

GATOR TALES

Fall 2014

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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.

President's Message

By Matthew Jackson, FOAR President



The return of [hummingbirds](#) on the refuge can only mean one thing, fall is just around the corner. After a long hot summer, their return is certainly a welcome sign for cooler weather. Speaking of summer, it started off with another great Family Fishing Day. It was some of the best fishing at the event in the past several years. FOAR supported it by providing volunteers and setting up the event. We also sponsored the [summer day camp](#) held at the Visitor Center. Over 30 young naturalists were able to get their hands on wildlife and their feet in the mud. Getting youth involved with the refuge continues to be an important goal for our organization. We also continued to assist with visitor services at the refuge by keeping our nature stores open with the help of volunteers and our store manager, Kay Lovelace.

Each fall provides several outreach opportunities to speak directly with the public outside the refuge boundaries. [GatorFest](#) in September, [Rice Festival](#) in early October, and [Buffalo Bayou Day](#) in Houston later in October give us a chance to interact with thousands of people to talk about the refuge. A simple 30 second conversation goes a long way in most cases and more often than not, gets people to come to the refuge or at least stop by the visitor center. Stop by our booths at these events to check us out and show your support. Another program we have in the works is a monthly workshop about various topics like birding and photography. We also will be helping at volunteer work days on the refuge this fall as well. Be sure to take advantage of these events. Check your emails and our updated [event schedule](#) on our website. Additionally, FOAR is sending three members, Linda Ann Jackson, John Kemp, and Kay Lovelace to the regional Friends training in New Mexico in early September. We hope for them to bring back some fresh ideas back with them. Keep an eye out for some of those in the near future.

I also want to mention the recent 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act and the Land & Water Conservation Fund. Both pieces of legislation were critical in changing America's way of thinking of conservation in the 1960's. They continue to protect undeveloped lands and provide essential funding for maintaining and creating National Wildlife Refuges. Check out [our website](#) for an article by the National Wildlife Refuge Association for more information.

The USFWS recently issued a [new policy](#) for Friends groups across the country. For the most part, most changes will likely not be noticeable for the majority of you. However, the change puts more emphasis on refuge Friends groups by shifting certain tasks away from refuge staff and more towards Friends. Our group has already done an excellent job with this in recent years, but the need for more support will continue to increase as our organization grows in members and in programs. Jim Kurth, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System with the USFWS, [recently wrote](#) about the importance of communities and Friends groups to refuges. He explained that "refuges draw people from local communities together for a common cause". More often than not, local residents have a personal story that makes a nearby refuge, *their refuge*. Once people have that connection, that refuge becomes personal to them. When people have a personal interest in something, they make it one of their priorities to take care of it. Think about an experience you had on Anahuac NWR. Odds are if you are reading this newsletter, that experience has empowered you to remain connected to the refuge and make it **your refuge**. Have another memorable experience this fall at ***YOUR National Wildlife Refuge!*** MJ

Refuge Manager's Report

By Jimmy Laurent, Refuge Manager

As we begin our last month of this fiscal year, I would like to share with you a few of our highlights from this year. I would also like to say thank you to the refuge staff, fire crew, volunteers and anyone else that helped to make this year a success. As we begin our fiscal year on October 1st, 2014 let's keep the trend of hard work and dedication going!

Habitat/ Moist Soil Units/Projects:

We are about ¾ way finish with clearing debris and silt left over from Hurricane Ike in Jackson Ditch.

This was a maintenance project that we received funding for this fiscal year that runs the distance of about 7k feet. We are using a CAT320 aquatic excavator to complete the work. On the end of the boom is a new style cutter head that actually throws the material onto the bank like a slush as opposed to the traditional digging and stacking with a bucket which would not be allowed with our existing core permit. This ditch is one of the main access points to access the marsh for waterfowl hunting on the East Unit.

As part of a continued effort to reintroduce prairie (primarily blue stem) on the refuge, for the third consecutive year, we along with Texas R.I.C.E. (Bill Stransky) and seed provided by Brazoria refuge planted approx. 100 acres better known to folks here as LeConte's prairie on the East Unit.

