

St. Lucie Audubon Society

Fostering appreciation of nature in St Lucie County, Florida, since 1954



The Laughing Gull

President's Message

By Eva Ries

It's on—our annual Adams Ranch Breakfast and Tour! The yearly anticipation has paid off for those watching the website and waiting to pounce on tickets like a Red-shouldered Hawk on a mouse. All three trips (one each in January, February, and March) are filled and sold out!

The chapter wishes to thank the Adams family and the Adams Ranch as they graciously offer this opportunity as a fundraising event open to the public for the St. Lucie Audubon Society. We are grateful to the late Bud Adams, whose legacy of conservation was demonstrated in the support of the local community and the environment.

We hope you are out enjoying the clear, cool weather and the seasonal birds present in the area. American Kestrels are evident in numbers this year, and there have been reports of rare birds, such as a Brant, in the Indian River Lagoon. Keep birding, and we hope to see you at the next member meeting on February 1st to hear our guest speaker from the South Florida Water Management District. See you then!

Inside This Issue

President's Message	1
Field Trip and Speaker	2
Conservation Corner	3
Chapter Dues Schedule	3
Citizen Science	4
Board of Directors	4
Feathered Friends	5



The Laughing Gull

Thursday, February 1
Speaker: Kathryn LaMartina

The speaker for our February General Meeting will be Kathryn LaMartina, the South Florida Water Management District Regional Representative. She will be speaking on the “St. Lucie Estuary/Southern Indian River Lagoon Water Resource Summary.”

Saturday, February 3, 2018 Field Trip

Rich Grissom Memorial Wetlands, aka Viera Wetlands

Viera Wetlands offers a wonderful opportunity to view and photograph birds as we drive the berm roads around water treatment impoundments. There should be nesting wading birds, ducks, and (maybe) rails.

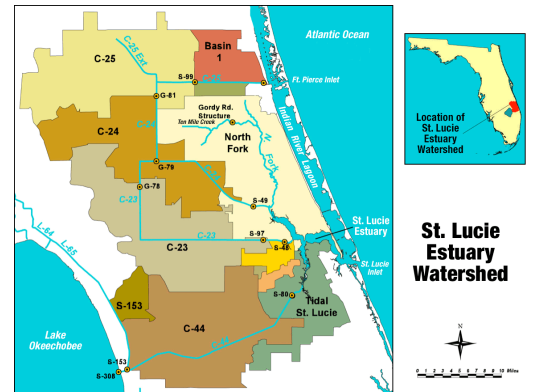
Guide: Linda Sullivan, avid birder & photographer

Meeting Place: Rich Grissom Memorial Wetlands parking area at 8:30 am.

Directions: On the website <http://stlucieaudubon.org/fieldtrips.htm>

Sign up: Contact Doris Brookens for sign up. Cell: 717-576-7876 email: dorisbrookens@gmail.com. You can also sign up at the February 1 general meeting.

“There is an unreasonable joy to be had from the observation of small birds going about their bright, oblivious business.” –Grant Hutchinson, *The Complete Lachlan*



Conservation Corner

BY DIANE GOLDBERG

I was horrified that our mayor wants to use McCarty Ranch water for drinking. A TCPalm investigation found treated human waste in waterways. EPA data shows Treasure Coast residents get their water from a system that has tested positive for coliform. People are vulnerable to the pollution because the contaminants can flow downstream in rivers and groundwater. The Treasure Coast Planning Council meeting had a presentation about biosolids, which is treated sewage. When the sewage is treated to rating AA, chemicals and compost are added and it's called fertilizer. Sod and feed farms use it generously because it's cheap and 'best management practices' are only voluntary. The chemicals were proof the tainted water that was tested came from farms using biosolids and not from septic tanks or manure.

Our State needs to make best management practices a requirement and all harmful substances a requirement in the tests, such as nitrogen and phosphorous instead of just one or the other. We must test for coliform, heavy metals, insecticides, herbicides, medical waste and microplastics. Our Agricultural Department and our Congress want to protect our farming industry, but our health and the safety of our environment needs to be protected too and are costly for our government also. Doing the right thing is less costly than the cleanup and health treatments.



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

-Sponsor: \$50

-Family (2 or more people): \$30

-Patron: \$100

Citizen Science

BY ED BOWES

Christmas Bird Count

We completed another successful Christmas Bird Count on December 14, 2017. I want to thank all of the team members on the 10 teams that worked so hard counting birds that day! Now that all the data is in, I want to share some of the highlights:

- 118 species identified
- 17,700 individual birds counted
- Highest count—vultures: 6500 Turkey Vultures and 1000 Black Vultures
- Other high counts:
 - 1800 Fish Crows
 - 1000 White Ibis
 - 800 Laughing Gulls

There were some other interesting finds during the count, including some single sightings and a selection of raptors.

