

DECEMBER 2022

VOLUME 48, ISSUE 3

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 chapter is in busy mode and we want to keep you informed on all the events and plans we are developing.

We were so delighted to welcome our new college student into the Audubon Conservation Leadership Initiative. Her name is Emily Bliss Duren. She is a junior at Indian River State College and she will be guided and mentored by our Science Advisor, Matthew Anderson. Her interests include Biology, Plant Sciences, and Entomology. Hopefully you will meet her on one of our field trips or at a general meeting. We have given her an honorary membership in our chapter for this season. She will be working with FDEP and Indian River Aquatic Preserves doing research, monitoring and conservation events. Welcome Emily!

Last month I told you about our plan to develop a YouTube channel and that John Nelson was heading up that effort. He corrected me on the email address I put in the message and I need to correct that now. He is still collecting any pictures or videos that you might have of our previous activities and send them to him at this correct address: floridaswildoutdoors@gmail.com

National Audubon has recently sent out a memo to all chapters regarding the Audubon Naming Project Update. There is a National Audubon Task Force which is undertaking the process of whether

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Photo by Dan Martinelli

The Laughing Gull

Thursday, Dec. 1:

Presenter: Miguel Nevarez

“Prescribed Fire.” Miguel Nevarez, a Mitigation Specialist with the Florida Forest Service, will be explaining why fire is crucial to the health of Florida’s ecosystem. **Face-to-face at Oxbow Eco-center and on Facebook Live.**

**Field trip: Indrio Savannas Preserve
Thursday, December 1, 2022
Trip Leader: Lorraine Morecraft**

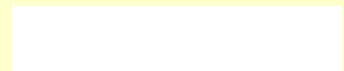
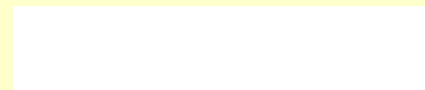
This interesting preserve is part of the Great Florida Birding Trail. It contains freshwater wetlands, pine and scrub flatwoods platted for a housing development that was never built and a large lake which was formerly a mine.

Please use the restroom before you arrive. 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>

“The forest is a quiet place if only the best birds sing.” ~ Kay Johnson



President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

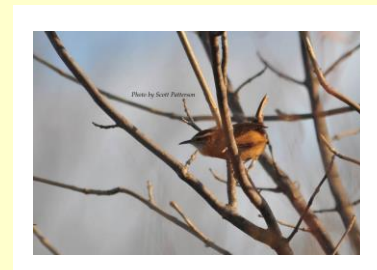
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to change the Audubon name or not. They want to be as transparent as possible and they want to show the extent to which this process is striving to be rigorous, thoughtful, equitable, and in line with our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, & Belonging values.

They say they understand that there are varying opinions regarding the actions of historical figures and that many feel passionately about their views. Before coming to any conclusion about the use of John James Audubon as our namesake, they are committed to listening to the input from our community, members, volunteers, donors, partners and staff. They recently held a survey that they are now reviewing. With the amount of input that is being collected, the current plan is for presentation of the data to the full Board in February 2023.

What does this mean to our chapter? They are saying that they recognize the power of a network unified in name and the power of a chapter's self-definition. As independently incorporated entities, each chapter has the autonomy and authority to make decisions in respect to their naming as best serves their needs. Our board has discussed this movement and we have decided to wait until the new year and the National Audubon recommendations come out. I will keep the membership posted on any decisions made by our board on this topic.

Our next general meeting is December 1st at Oxbow Eco-center and streamed on Facebook Live. See you then!



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 19th 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, 123 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 17, 2022**, 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 or via phone at (772) 607-4028. It’s a great day of birding that benefits conservation efforts across the USA. Join us!

Project Feederwatch starts 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 2022-2023 season. For more information and to join, visit this [link](#).

The Pelican Island Audubon Society is holding a conference on sustainable landscapes on January 21, 2023. Cost is \$25 for the day and the fee includes a box lunch. For more information and to register, visit the website [here](#).

St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

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Treasurer – JoAnn Stillman

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Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

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Events Chair – Harriet Scott

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Science Advisor – Matthew Anderson

Raffle Coordinator – Wayne Pembroke

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

This month's column honors our newsletter namesake, the Laughing Gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*). These gulls are named for their laugh-like call. They are coastal birds, rarely found far from salt water. Year-round residents of the Treasure Coast, Laughing Gulls have a different appearance in the winter.

Winter is not breeding season for Laughing Gulls, so their distinctive black head is not present. Instead, adults are mostly white with a gray back, dark legs, a black bill, and a smudge of black behind the eye. During breeding season, Laughing Gulls show a black head with thin white eye crescents and a red bill. Small white spots are present near the tips of the primary feathers in both plumages.

Laughing Gulls have broad interests in food. Their menu includes invertebrates, such as snails, crabs, and worms; fish; squid; garbage; handouts from beachgoers; and food stolen from open-air restaurant tables. Infrequently, they will also eat the eggs of other birds.

These birds nest on spoil islands, beaches, and in saltmarshes; anywhere they feel safe from terrestrial predators. Both sexes participate in nest construction, with the male bringing nest material and the female arranging it. Laughing Gulls are monogamous and pairs often remain together for several breeding seasons. A typical clutch is 2 – 4 eggs. As with other shorebirds, chicks are vulnerable to extremes of weather and predation by terrestrial predators, hawks, owls, and larger gulls.

Watch for our namesake when you visit the local beaches. And remember, don't feed the gulls!



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Thursday, January 19, 2023

Indian Hills Recreation Area

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, January 5, 2023

“Gulls of Florida”

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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