



Pic by Norm Welsh

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## Refuge Manager's Report

By Kristin Fritz

The spring season at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge will bring us flocks of migrating shorebirds and songbirds that stop to refuel on their journey north; least bitterns, purple gallinules, nighthawks, and yellow-rumped warblers are a common sight. If you take a stroll on any of our trails you will be able to find a diverse landscape from wildflowers in bloom in the uplands to mud turtles and red-eared sliders sunning on logs in the wetlands. There is something for everyone.



Land preparation throughout the winter months has led to abundant wildlife and plant species to flourish with our refreshing spring rains. Ongoing land management efforts continue across thousands of acres on the refuge. Some land management actions include mowing, trail trimming, invasive species management, water control structure replacement, and much more. These management actions continue in early spring and into the summer months to best support our diverse species across this beautiful landscape.

You can also find the refuge staff and volunteers working with local school groups and out at local community events. If you see us out at an event, come stop by our booth and say "hi", we would love to meet you and get you connected directly to the refuge. If you haven't made a trip to the refuge lately, take a moment to come enjoy all the beauty Anahuac National Wildlife has to offer.

*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.*

### Upcoming Events!

GatorFest  
9/15 (Weekend)

Rice Festival  
10/4 (Weekend)

Family Fishing Day  
10/28

See page 13 for more!

## FOAR President's Message

By David Sarkozi



The diversity on the Refuge is the theme of this issue of Gator Tales. Just what does that mean though? I could easily talk about the habitat, plant, and animal diversity of the refuge. Habitats wise I can name several distinct habitats; upland prairie, salty prairie, freshwater, brackish, and saltwater wetlands, prairie woodlots, and if you also count the headquarters, mix forest and some cypress swamp. iNaturalist lists 395 species of plants, 26 species of fungi, 269 species of birds, 42 species of reptiles and amphibians, 19 species of mammals, and 478 species of spiders and insects.

[Want to explore the 975 unique species listed by iNaturalist, including everything from birds to fungi? Click here to go directly to ANWR info on their site.](#)

I could talk about the diversity of user groups on the refuge. We have hunters, fishermen, crabbers, birders, and photographers as major groups that use the refuge, and that doesn't even touch the likely thousand who visit the refuge each year just to enjoy the space of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. You can see for miles in all directions and see very little man-made things except for the road you came in on. Often you cannot hear a manmade noise. The refuge is a space that can hold hundreds of people and still let you feel like you've gotten away from it all at least for a moment.

I think the Friends of Anahuac Refuge have done a good job of recruiting a board with diverse stakeholders. We have birders, we have general interest naturalists, we have folks who enjoy the work of outreach to the community, we have active fisher folk, we have photographers, and we have hunters. I think the diversity of stakeholders is well represented on the Friends of Anahuac Board.

Where I think we have not been successful so far is recruiting board members as diverse as those who come and enjoy Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.



Pic by Norm Welsh



The visitors to the refuge are very diverse, you only need to come out on a nice day to see that. That's an amazing thing really that the Refuge can be very proud of. The community at large feels comfortable and welcome on the refuge.

I've been involved in conservation and environmental advocacy organizations for thirty years now. From my very first day I've been hearing and involved in discussions about how to increase the diversity in our organizations. There is no doubt about it, the USA is becoming more and more diverse if you measure diversity by how many people are non-European. The future of all organizations like ours is in getting a membership as diverse as the community they represent.

No one seems to have figured out the answer to how to do that yet. Membership in our organizations isn't increasing in diversity at the same rate as our communities are. I don't think it's because the community doesn't care. I think it's because we haven't connected with them. We, the environmental and conservation community, haven't cracked that code yet. We need to figure this out quickly though. I think its critical to the future of our wild places.

Protecting the diversity of the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge depends on increasing the diversity of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge. We'll get this right, I'm sure. I'm sure going to keep trying.



Pic by Norm Welsh

### ***Haiku from a Reader***

#### ***Honey Bees by Betty Pinion***

Stripes black and yellow

Fuzzy, harmless, hard workers

Thanks for the honey!

*You'll find haikus submitted from readers sprinkled throughout the newsletter. If you'd like to submit one, please see page 5 for more information.*



## *Where Are the Birds? At Anahuac Refuge!*

**By Stephanie Martinez**

When I think of Diversity on the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, I think of the plants and animals because that's our goal as an agency; to encourage diversity and maintain a healthy habitat.

There are hundreds of various plants, insects, birds, visitors, reptiles, etc. I chose to highlight birds because I have personally noticed the lack of diversity in birds in many of the other areas while traveling.



