

Volume 17 Number 1
 March 2014
 OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
 OF FRIENDS OF
 ANAHUAC REFUGE
 PO BOX 1348
 ANAHUAC, TX 77514

NEW FACES



Welcome David Hanson!



I was born and raised in Baytown Texas. I attended Lee College for one year and graduated from Stephen F Austin State University in 1974 with a degree in Wildlife Biology and a minor in Forestry. I worked for the Texas Parks and Wildlife for about a year and then worked in the Chemical Industry for 32 years. I also worked part time as a waterfowl guide, for five years on what is now the East Unit of the refuge and ten more years on private property just West of the East Unit. I retired from ExxonMobil six years ago, allowing my wife and I have become birders and wildlife photographers. One of my pleasures in life now is duck hunting with my son and our daughters two sons in our area marshes. I enjoy teaching my grandkids about the outdoors and to be responsible stewards of our wildlife. My wife and I now live in the Cove area. My first memories of the refuge were fishing around Frozen Point and hunting on some of the property along the old original entrance road back in the late 1960's.



Gator Tales

FRIENDS OF ANAHUAC REFUGE

Welcome Gene Campbell!

Gene brings much experience to the Board, stating that he has hosted three of the Youth Waterfowl Expos with Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge and others. He has volunteered and worked with ANWR to flood and maintain levees in the original "rest area" on the East Unit.



"I have known all of the Anahuac refuge managers of the past as far back as Russell Clapper." In the coming years, I'd like to tempt FOAR with some ideas that can work. I welcome the opportunity to participate as a board member of Friends of Anahuac Refuge, and look forward to participating in the continued relationship the Friends group has with ANWR."

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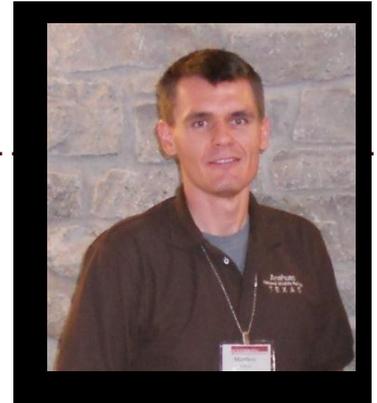
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Our Mission

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.

President's Message

By Matthew Jackson, FOAR President



Spring is a season when plants and wildlife begin to grow on the refuge, so this a good time to speak about the Friends of Anahuac Refuge's growth in the last year. In 2013, we: 1) gained new members, board members, and community partners, 2) raised over \$70,000 for our "50 for 50" fundraising goal; 3) supported several refuge events including Family Fishing Day, summer camp, Wildlife Expo, and volunteer workdays; 4) operated two highly successful nature stores; 5) diversified our outreach; 6) teamed up with other refuge Friends groups; and 7) worked on the 50th anniversary book. It was fantastic to be able to discuss these accomplishments and some of our 2014 plans to approximately 80 people who attended our annual meeting in January. It was the largest turnout for our annual meeting in at least the last 5 years and possibly ever. It is tremendously encouraging to see the local community embracing the Refuge and FOAR as all three continue to grow together.

This spring, FOAR will again be helping with the popular [Rail Walks](#) which bring hundreds of wildlife observers to the refuge. We will also be supporting [volunteer work days](#) on the refuge and the Refuge's environmental education program in the local schools. Planning for this year's [Family Fishing Day](#) will begin soon and we will be looking for volunteers for that event. We are also planning a special event for the release of the [Refuge's 50th anniversary book](#). Furthermore, we also anticipate moving our nature store into the new Visitor Information Station once it's completed in the coming months. The new building will certainly bring more visitors to the refuge with its amazing views of the refuge. To help keep the VIS and Visitor Center open this summer, FOAR will be hiring a [Student Conservation Association](#) intern to work in one of the locations.

Another neat project that is still in the beginning phase is the [Urban Refuge Initiative](#). In January,

FOAR hosted a meeting in Anahuac for refuge Friends groups in the Houston area to discuss urban outreach

opportunities. In collaboration with other nearby Friends groups and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Initiative aims to help educate urban residents about nature at [National Wildlife Refuges in the Houston area](#). As you can tell, we are certainly looking to grow even more!

