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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 chapter has completed the Annual Christmas Bird Count in St. Lucie County. Ed Bowes will take the data from the 10 different areas and compile it in order to send it off to Florida Audubon. I am sure he will give us an overview of the findings as soon as he can so we can see how our county is doing overall.

"A Little Birdie" has told me it is time to pay annual dues to our chapter. You can do this by going to our website, www.stlucieaudubon.org and choose a level. You can also send a check to our PO Box 12474, in Ft. Pierce, FL 34979. Your dues help keep us afloat each year and we thank you for your participation in our chapter.

There are lots of field trips planned this new year, please check our website to see them and sign up. We are also having many great speakers for our general meetings. The next meeting on January 5th will be a Zoom meeting because our speaker is not a local person. Michael Brothers will be talking about Gulls of Florida. He is a wonderful speaker and I encourage you to join in at 7 pm Thursday, January 5th. Ed Bowes has sent out invitations to join the meeting on December 12th, so look back in your email to make sure you have it saved.

I want to thank all of you who use the Smile.Amazon website to
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The Laughing Gull

Thursday, Jan. 5:

Presenter: Michael Brothers

“Gulls of Florida.” Michael Brothers, Adjunct Professor of Environmental Science - Stetson University and Retired Director of Marine Science Center in Ponce Inlet, Florida. Mr. Brothers will explain how to identify some common and some not so common gulls. **This meeting will be via Zoom only.**

**Field trip: Indian Hills Recreation Area
52 Savannah Rd., Ft. Pierce, FL
Thursday, January 19, 2023, 7:30 – 10:00 AM
Trip Leader: Eva Ries**

This property has a 1-mile walking trail around a water treatment area. We can expect to see wading birds and some songbirds. This is a walking tour, so wear comfortable shoes. **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>

“To remember freedom, it will be enough to watch a happy seagull flying in the sky.” ~ Mehmet Murat ildan



President's Message (continued)

BY ELLEN LYNCH

(Continued from page 1)

purchase things so that our chapter can get a donation quarterly. Using this website does not affect your cost at all, but it does generate funds for us and it is greatly appreciated.

Our Science Advisor, Matthew Anderson and Kaitlyn, a colleague of his, will be judging the STEM Fair on 1/13/23. They will recommend winners for our Annual Grace Stock Conservation Awards. We invite the winners (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) to attend our April meeting with their projects so we can give them monetary awards for their work in conservation. We support St. Lucie County students who study science in order to make the world a better place. Their projects are usually quite interesting. And just a quick note: Matthew has received a promotion as Indian River Lagoon Aquatic Preserves Manager, with the Florida Dept of Environmental Protection. Congratulations to Matthew!

It is my hope that this new year, 2023, will be full of hope and health to you all.



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

It's time to plan for participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count! This global bird count takes place annually on President's Day weekend. That means this year's count runs from February 17 to 20, 2023. Count 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.

- Make your best estimate of how many birds you saw of each species. For example, 5 Northern Cardinals, 30 American Crows. Huge flocks may be a challenge, but your best guess is still valuable.
- Enter your list(s) online at www.eBird.org. Put in a new checklist: for each new day; for each different location; for the same location, same day, if you counted at a different time of day. You can start entering bird lists at midnight local time on the first day of the count, anywhere in the world.

For all the details, visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website at <https://www.birdcount.org/>. There are lots of helpful videos on and links to get you started.

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 2022-2023 season. For more information and to join, visit this [link](#). There is still time to participate!

The **Everglades Birding Festival** is January 12 – 16, 2023. More information at 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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Corresponding Secretary - Jan Nuhn

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

The Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*) is not native to Florida, meaning they did not originate or evolve in Florida or even in North America. Cattle Egrets originate in Africa and somehow arrived in northeastern South America in 1877. The species spread northward, being first documented in the U.S. in 1941 and nesting here in 1953. So, Cattle Egrets are not native, they are naturalized. They are now one of the most abundant herons in North America.

Everyone in Florida has seen a Cattle Egret, whether they can name the bird or not. These ubiquitous herons can be found almost anywhere—following cattle on a ranch, chasing large mowers to capture fleeing insects, in wetlands, strolling through backyards, or scavenging in the parking lot of a fast-food restaurant. Compared to other herons, Cattle Egrets are short and stocky with a thicker bill. Adults are white with a yellow beak and legs. During breeding season, golden crown feathers appear and there are gold patches on the breast and back.

Cattle Egrets nest in a communal rookery, often with other wading birds. Rookeries are found on mangrove islands in rivers and lagoons or in the center of a lake or wetland to avoid predators. Clutches typically consist of 2 – 4 eggs. Nestlings have dark skin covered with down and black legs. After breeding season, Cattle Egrets continue with communal roosting at night.

They have a highly varied diet, consisting primarily of insects, which is why they follow livestock and lawn mowers. Cattle Egrets also eat other invertebrates, fish, frogs, lizards, and crayfish. They have been documented hunting mice and small songbirds (warblers) and will consume eggs and nestling birds.

Watch for this highly adaptable heron in your Florida yard, wetland, or local parking lot.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Thursday, March 9, 2023

T. M. Goodwin Waterfowl Management Area

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, February 2, 2023

“Surprising Facts about the Short-Tailed Hawk”

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

P.O. Box 12474

Ft. Pierce, FL 34979

