

OCTOBER 2019

VOLUME 45, ISSUE 1

# 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 summer is winding down and even though we do not officially meet during this time of the year, there are many people working on projects for us and for our feathered friends. Thank you to them all for their hard work and commitment to our chapter!

The Osprey Platform project where we provided the grant money to build and erect an Osprey Nest Platform has been completed. We partnered with St. Lucie County to build and erect at least one platform on Wesley Island, a County recreational island in the Indian River Lagoon. That was not all, we also provided two Great Blue Heron Poles with nesting arms that will hopefully provide a place for that species to nest. Our project was a great success, and since there are funds left over, we hope to do more in the next year for more Osprey poles in our County.

I am new to this President's job, but we have such a good team of officers and committee chairs that I am sure we will have a wonderful, educational, and fun-filled season to look forward to. We are looking forward to seeing our northern friends as they migrate back here to Florida (that's people and birds!). Please let me know when we see you if there is anything you would like for us to participate in or arrange for you. We are here to serve our community, make birding a great hobby, and support conservation of wild lands and wildlife.

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Thursday, Oct. 3

Speaker: Dr. Richard Forster

The speaker for our October general meeting will be Dr. Richard Forster who will be presenting "Shorebird Feeding Behaviors."

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Saturday, October 5, 2019

Paleo Hammock Preserve

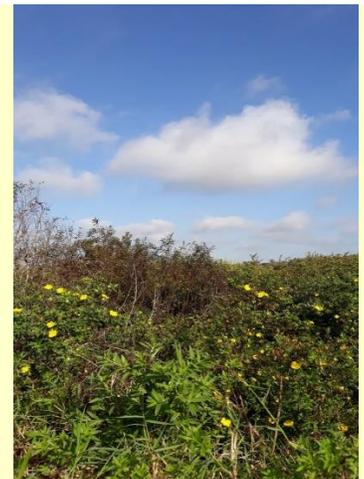
**Where:** Paleo Hammock Preserve, 8551 Carlton ED, Port St. Lucie, FL.

**When:** 7:45 am to 11:00 am

**Guide:** Tim Towles, expert birder and wildlife biologist

**Details:** This is a walking tour on uneven trails. The trails can be Wet, depending upon local rainfall. We recommend long pants, close-toed shoes, hat, insect repellent, sunscreen, and water. Bring your binoculars, camera, and enjoy the wetlands & prairie habitat. Birds include warblers, waterthrush, wrens, wading birds, and (maybe) Snail Kites.

**Contact:** Doris Brookens at cell: 717-576-7876 email: [dorisbrookens@gmail.com](mailto:dorisbrookens@gmail.com) You can register on our website: <https://www.stlucieaudubon.org/field-trips>



**"Being in touch with the natural world is crucial." ~ David Attenborough**

# Conservation Corner

BY RUTH NEESE

Ospreys (*Pandion haliaetus*) are large fish-eating raptors that are a common sight along St. Lucie County waterways. These birds seek out nest sites that have a high vantage point near water. Nests are large, bulky, and built from sticks and branches. Natural nest sites include dead trees and snags, but these sites can be limited. Osprey take readily to artificial nesting surfaces, including utility poles, power line structures, boats, buoys, and even crane booms. Man-made nesting platforms can provide a safer option for the birds when natural nesting sites are limited.

The St. Lucie Audubon Society wrote a grant that allowed the society to erect one of these artificial nesting platforms on a St. Lucie County recreational island. This effort was in keeping with our mission--“To foster knowledge, appreciation, and enjoyment of nature; to encourage responsible environmental stewardship; and to conserve and restore natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife and their habitats, for the benefit of humanity and the Earth’s biological diversity.”

The platform was dedicated to Marc Rosenthal, a long-time member and Treasurer who died recently. Our local Ospreys begin nesting in December, so we hope to have new tenets on the nest platform very soon!



## Chapter Dues

The year for local chapter dues runs January to January. Dues can be paid by check or via PayPal 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

## Items to Note

BY ED BOWES

### Proposed Bylaws Change

The Board of the St. Lucie Audubon Society proposes that the portion of the bylaws imposing term limits for chapter officers be removed. This bylaws change will be presented to the membership at the general meeting.

### Amazon Smile

Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. The St. Lucie Audubon Society participates in Amazon Smile, so please consider naming SLAS as your charity when using Amazon Smile. To use the service, log into [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) and select St. Lucie Audubon Society as your charitable organization.

**Project Feederwatch** starts Saturday, November 9 and runs through April 3, 2020. Join the team of citizen scientists by counting birds who visit your yard and feeders! The Cornell Lab of Ornithology uses the data to identify changes in winter ranges and bird species at risk. You can join Project Feederwatch here: <https://feederwatch.org/about/how-to-participate/>

The **Florida Keys Hawkwatch** raptor count is in full swing at Curry Hammock State Park just north of Marathon. You can follow the count on Facebook or visit the web page here: <https://floridakeyshawkwatch.com/>

In 2018, the Hawkwatch count broke the record for Merlins passing through the Keys.

### St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

President – Ellen Lynch

Vice President – Ed Bowes

Treasurer – JoAnn Stillman

Recording Secretary – Kathy Mayshar

Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

Program Chair – Kevin Hinkle

Birding Adventure Co-Chairs – Adella Blacka, Doris Brookens

Conservation Chair – Diane Goldberg

Membership Chair - Carol Pembroke

Events Chair – Harriet Scott

Public Relations – Ruth Neese

Directors at Large – Adella Blacka, Roger Laliberte, John Nelson

Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

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

# The Laughing Gull

## Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

You will have to work hard to find our local owls. First on the list is the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*). Barn Owls are members of one of the two phylogenetic families of owls—Tyto. These owls have a worldwide distribution and are distinguished by their unique facial disc. The North American race of Barn Owls is the largest.

Barn Owls are strictly nocturnal and almost totally silent in flight, which is why you have to work to find them unless you live on a farm. Unique among owls, Barn Owls can hunt successfully in total darkness using only their sense of hearing. They are extremely effective rodent predators, and swallow their prey whole. They then regurgitate the bones and other indigestible material as a pellet. Looking for accumulations of pellets can help you locate a Barn Owl roost.

Barn Owls have a rounded head with no ear tufts. They have a characteristic white, heart-shaped facial disc surrounded by shorter, stiffer tan feathers. Their upper parts are buffy-tan and gray with primarily white underparts. Female Barn Owls show more color than males, with a more reddish and more heavily spotted chest (photo 3). The more chest spots, the more vigorous the female and the more resistant to parasites and disease.

In flight, these owls can appear totally white. Thanks to the Harry Potter books, this characteristic can lead people to mistakenly believe they have seen a Snowy Owl. Even during a major irruption year, Snowy Owls have never drifted as far south as St. Lucie County, so if you see a “big white owl” here, rest assured it is a Barn Owl.

To find Barn Owls, you have to bird after dusk. Your best chance of seeing one is in the agricultural areas in the western portion of the county. Barn Owls may sometimes be spotted perched on a utility wire or bare tree limb along the C-24 Canal Road and in the Bluefield Ranch Preserve. They have also been seen in the hangars at the St. Lucie County airport.



## Coming Attractions

### **FIELD TRIP**

Friday, November 1, 2019

Jones Hammock & Platts Creek Preserves

### **GENERAL MEETING**

November 7, 2019

“Highlights in Indian River Lagoon Stewardship,  
Education, and Research”

## We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

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*Ft. Pierce, FL 34979*

