

MARCH 2024

VOLUME 49, 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

I am hoping that you have been birding this winter and enjoyed a field trip or two offered by our Birding Adventures Co-Chairs, Kathy Mayshar and Doris Brookens. They have recently added a few new trips for the next few months, so if you have not looked on our website recently, please check it soon to get yourself a spot before the trip closes due to being full.

Kathy Mayshar has just announced a new way to celebrate our 70th Anniversary. She is spearheading a contest for our members to win a free T-Shirt by sighting 70 different species, in St. Lucie County only, during 2024. She will also be selling the T-Shirts for \$25 in case you want one without participating in this contest. There is a form that you can use to list the species you see (or heard) up to 70. Or, she is encouraging us to use E-Bird to list your sightings as time passes. Do you think you can find 70 different species here in St. Lucie County? It will be a challenge, but it is attainable, especially during the winter months when the migrants are here.

Our Science Advisor, Matthew Anderson, has judged the STEM Fair participants and has chosen three award winners to receive our Grace Stock Conservation Awards in April at our General Meeting. The students will be asked to attend our meeting and briefly describe their projects to us and receive a certificate and a monetary reward. We

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

Thursday, March 7:

Presenter: John Nelson

“John James Audubon: His Travels in Florida,” presented by John Nelson, creator of the *Audubon Moment*.

Three field trips in March!!

Trip 1: Pelican Island NWR, March 21, 8:30 to 11:30 AM

Trip 2: Florida Young Birders Hike, March 23 at Round Island Riverside Park, Vero Beach, 8:30 to 10:30 AM

Trip 3: Kissimmee Prairie Preserve, March 26, 8:15 AM to 1:00 PM

There is more information and complete details 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>

“I think having land and not ruining it is the most beautiful art that anybody could ever want.” ~ Andy Warhol



The Laughing Gull

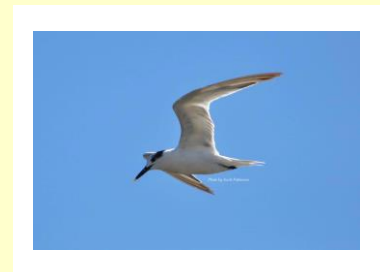
President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

have done this for years and most of our members really enjoy hearing about the projects these students have completed. It always surprises me that they are so smart and have met all scientific standards on their projects. The younger generation surprises me and it makes me hopeful for the future.

The latest report from our Membership Chair, Jan Nuhn, shows we have 32 new members so far this year (2024). We are still working to achieve the 70 new members by the end of this year. I believe we are doing well, but let's not stop asking folks to join our chapter. We have 38 to go!



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

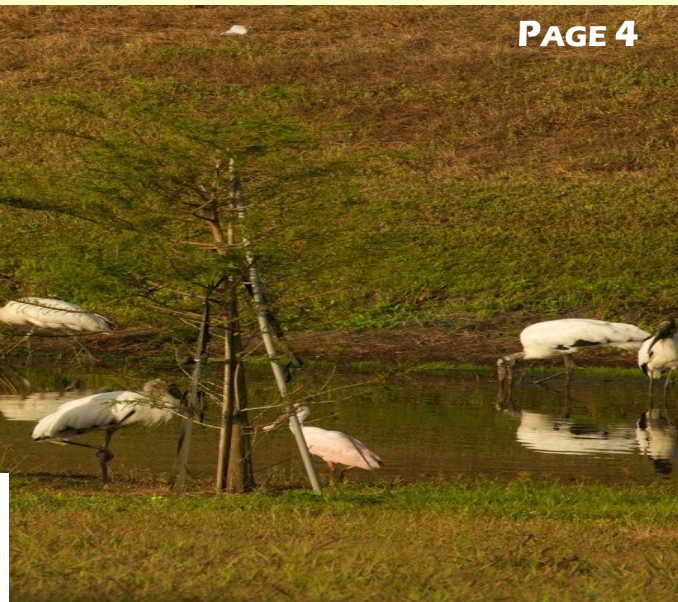
Citizen Science

By Ed BOWES

March 14th marks the International Day of Action for Rivers. The International Day of Action for Rivers is a day dedicated to solidarity – when diverse communities around the world come together with one voice to say that rivers matter. That communities having access to clean and flowing water matters. That everyone should have a say in decisions that affect their water and their lives. That it’s our time to stand up for these rights, now more than ever. This is more relevant to our area, since the Corps of Engineers has started releasing polluted water from Lake Okeechobee into the St. Lucie River—again. How much damage can the Indian River Lagoon withstand?

Civilizations grew up around rivers, and they are central to our lives and the survival of life on earth. Although freshwater ecosystems are so important, they are the most threatened in the world; freshwater species have seen an 83% decline since 1970 – *twice* the rate experienced within terrestrial or marine. They need our help – they need our voices. Speak out, defend, protect, restore, and be a river guardian.

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!



St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

President – Ellen Lynch

Vice President – Ed Bowes

Treasurer – JoAnn Stillman

Recording Secretary – Holly DeMarco

Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

Program Chair – Adella Blacka

Birding Adventure Co-Chair – Doris Brookens, Kathy Mayshar

Conservation Chair – Diane Goldberg

Membership Chair – Jan Nuhn

Events Chair – Harriet Scott

Public Relations – Ruth Neese

Directors at Large – Wayne Landry, Kathy Mayshar, John Nelson

Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

Our seasonal guests, a pair of Wood Ducks (*Aix sponsa*), have returned to visiting our backyard. The drake is sporting his spectacular breeding plumage, while the hen is a drab gray-brown. They brought three ducklings last year, and we are hopeful for similar success this year.

Like many ducks, Wood Ducks exhibit sexual dimorphism in plumage. This means the males and females are different colors. Male Wood Ducks are iridescent chestnut and green, with a prominent crest. Their necks show a white collar and chin strap, with white stripes in the crest. Male feathers have intricate markings varying from spots to bars and chevrons. Females also have a crest, which is smaller than the males' and gray in color. Overall, females are brownish-gray in color with a prominent blue speculum on the wing and a white eye ring with a "teardrop."

Wood Ducks are smaller than our other year-round duck species; eighteen inches in length as opposed to 20 inches for Mottled Ducks. Once bonded, the pair travels together to feed until eggs are laid. After that, one adult bird at a time will leave the nest to feed. They are cavity nesters and will readily use nest boxes placed near water. Plans for building a Wood Duck nest box can be found [here](#).

Wood Ducks feed primarily on plant material, such as duckweed, water primrose, and water lily. When aquatic plants are in short supply, they will venture onto land to eat acorns, berries, soybeans, beetles, and caterpillars. Wood Ducks are dabblers when feeding, meaning they make short dives for plants near the surface of the water.

These stunning ducks are found throughout St. Lucie County. Some preserves with recent sightings include Savannahs Preserve State Park, Pinelands Preserve, Teague Hammock Preserve, Spruce Bluff Preserve, and Indrio Savannahs Preserve. Good birding!



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

APRIL 4, 2024

70TH ANNIVERSARY BIRD WALK

Oxbow Eco-center

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, April 4, 2024

“Indian River Lagoon: An Exceptional Estuary”

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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