

Volume 16, Number 4
 December 2013
 OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
 OF FRIENDS OF
 ANAHUAC REFUGE
 PO BOX 1348
 ANAHUAC, TX 77514

Wildlife Expo 2013



The much anticipated Wildlife Expo lived up to its billing, with hundreds of people coming out to enjoy a raptor show, kayak rides, wildlife displays, crafts and games, fishing, target casting, firearm safety training, TV stars from the "Swamp People", bird watching, archery, and other activities. US Fish and Wildlife staff, various sponsors, and over 150 volunteers provided education, prizes and fun for the visitors, all at no charge.

An event of this magnitude did not just "happen". It required a tremendous amount of advance thought, planning, organizing, communicating, and cooperation among multiple agencies and sponsors. Then, think of the set-up work - mowing/preparing the area, getting bleachers/equipment/signs/booth stuff, etc. During the event, staff and volunteers provided lots of time and enthusiasm teaching, entertaining, and helping the public. Afterward there was all the tearing down and putting things away. It really was a HUGE TEAM effort that went extremely well. THANK YOU to all who participated. You can see from the photos below and on page 7 that people had a great time!

Photos by USFWS Staff, Jill Krone, and Joe Blackburn

Thank you!!



Gator Tales

FRIENDS OF ANAHUAC REFUGE

Inside this issue:

Wildlife Expo.....	1
Refuge Manager's Report	2
Annual Meeting Announcement	2
President's Message	3
Book Project Update.....	3
Nature Store Report	4
Bird Feeder from Recycled Materials	6
Time to Renew Your Membership	6

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.

Refuge Manager's Report

By Jimmy Laurent, Refuge Manager

Once again it's that time of year when we say goodbye to those darn hot summer days and finally start getting relief and preparing for our fall birds and critters. On any given day, look up and you will see flocks of geese and ducks moving about on the Refuge. Just yesterday, there was a large concentration of White Fronted Geese on the grit site which is located past the Anahuac shop about a mile down on the right hand side.

The second annual Anahuac Wildlife Expo was held on November 16. This year's event included target casting, archery and firearms safety for kids, alligator touch tanks, birds of prey show (Andes Condor, Peregrine Falcon, etc.), two of the guys from the hit show "Swamp People" and a host of other vendors. I would like to thank Stephanie Martinez and Tami Schutter for taking on the incredible task of planning this event with an extremely limited staff on the Refuge. Both of these folks spent many hours working with presenters, exhibitors, and volunteers to make sure the Expo went off without a hitch. The Expo was a huge success with over 500 participants. I was thanked and commended numerous times by participants who really enjoyed the experience along with how well the event was organized. Both Stephanie and Tami did an awesome job! I would also like to say thank you to all the staff members from the complex, the Friends Of Anahuac Refuge, and all other volunteers for your support. Without you, many of the behind the scenes items (setting up tables, chairs, prep work) would not have been possible so **Thank you** too!

Waterfowl season is here and the hunters are back. This year we capped the overall number of hunters on the East Unit to 80 for several reasons. First being with the lack of water, hunter safety has begun to be an issue and secondly we wanted to keep the experience as a quality hunt and prevent overcrowding in certain areas. With the current conditions on the Refuge, waterfowl numbers are high and hunter harvest is about 3 birds per hunter. We expect to see the number of hunters and birds harvested continue to increase as the season progresses.

The prairie restoration project that we completed/planted earlier this year is showing signs of progress on the East Unit. We are beginning to see strips of prairie seedlings in areas in excess of about a foot tall. This is great news in that the planting was totally experimental. By that I mean the ground was inundated with saltwater during hurricane Ike and no one could tell us the viability of the seeds we planted. With the fall rains upon us, we anticipate these areas to continue to improve and eventually return to native prairie.

