

Volume 15, Number 2  
 Summer 2012  
 OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER  
 OF FRIENDS OF  
 ANAHUAC REFUGE  
 PO BOX 1348  
 ANAHUAC, TX 77514



# Gator Tales

FRIENDS OF ANAHUAC REFUGE

## Refuge Manager's Report

By Jimmy Laurent, Refuge Manager



For the past few months on the refuge we have been preparing for summer. This includes mowing, disking fields and dropping water in many places per the habitat management plan. The grazing and farming program is back in full swing. All three of the organic rice farmers have begun planting their fields for the summer, and rice is beginning to slowly sprout up.

A seismic survey which will encompass Moody, Anahuac and most of McFaddin refuges began in April and will continue until late this summer. As the seismic crews begin rolling across the refuge in full force, we are carefully monitoring their progress to ensure that they stick to their schedule and prevent further damage to our already stressed marsh. As of now, the surveyors and drilling crews are on schedule and they should be finished later on this summer.

This summer the refuge will benefit by having two student interns, a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) student and a Student Temporary Experience Program (STEP). For the most part, these students will be working with our complex biologist Patrick. They will begin to work on tallow control efforts throughout the refuge. The extra hands will allow more ground to be covered and more tallow and other exotics to be controlled. Refuge staff along with the interns and volunteers will attempt to suppress the exotic species. Along with the tallow control efforts, the interns, SCEP and STEP students will help out in areas associated with the biological program. Additionally we will begin the tedious process of cleaning oyster shells/spats off of our water control structures. Periodically this needs to be done to ensure structure functionality. By removing the shells/spats, we will ensure that

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## President's Message

By Travis Lovelace, FOAR President

Given a tight federal budget expected in 2013, one wonders how the national wildlife refuges will be able to do what is needed and what can be done to support our local Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. That's where volunteers come into the picture. The National Wildlife Refuge Association says "Refuge Friends and volunteers are a cornerstone in helping the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) achieve critical wildlife conservation and public outreach goals on our national wildlife refuges". They say "there are 553 national wildlife refuges through all states and territories conserving a total of 150 million acres all managed by the National Wildlife Refuge System. The FWS is the world's premier wildlife conservation system." Continuing, "Each year Refuge Friends and volunteers perform roughly 20% of all the work done on national wildlife refuges. In 2009 they contributed more than

1.4 million hours or the equivalent of 665 full-time employees—a value exceeding \$28 million!"

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge is supported by its Friends and volunteers, with over 11,000 hours in FY2011. That is an equivalent of over 5.5 full-time employees. The Friends of Anahuac Refuge has volunteer opportunities both indoors and outdoors. Volunteer activities last year included restoring and maintaining habitat, hosting various family activities, helping in the Nature Store, and helping with educational activities for school kids, just to name a few.

Our thanks go to all the Anahuac Friends and volunteers. If you would like to make a real contribution to our environment, become a volunteer and join all of us Friends and volunteers. **You'll not regret it.**

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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.**

# Happenings on the Refuge

## International Migratory Bird Day

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge celebrated IMBD on May 12th with exhibits, crafts, guest speakers, and bird walks. There were lots of migrants in the woods behind the visitor center and singing Prothonotary Warblers throughout the day to entertain the guests. Some of the highlights were the great presentations given by the Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club, Gulf Coast Bird Observatory, and other local birders. There was information on birding (for beginners and experts), native plants that will attract birds to your yard, and a tent with live butterflies (what some birders focus on during the non-migration times). It was a fun event that ended with a Monarch butterfly release. This is an annual event, so come on out next year! Thanks to all our volunteers for making it a good day!



Monarch Butterflies



Our Blue Goose (symbol of US Fish and Wildlife Service) is ready to entertain visitors

## Fishing Day



Free Family Fishing Day 2012 had a great turnout! This year almost 200 visitors came to participate. We had fishing, crabbing and target casting, and this year we added a few more activities that were a hit. We had a crab touch tank, where visitors could learn about different crabs and hold them in their hands (claws secured of course), a bait and game fish display, where people could learn about the

different bait fish and game fish on the Refuge, and lastly, a fish obstacle course. The kids, and brave adults, were challenged to race through obstacles while pretending they were a fish, fighting against the current, traveling through caves, swimming through seaweed, and finally seeing what a shark eats (which was a prize for them). Most kids didn't care about the prize, but enjoyed racing their siblings or even their parents. Everyone had a great time, and we even welcomed a senior group that was able to enjoy fishing even though they had some physical limitations. We hope to have another great turnout next year and as always, it's the first weekend in June. Thanks to everyone who came out to participate and to volunteer!



