

Volume 16, Number 1  
 Spring 2013  
 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



Finally we are getting some relief from the drought conditions we have been experiencing for quite some time. Impoundments on the refuge are no longer dry with large cracks running through them. Those impoundments are now slowly filling with rain water, and wildlife is returning to those areas. Our cisterns at the shop, which serve as the only sources of fresh water for cleaning equipment, are full and can be utilized once again for that purpose. These conditions are giving us some much needed relief as we continue to flush many parts of the marsh trying to get salinity levels down. In anticipation of the summer we will soon begin pulling water off of the moist soil units and impoundments as we gear up for the summer and the planting of organic rice program on the refuge. Last year we planted approximately 700 acres and anticipate those same numbers this year.

The large scale paving project with the Federal Highways Administration (FHA) is nearly complete. There are only a few remaining areas other than Shoveler's Pond that remain. Once completed a fog shield and striping is all that will be needed to finally complete that project. Thanks for your patience and understanding as we complete this nearly finished and much needed project.

Regarding Shoveler's Pond, we have intentionally left this 200-acre unit dry during the paving project. This would help in the event we have a dump truck or piece of equipment fall into the unit. There is only one entrance into the unit and this would allow easier removal and not postpone the project any further. We anticipate the filling of Shoveler's Pond by the beginning of March.

All but one of the low re-lift pumps have been installed on the refuge. The only remaining work included in that National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant is to install one final pump into the Middleton Unit and pipe installation on the East Unit. This pump system will allow the refuge to move fresh water to

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## President's Message

What comes to mind when you think of spring time? Longer and warmer days? Migrating birds? **Blooming flowers?** **Bright blue skies?** Well, the latter could be said of the Friends as well. Good news has been **blooming** so far this year for the Friends. For the first time in several years, all of our board member positions are filled, our Nature Stores had our highest January sales total ever, we were awarded a \$10,000 grant for invasive species removal on the refuge, volunteers are lining up to help with the refuge's 50th Anniversary book, and we have already received many donations to help fund that project and others in 2013. It's becoming clear that the work the Friends has done in the past year is paying off. I am looking forward to continu-

ing this trend by ramping up our "50 for 50" fundraising drive and using new and unique ways to engage the community in wildlife and conservation. The Friend's strategic plan this year includes **YOU!** With your help, not only will our impact on the refuge continue to grow, but the conservation movement will continue to blossom locally and across the country.

At our Annual Membership Meeting in January, I discussed the development of our new permanent committees. If you have experience or are interested in book publishing, fundraising, publicity, store management, or leading work day projects, then **we**

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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.**

# Friends of Anahuac Refuge Annual Meeting



**Matt Jackson outlines plans for 2013.**

Approximately 50 people attended the Annual Meeting on January 26, 2013 and enjoyed good barbecue with all the trimmings and luscious desserts provided by donors, volunteers and members.

A short business meeting was held with presentation of financial statements and election of board members.

Refuge Manager Jimmy Laurent showed slides of projects completed and planned.

Cindi Barrett discussed the 50th Anniversary book project. **See her article on page 11.**

Outgoing President Travis Lovelace discussed some of the accomplishments of 2012, and incoming President Matt Jackson presented plans for 2013.

**Shown below are your leaders for the coming year. Left to right: Matt Jackson (President), Kay Lovelace, Darlene Prescott, Travis Lovelace (Vice President), John Kemp, Linda Ann Jackson, Rose Bolt, David Sarkozi (Secretary), Paula Webb, Tommy Harris (Treasurer), and Carolyn Harris.**

*Photo by Bill Powell*



Following the Annual Meeting, Chenier Plain Complex Project Leader Tim Cooper conducted a tour of the new Depot at Winnie. This is where Refuge heavy equipment will be stored when it is not in use on the Refuge (particularly important during hurricane season). This facility will also serve as headquarters for the fire crew and many of the maintenance staff.

