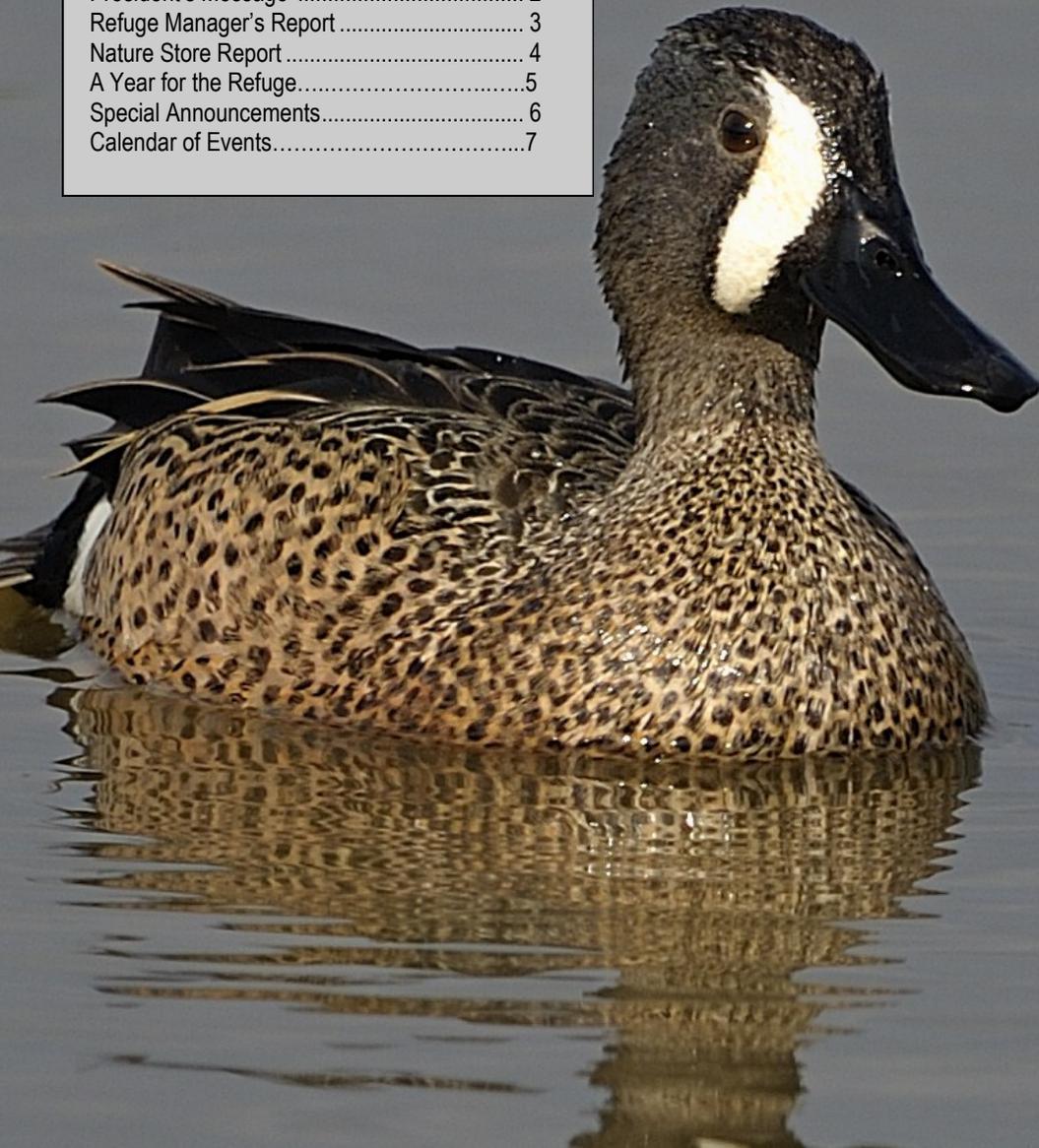


GATOR TALES

Winter 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.

Photo by Joe Blackburn

President's Message

By Matthew Jackson, FOAR President



President's Message-Winter 2014

FOAR had another great year in 2014 and there are many people to thank. First, I want to rundown some of the projects we did in 2014. The biggest project we did this year was finishing our 50th anniversary book. Nearly 40 people volunteered their time to help complete the book. The final result turned out better than we could have imagined. The nature stores continue to set new records each month as more visitors stream to the refuge. Our stores continue to be one of our leading fundraisers each year. Another project we always work on is outreach. We attended many events this year speaking to thousands of people about the refuge. Our efforts continue to pay off as more and more people are beginning to make their first trip to the refuge. The last item I want to mention here is youth education. FOAR supported the Refuge's summer day camp again this year which was expanded to include more kids due to demand. We also continue to support school groups who make field trips to the refuge by providing supplies and volunteers.

