@gmail.com](mailto:slacbc2012@gmail.com) or via phone at (772) 607-4028. We still need a few birders to count that day. It’s a great day of birding that benefits conservation efforts across the USA. Join us!

Project Feederwatch starts 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 2023-2024 season. This year, there is an added option to count mammals! For more information and to join, visit this [link](#).

### St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

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Vice President – Ed Bowes

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Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

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



## The Laughing Gull

# Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

The Treasure Coast beaches have had a more unusual visitor recently. An immature Black-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) has been seen near shore in Jensen Beach and in Ft. Pierce. This is a rare sighting because kittiwakes are true pelagic gulls, touching land only to breed. Their range does extend to the off-shore waters of the Treasure Coast during the winter.

The scientific name *Rissa tridactyla* refers to two characteristics of Black-legged Kittiwakes. The “rissa” means loud and garrulous, referring to their unceasing calls of “kittiwake” in their nesting colonies. The “tridactyla” refers to the atrophy of the hind toe, making the birds essentially three-toed (tridactyla).

During the nonbreeding season, kittiwakes range widely from the edge of the sea ice down to South Florida and Baja California. They live and forage offshore, eating primarily small fish and squid. Juvenile kittiwakes will occasionally appear singly on ocean beaches, usually during the autumn after a storm.

Black-legged Kittiwakes are a small gull. Adult nonbreeding birds have short black legs, a black smudge behind the eye, a white tail, solid gray wings with black wing tips, and a yellow bill. Immature birds have a black bill, a black terminal tail band, and a black “M” pattern on their back. They also have a black mark across the back of their neck. The photo of the visiting immature bird was taken in Jensen Beach.

Rare visits from pelagic birds like a Black-legged Kittiwake remind us to keep our eyes open when gazing on gulls at the beach. We could spot a real “out of townner!”



Photo by Janet Sredy

## Coming Attractions

### **FIELD TRIP**

Saturday, January 20, 2024

Bluefield Ranch Preserve

### **GENERAL MEETING**

Thursday, January 4, 2024

“Treasure Coast Wildlife Close Up and Personal”

## We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

*St. Lucie Audubon Society*

*P.O. Box 12474*

*Ft. Pierce, FL 34979*