The single bird sightings included:

- Clapper Rail
- Wilson’s Snipe
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird
- White-eyed Vireo
- Prothonotary Warbler
- 2 Crested Caracara
- 3 American Bald Eagles
- 6 Eastern Screech Owls
- 3 Great Horned Owls
- 3 Barred Owls

The raptors encompassed a Florida specialty, our nation’s symbol, and more owls than we have counted in several years.

Thanks again for participating, and I hope to see you all out counting again for the **Great Backyard Bird Count February 16 – 19, 2018!**

St. Lucie Audubon Board of Directors

President: Eva Ries

Vice-President: Ellen Lynch

Treasurer: Marc Rosenthal

Recording Secretary: Kathy Mayshar

Corresponding Secretary: Liz Dunleavy

Program Chair: Ellen Lynch

Birding Adventure Chair & Director-At-Large: Adella Blacka

Hospitality: Tom & JoAnn Stillman

Conservation Chair: Diane Goldberg

Directors-At-Large: Ed Bowes & Kathy Broadbent

Membership Chair: Carol Pembroke

Public Relations Chair: Ruth Neese

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

The St. Lucie Audubon Society is on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/StLucieAudubonSociety/>

Feathered Friends

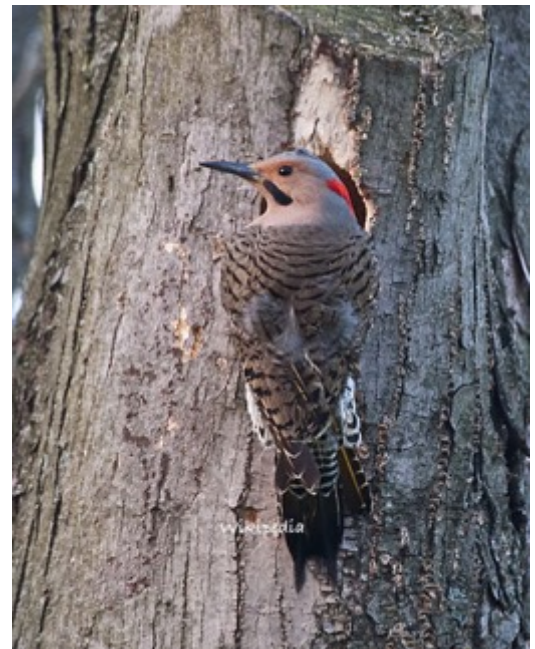
BY RUTH NEESE

Northern Flickers have been in decline since 1966, with a 49% drop in population between 1966 and 2012. Here in Florida, we see the yellow-shafted subspecies, *Colaptes auratus auratus*, which refers to the yellow color of the wing feather shafts.

Like other woodpeckers, there are subtle color variations between male and female Northern Flickers. Males have a black moustache, while females lack this black marking. Both sexes have a brown face with a gray crown, a red crescent at the nape of the neck, a black bib, and overall brown upperparts with black barring. Underparts are light beige to white with black spots. In flight, eastern Northern Flickers show yellow under the wings and tail feathers. You can see the hints of yellow in the feather shafts of the bird in the lower photo.

Unlike most other woodpeckers, you are more likely to see Northern Flickers on the ground! Their preferred foods are beetles and ants, which they dig up using their slightly curved bill. They are cavity nesters like other woodpeckers, and will sometimes forage on tree trunks. If you are lucky enough to see a courtship display, the male drums and dances on a resonant surface while one or more females watch the display.

Because they forage on the ground, yet need trees for protection, look for these birds in edge habitat. That means along the edges of woodlands, open fields with scattered trees, and the edges of wetlands. They have been recorded in Sheraton Scrub Preserve, Indrio Savannahs Preserve, Paleo Hammock Preserve, and Bluefield Ranch Preserve.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Saturday, March 10, 2018
Green Cay Nature Center/Wacadahatchee Wetlands
Guides: Hart & Jewel Rufe

GENERAL MEETING

Thursday, March 1, 2018
Speaker: Sam Fried
"Birding Cuba"

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stlucieaudubon.org>

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





For more information on the Great Backyard Bird Count, visit
<http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

From Audubon Florida: Audubon Continues Campaign to Target Conservation Dollars for More Conservation Projects—“Parks, not Paper Clips”

More information and a petition at this link:
<http://fl.audubon.org/news/advocate-parks-not-paper-clips-continues-crc-ramps-everglades-reservoir-and-more>