We look to continue these projects in 2015 along with some new offerings. Beginning in December 2014, we will be partnering with Audubon Texas to provide information sessions about waterbirds in our area. We plan to expand on this next year by hosting various types of classes and workshops throughout the year that cater to different public uses. We also are planning to do more youth education at the refuge's summer day camp and Fishing Day, along with local school groups making field trips to the refuge. With volunteer and community support, we can make these events and projects even better. Finally, we plan to reach out to our members more through member appreciation events in 2015. These events will be exclusively for our members to show our gratitude for your support.

As the year winds down, I want to thank some folks for their efforts in the past year. I want to thank the FOAR Board of Directors for their time and work in the past year. You are a strong and diverse group brought together for one purpose...to support the refuge. It has been a pleasure to work with you all for the past year. I also want to thank the exceptional volunteers at our refuge. Local residents, school groups, urban dwellers, and folks "migrating" in their RV's provided many hours towards our organization and the refuge this year. Your efforts are most appreciated and have helped make the refuge a better place for everybody, even the wildlife! The staff at Anahuac NWR has continued to be great to work with and I want to thank you as a Friends member and refuge supporter. Refuge manager Jimmy Laurent faced a monumental task of bringing back the refuge following Hurricane Ike shortly after arriving in 2008. He did a great job and we wish him good luck on his promotion as a Project Leader at the Lower Mississippi River Refuge Complex. Finally, I want to thank our members. Your support continues to drive our organization and makes us strive to do more. Anahuac NWR would not be what it is without the hard work and support of everyone. Thank you for all of your support!

I will conclude with a personal thought. We are very fortunate to have places like Anahuac NWR to visit, enjoy, and experience. No matter where you live, you are likely not far from a wildlife refuge or park. These kinds of places offer more than just nature. They offer a place to spend time with family and friends. As you visit your family and friends during the holidays, keep in mind these places and take advantage of them. They were given to you by the hard work of previous generations so we could hand them to the next generation. Go outside and enjoy **YOUR** National Wildlife Refuge! *Happy holidays and see in 2015!* MJ

Refuge Manager's Report

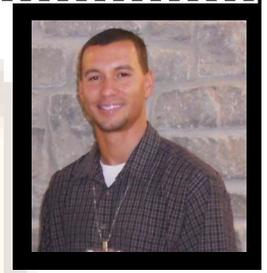
By Jimmy Laurent, Refuge Manager

This will be my final refuge manager report as I have accepted another position with Fish and Wildlife Service. Near the end of next week, my family and I will be moving slightly east to Natchez, MS. There I will serve as the new Project Leader for the Lower Miss. NWR Complex. This complex is comprised of three refuge locations to include St. Catherine's Creek, Cat Island and Bayou Cocodrie. I leave here with mixed emotions as I can still remember my first day at Anahuac. That day was long and I quickly realized we had a ton of work to do. We started working right away and it's been 100 mph ever since. Nearly 6 years later we are back better than ever. We have irrigation pipelines that can now move water over the landscape, we have installed almost all new water control structures, repaired all damaged levees to prevent saltwater intrusion, armored the entire refuge boundary along East Bay, we have laser leveled most of our fields to improve habitat and water management levels. We have paved roads and enhanced waterfowl hunting opportunities for the public. And all the variety of birds to include the least grebe, swans, whimbrels, all of the rail species and of course the ducks and geese.

As fall has quickly started to approach the mowing, spraying and other summer activities will now switch back to winter operations and projects. If you've visited the refuge recently you can hear the honk, quacks and calls from our wintering migrating species. The maintenance and fire staff has been working hard at completing the RV site improvements. This will give us 6 additional oversize slots to accommodate our RV volunteers.

Myself and John Stevens, our refuge operations specialist and collateral duty law enforcement officer, are spending more time working law enforcement throughout the busy waterfowl hunting season. Patrick Walther our complex biologist, has been working on ways to incorporate the newly acquired Cade and Clark Tracts into our habitat management plan. Those tracts primarily the Clark tract will require immediate attention to address invasive issues such as baccharis and Chinese Tallow. But for now we are focused on getting things mowed and kicking around ideas on how to integrate those tracts into our current plan. Stephanie has been busy recruiting volunteers for our winter season. This includes RVers local volunteers and utilizing their

services in a variety of ways to include working in the Visitor Center and the VIS.