Pic by Stephanie Martinez

The Refuge hosts over 300 species of birds that travel through or live here full or part time. As a family, we've travelled to various states, always visiting a nature area (National Park, Refuge, etc.) and even my tech-loving family will notice and say, "Where are all the birds?". It's something that most people who live here take for granted. It's not unusual to see a Great Blue Heron on the side of the road, in a neighborhood ditch hunting for crawfish, or a "river of birds" flying overhead seemingly for miles, or to hear a flock of geese going to roost. It's our normal and in my opinion, we are extremely lucky to have a Wildlife Refuge nearby so that we can enjoy all the wildlife it hosts.



Both pics by Stephanie Martinez



## *Meet the Fish and Wildlife Team*

*By Monique Slaughter*

Meet Monique Slaughter, our oil and gas specialist at the Texas Chenier Plains Complex. Slaughter helps with the management of privately owned oil and gas minerals on the Complex's four refuges to insure that the lands and resources of the US Fish and Wildlife Service are protected.

A lover of the great outdoors, Slaughter says she is excited and grateful to be part of a team charged with protecting and managing the upper coast wetlands of Texas.

A graduate of Lamar University with a degree in Marine Geology/Ocean Technology, she began her long career in wildlife management by joining the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department at the J.D. Murphree WMA in the Public Hunt Program, then up to her elbows in being one of the principals in managing the state's Alligator Program.

As part of that alligator program, Slaughter was soon taking well secured, "teenage" alligators to area schools for education programs. Sometimes those "closed mouth" alligators had to spend time in the Slaughter's bathtub between school visits – a surprise guest for her husband Dale. Teaching and entertaining children prepared Slaughter well for her role as grandmother to 5 grandchildren including a set of twins. A recent widow, Slaughter is also very proud of her two, grown daughters and sons-in laws.

Slaughter is very active in the Southeast Texas community and is a novice photographer. Her usual subjects? Her grandchildren and the beautiful upper coast and wildlife of Texas.



## *Nature Haiku Challenge*

We are looking for your best haikus to be printed in future Gator Tales Newsletter. A haiku is a short traditional form of Japanese poetry which consists of only 3 lines, each of which have a very specific number of syllables: First line-5 syllables, Second line-7 syllables, Third line-5 syllables. Haikus don't necessarily rhyme or follow strict punctuation rules. They often focus on images of nature. So, a haiku challenge is perfect for our newsletter! Visit the Refuge for inspiration and send me your best haikus to **FOARNatureStore@gmail.com** to be printed in future newsletters! Hopefully the haikus spread throughout the newsletter will inspire you to write one of your own!

You may also submit a picture that was your inspiration if you'd like, but that isn't necessary. We would love to see your ideas and creativity!

Thank you so much to Stephanie, Betty, Alena, and Fantasia for submitting some great haikus!

# FOAR Membership Drive

By Kay Lovelace



**Friends of Anahuac Refuge**

P.O. Box 1348

Anahuac, Texas 77514-1348

### Website

[www.friendsofanahuacnwr.com](http://www.friendsofanahuacnwr.com)

### President

*David Sarkozi*

### Vice President

*David Hanson*

### Secretary

*Kay Lovelace*

### Treasurer

*John Berner*

### Board Members

*Linda Ann Jackson*

*Gene Campbell*

*Norman Welsh*

*Chuck Davis*

*Carolyn Miles*

*Jason Miles*

### Nature Stores Manager

*Jennifer Pinion*

The Friends of Anahuac Refuge (FOAR) would like to invite you to become a new member or renew your past membership if you haven't already. As you know, we are a non-profit organization and rely on membership dues, Nature Store sales, and donations to continue to fulfill our important mission, which is shown above.

### Why should you become a member?

1—It's an inexpensive way to make a difference in the world by supporting the preservation of native habitats and the multitudes of wildlife that rely on them

2—Receive a 10% discount on purchases made in our Nature Stores located in the Visitor Center and in the Visitor Information Station

3—Receive our beautiful and informative newsletter and communications throughout the year of current happenings

### How do I become a member?

1—Complete the membership form at the end of newsletter and mail it with your check to FOAR, PO Box 1348, Anahuac, TX 77514

2—Go online at <https://www.friendsofanahuacnwr.com/>, click on "Get Involved" and scroll down to "Become a Member", click on "New or Renew", select the membership level, complete your details, click on "Pay Now".

3—Complete the membership form in the Visitor Center or Visitor Information Station

Also included is the FOAR Executive Board Standing Committees. Should you be interested in participating, we would welcome your help in this way or in any other way you would be interested in volunteering. Contact us at [friendsofanahuacrefuge@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofanahuacrefuge@gmail.com) for more information.