## *Send us photos and articles!*



We would love to see photos that you take on the Anahuac Refuge. These can be of the wildlife, plants, scenery, group activities, or anything you think might be of interest to others. Your photos might end up on our website, in the newsletter, in a brochure, or in one of our other publications. Send photos to [crharris1221@gmail.com](mailto:crharris1221@gmail.com) or to [tamara\\_schutter@fws.gov](mailto:tamara_schutter@fws.gov).

We'll also indulge your urge to write articles, letters to the editor, or general comments about the Refuge. Send them to the newsletter editor, Carolyn Harris, at [crharris1221@gmail.com](mailto:crharris1221@gmail.com).



*See you on the Refuge!*

# Ducks, Mud, and Scientific Research

by Cindi Barrett, RV Volunteer; data provided by Stephanie Martinez, USFWS

During late February and early March, researchers from the US Geological Survey (USGS) and the University of Georgia came to our area hoping to band Blue-Winged Teal. Refuge staff provided support for this effort. The researchers are studying how avian diseases are brought north by birds migrating from South America. Fellow RV volunteers Bill Powell, Dale Dufur and Don Smith and I told Stephanie Martinez that we would like to help the effort. Unfortunately, my back gave out and I wasn't able to participate. Bill Powell is convinced that he is jinxed because they didn't have any birds near the rocket nets on the days he worked. Apparently whenever Bill wants to help count something, the something doesn't show up ! ☺ Dale and Don were the winners as they were able to help with the banding during a very grueling and muddy day!



A muddy Don Smith holding a female Blue-Winged Teal

Photo by Dale Dufur

When asked whether they would do it again, both Dale and Don said they would. Their wives on the other hand might have something to say about that. As you see in the photos, they both came home covered in mud. Both were instructed by their spouses to shuck their clothes outside their RVs. Don's wife, Jan, made him leave his clothes outside in the rain for three days. Then she made him wash the clothes several times before the clothes were allowed in their RV again. Refuge Biologist Patrick Walther had informed all prospective volunteers that they would need rubber boots to remove the ducks from the rocket nets. He cautioned "You will be muddy". But I don't think Don or Dale or their spouses envisioned how much mud there would be.



Dale Dufur wasn't quite as muddy but would use bib waders in the future

Photo by Don Smith

Dale stated that he thought it was very interesting how much the researchers already knew about the diseases and how they would be able to determine whether the disease carried by the duck had come from South America.

The effort banded over 700 ducks. While focusing on Blue-Winged Teal, the group also banded Cinnamon Teal, Fulvous Whistling Duck, American Coot, Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Gadwall and American Widgeon. Of note was the Cinnamon Teal netted and banded while Dale and Don were helping.

The researchers will return next year. If you are interested in helping with this effort contact Volunteer Coordinator, Stephanie Martinez at [Stephanie\\_martinez@fws.gov](mailto:Stephanie_martinez@fws.gov).



Volunteer Sam Wallace and Refuge Staff Philip Pauling work with the banding project.

Photo by Vic Evans



Photo by Don Smith



Photo by Vic Evans

Researchers at work



Blue-Winged Teal (left)  
"Our" Cinnamon Teal (right)





# Spring birding on the Anahuac Refuge - absolutely phenomenal!

Spring migration found many birds returning home to the Refuge for another nesting season, and others were just passing through on their way to sites further north. Several photographers are willing to share their photos with you here in the newsletter, on our Facebook page, and on our website. These two pages show just a sampling.

*Thanks to all of the photographers for these great shots!*



This photo of a Yellow Rail **IN YOUR FACE**, by Scott Watson of Tropical Birding, was a big hit on our Facebook page. This group was on the last Yellow Rail walk of the season for Friends of Anahuac Refuge. Our long-time board member and volunteer David Sarkozi has been leading these popular walks for years. Birders come from all corners of the globe, and questions about the schedule start coming in early each year.