When not working at the RV site, the maintenance staff has continued to work on constructing, enhancing or repairing refuge resources. Steve Baker, our facilities manager continues to oversee the Winnie Depot and is working hard to resolve our ongoing warranty issues. We also use Steve's knowledge in maintaining our public use roads on the refuge. This includes periodic gravel and leveling of all public use roads on Old Anahuac and the East Unit. Nathan Kear, one of our maintenance guys, is a "do all" kind of guy. It doesn't matter if its electrical, plumbing, air conditioning, or concrete/construction work, Nathan is always there to get the job done with a can do attitude. Chuck Nelson, our refuge mechanic, has been working very hard to keep all of our equipment, boats and vehicles in running order. It seems that once he has everything running fine something else breaks. Chuck does a great job of keeping us going.

As I start to look out across our moist soil units I see numerous snow and white-fronted geese, mallards, teal, gadwall, shovelers, mottled ducks, and various shorebirds. The presence of those birds is a great reward for all of the hard work by the refuge staff, volunteers, partners, and friends throughout the year. With that said, I leave the refuge in good hands and I am confident Anahuac will continue on its tradition of doing great things in conservation for all the critters. So bundle up grab a snack and some binoculars and come see what we have to offer at our refuge!

Lastly I would like to say Thank you to everyone for your prayers, condolences and cards in the passing of my youngest brother Chandler. As we continue to grieve it helps knowing that folks are praying for our family in this great time of need.



Nature Store Report

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager



Hi everyone!

Find treasures, souvenirs, and gifts at The 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. For the Winter season the Visitor Center is open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Wed. through Sunday; and the VIS is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sat. & Sun. Make it a point to stop in; you won't be disappointed. In addition to a great purchase, you will feel a sense of pride because profits go directly toward supporting Refuge projects and programs. Don't forget us as you shop for gifts for the upcoming holiday season. All Friends of Anahuac Refuge members receive a 10% discount on most items purchased at the Nature Stores. You will receive this quarterly newsletter, Gator Tales, which has great information about past and

upcoming events and activities.

You will find that the interpretive displays in the Visitor Center as well as the Visitor Information Station are very interesting and educational. They will satisfy your curiosity about what a refuge is and why they exist. Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge is definitely one of our nation's most treasured assets.

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 and especially those who appreciate ducks in the wild!

How about purchasing an Audubon Daily Page Calendar which has a beautiful photo of a different bird for each day. Many of us like to have these for ourselves or for gift giving—a perfect stocking stuffer for the birder in your life.

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 to be sure.

Visit your Refuge often; it changes daily and fall/winter birds are here in great numbers!! The Volunteers in both locations are knowledgeable about the Refuge and can share maps and information to enable you to get the most from your driving and hiking tour of our Refuge.

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.

What a Year for the Anahuac Wildlife Refuge

By: John Kemp

2014 Has been a good year for the refuge and the year isn't even over yet. If you haven't been out in a while, it is a great time to come. Fall fishing in the Galveston

Bay along our shoreline is really picking up as noted in Shannon Tompkins' article in the Houston Chronicle recently. Birds passing through, going back south are showing up in better numbers. Duck hunting is starting for on the East Unit and Middleton Tracts. The new store is open and well stocked---come check out the specials for Christmas presents and pick up some great items.

2014 started with the completion of our 50th year Anniversary book being published and offered for sale at our two stores and on our web site. Some have compared it to National Geographic publications because of all the outstanding photographs presented in the book. It shows what goes on during a typical year on the refuge with our events, the required maintenance of the property, the animals that are present, and all sorts of happenings occur on a national refuge.

2014 saw the opening of our second store that is on the refuge near the entrance of the main refuge property. It is two stories tall with many great views that can be seen while standing on the viewing walkways around the store. Not to mention the wonderful products especially the t-shirts that are featured in the store. Hurricane Ike destroyed the last store down there, and we were fortunate enough to get funding to build a bigger and better store to enhance the experience of traveling around the refuge.

2014 was a year of land acquisitions for the Anahuac Refuge. Earlier in the year 1500 about 750 acres on each side of the entrance road was purchased and will be slated for restoring to enhance more bird and wildlife habitat use. But another really outstanding acquisition was the 2500 acres right on the Gulf near High Island.

The property consists of beaches and tidal marshes. It is

so new there are no signs to mark the property and plans to utilize the property are still in the early planning stages.