*Photos by Tamie Bulow*

# Calendar of Events

## Yellow Rail Walks led by David Sarkozi

7 a.m. and 4 p.m. on each of the following days:

Sunday March 24	Sunday April 7
Saturday April 13	Sunday April 14
Saturday April 20	Sunday April 21

For more information visit our website [www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org](http://www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org) or call Tami Schutter at (409) 267-3337



Meet at the Visitor Information Station on the main refuge. Wear rubber boots, sunblock, long sleeves, long pants, hats, insect repellent, and have plenty of water to keep you hydrated. Tours last about 90 minutes.

## FREE Birding Walks

For the past few months, FOAR has sponsored Birding Walks on the refuge. On these walks you can learn about birds, local history, and management practices on the refuge. Walks are appropriate for birders of all ages and are led by knowledgeable guides. You are welcome to borrow binoculars and field guides to make your walk more enjoyable, but please request these items when registering.

All walks begin at 8 a.m. at the Visitor Center, located at 4017 FM 563, Anahuac, TX 77514. You are encouraged to bring sunblock, long sleeves, pants, hats, insect repellent, and plenty of water to keep you hydrated.

The two remaining walk dates will be on March 9 and March 23.

For reservations, special accommodations, or additional information, please contact Tami Schutter at 409-267-3337.

## Marsh Madness! at McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge March 23, 2013 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

- Kayaking
- Crabbing
- Crafts and exhibits
- Duck calls
- Face painting
- Live birds of prey
- Alligators
- Retrievers
- Family fun for all



## Free Family Fishing Day at Anahuac Refuge June 1, 2013 9a.m. - 1p.m. Fishing license not required

Fishing, crabbing, target casting, games and exhibits

We need volunteers to help. Please call Stephanie Martinez (409)267-3337



## Summer and Fall Events

### Details to Come

Check our website frequently, subscribe to our newsletter, or get on our Google list so you'll be informed. Come to the events as a participant or come as a volunteer to help people learn about our great Refuge and its critters!

- July 15-19 Anahuac Refuge Summer Camp
- September 12-15 Texas GatorFest
- October 2-5 Texas Rice Festival
- October 12-13 Bike Around the Bay
- October 19 Kids Day on Buffalo Bayou
- November 16 Wildlife Expo and Dedication of new Visitor Information Station on the Refuge

## Youth Conservation Corp Recruitment

Know a 15-18 year old who would like a summer job with the US Fish and Wildlife Service? Get them an application for this great opportunity. Jobs are 8 weeks long, pay minimum wage and start June 10th. Applications will be available in April.

# Celebrations on the Refuge

## Celebration #1, February 20: Winnie Depot dedication ceremony

Photos by Stephanie Martinez and Bill Powell



Tim Cooper, Project Leader, Texas Chenier Plain National Wildlife Refuges (TCP Complex), comments on the occasion. Others on the platform are Art Brazee, representing C3 Construction Services, LLC; Sarah Cerrone, Chambers County Director of Economic Development, Special Projects; and Dr. Benjamin Tuggle, Southwest Regional Director for the USFWS.



While visiting for the Winnie Depot dedication, Dr. Tuggle and Aaron Archibeque, Region 2 Chief of Refuges, presented various staff members with awards. They are shown here with Tami Schutter, Park Ranger for the TCP Complex.



Dr. Tuggle addresses the audience.



American Legionnaires salute the flag.



Decorative cookies



Imaginative table centerpieces

## Celebration #2, February 27: 50th Anniversary Celebration

Photos by Bill Powell



Tami Schutter greets guests as they register



Tasty cake, provided by FOAR and decorated with the Blue Goose, USFWS mascot



Roots & Shoots hosted a breakfast table



Guests took a guided bird walk

Photo to the right: What could be more appropriate for an anniversary celebration of a wildlife refuge than a flyover of a Bald Eagle, our national bird!!