We would appreciate your support tremendously and are excited to be getting back up and going after the long inactivity during the pandemic. Your confidence in our organization is appreciated and your membership will go a long way to support Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kay Lovelace

Secretary and Outreach Committee Chairperson



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## *FOAR Executive Board Standing Committees*

By Kay Lovelace

### **Operations Committee**

The mission of the operations committee is to review and maintain FOAR bylaws, standard operating procedures and agreements.

Ex Officio chairman, President of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge-David Sarkozi

Ex Officio member, Treasurer of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge-John Berner

Nominated:

Chuck Davis

Carolyn Miles

Gene Campbell

Current portfolio: Bylaws, Financial Procedures, FWS agency agreement

### **Outreach and Capacity Building Committee**

The mission of the Outreach and Capacity Building Committee is building the membership of the FOAR, recruiting volunteers for Anahuac NWR. FOAR presence on social media, publications, and donations.

Nominated:

Kay Lovelace, Chairman

Linda Jackson

Jason Miles

Jennifer Pinion

Current portfolio: Membership, Website, Facebook, Newsletter, Various Festivals

### **Projects and Programs Committee**

The Mission of the Projects and Programs Committee is to implement projects and ongoing programs that enhance Anahuac NWR and showcase Anahuac NWR. The committee is responsible for budgeting and fundraising for projects and programs.

Ex Officio member: Anahuac Refuge Manager-Kristin Fritz

Nominated:

Gene Campbell, Chairman

David Hanson

Norman Welsh

Chuck Davis

Current portfolio: Jackson Prairie Woodlot, Willow/Hackberry Trail, Photo Contest, Adult Education Series, Audio Tour, Grant Writer.

### **Nature Stores Committee**

The Nature Stores committee provides oversight and recommends policy to the Board of Directors for the nature store and retail sales of related items.

Ex Officio chairman, Nature Store Manager-Jennifer Pinion

Ex Officio member, FWS representative on the Board of Directors-Stephanie Martinez

Nominated:

Norman Welsh

Linda Jackson

Kay Lovelace

## *National Friends Workshop*

By Jason Miles



My wife, Carolyn, and I are the newest members of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge board of directors. In late April, we attended the U.S Fish and Wildlife’s National Friends Workshop held at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. This meeting brought together folks from Fish and Wildlife, Friends groups and national conservation groups to discuss a wide-range of topics concerning nature conversation, support for nature wildlife refuges, and how to maintain or grow a Friends group.

People from all over the nation, including Alaska and Hawaii, participated expressing their refuge’s challenges. Some challenges were unique to a refuge, but many were common to other refuges, which lead to many informal “I have the same problem.” and “How did you solve it?” meetings over lunch and dinner.

Carolyn and I took a divide-and-conquer approach and each morning at breakfast we picked our sessions for the day making sure we didn’t overlap. The conference lasted 3 days and we were presented an enormous amount of material on a very wide range of topics. Every evening when we returned to our room, our brains almost hurt from all the information learned in one day.





For me, learning about the differences in managing rural and urban refuges was the most fascinating topic. For example, rural refuges constantly work to encourage visitation while urban refuges work constantly to manage large numbers of visitors. Since Anahuac NWR is in a rural setting but is less than an hour from a major urban area of 3 million people, it has a bit of both issues. Public outreach and engagement are very important to Anahuac NWR, but can you imagine 100,000 people around Shoveler Pond?

My wife found that Friends’ board succession planning and membership growth piqued her curiosity the most. The Friends of Anahuac organization provides many “golden eggs” to the refuge, but the “goose” that lays the “golden eggs” needs to be maintained. With everyone’s busy lives, how do you recruit people to volunteer at the refuge for a work day or to serve on the refuge’s board of directors? (Shameless plug – Are you interested? Work Day? Membership? Board member?)



In our downtime, we explored the forest setting of NCTC which sits on the Potomac River. Being birders, we never left our room without our binoculars and cameras and left 30 minutes early for every session. NCTC is set up like a college campus with wooded walkways between buildings. There was always something to see on the way to class. A highlight was a pair of common mergansers with babies swimming on the Potomac River.

One thing we both agree upon is the conference showed us that the Friends of Anahuac Refuge is moving in the right direction. As a Friends group, we have a strong relationship with the FWS staff and leadership of Anahuac NWR, we are all committed to sponsoring projects to support the refuge as well as the area around Anahuac and our board is a solid group of people volunteering our time to a very worthy cause.

***Haiku from a Reader***

***Anas fulvigula* by Stephanie Martinez**

Brown, with bright orange legs  
They live here throughout the year  
Love the Mottled Duck!



