

WINTER 2016 -2017 VOL. 20 ISSUE 1

GATOR TALES

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF ANAHUAC REFUGE

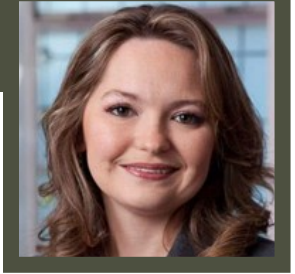
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Photo by Norman Welsh

F.O.A.R. Update

Rose Bolt, F.O.A.R. President



As the year 2016 comes to a close, I take a moment to reflect where the time went. The year seems like it literally flew by in the blink of an eye, or at least as quick as the snow geese come and go at the refuge. It seems one minute Shoveler Pond is empty, and the next, it is quite full of all types of waterfowl seeking a place of rest from the cold winters up north.

This year has been a whirlwind of activity for our board. We have had successes and we have also had some setbacks, but it has taught us where we need to improve and also what we are really good at. We attended many community events telling others about the Anahuac Refuge, and teaching kids about wildlife, launched our Birder's program to show local businesses how the refuge boosts their sales, and once again assisted the refuge staff with the summer children's program.

We have been saddened by the resignation of a few board members due to various reasons. John Kemp, Darlene Prescott, and most recently, Travis Lovelace has stepped down from our board. These leaders have given so much of their time and talents to the board, having served many years and seasons with the Friends group, and some even working for the refuge temporarily. They been a valuable asset to me personally, coming along side and teaching me valuable lessons along the way, and for that, I am forever grateful! They will be greatly missed, although I do believe you may still see them at events and out on the refuge.

However, this does allow an opportunity for fellow Friends to join the board, which is quite exciting. If you would like to serve as a board member, nominate someone, or if you would like more information, please contact me at: Rosebolt82@gmail.com or by phone at 409-277-9371. We would be happy to have you!

Most importantly, get involved. I believe everyone has a certain set of skills and talents. Within you is something that only you can do. Take time to ask yourself how you can use those skills to make a difference within the Friends group. Some opportunities to get involved include:

- Coordinate a birding class
- Volunteer in the Nature Store
- Maintain memberships
- Organize events
- Teach a photography class
- Update social media

I encourage you to contact us so we can help you use those gifting's through the FOAR as we branch out to teach others about wildlife at the Anahuac Refuge. Now is a great time to get involved, as we are planning events for 2017 to be announced at our annual board meeting scheduled for January 28th at 6pm. Hope to see you there!

-Rose Bolt

2016 –2017 Winter/Spring Calendar of Events

December

13– Board Meeting

22– Christmas Bird Count

February 2017

14-Board Meeting

April 2017

8– Yellow Rail Walk

8– Nurture Nature Festival, Baytown

22– Spring Outdoor Celebration

January 2017

10-Board Meeting

28– F.O.A.R. Annual Meeting

March 2017

14-Board Meeting

May 2017

10-Board Meeting

**Calendar subject to change
[Check online for updates](#)*

FOAR Annual Meeting
January 28, 2017, 6pm
First United Methodist Church in Anahuac



Follow and support Refuge Biologist
Patrick Walther online at:

[https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/
patrickwalther](https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/patrickwalther)

Nature Store Report

Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

We are always happy to welcome you to visit our Friends of Anahuac Refuge Nature Stores. One is located at the [Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center](#) located at 4017 Hwy 563 and the other is the [Visitor Information Station](#) located at the entrance to the Refuge off of Hwy 1985. Make it a point to stop in; you won't be disappointed!

The Nature Stores are operated by Volunteers who are knowledgeable about the Refuge and can share maps and information to enable you to get the most from your driving tours and hiking activities at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, a jewel of the upper Texas coast.



We offer an outstanding selection of books and field guides about birds, reptiles, snakes, butterflies, wildflowers, plants, birders checklists, nature jigsaw puzzles, etc. We have a great selection of children's books, t-shirts, plush animals, and toys. There are bird watching aids, collector patches and pins, jewelry, postcards, t-shirts, caps/hats, nature DVDs, collector Ducks Unlimited signed prints, paintings by local artist Martha Murphy, and other unique items. Everyone likes a bargain and we always have "quick sale bargain" items.

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 remains at the low price of **\$20.00** plus tax. Your family and friends would enjoy having one of their own. A unique and beautiful book for sure!

We **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 Gator Tales, our newsletter which provides project updates, events, and other information including a calendar of upcoming events. You will also receive updates or interesting refuge happenings via e-mail that cannot wait for the next newsletter.