Hold on everyone, the new Visitor Information Station (VIS) is nearly complete. The tongue and groove ceiling has been installed and painted; the tilt up exterior panels will be stained similar to the Cola color at the Winnie Depot in the coming weeks. The roof components are complete, but we are still waiting for the windows to be installed in the cupola. It has been a long time coming and we are all happy to see the great progress the contractor is making.

Finally, I would like to take an opportunity to thank all of the folks that volunteer on the Refuge. No matter what the task, you folks are always eager to help out. Every day I see the needed contributions that our volunteers make and I am very appreciative. Whether you are working in the temporary VIS on the Refuge having coffee and chatting with folks, helping teach one of our outdoor programs/education classes with Stephanie, working at the Visitor Center in Anahuac, counting ducks, checking salinities, or helping with general grounds maintenance I want to again say Thank You! Without the hard work and commitment from our volunteers, staying true to the mission of the FWS would be difficult. So once again **Thank You** to all our volunteers and I look forward to the next time we are working together on a project and I'll see y'all at the Refuge!

Friends of Anahuac Refuge Annual Meeting

- ◆ **Come and help celebrate recent accomplishments and hear about new and exciting things happening on the Refuge.**
- ◆ **Members and guests are welcome.**
- ◆ **Meal will be provided.**
- ◆ **A short business meeting will be held, with a brief Treasurer's Report, proposed change in bylaws, and election of new board members.**
- ◆ **Location: First United Methodist Church, 204 Trinity St, Anahuac, TX**
- ◆ **Time and Date: 5:00 p.m. Saturday, January 25, 2014**
- ◆ **So that we may better plan for food, please RSVP to kay3454@windstream.net or 409-252-3454.**

President's Message

By Matthew Jackson, FOAR President

Winter on the Texas coast usually means snow...snow geese that is. Luckily for them, they have a place to stay at the Refuge. Unfortunately, the last couple of months have not been so lucky for refuges though. As you know, they were closed for 16 days in October due to the government shutdown caused by a lapse of appropriations. The lack of budget from Congress meant no public access to any refuge facilities, halted conservation projects, and furloughed staff. The Friends felt the impact because we could not work in the visitor centers, work on projects as volunteers, or simply go out and enjoy the refuge. Even our 50th year book photographers were met with locked gates. This dark time provided a glimmer of hope though. Because of the shutdown, the public was able to begin feeling the effects of not having the Refuge. Our message certainly resonated with them at the Winnie Rice Festival, Houston's Buffalo Bayou Day, and Baytown's Nurture Nature Festival in October. These events are one of the best ways to engage the public to discuss refuges and the challenges they face. Thank you to the volunteers who stepped up to work in our booth and the public who showed their support at these events!

November 16th marked the return of the Wildlife Expo on the Refuge. This public event had not taken place since Hurricane Ike hit in 2008. Damage from Ike, reduced budgets, and limited staff over the past several years made it impossible for the Refuge to host the event. Although we still face these issues, the Refuge staff, FOAR, and very generous support from our partners helped make the event happen this year. Hundreds of visitors and volunteers got hands on experience with the Refuge. Some even got buzzed by a diving hawk from the Birds of Prey show, including myself! We will continue to need more support for this event to continue in the future.

Looking back at our organization over the past year, you probably heard or read about our "Moving FOARward" strategic plan in 2013. The plan included engaging the community to generate more local support for the Friends group, and ultimately the Refuge. I am pleased to say that our efforts are paying off as we have more members, a full and diverse board of directors, new outreach tools, new partnerships, and increased donations. Being entirely run by volunteers makes completing any one of these tasks difficult. Accomplishing nearly all of them this year shows the dedication and hard work of the board, our members, and support from the Refuge staff.