## *An Ode to Joan!*

By Kay Lovelace

The Butterfly Garden is what it is because of mainly one person, Joan Ward, a long time volunteer at Anahuac Refuge. Joan works tirelessly year-round to keep the Butterfly Garden beautiful and maintains the perfect haven for all kinds of butterflies and other pollinators. All would agree that the butterfly garden at the entrance of Anahuac Refuge is a terrific way to welcome visitors to the diverse habitats there are here, such as prairies, marshes, woodlots, bay side coastline, and beach front. With her help, Anahuac Refuge offers a terrific variety of landscapes and wildlife on this treasured and protected land of the upper Texas coast.



The Butterfly Garden is the primary responsibility of Joan Ward, a longtime volunteer for Anahuac Refuge. When you drive into the refuge entrance early in the morning you will likely see Joan kneeling or sitting among her babies, the butterfly garden plants. She gathers seeds and cuttings to be propagated in the grow room, moves the seedlings to larger containers in the shade garden, and finally the mature plants are moved to their final home outside in the garden. She has tremendous knowledge of native plants, and we all rely on her extensive knowledge. She is out there when it's hot and humid as well as wet and chilly and above all is willing and able to help with anything we ask and always with a SMILE.



In addition to the butterfly garden, Joan helps keep things looking nice and neat around the Visitor Center, the Visitor Information Station, and the Volunteer Community Area by picking up the trash, mowing, and cleaning the Community Center.



Joan has also been a vital part of all the educational programs hosted by the refuge, including the school visits and summer camps. She has been volunteering at the refuge for over 9 years now and has earned over 10,000 hours! Joan, what would we do without you?



Here is a big high five to you for helping to make our refuge a more inviting and beautiful place. Thank you for all you do, Joan. We all appreciate you very much!

### ***Haiku from a Reader***

#### ***Anahuac Refuge by Fantasia Verma***

Graceful wings take flight,  
In Texas refuge's embrace,  
Birds find their respite



Pic by OK Dept Wildlife Conservation



## *The Amazing Diversity of the Butterfly Garden*

By Jennifer Pinion and Joan Ward



One of my absolute favorite places to visit on the refuge would be the Willows Trail, especially as it winds through the Butterfly Garden at its start.

This is definitely an area chock-full of diversity! I've seen probably at least 50 different birds in this area, including one of my most-memorable sightings of a Rufous Hummingbird that had found the perfect spot in a tree and flitted to and from there for hours. I've also seen numerous turtles, frogs and lizards, more insects than you can imagine (including over 25 different spe-

cies of dragonflies and at least 10 different butterfly types), and several mammal species, including bobcats, rabbits, squirrels, Hispid Cotton Rats (trust me, they are cute) and otters.

But the thing that truly amazes me is the level of plant diversity that Joan Ward has worked hard to incorporate into a gorgeous display that attracts butterflies, bees, and dragonflies by the hundreds. There are so many different stunning plants that I had to buy a guide to try and start learning them all! Here is a list of the main plants in the garden, as follows:

- 1) Black-eyed Susan/Clasping Coneflower (Pic on right)
- 2) Lance-leaved Coreopsis (Pic below left)
- 3) Coral Bean (Pic below right)
- 4) Stiff Greenthread
- 5) Desert Marigold
- 6) Maximillion Sunflower
- 7) Basket Flower
- 8) Rosinweed
- 9) Fall aster
- 10) Compass plant
- 11) Gama grass
- 12) Side oats gama
- 13) Passion Vine
- 14) Ruelle
- 15) Frostweed
- 16) Salvias
- 17) Baptisia
- 18) Turks Cap





## *Remembering Jim Ward*

**By Kristin Fritz**

On June 20, 2022 Anahuac lost a giant in the world of volunteering and conservation. Jim Ward had donated enough time to equal one full time staff person for an entire year. Jim and Joan Ward have been volunteering with Anahuac, McFaddin, and Tx Point Refuges since 2015.

Between both Jim and his wife Joan, they have volunteered the equivalent hours of more than 4 full staff members for a year! If you visited the refuge, you may have had the honor of meeting Jim in the visitor centers, out mowing, or collecting trash and litter. Jim has helped the refuge with many events and outreach programs and assisted with the spring educational programs. Jim was also willing to step in and lend his talents and time with odd jobs that popped up across the refuge.

Jim is deeply missed and his contributions to the Refuge will leave an ever-lasting imprint on the landscape and in people's hearts. Thank you, Jim, for your dedication to Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.



