



# Laughing Gull

The Newsletter of the St. Lucie Audubon Society

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## President's Message

I finished viewing a three DVD set "the Life of Birds" narrated by David Attenborough. The video photography is spectacular. This is an in-depth study of bird behavior. A must see for every birder.

David Attenborough closes with this thought: "Birds have been flying over this earth long before man arrived, but we have taken over the land, sea and sky. If we are to continue to enjoy the birds with all their beauty and variety, we must secure a place for them. With knowledge, skill and care we can secure a place for them and surely we should."

Eric Draper, interim director of Florida Audubon, in a letter to chapter leaders closes with these remarks: "Let us honor our conservation inheritance by resolving to give our successors a Florida abundant with birds and other native species and where people are connected with nature."

The St. Lucie Audubon Society serves as an "Advocate for the preservation of the Earth's diverse ecosystems." We must remain vigilant for change which could endanger our bird population.

The SLAS Officers, Board members and Chairpersons will be busy during the summer months arranging for monthly meeting speakers, bird identification classes, monthly field trips, special events, and working with the county officials to secure a permanent home for the society. We should also develop and implement a strong education program for young people. If you are able to assist and/ or can make a positive contribution to the Society, please contact an officer or board member.

It has been an honor to serve as your President for the past two terms, and I wish to thank you for your support.

Daniel Walma MD

## Calendar of Events

May 8th Field Trip to Sebastian Inlet State Park

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Sabal Palm Shopping Center on US #1 in Fort Pierce..located just South of Virginia Avenue, on the West side of US #1. Park in the area near Publix/Staples towards the US #1 side of the parking lot.

Bring beverages and snacks, and of course sunscreen!...and remember to bring your guide

books. There is an \$8 fee PER CAR to enter the park, so carpooling is suggested. We will enter the NORTH entrance (over the bridge) to the park, but the entrance fee will allow us to enter the South side of the inlet afterwards.

Contact Dorothy at 349-6025 with any questions.

May Meeting: May 6, 2010. Speaker Greg Braun, Martin County Audubon speaking on Piping Plovers

Meeting Place: Oxbow Eco-Center • 5400 NE St. James Drive, Pt. St. Lucie, FL 34983

Located 1.5 miles south of Midway Road • 1.5 miles north of Airoso

[www.stlucieaudubon.org](http://www.stlucieaudubon.org)

## A Guide to Binoculars

There are great choices in every price range, but the market is also littered with junk. Buy "bird-worthy" binoculars and you'll enjoy birding more than you ever thought possible. Buy junk and you are apt to give up in frustration.

**NUMBERS GAME** - One of the first things you'll notice when you go shopping is that all binoculars are described by two numbers, such as 8X42 (pronounced "eight by forty-two"). The first number tells you the magnification, or how many times the object is being enlarged. The second tells you the diameter of the objective lens (the lens at the fat end of the tube) in millimeters. Thus 8X42 binoculars magnify the image eight times and have an objective lens that is 42 millimeters in diameter. When comparing binoculars of equal quality, the bigger the difference between the two numbers, the sharper and brighter the image. There are, however, some practical limits. Binoculars with objectives larger than 42 millimeters will be too big and heavy for most people to carry around all day. Binoculars with objectives smaller

than 30 millimeters will be lightweight and easy to carry, but they are not bright enough to show all the detail you need in poor light. Most experienced birders choose "full-sized" models with objective lenses that are 40 millimeters to 45 millimeters in diameter or "mid-sized" models with objective lenses from 30 millimeters to 35 millimeters. Full-sized binoculars will give you almost all the detail your eye is capable of seeing in all but the poorest light. Mid-sized models will sacrifice a little detail in poor light, but they make up for it in reduced size and weight.

### Lifetime Members of SLAS

Dan and Donna Walma

Bob Bangert

Bob and Liz Dunleavy

Hart and Jewel Rufe

### \*\*\* SPONSORS WANTED \*\*\*

St. Lucie County has a new policy of charging Non-Profits for use of County facilities.

Our cost is \$45.00 per month payable in advance. We are looking for sponsors to underwrite the cost of using Oxbow-Eco-Center.