Nature Store Report continued on Page 13... ★





USFWS– Doug Head in the field

Local Refuge Staff Member Earns National Honor

USFWS- Douglas M. Head II, assistant zone biologist at Texas Chenier Plain Refuges Complex, Texas Mid-Coast Refuge Complex, Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and Southwest Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex, is the recipient of the [2016 Refuge Employee of the Year Award](#) ([link](#)).

Doug Head is a problem-solver who demonstrates innovation and ingenuity in a number of ways. He designed a permanent platform system to monitor the effect of sea-level rise on marsh ecosystems, which enabled biologists to make accurate measurements without altering the study sites. He also streamlined the process of recording field data by minimizing equipment needs and steps to complete surveys for the only wild population of Whooping Cranes.

A variety of restoration projects have been successful, thanks to Head being part of the team. Last year, he conducted over 30,000 acres of wild and prescribed fire and provided several educational outreach opportunities to urban youth, including a group from Los Angeles. At Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Head assisted with establishing new monitoring techniques to assess the impacts of grazing and hydrological management.



Pictured with Mr. Head: Kelly McDowell, SW Regional Refuge Supervisor; David Houghton, NWRA President; Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, USFWS SW Regional Director; Shaun Sanchez, Deputy Chief of Refuge System; Aaron Archibeque, SW Regional Refuge Chief

Volunteers in Action

Fall Volunteer Workday

Volunteers helped tidy up the butterfly and hummingbird garden at the Anahuac NWR on November 19th. Jennifer Pinion (front of photo), with her high school science club, Club Green, and the Zeta Phi Beta - Beta Youth Affiliates, joined up with other volunteers and staff to make a big difference! THANK YOU!!!!



Volunteer workdays are scheduled throughout the year. They typically begin at 9am and end by noon with lunch provided

for everybody by the Friends. Check our [webpage](#) or [Facebook page](#) for updates on volunteer opportunities.

If you are interested in volunteering at the refuge, you can email the refuge volunteer coordinator, Stephanie Martinez, at Stephanie_martinez@fws.gov.

Youth Conservation Corps 2016

Anahuac NWR again participated in the Youth Conservation Corps, a summer job program for teens, ages 15-18. Participants worked on everything from planting native grasses to assisting during field trips. Participants shown at right holding one of the "guests" at summer camp, left to right: Daren Lugo, Dylan Lugo (youth leader), Chris Campbell (YCC Leader), Dalton Richards, & Rhett Hemphill.



Summer Camp 2016

A big THANK YOU to all volunteers, staff, YCC, SCA, FOAR, and everybody who helped with the kids at our 2016 summer camp!!! 23 kids attended this year's camp held at the refuge Visitor Center. Each day of the weeklong camp had a theme including insects, reptiles, and others. It was a fun event for the kids and camp staff!



Fall Outreach Events

Fall brings many outreach opportunities for the Friends and the refuge. Volunteers attended Anahuac's Gatorfest, Winnie's Rice Festival, and Bike Around the Bay. The two-day bike ride stops at the Visitor Center and the refuge. The ride supports Galveston Bay Foundation's efforts to preserve and restore habitat around the bay.



Photos:

- Refuge booth at Gatorfest (David Hansen, Kay Lovelace, George & Lauren Radecsky)
- FOAR booth at Gatorfest (James & Danny Maggio, Linda Ann Jackson, Eddie Taylor)
- Cyclists in Bike Around the Bay at the VC
- Volunteers helping Bike Around the Bay at VC



Volunteer Spotlight

Letter from RV Volunteers

When we stumbled upon Anahuac NWR in 2013 we never would have guessed that that chance meeting with a fellow full time RV'er would change our entire retirement and our lives. We had wandered around the Country enjoying the freedom that having an RV had allowed us. We at that point had had a chance to see so much of this great land. We had on so many

occasions visited Wildlife Refuges all through the country and really enjoyed them. We had done, in a previous life, Volunteer Programs for the NPS and many state parks doing 18th Century Living History for 30 years. So it just seemed a natural fit to lend a hand with a few school programs for Anahuac NWR for a few weeks, as we had originally planned. We were after all just passing through, as we were going to Alaska in the spring, and we were on the long route to get there from Pennsylvania in the cold winter season. We had been staying in Beaumont and there were just so many Refuges in the area to visit. One conversation always leads to another and our 6 week stay at Anahuac turned into three months, and our lives will never be the same. We now, as of 2016, have been enjoying the many rewarding days we have spent doing all manor of duties for the Refuge system. Whether it be Visitor Services or some light maintenance , we have always enjoyed the work. Well, its really not work, as doing School Programs and such just brings such great joy to us and the true meaning of being a Volunteer rings true in every sense of the word. We feel very thankful to have been allowed to do this service, for one of the truly appreciative Agencies of our Federal Government , the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We have as of this writing, had the awesome experience to have Volunteered on six different Refuges and it's been just so rewarding and we hope to continue this experience in the future.