## *Upcoming Events-Mark Your Calendars!*

9/15 weekend Gator Fest

10/4 weekend Rice Festival

10/14 Nurture Nature Festival

10/21 KBR Kids Day

10/21 Bike Around the Bay

10/28 Family Fishing Day

More information will be in the next Newsletter that should be out in early September. Also, details will be posted on Facebook and the Friends of Anahuac website.

[FriendsOfAnahuacNWR.com](http://FriendsOfAnahuacNWR.com)

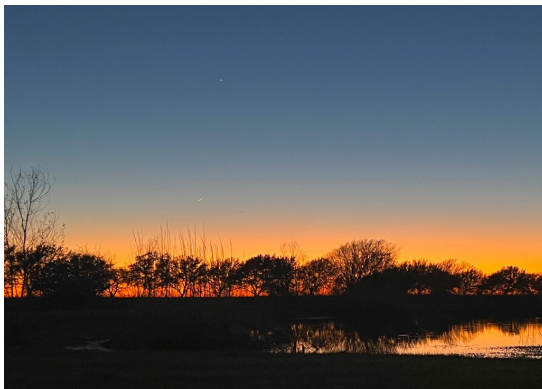
Scroll down on the main page for Events.

## 2023 Cell Phone Photo Contest Winner!



Kathie Maxwell

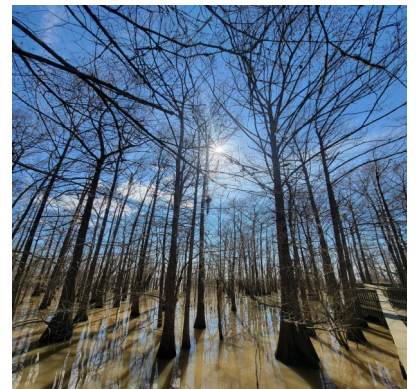
*Hackberry Trail Sunrise*



Crystal H. Garrett  
*Entrance Pond Sunset*



Arial Pinion  
*Black Vulture*



Tony Stansfield  
*Cypress Swamp*



Arial Pinion  
*Bobcat*

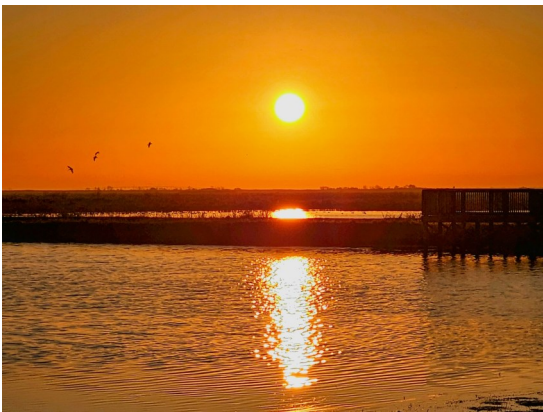


Alena Pinion  
*Misty Morning*



Meghan James  
*Cypress Swamp Boardwalk*





**Bruce E. Shollmier**  
*Hackberry Sunrise*



**Hubert Gonzalez**  
*Black Vulture*



**Hubert Gonzalez**  
*Mud Turtle*



**Shelby Bourland**  
*Afternoon Sun Over East Bay*



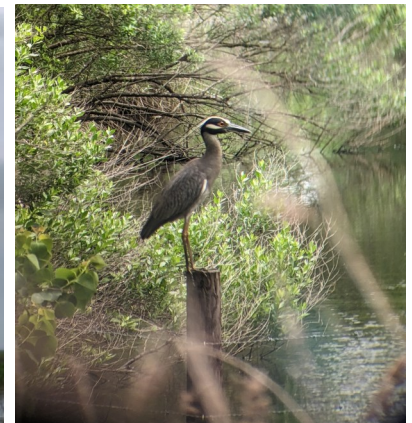
**Jami Linder**  
*American Alligator*



**Stephanie Schwantes**  
*Cattle Egret*



**Stephanie Schwantes**  
*Neotropic Cormorant*



**Cindy Lopez**  
*Yellow-crowned Night Heron*

Thank you to all the people who submitted pictures to our photo contest! Please watch the Friends website and Facebook for information about our next contest.