The entire Refuge System itself may be coming into a growth period, even it is just a small one. Congress [increased the System's budget by 4%](#) this fiscal year which still leaves it well below where it needs to be, but the move certainly limits cuts and reductions that refuges were facing because of the sequestration. More importantly, the budget increase highlights the growing trend of supporting natural resources and wildlife in the U.S.. The Urban Refuge Initiative will only further reinforce this growing trend in Houston. For us, the turnout at the annual meeting speaks for itself. Hurricane Ike was tough on the refuge and FOAR, but the organization has endured and is growing again. Being a volunteer organization, having new people from the local community come in and lead is encouraged. It makes FOAR a sustainable organization that can endure hard times and allow it to grow each year just like the plants and wildlife do each spring on the refuge. With growth, we can assure the Refuge will be here for the next 50 years and a new generation of Friends will be here to support it...and it starts with **you!** Get outside this spring and enjoy **YOUR National Wildlife Refuge! MJ**

Refuge Manager's Report

By Jimmy Laurent, Refuge Manager

After what seemed to be a record breaking winter with temperatures dropping into the single digits, we are slowly beginning to see the early signs of spring and warmer weather. This past winter even produced a few small snow flurries for all the non-believers! Now, as we gear up for our busy season and summer migration we are looking forward to the upcoming months. With the addition of rain seemingly every week last winter, the ground has been wet and Refuge heavy equipment has been limited to high prairie fields for maintenance.

In preparation for the summer, we have dusted off the Habitat Management Plan (HMP) and identified fields and areas of the refuge that will need to be serviced this year. This has been a tough challenge with the continued loss of personnel and funding. The first order of business will be pulling water off of the Moist-soil units and impoundments as we continue our organic farming program this year. As I mentioned recently in the FOAR board meetings, we will be taking several fields out of the farm rotation this year in anticipation of treating them for the infestation of the mud bank millet. Once these fields have been restored to desired habitat, we will again incorporate them into the farm program's rotation. The other big priority is treating invasive species across the refuge. This includes not only the mud bank millet mentioned above, but also Phragmites, persimmon, Chinese tallow, sesbania, water hyacinth, Raoul grass and an assortment of others.

Over the past few months we have been busy doing an assortment of things. This includes but not limited to building a lean to on the hunter waterfowl check station, roller chopping many of our moist soil units, monitoring the prairie seed planting next to the RV trailer area (LeConte's Prairie), and chasing hunters around the marsh. This year, harvest numbers weren't nearly as high as last year. If you are asking why then you are not alone. The sheer volume of rain we received during the year

caused much of the Gulf coast landscape including Anahuac NWR to hold water throughout the waterfowl season. Last year during the drought,

Anahuac was essentially one of the only places that purchased water and had the ability to hold large acres of water during the year. This year we had a variety of bag limits harvested to include Green winged teal, Gadwall and Northern Shoveler. We did have a few outliers including two Bufflehead, three Canvasback and a couple of Whistling ducks. But I wanted to give a big THANK YOU to Kay Lovelace for graciously stepping up to serve as the checkstation operator. Not only did Kay step up, but she had to quickly learn all her ducks, remove Mottled duck gizzards and learn the names of all our hunters. I think she did a great job in helping out the refuge and in the process now knows more waterfowl species than most of us!

We also hosted the FOAR Annual Meeting at the Methodist Church in Anahuac last month. This year I presented on the 2013 year in review, there was a presentation from the FOAR President Matt Jackson and a presentation from the Anniversary Book Team Leader, Cindi Barrett, who reported that the book will be coming out later this year. The food, as always, was great! We welcomed several folks from the surrounding Friends groups as well as a couple folks from the Albuquerque Regional Office. So if you missed it, you might consider joining us for our Volunteer Banquet on 3/21/14 at the TCP office at 6:30 in Anahuac.

Our VIS project is near completion. The interior inspection was completed last week and the contractor is working hard at completing the exterior (parking bumpers, striping, handicap placard, etc.) before his deadline. Next week (2/24/14) Capital Exhibits will begin the installation of the exhibits which will include an animatronic alligator in the center of the VIS floor. This alligator will be a full mount with sound sticks of the various sounds they make.



Nature Store Report

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

Every year I begin feeling an urgency about preparing for spring. Our purple martin friends once again have returned to our yard and we welcome them eagerly—it's hard to believe it has been a year already. They sound very cheerful but I suspect some of the chatter is expressing a frantic feeling as they busily prepare their little homes for the arrival of eggs and ultimately babies this summer. As I mention each year, their busy behavior energizes me to begin preparation for all the wonderful people who will be coming to visit our special refuge during this spring time of 2014. I love spring time don't you? I am excited to welcome people from all over the world who share the joy of springtime at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.