Hopefully you received my email early in November about the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's economic impact report. It highlights the importance of ecotourism across the country and found that National Wildlife Refuges generate \$2.4 billion to local economies every year. The same study found that Anahuac NWR alone welcomed over 90,000 visitors and generated over \$3.5 million in economic benefits in 2011. That amount is nearly five times the amount that Congress appropriated to the Refuge that year. People who are not birders, hunters, fisherman, or simply nature enthusiasts may argue that refuges may not be worth spending money on, but nobody can argue against the economic benefits they provide. That is just part of the legacy that is being made for future generations. I hear the snow geese calling...I'll see you this winter at YOUR National Wildlife Refuge. MJ



Book Project Update

by Cindi Barrett, Book Team Leader

Oh goodness, where to begin to update our membership on the project to create a book commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. I've lost count of the number of photos that have been submitted to the project but I can tell you that after three selection cycles we have selected about 1300 pictures as "book worthy". Thirty-two photographers are participating in the project as I write this update but Jim Crabb, RV Volunteer, manages to recruit one new one a week. The images that I've had the privilege of seeing are beyond words and they cover just about everything from ants to coyotes. Naturally, the largest number of pictures selected are birds.

The hardest part of the project is about to commence. We have hired a page layout person to do the graphic design. Our volunteer writers have been composing and revising the text. Wonderful people have volunteered to identify mystery plants, insect, reptiles and birds. I am amazed on a daily basis by the number of people that have volunteered to help with the project and I thank you all. This is an amazing project and I urge you all to stay tuned because hopefully the next update I write will be about how to order your personal copy of the book!

Waterfowl Season Dates:

Early Teal - Sept. 14 - 29

Youth Only Hunt - Oct. 26 - 27

Regular Duck - Nov. 2 - Dec. 1 and Dec. 14 - Jan. 26

"Dusky" Duck - Nov. 7 - Dec. 1 and Dec. 14 - Jan. 26

Light Geese Nov. 2 - Jan. 26

Canada Geese Nov. 2- Jan. 26

White-fronted Geese: Nov. 2 - Jan. 12

Here are the links to waterfowl hunt regulations for the three refuges:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/mcfaddin/visit/visitor_activities.html

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Anahuac/visit/visitor_activities/hunting.html



Nature Store Report

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

Hello everyone. Time marches on, as always. We find ourselves in the holiday season, even as we anticipate the opening of our new Nature Store and Visitor Information Station (VIS) on the "main" refuge. This facility will be awesome!!!! Watch for more news later in the fall or early in the new year regarding the opening. We will all love it!!

The Nature Store is ready to help you with special and unique gifts for friends and family and yourself, too. The photos on the next two pages show some of our old and new items to trigger ideas in your mind for your shopping needs.

Glass
collector
animals

NOTE: The Nature Store on the refuge doesn't carry all of these items due to space limitations. Come to our location at 4017 FM 563 for the greatest selection of gift items.

New
t-shirt
designs

Holiday Sale

Friday and Saturday after Thanksgiving (November 28 and 29). All regular merchandise will be 10 % off, and Friends of Anahuac Refuge members receive 15% off. We would be happy to welcome you as a member at the time you shop so that you may get the 15% off. (Consignment items cannot be discounted.) The discounts will be offered in both Nature Stores. AND on top of the discount, if you purchase \$75.00 in merchandise, you will receive a free stainless steel coffee mug or water bottle.

Sun
Catchers

Jewelry

Butterfly
Houses

Books galore -
nature, kids,
local interest

We would be delighted to have YOU as a volunteer in one of the stores, or as an occasional helper as your schedule permits. Stephanie Martinez is the volunteer coordinator with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and can be reached at (409) 267-3337 or via email at Stephanie.Martinez@fws.gov. You may also contact Nature Store Manager Kay Lovelace at (409) 252-3454 or via email at kay3454@windstream.net.

Happy Holidays to each of you. Experience nature as a part of your holiday activities. See you in the Nature Stores!

Car Charms



Fish Dishes



Spoons

Magnets - birds, butterflies, gators, note clips, stars, etc.