# Nature Store News

By Jennifer Pinion

Diversity is the buzz word for this newsletter and the nature stores are a great place to experience that! I'm very lucky in that I get to visit with locals and people from around the world when I volunteer in the stores. I love our map in the Visitor Center with pins marking where people have visited from. (Pictured Left)



Date	3/26	3/27	3/28	3/29	Date	3/26	3/27	3/28	3/29	Date	3/26	3/27	3/28	3/29
Black-bellied Puffin	✓	✓	✓	✓	Black-bellied Puffin	✓	✓	✓	✓	Black-bellied Puffin	✓	✓	✓	✓
Whistling Duck	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Greater White-fronted Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stone Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ross's Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Golden Plover	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mallard Duck	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Blue-winged Teal	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Northern Pintail	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green-winged Teal	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Canvasback	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lesser Scaup	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ruddy Duck	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pink-billed Grebe	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wood Stork	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Neotropical Cormorant	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Doubling-billed Cormorant	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Avocet	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
American White Pelican	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brown Pelican	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Least Bittern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Blue Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Great Egret	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Little Blue Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Snowy Egret	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tricolored Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reddish Egret	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cattle Egret	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Black-crowned Night Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wading Tattler	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wilson Phalarope	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	Least Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓

Volunteering in the stores has also helped me see the diversity of wildlife the refuge has to offer! I love when visitors excitedly detail their sightings, from bobcats and minks to "lifer" birds, especially during the spring migration. The birders work together to help each other get the most out of their visits, including marking their sightings on our bird board. If you are just starting out in birding, this is a helpful resource! Stop by and check it out the next time you visit.

Although birders, hunters, and fisherfolk are probably the most common visitors, there are so many others that have a wide variety of interests. It is always enjoyable to hear from these people about their unique passions. I've learned so much from the bee lovers, mushroom hunters, native-plant gardeners, environmentalists, dragonfly enthusiasts, families on an outing, dog "parents", turtle collectors, artists, those just looking for quiet meditation and of course, those that come for the alligators! These conversations drive the stock kept at the stores, which is constantly evolving to hopefully offer a wide variety of items where every visitor can find their something to fit their individual interests.



Our selection of turtle items is unreal, but people can't seem to get enough of them! We have turtle stuffed animals, a key hider, key chains, magnets, glass figurines, a bedazzled holiday ornament, lucky charm tokens, socks, turtle toys, and even a stunning sea turtle hand-beaded clutch! We have even more turtle items not pictured including earrings, premium flour sack towels and sea turtle t-shirt.



We also have plenty of bee paraphernalia! We have bee socks, reusable shopping bags, dryer balls, beeswax eco-wraps, earrings, lucky tokens, gardening books focusing on attracting bees to your garden, car charms, a hand-blown glass ornament, a measuring spoon set, playing cards, bird houses with bee décor, and jigsaw puzzles. We even have a bee dog toy! If you are a bee lover, you should buzz in here soon and check out the selection. (Not all bee products mentioned are pictured.)



For our fisherfolk, we have some bright and fun socks, handy field guides for freshwater and saltwater fish identification, a lovely Redfish patch, fish “lures” bottle openers, a crab trap holiday ornament, various caps and hats, and a Gone Fishing jar opener. We also have a great selection of books and guides for fishing in Texas and in the Gulf of Mexico. Hopefully we can reel you in with this assortment!



## Nature Store News Continued

My personal passion is protecting the environment and trying to reduce my own carbon footprint and I've included products in the store to help others do the same. We have products made out of recycled materials, such as our Jabebo earrings (recycled cereal boxes) and the entire line of eco-chics bags (recycled water bottles) which includes shopping bags, fanny packs, lunchkits, and even crossbody bags that work perfectly for a hiking backpack or a purse. We also have plenty of reusable products such as eco-dryer balls (not only do you not need dryer sheets, but they save electricity by reducing the drying time!), beeswax wraps, Swedish cloths (reusable superabsorbent cloths that can be washed in your dishwasher or with clothes that replace paper towels and sponges in our house), and several varieties of reusable shopping bags.



We have a diversity of kids' products, from socks and t-shirts (some of which even glow in the dark) to some of the most well-written and informative children's books out there—board books all the way up to young adult. (Come visit me on a Saturday and I can help you find the best books per age/reading level.) We also have a wide variety of environmental toys to help them learn as they play. Jigsaw puzzles, card games, snapping gator toys, bath toys, musical instruments, puppets, and plush; we've got something fun for kids of all ages.

(Pictured is just a very small example!)





And we didn't forget about your furry kids! We just received a large selection of dog toys. They come in a variety of sizes and include rope toys, squeaky toys, crinkly toys and ball toys. Each is marked with a sturdiness scale and I have been impressed with how long these lasted in my own household of 5 dogs who are 50+ pounds each! Come check out the selection to make your fur babies happy!

I want to highlight some of our newest and most sought-after t-shirt designs. At the beginning of spring, we received in the Crazy Bird Lady and the Songbird Spectrum designs and they have proven to be very popular already! The Crazy Bird Lady t-shirt (below left) is in a Ladies cut and available in sizes Small-3X. (This design is also available on a mug.) The Songbird Spectrum t-shirt (below right) is Unisex sizing and is available in sizes Small-2X. (This design is also available on a mug and a magnet.)



