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Refuge Manager's Report

By Kristin Fritz

As we slip out of summer and slide into fall, it is an exciting time out on the refuge. October has brought us migrating song-birds and shorebirds that use the refuge as a stop to refuel on their journey. We are getting ready for our fall migration with continued habitat management across the refuge.



A few of our exciting management actions involve the completion of over 320 restored acres of wetland and prairie habitat on our Pintail unit. Shovelers Pond will be returned to its flooded status, after a long summer of intensive management actions to fight invasive species. The refuge staff worked closely with partners to help fence off and sign critical nesting bird habitat on our beach units in Galveston County. Across the refuge thousands of acres were prescriptively burned for habitat management, while in other areas of the refuge hundreds of acres are being flooded to best support our migrating birds. We are also back at local events and festivals where we get to see you face-to-face; if you see us out at an event come say "hi" at our booth!

If you would like to get involved and volunteer, we are always looking for smiling faces. From planting wetland plants in our newly restored Pintail Prairie Unit, to working in our beautiful visitor centers, or joining our amazing Friends group, we have a spot for you. If you haven't made a trip to the refuge, take a moment to come enjoy all the beauty Anahuac National Wildlife has to offer.

Upcoming Event!
October 22
Family Fishing Day
 See flier on page 17
 for more info!

Our Mission: The mission of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge is to support, preserve, promote, and enhance Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and its use for recreational, educational, and scientific research purposes.

FOAR President's Message

By David Sarkozi



Why hello! Gosh it's been a long time since we last had a chance to catch up. We are relaunching our newsletter and you can look forward to hearing from the Friends of Anahuac Refuge (FOAR) regularly. For that I want to thank Jennifer Pinion for taking this on. This issue is a big one and we have a lot to share with you on what's been going on. Take some time and go through this issue and see what we've been doing.

I won't sugar coat it, Covid was hard on FOAR. Our main source of revenue, our nature stores at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Contact Station (VIS) and headquarters Visitor Center (VC), were closed for two years. During that difficult time Kay Lovelace our longtime nature store manager decided it was time to pass the baton on to someone else. I want to thank Kay for her years of dedication to FOAR and hours and hours of time spent on keeping the stores running.

Jennifer Pinion stepped up to take over the nature stores and she is about a year into it now and you should start seeing her mark on the stores. Much more gratitude is owed to Jennifer from me and from FOAR for taking on the role of managing the nature stores. Jennifer is now bringing in new inventory and next time you are at the VC or VIS please take a few minutes to see what's new and consider supporting the FOAR via the Nature Stores. Can't make it out to the refuge? Jennifer now has online sales, visit our website to connect to our online store. *Hint, it's not too early to do some holiday shopping at our nature stores. Amazon won't miss your business, but it makes a world of difference to us. **It matters where you spend your money.***

Sadly, I need to share with you that we lost former President of FOAR Travis Lovelace. Travis was passionate about prairie restoration and spent hours of volunteer time working on prairie restoration projects for the refuge. As a memorial to Travis a demonstration prairie is planned. Monies from generous memorial donations are being used and you can read about it in this issue of the newsletter.

FOAR has completed a couple of projects and is working to complete some others that will enhance the visitor experience at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. We have expanded the trails at the Toni Marchetti bird blind on the refuge. There is now a new paved walking loop around the south end of the woodlot allowing more access to the migrant trap. A large planting of native trees and shrubs has been completed to increase diversity and provide more migratory bird habitat.

We have also enhanced the viewing and added a new water feature at the famed Willows on the refuge. The boardwalk has been expanded some to allow better viewing of the new water feature. A screen was added on the northside so activity there is less likely to spook birds at



Travis Lovelace

the water feature. Several new native trees and shrubs have been planted to continue the restoration of the Willows. I remember well my first ever spring “fallout” experience in 1995 at the Willows where I got more than 20 “lifers” of warblers, tanagers, and buntings that day. Freezes and storms were hard on the willows until there were almost no willows left after Hurricane Ike. Since then, the FOAR has been working hard on the Willows and I can say the Willows are now in the best shape I’ve ever seen.

Gene Campbell deserves all our thanks for heading up and executing these projects. His talent and passion for these projects are making Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge better for everyone. Success in these two projects will be due also in no small part to David Hanson. David has taken on the Herculean task of ensuring these new trees survive one of the hottest and driest summers ever on the refuge. David had rounded up volunteers through the heat of the summer to transport hundreds of gallons of water to keep most of the new trees alive. David and his fellow volunteers surely averted the total loss of all the new trees.

Chuck Davis is working to complete a new audio tour of the refuge. We’re in the final stages of this project. Soon you will see the tour signs on the refuge with a QR code to download the tour audio on your phone as you tour the refuge.