## Four for FOAR!!!

**Four new board members were elected at the Friends of Anahuac Refuge Annual Meeting. Darlene Prescott, Paula Webb, Rose Bolt, and Linda Ann Jackson will be bringing new ideas and helping lead the organization. You can read about them and see their photos on this page and the next. Welcome aboard!**



Photo by Darlene's grandniece Mia at Burke Crenshaw Park in Pasadena

**Darlene Prescott** is a native Texan who attended public school in Deer Park, then went on to earn a B.A. in Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin in 1976. She moved to New York City and worked for the United Nations for 28 years, also completing two United Nations peacekeeping assignments – in the Middle East and East Timor (now Timor-Leste). While working for the UN, she earned her law degree (J.D.) from New York Law School in 1990, subsequently passing the New York State Bar. For the last 13 years of her UN career, she was a Legal Officer with the UN Office of Legal Affairs. After retiring from the UN in November 2005, she returned to the Houston area and was accepted by the Texas State Bar. She currently performs pro bono work with such organizations as the YMCA International Services, assisting local human trafficking victims obtain US visas. Darlene has had a number of articles on public international law issues published in various media.

Darlene also has a keen interest in preserving wildlife and their habitats. In addition to her membership and board position in Friends of Anahuac Refuge, she is a member of the Armand Bayou Nature Center. Her article on the 2012 Gatorfest was published in several local newspapers. She is currently writing a book on Texas alligators.

Traveling is another interest. Darlene has traveled to 50 countries – and plans to add more to her list, as well as return to some of those already visited. Australia is one of her favorite countries – no gators, but lots of crocs in the country's northern territory.

**Paula Webb** was born in Wichita Falls, TX, 4<sup>th</sup> of 9 children. Her dad was in the Air Force, so her family lived in several states during her first 15 years. Upon her dad's retirement, the family settled in Oak Island, where she attended and graduated from Anahuac High School in 1979.

After graduating, she married her high school sweetheart Bobby, and raised two daughters. She attended Lee College in Baytown, TX graduating with honors in 1995 (Associates Degree in Office Administration) and again in 1997 (Associates Degree in Legal Assistant). "It hasn't always been easy (working, studying, volunteering, getting dinner on the table), but it's always been rewarding."

Paula has always placed service to others as a high priority in her life. As a child, she opened a lemonade stand to raise money for her church, wrote letters to veterans, adopted a grandmother at a nearby nursing home and trick-or-treated for UNICEF.

As a teenager, Paula participated in a 12-hour Skate-a-Thon to raise money for diabetes and a 25-mile walk to benefit muscular dystrophy. "I'm not capable of doing everything, but I am capable of doing something. An hour here, a day there, it all adds up." As an adult volunteer, she has worked with the Bay Area Rehabilitation Center and the Adult Literacy Program of Baytown. She was a Girl Scout Leader for 7 years (1985-1992), and participated in beach cleanups and salt grass plantings.

Paula is currently a Red Cross Volunteer and has been a FOAR volunteer for 1½ years, recently receiving her 250-hour pin. As a volunteer in FOAR, she has participated in 2 planting days, Bike-Around-the-Bay, Gatorfest information booth, and works in the Nature Store. She is looking forward to serving on the board and all the events of 2013.



Paula enters the alligator incubator at the Visitor Center

**Rose Bolt** was born and raised in Anahuac, TX. She moved during her high school years, graduating in the year 2000 from Vernon High School, a year ahead of schedule. After graduating, she returned to Anahuac to start a family.

Rose and her husband James homeschool their 3 children Destiny (12), Joanna (10) and Earl (8). They enjoy traveling, being outdoors, and visiting museums, "because the best way to learn is through experience."

Currently, Rose is a substitute teacher at Mercy Gate Church in Mont Belvieu. In her spare time, she volunteers for Beauty Will Rise, a non-profit corporation that helps raise awareness of the sex trafficking epidemic in Texas, and helps to fund the rehabilitation of those victims. There, she serves as the secretary/treasurer of the board.

She learned about FOAR through her mom (Paula Webb) and soon became a member and began working at the Nature Store. Rose and her family have participated in several work days. The kids love getting dirty on planting days. The family enjoys helping out and going back to visit to see the progress. They're learning to identify birds, plants, bugs and other critters in nature, but they're also learning how to take care of the planet for generations to come.



Wife, mother, teacher, volunteer, busy lady!



Linda Ann shows off the dedication plaque for the Winnie Depot

**Linda Ann Jackson**, born and raised in Anahuac, comes from a long and distinguished line of Texas and Chambers County pioneers. Descendant of Humphrey Jackson, one of Stephen F. Austin's Three Hundred, and James Taylor White, early Texas cattle rancher, Linda Ann is a sixth generation Texan and Chambers Countian.