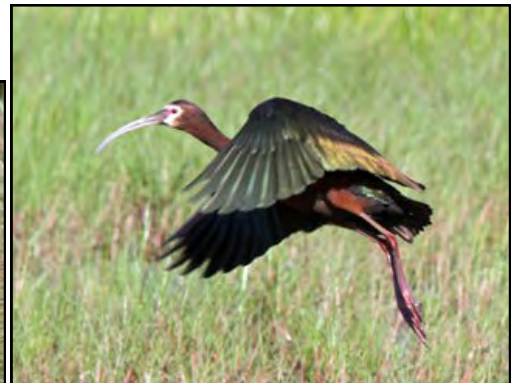


Great egret and chicks

Here are three shots by Jim Crabb, one of our RV volunteers.



Common gallinule (moorhen)



White-Faced Ibis

These three are by Joseph Kennedy, frequent Anahuac visitor and TexBirds poster, always with excellent photos!



Common Nighthawk



Northern Bobwhite



Least Bittern



## Even London knows about us!

This Marsh Wren photo by Joseph Kennedy brought us publicity in a London newspaper, with an article about this “mystery bird” and its behavior, documented in two videos. The article acknowledges Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge as the site of the photo. Read more at

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/grrlscientist/2012/may/23/10>

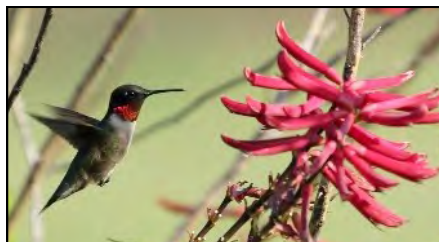
For those of you getting this newsletter via e-mail, you can go to this link by holding down the Ctrl key as you click on the link.



Bill Powell, another of our RV volunteers, is an avid photographer. Here are three of his bird photos.



Indigo Bunting



Ruby-Throated Hummingbird



Great Kiskadee



Jay Mangum just happened to be on the refuge when a flock of Bobolinks dropped in for a visit. Here's his photo of one.



Acadian Flycatcher

Here are four photos by Arlette Keene, frequent visitor and Life Member of Friends of Anahuac Refuge. She is seldom without her binoculars, camera., and field guide.



Wilson's Phalarope



Black-Crowned Night Heron (juvenile)



American Avocet

## Spring 2012 Reading Program

Each year, Friends of Anahuac Refuge sponsors a reading program for fifth graders in area schools, where students are encouraged to read nature-oriented books. This year, awards were given to students in Mont Belvieu and Anahuac. The three top readers in each school received prizes sponsored by the Friends of Anahuac Refuge: a wonderful book, *Reader's Digest*, *Wildlife of North America*, and a gift certificate to Academy Sports and Outdoors.

The fifth graders at Barbers Hill Intermediate School read over 3000 books during the program. The students who read the most books were: 1st place-Gregg Ballard, 2nd place-Jon Watkins, 3rd place-Connor Hudgins. Mrs. Edwards' homeroom won a pizza party for reading the most books as a group. Stephanie Martinez, Volunteer Coordinator for US Fish and Wildlife Service, Kay Lovelace, FOAR Board Member, and Carol Porter, 5th grade teacher, worked together to organize this year's reading program. Mrs. Porter is a great advocate of this program and works hard to make sure all goes well for the students, who are very enthusiastic about this program.

Fifth graders at Anahuac Intermediate School also read over 3000 books. Ms. Moore was instrumental in arranging for the Reading Program to take place for the Anahuac 5th grade classes. As it turned out, Ms. Moore's homeroom class won the prize for most books read by a class group, and each of those students received a certificate to Dairy Queen for an ice cream treat of their choice. Individual winners were: 1st place-Selena Nash (photo unavailable), 2nd place-Kaila Thomas, 3rd place-Cynthia Perez (photos at right).

This Reading Program is one of our favorites each year. A big **thank you** to **Mrs. Porter** and **Ms. Moore** for their efforts in making this a successful program. To see the students' enthusiasm and interest in learning about nature is encouraging. Who knows, one of these readers may become a US Fish and Wildlife Service employee or a productive Friends member or volunteer at a refuge because of the interest sparked by participating. Reading opens up all sorts of possibilities in the mind of a student.



Barbers Hill winners are shown with Kay Lovelace of FOAR and Stephanie Martinez of US Fish and Wildlife Service



Kaila Thomas



Cynthia Perez

*(Refuge Manager's Report, continued from page 1)*

flap gates and boards seal tight and prevent saltwater intrusion. This will include the cleaning of the boards in structures, the swing gates and all other components that are subject to oyster shells/spats that need to be removed. With the mottled duck banding season just around the corner there will be plenty of exciting and important jobs for them to do. Summer is quickly approaching and the refuge's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program will start June 4th. The program will be used to get many maintenance type projects done on the refuge, give participants an inside view of refuge operations, as well as provide some local youth summer employment. This year we are fortunate to again hire four YCC youth. One of the four is returning as our youth leader after working as a YCC youth two years ago.