Blue Bird Ornaments



Bird Houses



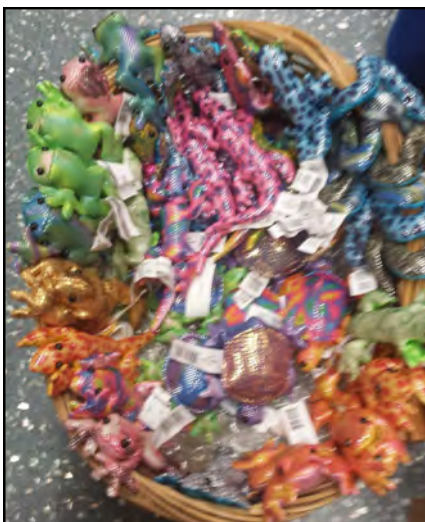
Night Lights



Bottle Stoppers



Earrings



Sand-filled Critters

Mugs, Notecards, lots of gift items



Caps and hats

Reduce Reuse Recycle – Make a Bird Feeder

By Cindi Barrett, Refuge Volunteer

Here's a project you can do with the kids and grandkids. When Tami Schutter was initially planning the Wildlife Expo I volunteered to man a booth to teach people to make a bird feeder out of a recycled bottle. To keep it simple, I decided to use a bamboo skewer and a zip tie to complete the feeder. You simply punch holes in the bottle of a bottle, thread the skewer through and you have a perch. Punch a hole through the bottle cap, loop a zip tie, thread it through the hole and you have a hanger. Fill with seed. Cut a vee about an inch above the perch and the birds have access to the food without spilling seed all over the place.



I contacted Project Feeder Watch at Cornell Laboratory for Ornithology about the Expo. They very graciously sent us 500 Project Feeder Watch brochures to hand out to the kids. The brochure shows people the common feeder birds. I also made demonstration feeders out of plastic bottles. You can use old wooden spoons, chopsticks, pencils and plastic straws for perches as well as bamboo skewers. String and twist ties can substitute for the zip ties.

Thanks to Linda Ann Jackson Foltz, FOAR Board Member and Marilyn Bilyieu for helping me with the booth. We had a bottle punching party the Wednesday before the Expo and pre-punched 500 bottles. At the Expo, children assembled the bird feeders, filled them with seed, and took them home in recycled grocery bags.

Special “thanks” go to Dos Vaqueros Feedstore, Wallisville/Anahuac; Winnie Farm and Ranch Supply, Winnie Farm and Home Supply, Stratton’s TruValue, Winnie and Chambers County Commissioner Huddleston for their donations of seed and funds to purchase seed.

The leftover seed will be used to fill the feeders around the Anahuac NWR Visitor Center this winter.



Here's our Expo Booth - Photo by Joe Blackburn



Here are a couple of the finished feeders - Photos by Jim Crabb

Time to Renew

- 1) Our bylaws mandate that all annual memberships expire at the first of each year. If you get this newsletter by regular mail, check your mailing label. If it says 1-Jan-14, it is time to renew. You may do so online or by sending in the renewal form on the back of the newsletter.
- 2) **However**, this rule may be changing soon. We will be voting at the Annual Meeting in January on whether to change the bylaws to make annual memberships expire 12 months after joining or renewing, rather than having them all expire at the first of each year. Here's your chance to make your voice heard.
- 3) Those of you who receive the newsletter as a PDF document via e-mail will be sent notice of renewal via e-mail. If you currently receive the printed version and want to change to the electronic version, contact the newsletter editor at crharris1221@gmail.com.



More fun at the Wildlife Expo! Plan to come next year!



Gator Tales

Friends of Anahuac Refuge

PO Box 1348

Anahuac, TX 77514

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage PAID

Permit No. 25

Anahuac, TX 77514



www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org

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 — Tommy Harris

At Large Members:

Rose Bolt Carolyn Harris Linda Ann Jackson

John Kemp Kay Lovelace

Darlene Prescott Paula Webb

If you prefer to receive your newsletter as a PDF file via e-mail, notify the newsletter editor at crharris1221@gmail.com

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