In 1963 Linda Ann's family sold part of the 26,000 acre JHK Ranch to the federal government for the creation of the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Over the years the refuge has been expanded by acquisition from her direct family members, cousins and extended family from both the Jackson and White heirs.

Linda Ann in her own right has been active in the community. She worked for 21 years for Texas Health and Human Services serving the needs of others in southeast Texas until her retirement. She is also involved in the First United Methodist Church in Anahuac, member of the Order of the Eastern Star #649, member of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas – James Taylor White chapter, serves on the advisory committee to the Chambers Health Wellness Center, a Chambers County central counting station staff member and a Texas GatorFest volunteer, just to name a few.

Linda Ann is married to Kevin Foltz, a Unit Supervisor for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice – Parole Division. She and Kevin reside in Anahuac across the street from the house where she grew up.

Linda Ann is honored to be serving on the Friends of Anahuac Refuge board as she knows that she represents not only herself but also her family members who made the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge possible.

## Is this your last issue? Check your membership status.

Membership renewal notices were sent out in January. Many of you responded promptly with your renewals, and we say **"Thank you!"** If you get the printed newsletter via regular mail, you can check the date of your membership expiration on the label. For those of you who get the newsletter as a PDF file via e-mail, you'll receive one more reminder if your membership has expired. If in doubt, contact the database manager Carolyn Harris at [crharris1221@gmail.com](mailto:crharris1221@gmail.com).

Some of our grants ask us to track the number of members, volunteers, and contributors we have before and after the grant period. We would like to be able to state that all of these numbers are steady and/or increasing. You can help by renewing your membership, recruiting others into FOAR, volunteering, and donating; **any or all of these as you are able and willing.**

More members means more financial and moral support for our projects, and this makes the refuge a **better place for wild-life** and a **marvelous place to visit**. **And don't forget about that 10% discount at the Nature Store!**

You may renew online at [www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org](http://www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org) or in person at one of our Nature Stores or by filling out the form on the back page of this newsletter and mailing it to us. If yours is an annual renewal and your name hasn't crossed our desk yet, we hope to see it soon!



We would hate to see you go!

# FOAR Volunteers in Action

Here's what we've been up to!



The hunters and helpers appreciated the chili made by David Sarkozi, as always a superb chili maker. There were several “fixins” to add to the chili to make it just the way each person likes it—rice, cheese, crackers, sour cream, etc. The desserts were a big hit also. Thanks to Dayna Haynes for the pineapple upside down cake and to Kay Lovelace for the brownies.

**Chili Day 2012** was a great success and the rainy weather held off until just before closing time. This annual event, sponsored by FOAR, provides hot coffee, chili and desserts to hunters when they come back from their early morning start .

*Photos by David Sarkozi*



Park Ranger Tami Schutter wants to do a taste test.



Here comes Kay Lovelace with a big pot of chili.



Hunters are one of many groups who enjoy and appreciate our refuge. In addition, they provide an opportunity for the staff of US Fish and Wildlife Service to examine “up close and personal” the species, health, size, and sex of each duck or goose taken by the hunters. In the photo to the right, refuge staff inspect the harvest.



# Volunteer FOAR a Day February 2



Tackling the front bed

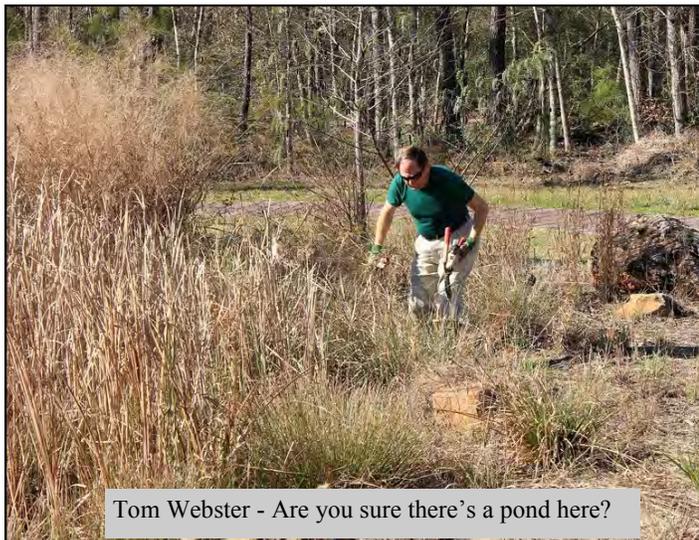
Volunteers worked on landscaping around the headquarters building and pond at the Chenier Plain Complex Office and Visitor Center. Tasks included weeding, putting down landscape fabric, mulching, and trimming. The place looked great when they were finished!