### ***Haiku from a Reader***

#### ***Water Dog by Alena Pinion***

Sleek, graceful, playful

Splashing in the cold water

Little cute otter



Pic by Norman Welsh



## FOAR Spring Events

By Jennifer Pinion, Stephanie Martinez and Chris Campbell

Anahuac Refuge had a busy Spring which gave the Friends group plenty of opportunities to help! From beach cleanups to classroom visits, guiding birders to creating new gardens, FOAR volunteers supported FWS in a variety of ways.



On March 14, several volunteers led by FWS Chris Campbell at the South Unit beach spent the morning picking up trash for the first annual Nest Fest. This group was part of 312 volunteers that managed to remove over 2,300 pounds of trash across 12 different beaches that are designated as sea turtle and shorebird nesting grounds.

About a week after beach cleanup, FWS Chris Campbell returned to the previously cleaned South Unit beach and joined Kristen Vale (Coastal Program Coordinator for the American Bird Conservancy) and Carrie Chapin (Houston Audubon Society) and several volunteers in placing approximately 50 signs marking nesting areas for shorebirds. These signs will serve to protect about half a mile of critical nesting areas for Wilson's plovers and Least terns, as well as Willets, Killdeer, and Black Skimmers. A pair of Wilson's plovers were already seen searching for their nesting location by the end of the day!

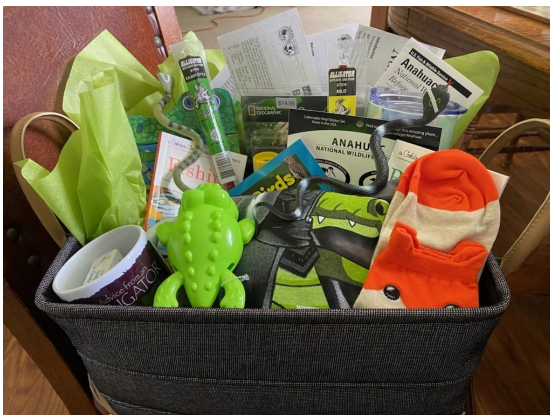


## *FOAR Spring Events Continued*



On April 1, 2023 the Texas Junior Duck Stamp competition was held at Texas Chenier Plains Visitor Center in Anahuac, Texas. Park Ranger Chris Campbell (Anahuac NWR) hosted and co-coordinated the event which was lead by Felice Yarbrough (Houston Urban) with the assistance of several interns with Houston Urban. Local artists (including one former competitor) made up two thirds of the voting panel and Betty Pinion, one of our volunteers was the final judge. This contest has been a year in the making and has required monthly Teams meetings led by Suzanne Fellows (FWS), local and online advertising, cataloging entries, and selecting judges for the event. There were 198 entries from all around Texas and the winning artwork was that of a blue-winged teal which was based on a picture taken by the artist at our very own Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.

At the end of April, Jennifer Pinion, the FOAR Nature Store Manager, brought a selection of items and plenty of information about the refuge and the Friends group to Galveston for FeatherFest. Sales were good and plenty of people visited the refuge after hearing about the great things we have going on!



The Friends group also donated a basket of items to the Ducks Unlimited Banquet to be auctioned off to raise funds for their ongoing commitment to “conserving wetland and grassland habitats for waterfowl, communities and wildlife”.



## *FOAR Spring Events Continued*

The Friends of Anahuac Refuge president, David Sarkozi, gave a free birding class for the public on April 16th, right in the middle of birding season! The class began with a presentation including hints at finding and identifying birds, best apps to use when birding and how to pick binoculars. Afterwards, David took the group on a birding walk behind the Visitor Center where we were able to apply what we had discussed earlier. We learned a lot, it was a great day and we appreciate all the participants that joined us. Thank you David, for taking time out of your own birding schedule to share your knowledge.



*Left: Photo of the birding class with David Sarkozi kneeling in the center.*

*Below Left: Something good is spotted as class walks trail*

*Below Right: David discussing field guide choice options*

By the way, I've been using the Merlin App recommended from this class and have thoroughly enjoyed it, especially to identify birds by their calls!





## *FOAR Spring Events Continued*

Throughout the Spring, FWS hosted numerous environmental education classes. Over 1,000 students from pre-school to 5th grade visited the refuge to learn about topics such as insects (identification, metamorphosis, importance, etc.) to food webs, healthy habitats, watersheds, wetlands, migrations, and much more. Most classes were also able to walk trails at the refuge, visit the “airboat ride” theater at the visitor center, and/or drive around Shoveler Pond to see alligators, waterfowl and shorebirds. Many local schools were able to visit this year, including Anahuac, Winnie, Barbers Hill, and a few private schools.