On the refuge's Middleton Unit, contractors are finishing up Phase 1 of a project. This project will convert old fallow agriculture fields into a MSU along with a re-lift pump for moving fresh water. This project was funded through NAWCA in a joint effort with Ducks Unlimited and will essentially be one large MSU in a closed area for waterfowl. When finished it will encompass 300 acres and we will have the ability to pump and move water out of the drainage ditches utilizing our existing water rights. This is especially important as we can now move freshwater across the landscape in particular the Middleton Marsh.

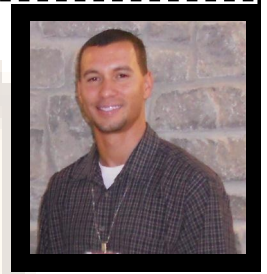
Mottled duck banding season is underway and it has been a sluggish start with the biology folks and Patrick only banding 20 or so mottled ducks due to extreme drought conditions. Since then with all the rain we have been getting, things have really improved. The biology folks and Patrick have banded 480 mottled ducks with 40 recaptures and 12 blue winged teal.

Our two Modular office trailers have finally been sold. The one at Winnie has been removed and the one at the refuge will be removed on the 20th of this month. These were the trailers we used as offices after Hurricane Ike.

Public Use/Environmental Education:

We have had 1400 kids participate in our EE program so far this year. We also had 31 kids participate in our second

annual Jr. Ranger Summer Camp in July, ranging in age from 6-12.



Near the end of July, we had an educational volunteer workday with 15 SCA students and 4 adults from various agencies including the Galveston Bay Foundation, NRG Energy, & Natural Resources Conservation Science planting smooth cord grass behind our shoreline protection rip rap along the Galveston Bay.

We did a career day for Barbers Hill, which reached over 80 kids and a summer reading program in Anahuac that taught 40 kids and their parents about the refuge.

We had a class of 45 students from Galveston A&M tour the refuge and learn about our management practices.

We had 345 folks come out and join us during our annual Yellow Rail Walks

EFFICIENCIES:

During the last year we have replaced two vehicles with hybrids, a Ford Fusion and a Ford Escape, we have also purchased a solar UTV.

We have installed PV or solar panels on the refuge shop and the VIS to help reduce our electricity costs.

Since the solar panels have been installed, our electric bill runs about \$10.00 a month at the shop.

We were fortunate enough to receive funding through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to install 5,540 feet of 18" – 21" irrigation pipe and a stationary 540 PTO re-lift pump that will now allow us to move freshwater over approx. 800 acres utilizing our water rights on Onion Bayou. The only catch is that we have to monitor the salinities in the bayous after rains and also monitor when folks north of us decide to let their water go. We can then recapture the water and reuse it. This is nice because it is all free to us.

We completed the second phase of the terrace planting in Shovelers Pond using the YCC kids, intern and SCA CDIP this summer. Over the past couple months they helped transplant bulrush/bullwhip onto the remaining terraces. These terraces were approx.. 150' long and they planted at least 10 of them. (50 terraces approx. 150' long) They were able to use existing bullwhip found in the unit and simply transported and replanted it on the terraces that needed vegetation. This was hard work but they managed to completely plant the remaining terraces.

On the 320 acres of the Grandberry Unit, we are installing six pipes that will help us utilize rain water, or if we chose to, purchase water from the local canal company to water up Shoveler's Pond. The Granberry Unit serves as the reservoir and once filled we can easily move water into Shoveler's Pond, which is our popular auto tour loop. This is all reusable water and again cost is minimal to use. This will further enhance our DM project from two years ago. That project was funded from outside sources and through the Div. of waters resources in Albuquerque.

Nature Store Report

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager



Visit our Friends of Anahuac Refuge Nature Store at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center located at 4017 Hwy 563 or our Nature Store at the Visitor Information Station located at the entrance to the Refuge off of Hwy 1985. There are many bargains to be had such as **\$5.00 t-shirts** at both stores and other items marked down 25% to 50% off the regular price at the Visitor Center.

