

APRIL 2018

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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 Eva Ries

Successes and Coming Events

We wish to thank our friends and supporters from the Treasure Coast for a wonderful response to our three Adams Ranch Tours this year, it was another resounding success! Of course, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the family and staff of the Adams Ranch for opening their doors to our guests and providing this opportunity to our chapter. The legacy of community outreach that Alto "Bud" Adams established lives on in this way, and we are pleased to be part of it.

Our yearly Bird-A-Thon is nearly here, and there are great speakers in the area in the form of David Simpson and Richard Crossley. We'll also be preparing for St. Lucie County's Earth Day and other festivals.

Swallow-tailed Kites have been sighted, but so have Common Loons in the Intracoastal Waterway. Have you seen a bird species of special interest? Report it on eBird and make a citizen science contribution to help map bird species! <https://ebird.org/>

If you're interested in volunteer opportunities through the chapter, we have them! Contact us via email:

772-577-3562

stlucieaudubon@gmail.com

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Photo by Dan Marinelli

Thursday, April 5

Speaker: Michelle Peterson

The speaker for our April general meeting will be Michelle Peterson, Florida Master Gardener & Master Bee Keeper. Her topic will be “The Buzz About Bees: Honey Bees & Native Bees.”

Saturday, April 7, 2018

Boat Trip to Indian River Lagoon Spoil Islands

With the Friends of the Spoil Islands:

This trip is full!

“The flower doesn’t dream of the bee. It blossoms and the bee comes.” ~Mark Nepo



Conservation Corner

Water & Climate Change

BY RUTH NEESE

World Water Day is celebrated every year on March 22nd. This year, the theme of World Water Day focuses on using nature to help conserve water. One strategy is to preserve and restore wetlands. When wetlands are bulldozed and filled for agriculture or infrastructure, biodiversity is degraded and climate change is accelerated.

Climate change adds to the multiple pressures that threaten biodiversity on our planet. These pressures include habitat loss and degradation, pollution, worsening water quality, water shortages, and over-utilization of natural resources. Notice a pattern here? Humans are responsible for most of these environmental problems. Florida's environment is experiencing these pressures from urban sprawl, phosphate pollution in Lake Okeechobee, destruction of wetlands and mangroves, and poor water management decisions.

Wetlands are under threat here in Florida and nationally. State and federal legislators want to change the definitions of "wetland" and "high water line" to permit more filling and building. We need better wetlands protection, not a loosening of regulations. Monitor these proposed changes and contact your state and federal representatives to urge them to protect wetlands.



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

Citizen Science

BY ED BOWES

Global Big Day 2018

Get excited! The Global Big Day returns on May 5, 2018! If you are unfamiliar with the Global Big Day, it is a bird counting event sponsored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. For one day, everyone on the planet counts birds, then submits a list to eBird. This data is crucial for tracking long distance migrants that cross one or more continents—lapwings, Black-bellied Plovers, Red Knots, Semipalmated Sandpipers, and more. Even our local Swallow-tailed Kites traverse two continents and the Gulf of Mexico during migration!

Participation is easy, just count birds on May 5, 2018. You can spend the day in the field and count for hours, or you can count for 10 minutes looking out the window at work. However you choose to participate, you must enter your checklist into eBird before May 8. You can find eBird online via a desktop computer, a laptop, or through a mobile app for your smartphone (iOS and Android). More information on how to participate can be found here: <https://ebird.org/content/ebird/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/Taking-Part-in-Global-Big-Day.pdf>

The results from the Dotty and Hank Hull Bird-A-Thon will be reported in the May newsletter.

St. Lucie Audubon Officers & Board Members

President – Eva Ries

Vice President – Ellen Lynch

Treasurer – Marc Rosenthal

Recording Secretary – Kathy Mayshar

Corresponding Secretary - Liz Dunleavy

Program Chair – Ellen Lynch

Birding Adventure Co-Chairs – Adella Blacka, Doris Brookens, Kathy Mayshar

Hospitality - JoAnn & Tom Stillman

Conservation Chair – Diane Goldberg

Membership Chair - Carol Pembroke

Citizen Science – Ed Bowes

Public Relations – Ruth Neese

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

The Laughing Gull

Feathered Friends

BY RUTH NEESE

This member of the blackbird family is known for its bright yellow chest and flutelike song. The Eastern Meadowlark (*Sturnella magna*) is a year-round resident of the western portions of St. Lucie County. Sadly, its numbers have been in sharp decline here and across North America due to habitat loss. Populations fell 89% between 1966 and 2015 due to loss of grasslands. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the Eastern Meadowlark is listed as a Common Bird in Steep Decline and rates an 11 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score.

Eastern Meadowlarks are mottled brown with black marks on their upper parts, making them very hard to see in tall grass. Their underparts are bright yellow with a bold black V as a “bib.” Tails are mostly brown with black barring, but the outer feathers are white. These white tail feathers are conspicuous in flight.

Male Eastern Meadowlarks sing a flutelike song from an exposed perch. This is typically your first clue that a meadowlark is present. He sings 3-8 whistles slurred together that gradually drop in pitch. The song will vary a bit by geographic location, but once you hear one, you will always be able to identify an Eastern Meadowlark by ear.

When birding in the western portions of our county, watch for Eastern Meadowlarks to be perched on utility wires and fence posts. They are usually present at the St. Lucie County Fairgrounds, where several males may be singing at once. You can also find them at Paleo Hammock Preserve, Bluefield Ranch Preserve, Pinelands Preserve, and along the roads that crisscross livestock pastures.



Coming Attractions

FIELD TRIP

Watch for a sea turtle walk in June!

GENERAL MEETING

May 3, 2018

“Show and Tell”

We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

<http://stluciesudubon.org>

St. Lucie Audubon Society

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