*Photos by Bill Powell*

Thanks to these volunteers who gave up a good portion of their Saturday to spruce up the headquarters area:

Tom Webster  
 Matt Jackson  
 Bill Powell  
 James Bolt  
 Rose Bolt  
 Destiny McGregor  
 Joanna McGregor

Earl McGregor  
 Alyssa Jackson  
 Paula Webb  
 Travis Lovelace  
 Kay Lovelace  
 Dorothy Anderson



Tom Webster - Are you sure there's a pond here?



Yes - there it is!!!



Destiny, Earl, and Joanna McGregor, along with friend Alyssa Jackson get their instructions from Rose Bolt. Travis Lovelace, James Bolt, and Matt Jackson confer in the background.



Do you kids have enough energy left to eat lunch? Joanna, Destiny, and Alyssa are still standing. Earl prefers to collapse.

# Nature Store Report

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

Once again our purple martins have arrived so spring will soon be upon us. Our little chirpy friends remind me that I better get ready for the busy spring time here on the refuge.

We have several new items and many of your old favorites in the two Nature Stores. Many of them are shown here. Stop by to visit and shop for unique merchandise. Remember that all profit from the Nature Stores go toward refuge projects.

See you in the Nature Stores!



## Books, books, books! Pick a subject!

Texas Local history Gardening Texas nature and wildlife  
 Birds Fish Mammals Reptiles  
 Activity books and nature books for kids



Lots of t-shirt designs!



Here's the popular beige polo shirt embroidered with Mottled Duck logo



Lady's blue polo shirt with refuge logo



Here's a bonus for you!



Long-sleeved denim shirts for ladies and men. Some have our name embroidered on them and some have the beautiful Mottled Duck embroidery.



Magnets galore!

## Other Items:

- Unique caps and hats for men and women
- Pins, badges, earrings
- Bandanas (soon)
- Cups and mugs
- Alligator magnet clips
- Nature-related items for adults and children
- See more Nature Store items on the next page

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](mailto:Stephanie_Martinez@fws.gov).

You may also contact me (Kay Lovelace) at (409) 252-3454 or via email at [kay3454@windstream.net](mailto:kay3454@windstream.net).

## More Nature Store Items



Everyone likes a bargain, right? Several of our t-shirts are marked down for clearance to make space for new ones.

Have you tried our **Birds and Beans Coffee**? It is grown in the shade of the trees eliminating the need to clear cut the land in order to grow coffee plants. There are 4 different flavors from light roast to dark roast including decaffeinated, and each comes in ground or whole bean. They are produced and processed organically and sold following the Fair Trade Act. Try it - you'll like it!!! And so will the environment.



Beautifully designed notecards

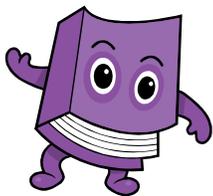
*All profits go toward funding refuge projects.*

*Members receive a 10% discount on Nature Store merchandise.*

*Visit both Nature Stores, as there are some differences in the selections.*

## 50th Anniversary Book

*By Cindi Barrett, Book Team Facilitator*



In the last issue of Gator Tales you might have seen an ad looking for volunteers to work on a 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book and wondered what it was all about. At their November meeting, the Board voted to produce a commemorative book about the Refuge for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I was asked to facilitate the team and get the ball rolling. In addition to me, the team consists of board members John Kemp, Kay Lovelace and David Sarkozi. Tim Cooper and Tami Schutter are the team's Fish and Wildlife Service representatives. From mid-November to mid-December the team met weekly to lay out a rough outline of the book.