Twenty-nine years ago, I helped found the FOAR. I’m proud of what the organization has accomplished in that time. If you are a current member, I want to thank you for that, and ask that you continually renew your membership. If your membership isn’t current, I’d like to ask you to consider renewing your membership. If you’re just now learning about the FOAR please consider becoming a new member. Whatever your membership status, please consider becoming a volunteer at the refuge; there are volunteer opportunities for almost anyone. Visit the FOAR website to find out more. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Can you find all the alligators?

Count the total number of gators you find in this entire Newsletter, including ALL pictures, clip art, logos, etc. (This might be more difficult than you realize because just like in real life, some hide very well!) Visit the Visitor Center Nature Store (4017 FM 563) or the Visitor Information Station Nature Store (On the Refuge) and tell the volunteer the correct number of gators before December 1st to win a prize! You can also email FOARNatureStore@gmail.com with the correct number for a prize if you can’t make it to the Refuge soon enough!



By Norman Welsh

Native Prairie Demonstration Garden Coming Soon!

By Kay Lovelace

Soon, there will be a space near the existing Butterfly Garden which will be devoted to native prairie plants. This demonstration garden will be planted in early 2023 to show a variety of forbs (a herbaceous flowering plant other than a grass) and grasses that grow in native prairies. There will also be a sign to educate our visitors about prairies and their role in maintaining healthy habitats on which wildlife can thrive. This project was made possible by donations in memory of Travis Lovelace, a volunteer for the Friends of Anahuac Refuge, whose passion was participating in the restoration of native prairies. Much of the information here came from his research and native prairie restoration volunteer work at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.



Prairies

The native coastal prairie is a diverse mix of plant species; many different types of grasses and many species of forbs thrived at one time. This diversity is the reason our prairies are so beautiful; we see plants in various stages of growth from budding to blooming to setting on seed. At any time of year, we see blooms from a huge variety of plants.

The Gulf Coastal Prairies and Marshes include approximately nine million acres of coastal plains, 20 to 80 miles in width. Less than 1% of the coastal prairie in Texas and Louisiana remain making them endangered. Prairies are a critical food source for many species of grassland birds such as Northern Harrier, Swainson's Hawk, Upland Sandpiper, Long-billed Curlew, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Short-eared Owl, Horned Lark, Sedge Wren, American and Sprague's Pipit, Savannah and LeConte's Sparrow, Dickcissel, Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark to name a few. A huge variety of mammals live on the prairies and benefit from luscious vegetation also.

Prairie and marsh grasses were the dominant vegetation in most of the region prior to Anglo-European settlement and cultivation. The National Wildlife Refuge System preserves and enhances habitat to save natural resources which provide food for wildlife. All living things have needs such as water, food, safety of space, etc.

Coastal prairies provide a natural border where freshwater and saltwater meet--a transition from dry land to wet land. On the Upper Texas Prairie, hurricanes are a frequent threat and cause periodic flooding. Thankfully, the prairies and marshes provide protection from flood waters for landowners and cities in this region.





Like other former grassland areas on clay soils in Texas, the Gulf Coastal Prairies are well-suited to agriculture, farming, cattle ranching, and urban and industrial development have transformed the region. Virtually the entire historical prairie on Anahuac NWR was converted to agricultural uses before being purchased by the Refuge System.

Prairies have been even more extensively converted or widely invaded by non-native grasses, weedy forbs and invasive woody species such as Chinese tallow-tree and Eastern baccharis, which now grows in dense stands covering thousands of acres along the upper coast. Thankfully, sizeable, protected lands are being set aside for conservation to be converted back to native prairie habitats.



Prairie is one of the most endangered ecosystems in North America. Historically, naturally occurring fires shaped the plant and animal communities of the Chenier Plain. It was a positive force in maintaining the health and diversity of these wildlife habitats. Today, we use prescribed or controlled burns to achieve pre-identified management objectives and to maintain the expansive prairie landscapes.



Historically, bison, geese, and muskrats inhabited the Chenier Plain. They fed on young, tender prairie plants that emerged following natural fires. Though the landscape was altered wherever they grazed, many plants and animals flourished. Today, careful use of grazing maintains diversity and provides critical openings in thick vegetation. In addition, the use of machinery for mowing, disking, and chemical spraying helps control the growth of invasive plant species.

Prairies continued

Water control structures are used to manage water movement. They help prevent saltwater intrusion, release excess water, and control tidal flow to benefit wildlife. Often, a combination of all these management tools is the only practical solution to managing large prairies.



