

FEBRUARY 2024

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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 Board, led by Doris and Steve Brookens, has made some plans for our celebration of 70 years as a Chapter in St. Lucie County. At our April General Meeting on April 4, we are going to offer a Bird Walk at the Oxbow Eco-Center to begin at 6 pm. The trails at Oxbow are wonderful and this will give everyone a chance to explore a trail and see some birds there. The walk will be led by Doris and Steve. Please make sure to register for this on our website so we can be prepared ahead of time.

After the Bird Walk, we will hold our regular General Meeting at 7 pm with a speaker, and then we can enjoy some social time together with a cake for our 70th Anniversary. We hope you will be able to come early for the walk, but by all means, at least come to the meeting and have some cake!

Our Conservation Chair, Diane Goldberg, is providing a free lecture at IRSC on Native Plants on Tuesday, February 13th at 10 am to 11:30 am. The lecture is going to be held at the Pruitt Campus (PSL) 500 NW California Blvd, Building E, 2nd floor, Room #210. The lecture will cover native edible and historically medicinal plants. These plants benefit our health, clean water, healthy waterways and to help our native wildlife, including birds. She will provide some free native seeds and

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

The Laughing Gull

Thursday, Feb. 1:

Presenter: Dr. Paul Gray

“History of Human Relationships with the Waterfowl Group,” presented by Dr. Paul Gray, Science Coordinator for Audubon Florida’s Everglades Restoration Program.*

Field trip: Peaceful Waters Sanctuary
11676 Pierson Rd, Wellington, FL
Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 8:00 – 10:30 AM
Trip Leaders: Doris & Steve Brookens

The sanctuary is located inside the Village Park Athletic Complex. There are elevated boardwalks and 1 mile of walking trails with modern restroom facilities. Anticipated species include wading birds, waterfowl, and warblers. There is more information at the registration link below. Questions? Contact Doris at (717) 576-7876 or email dorisbrookens@gmail.com

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

***There has been a change in speaker for the March meeting. The speaker will now be John Nelson.**

“In some Native languages the term for plants translates to ‘those who take care of us.’” ~ Robin Wall Kimmerer



The Laughing Gull

President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

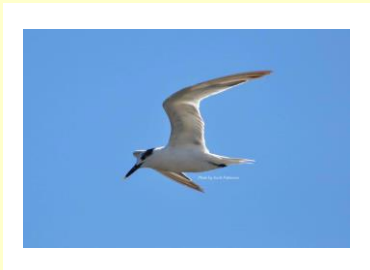
plants to anyone present. See our website for the link to register for this free event.

The Florida Young Birders Club-Treasure Coast Chapter- is holding its first meeting on January 27th with a bird hike. Hopefully we will get a report from Matthew Anderson in February to find out how this event is going. If you know of a youngster who might be interested in this club, please let us know and we will make sure to include them in future meetings.

Our Chapter is going to partner with the St. Lucie County Extension Office to provide backpacks to the downtown library in Ft. Pierce. These backpacks include binoculars, a bird ID book, and a local birding list to use. There are already 2 of these backpacks in the Kilmer Library to check out. The location of the library is right on the lagoon and there are a lot of birds in that area to see.

We would like to add 3 additional backpacks to the library and maybe offer some assistance at the library (the second-floor windows section is ideal) to anyone who wants to learn about birding. This is a new project and anyone interested can join in to help. John Nelson has volunteered to help get the 3 new backpacks together by ordering some binoculars. You can let your friends and family know about the opportunity to check out the backpacks in order to learn about our local birds.

Happy Valentine's Day!



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

On February 2nd, we celebrate a habitat that is central to human wellbeing—wetlands. Friday, Feb. 2 is [World Wetlands Day](#). The day marks the anniversary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an international treaty signed in 1971. The purpose of World Wetlands Day is to raise awareness and increase people’s understanding of the critical importance of wetlands to wildlife and humans. Wetlands are vital for protecting water quality and for sustaining food and breeding sites for many species. Please do your part to decrease pollution of wetlands, join in efforts to protect wetlands from development, and support wetlands restoration.

St. Lucie County is celebrating World Wetlands Day with a Guided Nature Walk in the Indrio Savannahs Preserve on February 2nd from 8:30 to 10:30 AM. The walk is being led by Eva Ries. If you would like to participate, register here: [SLC Guided Nature Programs](#).

Project Feederwatch started November 1st and runs through April 29th! 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. For more information and to join, visit this [link](#). There is still time to participate!

The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) happens President’s Day weekend! Be sure to participate by counting 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. More info here: <https://www.birdcount.org/>



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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Conservation Chair – Diane Goldberg

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Events Chair – Harriet Scott

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Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

Have you been treated to the spectacular site of Roseate Spoonbills (*Platalea ajaja*)? There are only two “big pink birds” seen in this part of Florida, and the most common is the Roseate Spoonbill (the other is a rare Caribbean Flamingo). All Roseate Spoonbills have white neck, upper back, and upper breast feathers with varying shades of pink on the wings and lower portions of the body. During breeding season, a brilliant carmine patch develops on the wing-and tail-coverts. Juvenile spoonbills lack this bright wing patch and begin life with feathers on their head. As birds approach maturity, they lose the head feathers and birds of breeding age have bald pale green heads.

Spoonbills possess a uniquely shaped bill that looks like a large spoon or spatula. They feed by sweeping the partially open spoon back-and-forth in a semicircle through shallow water in search of small prey items. When prey contacts the spoon, the bill snaps shut in a process called “tactolocation.” Roseate Spoonbills feed in all types of water—fresh, brackish, and salt—as long as the water is less than 12-inches deep. Primary food items are small fish, crustaceans, and aquatic insects.

Breeding season begins in November in the Florida Keys and typically lasts until March, advancing north over time. The birds nest in or near a colony on small islands or in trees overhanging water. Spoonbills are known to abandon their nests with significant human disturbance, including heavy boat traffic. Florida lists these birds as a Species of Special Concern due to habitat degradation and human disturbance issues. So, if you see Roseate Spoonbills in the wild, *especially* in a breeding colony, please keep a respectful distance and maintain quiet. We do not want to lose the “Flame Bird!”



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024

Kissimmee Prairie Preserve

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, March 7, 2024

“TBA”

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

P.O. Box 12474

Ft. Pierce, FL 34979