*The educational stations allow for students to learn through play and hands-on activities, making these visits very memorable for these students*

*Students seine with nets for small fish and invertebrates and then identify them using charts with help from FOAR volunteers*



*Students use nets to sweep the grass for small insects to identify with the help from volunteers. All specimens caught are released carefully back to nature afterwards.*



## *FOAR Spring Events Continued*



FOAR members David Hanson and Gene Campbell can often be found at Jackson Woodlot or the Willows guiding birders in the spring. Both are instrumental in the maintenance of the water features at these areas and much more on the refuge! This is just an average spring day with the birders lined up to catch a glimpse of many migratory birds.

The Friends of Anahuac Refuge prepped the ground and planted numerous plants in the new native prairie garden dedicated to the former president, Travis Lovelace. Plants include the following: Little Blue Stem, Sideoats gamma, Partridge pea, Illinois Bundleflower, Texas Bluebonnet, Echinacea, Salvia, Physotegia, Bouteloua and Indian Blanket. This project is coming along nicely and will be highlighted more in our next newsletter.



As you can see, some of the plants are already thriving and providing for our local pollinators. Please see the Friends of Anahuac Refuge website for more information on this project at the following link:

[Native Prairie Demonstration Garden - The Beginning \(friendsofanahuacnwr.com\)](http://friendsofanahuacnwr.com)



## Stories/Photos from FOAR members

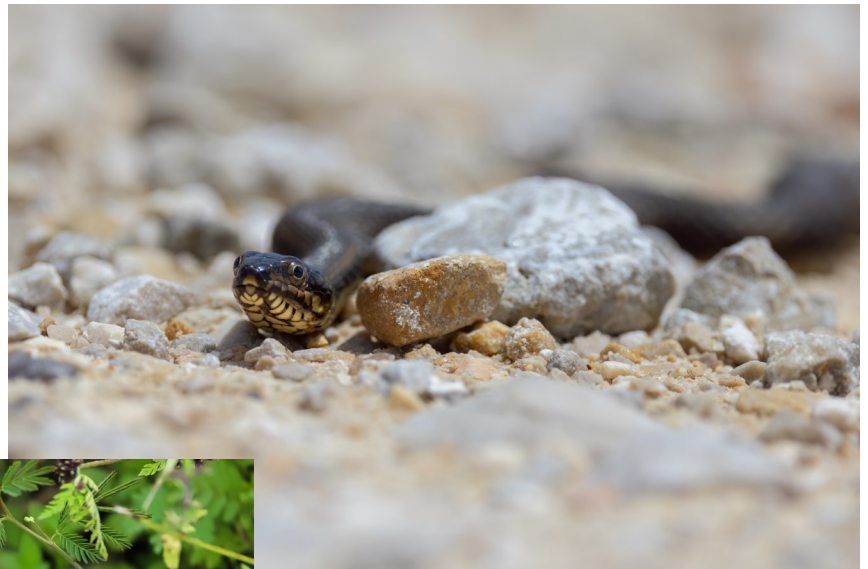


By Frank Farese

Frank and his wife Margaret told me about how they watched this gator attempt to eat this turtle for the longest time as they were curious if the gator would be able to break the shell or not. Eventually, they moved on, hoping the turtle did manage to get away. It is unknown how it played out, but in my opinion, this gator probably gave up and went in search of an easier meal!

-Jennifer Pinion

Some great snake shots from our visitors! The top picture is a gulf salt marsh snake and the bottom one is a cottonmouth. Notice the difference in the shapes of the head between the non-venomous marsh snake versus the venomous cottonmouth!



By Les Tompkins



# Gator Tales Spring 2023

Friends of Anahuac Refuge  
PO Box 1348  
Anahuac, TX 77514



We're on the web!

[www.FriendsofAnahuacNWR.com](http://www.FriendsofAnahuacNWR.com)

Nature Store Link:

[foar-nature.square.site](http://foar-nature.square.site)

## FOAR Board of Directors

President-David Sarkozi

Vice President-David Hanson

Secretary-Kay Lovelace

Treasurer-John Berner

At Large Members:

Gene Campbell

Chuck Davis

Linda Ann Jackson

Jason Miles

Carolyn Miles

Norman Welsh

## Membership Application/Renewal\*

New       Renewal       Email Newsletter

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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\$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 payment to:

Friends of Anahuac Refuge

PO Box 1348

Anahuac, TX 77514

**\*FOAR Membership Renewals  
can also be done online at**

**[Friendsofanahuacnwr.com](http://Friendsofanahuacnwr.com)**