Below is a list of plants identified to be placed in this native prairie demonstration garden. There may be additional species added as the years go by:

Tall Plants

Big bluestem, Compass plant, Coral bean, Gama grass, Switch grass, Turks cap, American aloe, Rattlesnake master, Maximillian sunflower

Medium Tall Plants

Texas coneflower, Little bluestem, Slender rosinweed, Pale coneflower, Liatris, Bee-balm, Yellow Indiangrass, Lantana, Ashy sunflower, Baptisia, Indian plantain, Leather flower, Bushmint, Prairie parsley

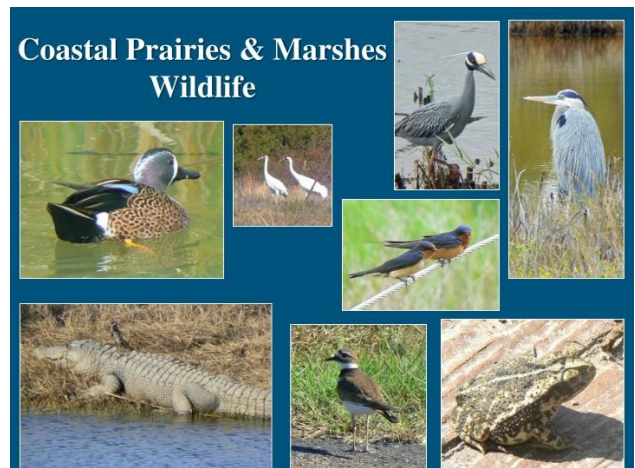
Short Plants and Ground Covers

White prairie clover, Sage, Wild leaf, Horse herb, Coreopsis, Frog fruit, Brown eyed susan, Self heal, Rain lilies, Wood sorrel, Butter cup



We can all help the Gulf Coast Prairies and Marshes by polluting less, specifically water pollution. When land or water is polluted with chemicals and littered with garbage, it will eventually end up in our waterways. A lot of pollution in the Gulf of Mexico comes from the U.S., not just Texas. It is imperative that we work together to stop pollution and littering in order to protect the prairies and marshes in Texas along with all the wildlife living there.

You can also help by supporting Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge where prairie habitat is treasured.



Meet the Fish and Wildlife Team

By Kristin Fritz

Jon King has been the Fire Management Officer (FMO) for the Texas Chenier Plain Fire Zone since April of 2019. Jon was born in Texarkana, Texas and much of his extended family still lives in the area. He went to college at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry and a Master of Science in Wildlife Management. He came here from Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge where he was the FMO for all the refuges and hatcheries in Oklahoma and north Texas. Jon has also worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at the Southwest Louisiana NWR Complex and Pocosin Lakes NWR, as well as for the National Park Service at the Big Thicket National Preserve. Jon is married and has a young daughter and son. After working and living on both the Atlantic and Gulf Coast, his wife and he decided that they liked coastal living. So, when the opportunity arose, they excitedly moved back to the Gulf Coast and his home state of Texas. Anahuac NWR and the other refuges of the Texas Chenier Plain are very special places and you can often find Jon and his kids at Anahuac NWR on his days off trying to burn some of their seemingly never ending energy.



Nature Haiku Challenge

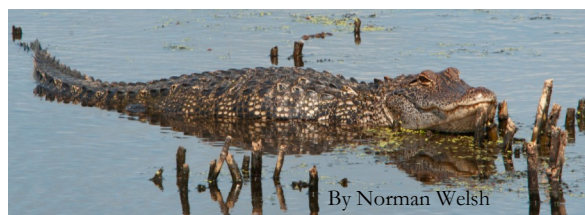
We are looking for your best haikus to be printed in future Gator Tales Newsletter. A haiku is a short traditional form of Japanese poetry which consists of only 3 lines, each of which have a very specific number of syllables: First line-5 syllables, Second line-7 syllables, Third line-5 syllables. Haikus don't necessarily rhyme or follow strict punctuation rules. They often focus on images of nature. So, a haiku challenge is perfect for our newsletter! Visit the Refuge for inspiration and send me your best haikus to FOARNatureStore@gmail.com to be printed in future newsletters! Here's a couple of haikus as examples for you that were inspired by this picture.

Peaceful by Arial Pinion

Sitting in the water

Scales shining in the sunlight

The peaceful gator



Lazy Gator by Alena Pinion

Big, lazy gator

Is looking pretty though just

Laying in the swamp.

Get your submissions in by Dec 1 to be in our Winter Newsletter! You may also submit a picture that was your inspiration if you'd like, but that isn't necessary. Can't visit the Refuge soon but need inspiration? Look at all the many pictures in this newsletter! There are so many wonderful photos that something is bound to spark your creativity!

Spring 2022 Photo Contest Winners!