Respectfully Submitted,

George & Lauren Radecsky

USFWS- George & Lauren working in the old temporary VIS



Refuge News

Refuge Research Project

Roots and Shoots from Anahuac High School came out to help researchers at Anahuac NWR search through water column samples for invertebrates (tiny insects, worms, mollusks, etc).

Ms. Tiffany Lane, a graduate student from Texas Tech is studying winter waterfowl

habitat selection on Anahuac NWR. She and her assistant, Mariah Box, collect samples from ponds that are utilized by numerous duck species and then examines the samples to identify the invertebrates in those pond. They are looking to determine why those particular ponds are selected by the ducks. Roots and Shoots came out to assist in the tedious nature of picking through the samples and got some valuable information while doing it. They were able to ask questions about what types of Science careers were available, what it's like to be in college working on her Master's Degree, etc. Tiffany shared some great information about getting jobs and how to choose a degree.



It was a great day for everyone; the students were able to see some "real life" science work and they were a BIG help!!



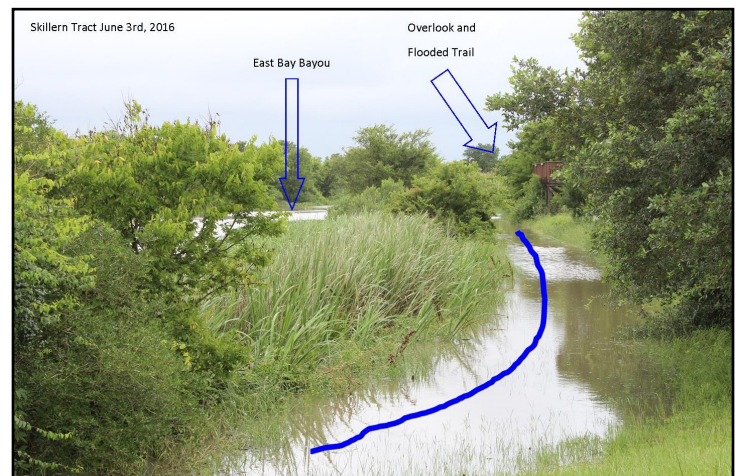
Plant Propagation Project

Anahuac NWR is continually propagating and planting native plants in prairies and the butterfly and hummingbird garden. Here, volunteer Brianna Humphrey shows off some seedlings about to get added to a prairie. Next, Refuge Biologist, Patrick Walther gets his hands dirty while planting the seedlings with the volunteers and staff.



2016 Family Fishing Day Cancelled

The refuge's annual Family Fishing Day was cancelled in June 2016 for the first time in 20 years. Heavy rains flooded many of the bayous on the refuge that week. We look forward to helping bring back the event in 2017!!





USFWS-Ibis in Shoveler Pond

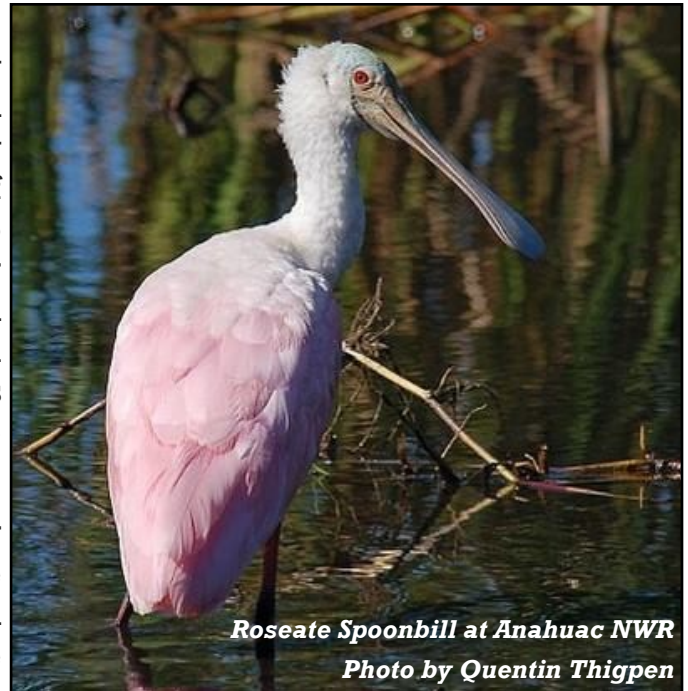
Shoveler Pond Rookery

USFWS- For the past 3 years, the number of colonial nesting birds (birds that prefer to nest near each other, in large groups) in Shoveler Pond has grown larger and larger. This year Biologists estimate there were over 600 birds in the patches of bulrush (*Scirpus californicus*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*) within Shoveler Pond.