2014 also saw the building and completion of a very nice bird blind at the end of the boardwalk at the headquarters building on CR563. This is an area of trees with wooded habitat not found down on the refuge so a lot of different kinds of birds pass through. Our store at this location has educational displays, videos about the animals on the refuge, and wonderful educational based books, gift items reflecting wildlife, and some neat volunteers just full of information about the refuge. Not to mention the store is a good place to get your refuge passport stamped.

2014 will close as one of the most outstanding years in the Refuge's 50 year history.

Our Annual Friends Board Dinner in January is an event you are all invited too. Just before the year's end we will have to the promotion of Jimmy Laurent to Project Manager at a Louisiana National Refuge. Jimmy and his smile will be missed and we wish him great success at his new location. We did teach him a lot.



Photo by Tim Cooper

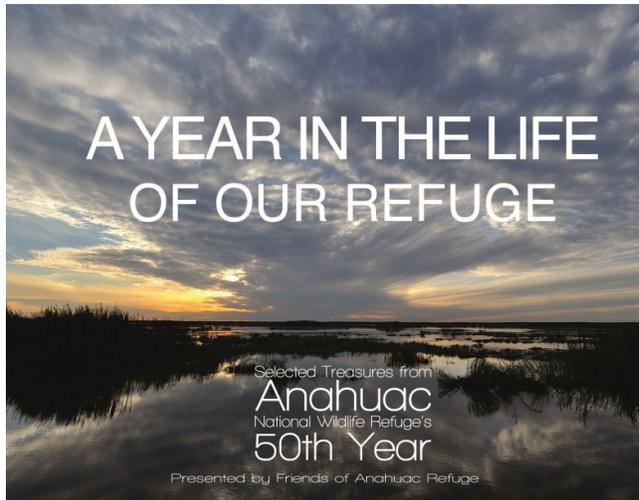
This manatee was rescued near Anahuac NWR, in Trinity Bay. Once the sighting was confirmed, Heidi Whitehead with Texas Marine Mammal Stranding Network and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, along with Chambers County Sheriff's Office Marine Units teamed up to assist the mammal.

Need a gift idea for the person who has everything?

Purchase "A Year in the Life of Our Refuge" as a unique gift for the naturalist in your life!

These books, and others, are available at the Nature Stores at the Anahuac Refuge Visitor Center on FM 563 or Visitor Information Station at the Refuge.

Board of Directors Meetings are now every second Tuesday of the month, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.



<http://friendsofanahuacnwr.com/BookProject>

New Visitor Center and VIS hours!

The **Visitor Center** will now be open from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Wed. - Sun.

The **Visitor Information Station** (located on the Refuge) will now be open from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Sat. and Sun.

FOAR Board-member Publishes Book on Alligators

Darlene Prescott, a FOAR board member, has

published a brief, but comprehensive, book on the American alligator in Texas: *Texas Alligators: A Wildlife Profile*. All aspects of this fascinating reptile are covered, including where the public can view them within the state -- including the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. The anatomy and life cycle of the alligator are discussed, as well as hunting and farming regulations. A glimpse of the animal's history reveals the almost extinction and recovery of the alligator -- which prompted emphasis in the book on the ongoing protection of the gator and its habitat.

Yellow Rail Walks!

April 11th & April 25th at 7am

Take a guided walk through the marsh on the refuge in search of rails. Free and open to the public. Rubber boots, and insect repellent are recommended. We do have a few pairs of boots to loan out, but it's best if you have your own. Meet at the **Visitor Information Station** on the refuge.



In case you haven't heard, Anahuac NWR now has beachfront property in Galveston County. The USFWS along with several non-profit organizations were able to recently acquire 1,350 acres of the historic Cade Ranch on Bolivar Peninsula. More info will be available in the coming months. This is a BIG win for wildlife and wetlands conservation on the Texas coast!

Events

Board of Directors Meetings -

6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Texas Chenier Plain Refuges
Complex Office.

Board meetings are the second Tuesday of every month, except for holidays and summer. Monthly board meetings are held to discuss FOAR programs, approve monthly budget reports, and hear about projects on the refuge from staff. Board members required, regular members invited. Please RSVP if you plan to attend.

All are invited to join board members and staff for dinner at Nopalitos in Anahuac at 5:30pm.

Audubon Waterbird Info Session -

Audubon Texas will be giving an info session about their waterbird surveys on Monday evening, December 15, 2014 at the Anahuac NWR Visitor Center. People who are interested in learning more about waterbirds around Galveston Bay, wildlife surveying, and volunteering for this project should make plans to attend this meeting.



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/)



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
Gene Campbell	Darlene Prescott
Paula Webb	David Hanson

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

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