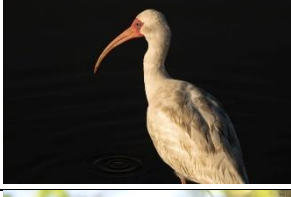

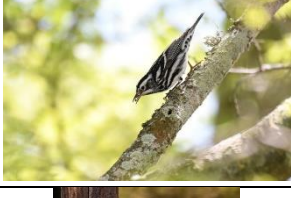



1st Place-Ibises at Sunrise by Rick Vogels

2nd Place-Bobcat by Mike Pantaleo

He won a pair of Vortex Crossfire 10x42 binoculars!

He won a pair of Vortex Crossfire 8x42 binoculars!

Spring 2022 Photos of the Week

Week 1		Snowy Egret By Jim Stough	Week 7		Ibis Silhouettes By Rick Vogels
Week 2		Red-tailed Hawk By Edward Ferrin	Week 8		Bobcat By Mike Pantaleo
Week 3		Clapper Rail By Kathie Maxwell	Week 9		King Rail By Marianne Feeney
Week 4		White Ibis By Anna Calhoun	Week 10		Eastern Meadowlark By Christie Holmgren
Week 5		Black and White Warbler By Kathie Maxwell	Week 11		Immature Male Summer Tanager By Jeffrey Wang
Week 6		Little Blue Heron Rick Vogels	Week 12		White-tailed Kite By Bob McCurry











Winter 2021 Photo Contest Winners!



1st-Black-bellied Whistling Duck by Amy Ridall
She won a pair of Vortex Crossfire 10x50 binoculars!

2nd-Black-bellied Whistling Ducks by Mark Doing
He won a pair of Vortex Crossfire 8x42 binoculars!

Winter 2021 Photos of the Week

Week 1		Red-tailed Hawk By Stafanie Tsai	Week 7		Red-tailed Hawk By George Nobles
Week 2		Neotropic Cormorant By Morten Lamoey	Week 8		Black-bellied Whistling Ducks By Mark Doing
Week 3		Great Blue Heron with Ribbon Snake By Bob McCurry	Week 9		Belted Kingfisher By Kathie Maxwell
Week 4		Immature Red-tailed Hawk By Elsie Werrick	Week 10		Northern Harrier By Mark Doing
Week 5		Glossy Ibis By George Nobles	Week 11		Immature Bald Eagle By Bob McCurry
Week 6	Unavailable	Unavailable	Week 12		Black-bellied Whistling Duck Amy Ridall















Spring 2021 Photo Contest Winners!



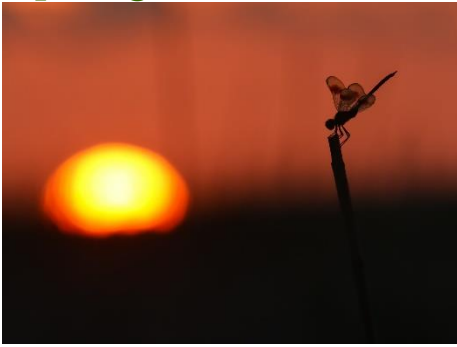
1st-Black-bellied Plover by Doug Haass
He won a pair of Vortex Diamondback 10x50 binoculars!

2nd-Red-tailed Hawk by Bruce Shollmier
He won a pair of Vortex Crossfire 8x42 binoculars!

Spring 2021 Photos of the Week

Week 1		Red-tailed Hawk By Bruce Shollmier	Week 7		Dickcissel By Jim Stough
Week 2		American Bittern By Robert McCurry	Week 8		Red-winged Blackbird By Deborah Repasz
Week 3		Baby Alligators By Bruce Shollmier	Week 9		Alligator among flowers By Viktor Odnovyun
Week 4		Pied-billed Grebe By Deborah Repasz	Week 10		Black-bellied Plover in full breeding plumage By Doug Haass
Week 5		Eastern Kingbird By Deborah Repasz	Week 11		Black-crowned Night Heron By Jim Stough
Week 6		Immature male Summer Tanager By Robert McCurry	Week 12		Cliff Swallow By Ryan Leimbach

Spring 2020 Photo Contest Winners!















1st-Dragonfly at Sunset
by Cynthia Lockwood

2nd-Bay-breasted Warbler
by Gary Wayne

3rd-Eastern Wood Pewee
by Larry Armer

Spring 2020 Photos of the Week

Week 1		Lesser Yellowlegs By Jim Stough	Week 7		Crested Caracara By Cynthia Lockwood
Week 2		Osprey By John Garbutt	Week 8		Black Swallowtail Butterfly By Gary Wayne
Week 3		Red-tailed Hawk By Dora Hatch	Week 9		Eastern Meadowlark By Barry Hatch
Week 4		Krider's Red-tailed Hawk By Dora Hatch	Week 10		Savannah Sparrow By Robert McCurry
Week 5		Cerulean Warbler By Jim Stough	Week 11		Dragonfly at sunset By Cynthia Lockwood
Week 6		Bay- breasted Warbler By Gary Wayne	Week 12		Eastern Wood Pewee Larry Armer



Winter 2019 Photo Contest Winners!