Exciting news.....WAIT TILL YOU SEE THE VIEW from the windows that look out in all directions from the new, elevated Visitor Information Station on the refuge. Wildlife watching from the windows and the observation deck surrounding the octagon shaped building will be spectacular. You will agree that the long anticipated wait is well worth it. An exact date is yet to be determined but be watching for the opening announcement soon. You will be excited to visit this beautiful facility which will hold informative Refuge interpretation displays, a volunteer to provide free Refuge information (yes, we will still have free coffee), and last but not least, the Nature Store for nature related gift items and souvenirs. We are extremely fortunate to have two state-of-the-art facilities--The Visitor Center and soon the Visitor Information Station. They are and will be a source of pride and enjoyment now and for many years to come.

Come by to see us, we love to visit with you and, of course, the Refuge benefits from your purchases in the Nature Store. We continue to carry nature related items for children and adults. Our book selection is extensive about birds, fish, mammals, reptiles, gardening, local history, Texas nature and wildlife, children's books including activity books and many more. Clearance sales galore!!! We have unbelievable prices on several shirts and other items. Remember that all profit from the nature stores help fund projects to maintain and improve our Refuge.

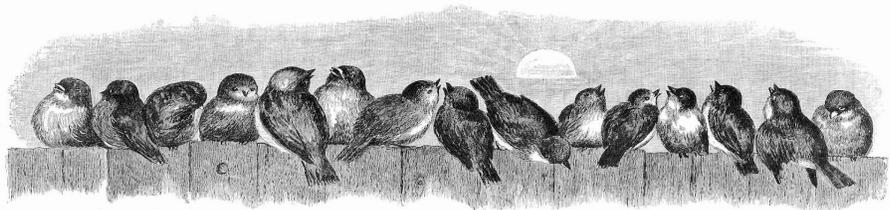
We would be delighted to have YOU as a volunteer in one of the stores, or as an occasional helper as your schedule permits. Stephanie Martinez is the volunteer coordinator with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and can

be reached at (409) 267-3337 or via email at Stephanie_Martinez@fws.gov .

You may also contact me at (409) 252-3454 or via email at kay3454@windstream.net.

See you in the Nature Stores!

Kay Lovelace



NATURE STORE COUPON

\$10.00 t-shirts

Present coupon to receive this offer. Not valid on the purchase of gift cards, prior purchases, or with any other coupon offer. Coupon good on select t-shirts, until the sale has ended.



Rose Bolt, incoming Treasurer of the Friends of Anahuac Refuge (FOAR), presents a check to County Librarian, Valerie Jensen. The donated money will be used to purchase children's books on ecology, estuaries, marshes and related topics. These subject areas of the collection continue to teach the elementary and middle school students about nature and wildlife as it applies to them locally. FOAR is a non-profit organization which supports the mission of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge.

Tommy and Carolyn Harris

It saddens us to accept the resignation of Tommy and Carolyn Harris from the FOAR Board of Directors. They have been a tremendous asset and support for the organization. We turned to each of them for their expertise on many occasions and we will most certainly miss them.

Tommy has been a great asset as our Treasurer for 9 years. He has been our teacher of how finances should be handled as a non-profit organization. He never once lost his patience with our unending questions and requests for information. He has been our guide ensuring that we followed all the rules to maintain our financial integrity.

Carolyn has also been a great asset in many capacities for 9 years. She has primarily been the Gator Tales Newsletter Editor and creator of publications, but she also was right there when any of us had questions about Membership Database and Communications. She also allowed us to complete the very successful "Adopt a Tree" grant application and follow up reports after Hurricane Ike destroyed many of the trees and bushes on our refuge.

Though we are sad to see them go, we are very happy for Tommy and Carolyn as they move forward with their lives doing volunteer work for their church and other organizations closer to their home in Kingwood .

**Thank you very much Tommy and Carolyn,
you will be sorely missed!**

Message from Outgoing Treasurer, Tommy Harris:

"It has been my privilege to serve as your Treasurer for nine years. Rose Bolt has stepped up to be the new Treasurer, and in my opinion, FOAR could not have a better person serving in this capacity. Please give her your full support."



Annual and Regional Meetings

By Darlene Prescott

January 25, 2014 was a big day for the Friends of Anahuac Refuge (FOAR). On that day, the Houston Region Friends Meeting was held at the Refuge Visitors Center. Several FOAR board members attended and later in the day, the FOAR annual meeting was convened in Anahuac.