With budgets projected to diminish next year, we have submitted and received several grants through various sources. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) and its nearly \$500,000 grant have allowed us to make significant changes on the refuge. This includes the installation of three low lift, hydraulic powered pumps. Two of those

are on the East Unit and one is in the Granberry north of Shoveler's Pond. With the remaining funds, we will install a fourth pump into the Middleton Tract once we get clearance from the US Army Corps of Engineers.

We applied for and received funding for a water resources project that would essentially connect our existing NFWF funded pump in the Granberry Unit to the Chambers Liberty Canal Navigation District (CLCND). This is particularly important for several reasons. In drought years we can purchase water from the CLCND to pump up the Granberry Reservoir, which would give us the ability to fill Shoveler's Pond at almost any time. Otherwise, we must rely on the rains or occasional freshwater out of Oyster Bayou to manage things in Shoveler's Pond.

Finally the Visitor Information Station (VIS) is down and we can begin the reconstruction process. It has been a long time coming and we are all excited about the new building. As we go through all the legal formalities, I will continue to provide updates as we receive them. One bit of good news is that all exhibitory and interior layouts have been completed. Those items have been in storage and will remain there until the VIS construction is complete.



# Nature Store News

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

**WHEW!!!!** We had a spectacular spring season from the Nature Store perspective. **Thank you** to all who came out to enjoy our refuge! Thank you also for the support of those who stopped in at the Nature Store on the refuge or in the new Visitor Center to make purchases. As you know all profits from sales in the stores go to enhance or maintain projects and programs on our refuge.

Now the long, hot days of summer are here. That's when we get busy thinking about what to have available in the Nature Stores for fall and winter. Some of the items will be long sleeved denim shirts and hoodie jackets. Of course, we will continue to bring in new books and nature related items that are sure to interest people of all ages. Watch the next issue for more details on new items.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to the outstanding volunteers who work to keep our stores open year round. You are very much appreciated. **THANK YOU!!!!!!**

We would be delighted to have **YOU** as a volunteer in one of the stores, on our Nature Store committee, or as an occasional helper as your schedule permits. Stephanie Martinez is the volunteer coordinator with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. She can be reached at (409) 267-3337 or at [Stephanie\\_Martinez@fws.gov](mailto:Stephanie_Martinez@fws.gov). You may also contact me at (409) 252-3454 or at [kay3454@windstream.net](mailto:kay3454@windstream.net).

During the summer we have a bargain table so we can clear shelf space for new merchandise. Come on out to see what good buys we have ready for you.



The Houston Chronicle's Brenda Beust Smith, aka The Lazy Gardener, wrote an excellent article about the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge in a recent story, "Coralbeans and Alligators".

Read it at: <http://blog.chron.com/lazygardener/2012/05/coralbean-and-alligators/>

One of her comments is "Anahuac NWR is undergoing major improvements, so if you haven't been in a while, it's well worth the trip!" Thank you, Brenda!



## New Complex Receives LEED Gold Certification

Our new Visitor Center and Administration Building has been recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) as being worthy of LEED Gold Certification. Two plaques were awarded during the certification ceremony held on May 12, 2012, immediately following the celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. Construction of the facility marked the culmination of a long process to unite four refuges - Moody, Anahuac, McFaddin, and Texas Point - in southeast Texas. In addition to housing administrative offices, it provides a convenient location for visitors to pick up maps and learn more about the four refuges that form the Texas Chenier Plains Complex.

The USGBC is committed to a prosperous and sustainable future through cost-efficient and energy-saving green buildings. The LEED green building certification system is the foremost program for the design, construction, maintenance and operation of green buildings. By using less energy, less water and fewer resources, LEED-certified spaces save money for families, businesses and taxpayers, reduce carbon emissions, and contribute to a healthier environment for residents, workers and the larger community.



# Gator Tales

**Friends of Anahuac Refuge**

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**[www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org](http://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** — Travis Lovelace

**Vice-President** — Matt Jackson

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**Carolyn Harris   John Kemp   Kay Lovelace**

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