1st-Red-tailed Hawk
by Dan Davis

2nd-American Bittern
by George Nobles

3rd-Northern Shoveler
by Ryan Leimbach

Winter 2019 Photos of the Week

Week 1		American Bittern George Nobles	Week 7		Sunrise By Dan Davis
Week 2		White-tailed Kite By Robert McCurry	Week 8		Male Northern Shoveler By Ryan Leimbach
Week 3		Vermilion Flycatcher By Barry Hatch	Week 9		Great Blue Heron By Wade Cortez
Week 4		Speckled Kingsnake By George Nobles	Week 10		White-faced Ibis By Bryan Roberts
Week 5		Red-tailed Hawk By Dan Davis	Week 11		Red-tailed Hawk By Wade Cortez
Week 6		Black-bellied Whistling Ducks By Patrick Zinn	Week 12		Red-eared Slider and American Alligator By Bryan Roberts

The Jackson Woodlot Improvement Project

By Jan and David Hanson

In February 2022, the Friends of Anahuac Refuge funded a project to improve Jackson Prairie Woodlot. The area around the pond was cleared of brush in order to plant more bird and animal friendly trees, shrubs and grasses. In order to access the pond area, a backhoe was utilized to dig out the pond and build up the levee. Bald cypress, live oak, hackberry and mulberry trees, wax myrtle and yaupon shrubs and switch grass was planted around and behind the pond. The surface of the pond was covered with water hyacinth, an invasive species, which we removed. The existing sidewalk was extended to the south end of the woodlot. We of course had no way to know ahead of time that we would have one of the driest summers on record for this area. We started watering as many of these trees and shrubs as possible early summer 2022 and it has continued through the first half of August. We have not been able to save every tree and shrub we have watered because it has just been too hot and dry. We have found the worst affected are the Wax Myrtles followed by the Cypress trees. Another interesting note was when we planted these trees, we used an organic fertilizer that can be used in a wildlife refuge. This pelletized fertilizer is made with molasses as a binding agent. Later we found several of these trees and shrubs dug up out of the ground and had to replant them. Turns out the wild hogs really like molasses! I found one tree dug up at least twice which of course made them hard to keep alive. Come enjoy the new sidewalk and vegetation. It might take 3-5 years for these trees to really grow but ultimately the woodlot will look great.

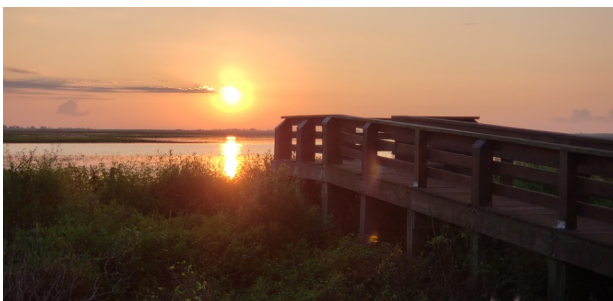
David Hanson and Gene Campbell watering young trees



Hackberry Trail and Observation Decks

By David Hanson

Recently I drove the road to the Jackson Prairie Woodlot and observed the wet soil unit that runs parallel to the Hackberry Trail on its East side. That field has been plowed and is being slowly flooded to give the wading birds, waterfowl and shorebirds water and wet mud to feed in. This water runs down the middle of the field and runs in front of both observation platforms, which



extend out into the field off the Hackberry trail. One is right at the South End of Hackberry trail and the other is a hundred yards or so down the trail from the North end. The water extends all the way to the field that is on the East of the Jackson Prairie Woodlot. As of this writing we have had some more rain and walking the trail could also find early migrating songbirds, waterfowl, shorebirds and wading birds.

Nature Stores News

By Jennifer Pinion

Both of the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Nature Stores are completely open following Covid! If you have concerns, a safety Plexiglas shield has been put into place to protect our volunteers and visitors and all transactions can be completely touchless with our new payment system.



Did you know that we have two different Nature Stores? Our Visitor Center is located at 4017 FM 563 and our Visitor Information Station is located at the entrance to the Refuge off of FM1985. Our current hours for both stores is Friday-Sunday 9am-4pm. Stop by and visit when you come out to the Refuge. The volunteers will have maps and information to help you make the most of your visit.