Make it a point to stop in; you won't be disappointed. Our Nature Stores are a great place to find items for the nature enthusiast. We offer an outstanding selection of books and field guides about plants, birds, reptiles, snakes, butterflies, wildflowers, plants, birders checklists, **NEW** nature jigsaw puzzles, etc. We have a great selection of children's books, t-shirts, and toys. What better way to pass on the joys of nature to our youngsters. There are bird watching items, collector patches and pins, jewelry, postcards, t-shirts, caps/hats, nature DVDs, tapes, and many other unique items.

We have **NEW** Ducks Unlimited signed prints, seven different prints to select from. They are high quality art--beautiful and ready for framing. These are limited, we won't be able to get them again so don't wait too long. Perfect as a gift for the nature lover or duck hunter in your life!!!

Speaking of gift giving... We will have the Audubon Daily Page Calendar in stock soon. Many of us like to have these for ourselves or for gift giving for the new year which is just around the corner.

Many of you already have the book, *A Year in the Life of Our Refuge, Selected Treasures from Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge's 50th Year*. I am sure you agree that it is truly a treasure to own. Remember this wonderful book for holiday gift giving now while it remains at the low introductory price of \$20.00 plus tax. A bargain that is for sure.

Visit your Refuge often; it changes daily and fall bird migration has already begun!! The Nature Stores are operated by Volunteers who are knowledgeable about the Refuge and can share maps and information with you to enable you to get the most from your driving and hiking tour of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, a jewel of the upper Texas coast.

We would welcome anyone interested in becoming a member of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge (FOAR) for as little as \$15.00 for an individual. Membership fees and all income from the Nature Stores help provide funds to continue projects for education and protecting and enhancing refuge wildlife habitat. All members receive a 10% discount on most items purchased at the Nature Stores. You will receive our quarterly newsletter, Gator Tales, which has great information about past and upcoming events and activities.

The Visitor Center on Hwy 563 is open from 10 am to 5 pm on Wednesday through Sunday and the Visitor Information Station at the Refuge entrance is open weekend days from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm. (expanded hours are coming soon this fall)

See you on the refuge!!

We would be delighted to have YOU as a volunteer in one of the stores, or as an occasional helper as your schedule permits.

You may contact me at (409) 252-3454 or via email at kay3454@windstream.net; or contact Stephanie Martinez, Volunteer Coordinator, at (409) 267-3337.

SPECIAL VISITORS

By: Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

All who visit the Visitor Center, Visitor Station, and the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge are special to the Friends of Anahuac Refuge and the US Fish and Wildlife Service Staff. I had the pleasure of speaking with one such young man who stopped by on June 7, 2014 in the Visitor Center. His name is José M. Acevedo and he is from Aguada, Puerto Rico. He is spending the summer studying and doing research at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, TX. His goal is to become a pediatrics physician. As we were visiting, I was struck by what a special person José is and what a gift he will be to children who are sick and need help from not only a physician but from a caring person. After all, a BIG part of healing is the tender loving care received from doctors, nurses, family, and friends. José will provide medicines and treatments but most of all will provide a tremendous “bedside manner” for his patients and their families.

He expressed his appreciation of nature and wildlife. He spoke of a pre-colonial forest in

Puerto Rico that has been untouched by humans for hundreds of years and of the two nature preserves they have which people are allowed to enter only to certain areas. So being able to go into the refuge was a special treat for him. He is a photographer as you can see from his



photo—nice camera, huh? While he is staying in Houston, he wants to see as many places as possible that provide opportunities to see nature at its best and to photograph the wildlife and beauty that he sees. He thoroughly enjoyed the boardwalk behind the Visitor Center and shared the photos he took—he has a good eye for spotting even the smallest of creatures.

We said a fond farewell as though we had been friends for a long time—he was heading for the refuge to enjoy all the wildlife he can possibly find and photograph. José, we hope to see you again soon and thank you for visiting our refuge, a very special place.