At the Houston Friends Meeting, Nancy Brown, Public Outreach Specialist of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presided, and made a presentation, emphasizing the importance of getting our message out to the public. Ken Garrahan, Chief of Visitor Services of the Southwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, also made a presentation and answered questions. Matt Jackson, FOAR President, spoke briefly about FOAR activities. Other Friends groups attended, including those from Attwater NWR, Balcones NWR, and Brazoria

NWRs. Also in attendance were members of the Houston Wilderness. Marc Reid, the Director of Conservation, Projects, and Partner Services, explained that Houston Wilderness is a broad-based alliance of business, environmental and government interests that act in concert to protect, preserve and promote the unique biodiversity of the region's precious remaining ecological capital—from bottomland hardwoods and prairie grasslands to pine forests and wetlands.



Nature Store Manager, Kay Lovelace, hands new FOAR Treasurer, Rose Bolt, and outgoing Treasurer, Tommy Harris a deposit from the Nature Store.

The FOAR Annual Meeting was convened in the afternoon and was well attended. A barbecue feast was provided by Samson Energy, and Board Members brought tasty desserts.

FOAR welcomed two new board members, Gene Campbell and David Hanson. FOAR now has a full board, and membership is up 15%! Carolyn Harris introduced a change in the By-Laws: Memberships will now be renewed annually – on the date that the member actually paid the initial membership fee.

Matt Jackson, FOAR President, spoke about 2013's many accomplishments, including the fact that the Refuge generates millions of dollars in the local economy each year and creates thousands of jobs in the community. Plans for 2014 also were discussed. In spite of many successes, it was emphasized that it was important to bring in more members and volunteers, who are essential to the operation of the Refuge. Joining and participating in a FOAR committee was also highlighted.

Cindi Barrett gave an update on the 50th Anniversary book project. The book project is moving along as scheduled, and the book should be out around April 1, 2014. It is expected that, initially, 2,000 books will be printed. The book will contain many beautiful photos and is expected to be a cherished memento of the Refuge's 50th anniversary – founded in 1963.

And, last but not least, Rose Bolt, FOAR board member, presided over the trivia questions for door prizes finale of the meeting.

Events

Yellow Rail Walks -

Saturday March 29, 2014

7 am and 4 pm

Saturday April 5, 2014

7 am and 4 pm

Sunday April 6, 2014

7 am and 4 pm

Sunday April 13, 2014

7 am and 4 pm

Saturday April 19, 2014

7 am and 4 pm

Sunday April 20, 2014

7 am and 4 pm

No reservation is needed. Please bring waterproof foot gear. Rubber knee boots are recommended. We have a limited number of loaners. Expect very strenuous walking in standing water and mud (but not deep). Expect lots of mosquitoes. Expect someone in the group to face plant in the mud.

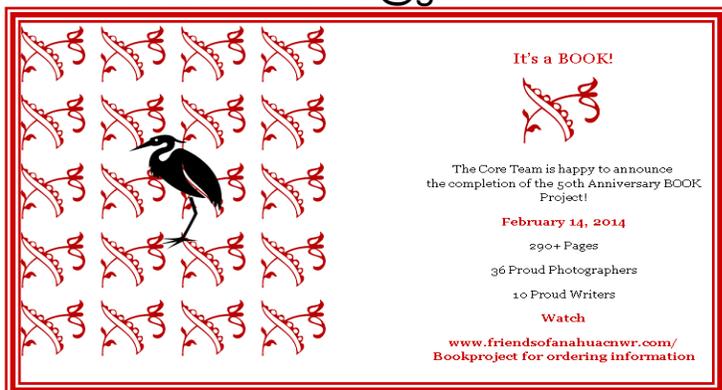
Volunteer Banquet (March 21st) -

Texas Chenier Plain Refuges Complex Office.

Galveston Feather Fest

(April 10th - 13th)

50th Anniversary Book Release - email iminterestedinthebook@gmail.com



Family Fishing Day (June 7th) -

The State of Texas encourages people to go outdoors and fish in Texas by designating the first Saturday of June every year as the only day in Texas where you can fish without a license. The refuge participates in this event by hosting an annual Family Fishing Day on the refuge. Refuge staff and volunteers will be on hand to help folks new to fishing and answer questions about it and the refuge. The event is FREE and open to the public. NO FISHING LICENSE REQUIRED THIS DAY ONLY!

Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

(June 9th) - Look for applications at the end of the school year.

Work Days -

Saturday March 1, 2014

9AM - 12PM; prairie planting and Butterfly Garden Maintenance

Saturday March 29, 2014

9AM - 12PM; TBD

Gator Tales

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 Kay Lovelace

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