Now is a great time to visit the store for several reasons: 1) So much new stock! 2) There is a new Scavenger Hunt for preschool and early grade children at the Visitor Center. 3) We have a large sale section at each store with at least 2 dozen items discounted at least 40%! 4) We are also offering a different sale each month both in the store and online. For the month of October, the in-store sale is a whopping 20% off our Otter Be Chilling T-Shirts. These are made out of a soft jersey material and we offer both Adult and Youth Sizes. You **otter** come to the store soon and grab you one before this sale ends!



Our online sale for October is 15% off of the Purple Gallinule T-Shirts. These are Heavyweight 100% preshrunk cotton and come in Unisex sizing. We have sizes Small-3X available in two different colors, Brown or Teal. To get this deal, use code PG15 at the checkout screen of our Online Store.

Follow the Friends of Anahuac Refuge Facebook page to be the first to hear about future sales! As we approach Christmas, there will even be weekly sales for holiday shopping!

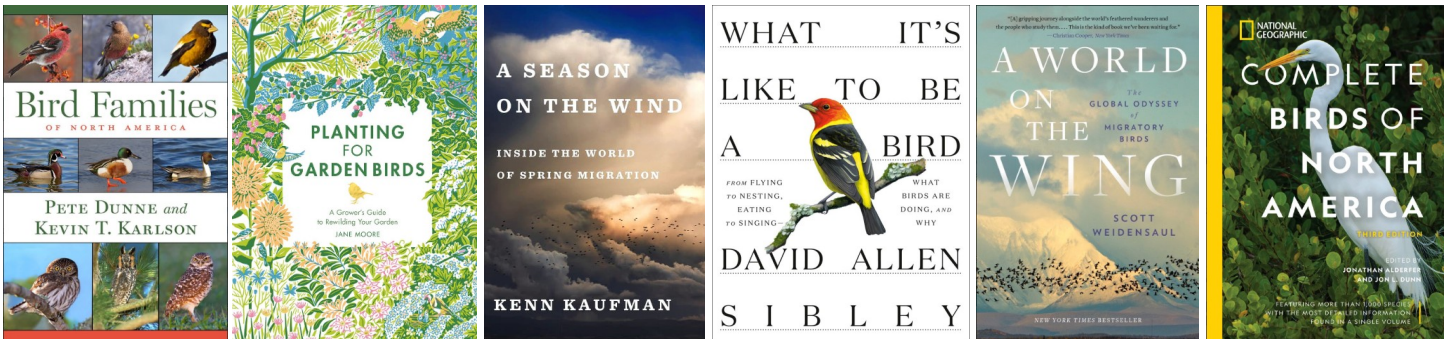
We have just received a new shipment of Jabebo Earrings including many brand new designs! These are made of recycled cereal boxes and the ear wires are made of surgical steel!



We are also offering two Jabebo Christmas ornaments, Four Calling Birds and a Chukar Partridge in a Pear tree. We are expecting several orders of additional nature-inspired ornaments from other vendors very soon as well.



We have so many new books that I could write a whole newsletter just about them. So, instead I'll just give you a teaser of some of my favorites for the bird lovers:



Want an easy way to get your kids playing outside? We have the solution...numerous activity books for kids of all ages! We have field guides suited to their perfect age, scavenger hunt books, and take-along activity books! Whether it's birds, insects, reptiles or anything else they are interested in most, we've got you covered! Check out our large selection of youth books online or in the stores!



We also offer finger puppet books, sticker books, story books, coloring books and many more youth books!



I'll end with a brief word about three of the many new t-shirts that are due to arrive any day now! The first one here is the Pond Scoggins T-Shirt and the second is the Eastern Birds T-Shirt. (Both will be available in adult sizes Small-3XXX.) The third shirt below, It's In My Nature T-Shirt, will be available in both adult (Small-3XXX) and youth sizes (Small-Large).



Finally, we are very happy to announce that we are getting more of the popular Night Vision T-Shirts which had been discontinued! I know many have been wanting one of these beauties and I'm so pleased we were able to get a special order of them. All these shirts and more will be available very soon! Our online website is foar-nature.square.site, where you can have items shipped directly to you or save on shipping by picking up your order at the stores.



The FOAR Nature Stores are run by volunteers and we are always looking for more! It is an exciting opportunity to meet people from around the world while also learning more about nature and the Refuge. If interested, please contact Stephanie Martinez at 409 267 3337 EXT 142. We'd love for you to join our team!