SHOVELER POND

By: Matthew Jackson, FOAR President

If you're looking for a different experience on the Refuge, later in the summer, consider hanging around Shoveler Pond boardwalk. I found it best to be there about one hour before sunset, where you are sure to see lots of birds. I certainly got a show of Egrets, Herons, Roseate spoonbills, Red-winged blackbirds, Barn swallows, Purple gallinules, and Common moorhens. Aside from all the flora and fauna, the sunset at Anahuac Refuge is a classic example of why I love the Refuge so much! Hope you get a chance to come out!



JR RANGER SUMMER CAMP

We had 31 kids participate in our second annual Jr. Ranger Summer Camp in July, ranging in age from 6-12.



Events

Work Days -

September 27; 9am-12pm
Butterfly Garden Maintenance

Gator Fest -

September 13; 10am-8pm
September 14; 12pm - 6pm
We need your help! Small shifts, parking and admission to the event.

Rice Festival -

October 3; 10am-5pm
October 4; 9am - 6pm
We need your help! Small shifts, parking and admission to the event.

Kids Day on Buffalo Bayou -

October 18; 10am - 2pm
We need your help!



FOAR Annual Meeting -

January 24, 2015
ALL are welcome! Join us for volunteer recognition; anyone who has volunteered with us, please plan to attend for a good time and gifts!

If you would like to volunteer for any of these events, please contact Stephanie Martinez, Volunteer Coordinator with the US Fish and Wildlife Service at (409) 267-3337 or via email at Stephanie.Martinez@fws.gov.

You may also contact Kay Lovelace at (409) 252-3454 or via email at kay3454@windstream.net.



Waterfowl Hunting 2014-2015

Normally, forty percent of the refuge is open to waterfowl hunting. Three different hunt units provide access to hunt areas by foot or by boat. An accessible hunt blind is also available on a first-come, first-served basis for hunters with a disability.

Portions of the refuge are open to hunters free of charge. East Unit Hunt permit is \$10 a day or \$40 for an annual permit. No user fee is required for hunters under 16 years of age. This permit is available the morning of the hunt and is required before entry of the East Unit Hunt Area.

* All hunters are required to carry a signed general permit while hunting on the refuge.*

Early Teal Season -
Sept. 13 - 28, 2014

Scouting on the Refuge
Oct. 18 - 24, 2014

Youth Only
Oct. 25th & 26th

Regular Season
Nov. 1 - 30, 2014 &
Dec. 13, 2014 - Jan. 25, 2014

"Dusky" Duck
Nov. 6 - 30, 2014 & Dec. 13, 2014 - Jan. 25, 2014

* General permits are available at the Nature Store, VIS, and online (www.fws.gov/refuge/Anahuac/)

Gator Tales

Friends of Anahuac Refuge

PO Box 1348

Anahuac, TX 77514



www.friendsofanahuacnwr.com

Your Friends of Anahuac Refuge Board of Directors meets the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the US Fish and Wildlife headquarters at 4017 FM 563.

You are welcome to come and share your ideas!

F.O.A.R. Board of Directors

President — Matt Jackson

Vice-President — Travis Lovelace

Secretary — David Sarkozi

Treasurer — Rose Bolt

At Large Members:

Linda Ann Jackson John Kemp Kay Lovelace

Gene Campbell Darlene Prescott

Paula Webb David Hanson

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Comments? Questions? Send us an e-mail at friendsofanahuacrefuge@gmail.com

Membership Application/Renewal

New Renewal E-mail Newsletter

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work or Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Date _____

- \$15.00 — Regular Membership
- \$22.50 — Family Membership
- \$50.00 — Sustaining Membership
- \$75.00 — Family Sustaining Membership
- \$100.00 — Corporate Membership
- \$300.00 — Lifetime Membership
- \$_____ Donation (any amount)

Complete and mail with membership fee to:

Friends of Anahuac Refuge

PO Box 1348

Anahuac, TX 77514

or join/renew online @ www.friendsofanahuacnwr.com