According to the USFWS publication “Colonial-Nesting Waterbirds”, the term Colonial Nesting Waterbird refers to “a large variety of different species that share two common characteristics: (1) they tend to gather in large assemblages, called colonies, during the nesting season, and (2) they obtain all or most of their food (fish and aquatic invertebrates) from the water (USFWS, 2002).

The birds choosing to nest here is directly correlated with management practices and quality of habitat. Since they nest so closely together and in such great numbers, the risk of running out of their food source is great, so there must be plenty of food and fresh water available. If the habitat continues to be rich in diversity and resources then more birds will join the rookery. In addition, the nesting birds and/or hatchlings will return year after year so it’s important to keep the area protected.

Shoveler Pond is the 2.5 mile, drivable tour loop in Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Visitors can see the waterbirds from the drive and/or boardwalk along the loop. Bird species using this rookery include White Ibis, White-faced Ibis, Snowy Egret, Great White Egret, Little Blue Heron, Black Crowned Night Heron, Roseate Spoonbill and more.



*Roseate Spoonbill at Anahuac NWR
Photo by Quentin Thigpen*

New Faces and Changes at Anahuac NWR in 2016

Brian Elliott - Law Enforcement Officer - Full Time

Tim Tregoning – Electrician - Full Time

Brad Dunlap - Maintenance - Full Time

Colt Sanspree - Check station - Term Position

Jesse Rodriguez - Range Tech/Fire Crew - moved to Full Time Permanent

Trevor Canada - Range Tech/Fire Crew - Temporary Position

Grant Lovato - Range Tech/Fire Crew - Temporary Position

Record Year for Whooping Crane Survey

USFWS- A preliminary U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service analysis of aerial surveys indicates that 329 whooping cranes, including 38 juveniles, are in the primary survey area (approximately 153,200 acres) centered on Aransas National Wildlife Refuge near Austwell, TX. The Aransas-Wood Buffalo whooping crane population is the only surviving wild population of whooping cranes in the world.



At least nine birds were noted outside the primary survey area. The survey shows an upward trend in whooping crane abundance over the last five years. Last year, 308 whooping cranes were estimated in the primary survey area.

“This is the highest survey estimate ever documented for this population of whooping cranes,” said Wade Harrell, U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator. “We are thrilled to see that these birds continue to increase in number after being so close to extinction only 75 years ago.”

Whooping cranes are one of the rarest birds in North America and are highly endangered. Cranes can survive more than 25 years in the wild. Adults generally reach reproductive age at four or five years, and then lay two eggs, usually rearing only one chick.

For more information about the survey and whooping cranes, go to the Aransas Refuge website, <http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Aransas/>.

Find more stories like this, visit: <https://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/newswire/>

★ Nature Store Report Continued from page 4...

Both the Visitor Center and Visitor Station are open from 8:00 AM until 4:00 PM most days during the winter and spring. The Visitor Center on Hwy 563 is most always open Wednesday through Sunday. Since they are operated mostly by volunteers, there are days one or both centers will be closed should we not have a volunteer for that day. We apologize for this inconvenience. If you would like to join our team of volunteers, we would love to have you and we can certainly use your help. Please contact Stephanie Martinez at 409 267 3337 X142 or Kay Lovelace at 409 739 3077. **See you on the refuge!!**

Wildlife

Enjoy some of the best shots shared from volunteers, visitors, and staff from 2016! Thanks to all photographers! Check out more photos on our [Facebook](#) page.

William Powell



Joe Blackburn



Joe Blackburn



Allen Biedrzycki



Allen Biedrzycki



Jim Stockie



Norman Welsh

Watch



Allen Biedrzycki

Joe Blackburn



George Nobles

David Sarkozi



Norman Welsh

Denise Shields



Tricia Gardner Deland



Les Stewart



Denise Shields



Norman Welsh

Gator Tales

Friends of Anahuac Refuge

PO Box 1348

Anahuac, TX 77514



www.FriendsofAnahuacNWR.com

See Previous Editions at www.FriendsofAnahuacNWR.com/Documents

Your Friends of Anahuac Refuge Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30pm at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters at 4017 FM 563, Anahuac, TX.

F.O.A.R. Board of Directors

President - Rose Bolt
Vice President - David Hanson
Secretary - David Sarkozi
Treasurer - James Bolt

At Large Members:

*Linda Ann Jackson Gene Campbell
Chuck Davis*

Follow us on [Facebook](#) for more photos and event information

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Comments? Questions? Send us an email at FriendsofAnahuacRefuge@gmail.com

Membership Application / Renewal

New Renewal Email Newsletter

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Work/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
P.O. Box 1348
Anahuac, TX 77514**

Or Join/Renew/Donate online on our website