FOAR Outreach Events

By Jennifer Pinion

Fish and Wildlife and volunteers with Friends of Anahuac Refuge have been very active at various outreach events in the last year! Spending an April weekend in Galveston selling Nature Store items at Featherfest in Galveston was an absolute pleasure and I learned quickly that our Ja-bebo earrings are very popular! FOAR volunteers assisted FWS at their booth at Gatorfest in September. The kids enjoyed doing “magic” reptile pictures and learning about all the different specimens on the table, including a gator skull, a snake skeleton, gator scutes and teeth, and various animal pelts. Just two weeks later was Rice Festival, where we helped FWS with a similar table and had “magic” insect pictures. The Refuge fire program was also there with information and sample tools. At the beginning of October, we helped at the Nurture Nature Festival hosted by Baytown Nature Center. The Refuge had many of the same wonderful specimens, including a large sea turtle and several live specimens such as a skink, a yellow-bellied racer snake, and a small red-eared slider. Kids made beaded snakes and had the opportunity to guess what natural items were in the touch boxes. FWS and FOAR also had a table at the Chambers County Employee Health Fair and a table at the Winnie-Stowell Ducks Unlimited Banquet. If you ever see us at a festival, drop by and say hello! Hopefully we’ll see you at our next big event on October 22, Family Fishing Day! See following flier for details.



Pictured Above-FWS Stephanie Martinez and FOAR volunteer Jennifer Pinion with numerous specimens at Gatorfest.

Pictured Left-FOAR volunteer Ariel Pinion and FWS Chris Campbell and Audrey Lanier at the Rice Festival booth

Pictured Below Left-FWS Stephanie Martinez tells visitors about the Yellow-bellied Racer snake while FWS Chris Campbell assists visitors with beaded snakes

Pictured Below Right-FOAR volunteer James Maggio, FWS Stephanie Martinez, Cody Kennedy and Aubrey Lanier





Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge



Fall Fishing Day

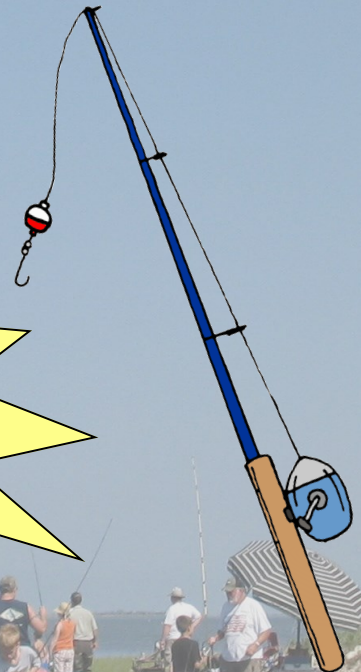
Activities Include:

- Fishing & Crabbing
(No fishing license required at this event!)
- Crafts & games
- Knot tying
- And MORE!!



Photo by
Thomas Power

For more information
please call:
(409) 267-3337



9am - 1pm

Saturday October 22, 2022

EVENT LOCATION:

Anahuac NWR, Frozen Point, off of FM 1985

GPS Coordinates: 29.553582,-94.526295

The Willows Trail

By Gene Campbell

The Willow Trail began as a farm road in the 50's. It allowed rice farmers and cattle ranchers access into the upper marshes. Rice fields were established in these marshes and water was pumped in and out until the rice farmers gave up due to the low elevations. These fields surrounded the road until sometime in the 60's when the road was relocated and elevated for more reliable access and better drainage. The abandoned road and adjacent irrigation canal began to grow up with Willow, Hackberry and Cypress and many other invasive plants.

As this growth continued it provided a great undisturbed habitat for many species of animals including red wolf, coyote, bobcat, raccoon, mink, otter, songbirds, raptors, wading birds, rail, alligator, snakes, reptiles and fish of many types and so much more.

When it was noticed as a great area for wildlife, the old roadbed was mowed for a walking trail. The Butterfly Garden and a boardwalk were added and many plantings of live oak, willow, mulberry, native prairie grasses and wildflowers flourished. All went well until Ike.

Hurricane Ike hit on Sep 11, 2008 with such fury it looked like there was nothing left to save. Salt water tides as high as 12 feet roared through this area destroying almost everything man-made and most wildlife. Dead snakes and alligators were everywhere. Muskrat, and nutria were not seen again for years. The Willows were a shambles. All trees were either destroyed or badly damaged. Those of us who saw it were certain it would never recover.

The oaks were tough enough and most that weren't blown over have recovered. Thankfully you can never get rid of willow and hackberry and fortunately a few cypress made it through; so, after many years of care and repairs and mother nature doing what she does best it looked as if the habitat could thrive again.



Eagle Scout Nicholas Kammerer and fellow scout volunteers

Willows Trail Improvement in Progress-Adding a viewing platform and lattice fence



In 2021 the USFW staff recommended a FOAR project at The Willows that would increase the wildlife viewing opportunities, so the Friends group came up with a plan. The plan included two new water features and a viewing platform with additional seating. A lattice fence was installed to provide wildlife seclusion from visitor traffic on the trail. Most importantly Eagle Scout Nicholas Kammerer headed up his troop of scout volunteers in clearing tallow trees and planting 70 trees and shrubs that had been lost to Ike. Birding and wildlife viewing at the Willow Trail was fantastic this Spring.