In return we will acknowledge individual or company names in our Newsletter several times during the ensuing year. If you are interested in sponsoring SLA's ongoing program please send checks to :

**ST. LUCIE AUDUBON,  
P.O. BOX 12474,  
FORT PIERCE, FL 34979**

**Thanks to the Following Sponsors**  
John and Nettie Brolman  
Deena and Dana Wade - "River Lilly"  
Ed Bowes & Ruth Neese  
Treasure Coast Wildlife Center  
Billi Wagner  
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### www.stlucieaudubon.org

#### ST.LUCIE AUDUBON SOCIETY 2009 OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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Conservation Chair	Ed Bowes	eddie-ruth@msn.com
Education Co-Chairs	Terri Brown	tmbrown761@bellsouth.net
Bird ID Classes	Liz Dunleavy	DunZippy@aol.com
Hospitality Chair	Judith Whittemore	wilbarwhit@bellsouth.net
Chapter Historian	Judy Gersony	jagersony@hotmail.com
Webmaster	Mary Dodge	mary@jackmaryetc.com

## Conservation Corner

Submitted by Ed Bowes

I have heard birders express concern about the fate of birds removed from the Endangered Species list. Fortunately, many state, federal, and international laws exist to protect migratory and non-migratory birds. I will briefly explain the top four federal laws that protect birds in the U.S. These laws are the Lacey Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

The Lacey Act was one of the first attempts to protect birds in the U.S. Initially enacted in 1900 in response to the decimation of bird species for the millinery industry, the Lacey Act prohibited the possession of and interstate commerce in birds and bird parts in violation of any state, tribal, or U.S. law. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act was passed in 1918 to give "teeth" to the enforcement of the Lacey Act.

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) decreed that all migratory birds, their parts, eggs, and nests were protected. This law has been amended several times to include partnerships with Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Russia. The last amendment was made in 1998, tripling the financial penalties for misdemeanor offenses from \$5000 to \$15,000 and prohibiting the baiting of game birds. The Endangered Species Act of 1973 builds on the MBTA and accords enhanced protection to struggling species. Together, the MBTA and Endangered Species Act confirm or implement U.S. commitment

to several international treaties that seek to protect migratory birds.

Finally, the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 specifically addressed persistent human molestation of eagles. The Act forbade the take; possession; sale; purchase; barter; offer to sell, transport; export or import; of any Bald or Golden Eagle, alive or dead, including any part, nest, or egg unless allowed by permit.

These laws carry heavy penalties for felony violations—a \$250,000 fine and up to two years imprisonment per violation and penalties are doubled for an organization that breaks the law. For detailed information on these and other federal protection acts, go to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Web site at: <http://www.fws.gov/migratorybirds/RegulationsPolicies/treatlaw.html#esa> Information on Florida's wildlife protection laws is available at <http://myfwc.com>

## Election Results

At the April meeting of the SLAS, the following were elected by acclamation: President Elect-Ruth Neese, Vice-President Elect-Dorothy Schultz, Corresponding Secretary Elect-Liz Bardsley, and Director at Large Elect-Liz Dunleavy.

They will be installed at the SLAS general meeting in May

### Membership Application

A one-year chapter membership extends from January to January. You may use the coupon below to begin or renew your membership.

SLAS is now offering a Chapter-only annual membership for those who want to financially support their local chapter. The following dues options apply:

- Individual: \$20 per year**
- Family: \$25 per year**  
(for 2 or more people in same household)
- Sponsor: \$50 per year**
- Patron: \$100 per year**
- Lifetime: \$500**

Each local membership includes a subscription to the monthly newsletter "The Laughing Gull". You may receive "The Laughing Gull" via standard mail or electronically via email. Please indicate your preference below.

**Please make checks payable to and send to:**

St. Lucie Audubon Society, P.O. Box 12474,  
Fort Pierce, FL 34979

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**New membership:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Renewal:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please send my "Laughing Gull" by:

**Email** \_\_\_\_\_ or **Standard mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Thanks for your support.*

# Feathered Friends

Submitted by Ruth Neese

widow's beak is only ½ inch long, but the mouth can gape to 2 inches! This mouth is surrounded by stiff bristles that enlarge the gape, enabling the capture of large insects while in flight.

My first encounter with a Chuck-will's-widow (*Caprimulgus carolinensis*) was as a child growing up on a barrier island off coastal Georgia. I nearly stepped on the bird while I was walking through the pinewoods next to my house. At the last second, the bird turned its head and I noticed the movement! Chuck-will's-widows are superbly camouflaged, their feathers being variegated shades of brown with black flecks and a brown throat, and seldom seen unless flushed from the ground.

Nesting begins in March and runs through June; up to 2 eggs are laid in leaf litter. There is no attempt at nest building. Incubation lasts about 20 days, and the young are capable of flight 17 days after hatching. Though listed as a Species of Least Concern, very little is known about current Chuck-will's-widow population levels. The Center for Conservation Biology at the College of William & Mary initiated a Nightjar Survey Network in 2007 with the goal of determining population status for all U.S. nightjars and launching conservation programs. Be sure to listen for the call of this enigmatic bird on a clear moonlit night.

The Chuck-will's-widow is a harbinger of spring in the southeastern U.S., well known for its namesake call on clear moonlit nights. The bird is a member of the nightjar family, a group of birds with long wings, small legs, nocturnal or crepuscular activity, and large mouths. A Chuck-will's-

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newsletter@stlucieaudubon.org

address to

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