This Spring was great but as the migration wound down, so did the rain. It has been a very hot and dry summer. Had it not been for volunteers like FOAR Volunteer David Hanson and Service Volunteer Joan Ward, this work would not have been a success. After many weeks and hundreds of hours of watering, it looks like Willow Trail has made it through another tough time.

All projects like the Willow Trail, Hackberry Trail, Jackson Woodlot, Skillern Tract and many others were at some time just a vision. Then, they become projects and then they become someone's love. Service and FOAR volunteers are the heart of many programs and projects.

FOAR is always looking for volunteers. We occasionally have workdays when visitors are asked to come help. Keep an eye out on the website and Facebook for these opportunities. We would love to meet you. Maybe you can find a new way to enjoy nature and meet new friends.

Willows Trail Completed Project



Remembering Lu Skillern-Keeler

By Kay Lovelace

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge lost a legend on June 19, 2022, Lu Skillern-Keeler. She and her husband, Grady, were founding members of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge (FOAR) and served on their Board of Directors for 10 years. Lu developed an Outdoor Environmental Education Program that over 1,000 Chambers County school children, grades K-5, attended each year on the Refuge. This program continues to be used today. Besides birdwatching, Lu was also an avid gardener of native plants to entice birds, butterflies and other wildlife. She also managed the FOAR Nature Store for several years before moving back to Ponca City, Oklahoma.

Shortly after Grady's death in 2005 the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service honored Grady and Lu for their volunteer work by naming a site on the Refuge, the Skillern Tract.

Those of you who knew Lu, know that she was full of life, very strong, good through and through, and determined to accomplish goals to leave a legacy. An example of what a determined woman she was, is that she loved flying small planes. So, in 1965 she earned her private pilot's license in a Piper Clipper. Remember that in the year 1965, it was difficult for a woman to get a pilot's license but Lu persevered and reached her goal. She is one of few people who can say, "I survived a plane crash." Yes, her small plane went down, she did survive the crash, thankfully.



Lu's e-mail signature was a quote by Albert Schweitzer "Respect for life, life of all kinds, is the first principle of civilization." I can't think of a better way to remember this wonderful and generous woman who made a BIG DIFFERENCE at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. You will be missed dear Lu.

Lu with her daughter Sandi, friend Kay, and granddaughter Stephanie. Sandi made this quilt for Lu from t-shirts that were sold in the Nature Store while Lu was the manager.

Lu visited Anahuac Refuge in May and met with a few friends while here. Little did we know that this would be our last time to see our dear friend.

Donations in Lu's memory may be sent to:
 Friends of Anahuac Refuge
 PO Box 1348
 Anahuac, TX 77514



Remembering Travis Lovelace

By Jennifer Pinion

FOAR lost another legend recently, Arthur “Travis” Lovelace, who passed on January 27, 2021. For over 15 years, he was very active with the Friends of Anahuac Refuge and held various officer positions and headed up many projects at the Refuge during that time.

Travis had a passion for the environment, especially protecting native lands. He worked as a director of the Eddie V Grey Wetland Education Center where he shared his knowledge of the natural world of the Upper Texas Coast. He also directed the Waterbourne Wetlands Education Center programs in Anahuac taking students and visitors into the marsh and the Trinity River to learn about the nurseries, habitat, wildlife, and the richness of the Chambers County ecosystem. He loved working with the youth of the area and he was a natural.

After retirement in 2005, he became an active volunteer at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. He wanted to spend his retirement making a difference and leaving a legacy. He served as the president of the Friends group, as well as being on the board at other times. There was hardly an event when he and Kay were not involved in some way. If you ever met him at one of these events, you would notice his smile and enthusiasm immediately. He started up the Outdoor Work Team where he focused on his love of native prairie plants, and after Ike, he led the complete overhaul of the community building making it significantly more comfortable for the RV volunteers who utilize it during their stay. This is just a tiny portion of his contributions to the Refuge, the Friends of Anahuac and Fish and Wildlife Service in general.

Travis enjoyed fishing, exploring, and experienced many adventures traveling the waterways of Chambers County. He was definitely one of the most knowledgeable people of the area, especially the native plants and grasses. FOAR is proud to be in the process of working on a Native Prairie Garden in his remembrance. It will be located behind the current butterfly garden. We are so excited to be able to keep his passion alive at the Refuge! Donations are still being accepted for this project.



FWS Matt Whitbeck working with Travis and his plants

Gator Tales Fall 2022

Friends of Anahuac Refuge
PO Box 1348
Anahuac, TX 77514



We're on the web!

www.FriendsofAnahuacNWR.com

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