Since Christmas the team has been advertising the project through the FOAR website and Facebook™ pages. Tami Schutter created a beautiful ad/flyer that has been hung at various establishments in the area. The ad ran in the Baytown Sun Coastal Magazine recently. The team grew in January with the addition of Gary Clark and Mike Arnold. Gary Clark writes a nature column for the Houston Chronicle and he has volunteered to edit the writing for the book. Gary and his wife, Kathy Adams Clark had their first date on the Refuge. They've both agreed to write the foreword for the book.

Mike Arnold, a new resident to Oak Island, saw the flyer in the Visitor Center and contacted us about doing page layout. Mike is a multimedia artist who has moved here with his wife to care for her mother, an Oak Island resident. He produced a book about a wildlife rehabilitation center in Colorado where he volunteered his time.

The team hosted a Public Meeting on February 12 to meet with people interested in participating in the book project. We had 14 attendees at the meeting. As I write this article we now have 8 photographers signed up for the project. We've already received about 200 photographs. The plan is to collect photographs throughout the anniversary year and in January 2014 go to press with the book.



The team has made tremendous progress in the last two months. We still have a lot of ground work to finalize in the next month like how to select the photos to be used in the book, how many pages to produce, where to get it printed, etc... We still could use some volunteers to help work public events where we need to get photo releases signed by participants so we can use their photos in the book. We can also use more photographers and writers. So if you have photos that you're proud of, consider sending them to the project. Check the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book page on the FOAR website for details.



**For more information contact Cindi Barrett ( [bookFOAR@gmail.com](mailto:bookFOAR@gmail.com) )**



# Moist Soil Management

By Cindi Barrett

When I first saw the Moist Soil Unit on the Anahuac Refuge Fact Sheet, which is given to visitors at the Visitor Information Station, I wondered “what the heck is a Moist Soil Unit?” Especially because when I drove by the White Front Moist Soil Unit in November of 2011, that unit didn’t look moist at the time, it was bone dry. I knew I was in a coastal marsh area or wetland but what are these Moist Soil Units I see on the Refuge maps? It wasn’t until this past fall that I learned what a Moist Soil Unit is all about.

The Moist Soil Units on the Refuge are where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is practicing Moist Soil Management. They manipulate the water levels on the unit to improve habitat for ducks and shorebirds, like black-necked stilts. When the unit is dry, Refuge employees will use a tracked tractor (tracks like on a military tank) to disc the unit, sometimes planting seeds. Water will be added to the unit to assist the seed in sprouting. If there is enough natural evaporation to allow the unit to dry out, the unit is left alone. If evaporation is not happening fast enough, a screw gate can be opened to allow water to drain out using good old gravity.

When the seed has grown into plants, the gate is closed allowing the unit to flood again. If there is not enough rainfall to flood the unit then Refuge employees will open other gates to allow water to gravity feed into the unit. If it is really dry, the Refuge may pump water from one of the bayous into a Moist Soil Unit.



Photo by Cindi Barrett

A tractor with tracks like a tank is again used to chop the plants in the unit; USFWS calls this roller chopping. This helps break up the plants that have grown and speeds up the degradation of the plants and allows for the scattering of seed. The water is rich in nutrients that promote the growth of invertebrates in the unit. Invertebrates like crawfish and worms are food for ducks and shorebirds. The chopped plants are also food for a variety of bird species.

The depth of the water on the unit dictates what birds use the Moist Soil area. Shallow water levels mean shorebirds. Deeper water means waterfowl aka ducks. The challenge to Moist Soil Management is timing. At present research is being conducted on the East Unit to determine if there is an optimum time for planting and roller chopping. This research will provide critical information to Refuge staff on how to best manipulate this habitat for optimum benefit of wildlife.

So why do Moist Soil Management you might ask? Moist Soil Units mimic what Mother Nature does in a wetland habitat but on a smaller scale and without the extremes that she imposes at times. Invertebrates are extremely important for nesting mottled ducks, an indicator species of the health of Texas coastal marshes. Manipulating water levels produces desired plant life while suppressing invasive plants without chemical intervention.

Rice farming is a form of Moist Soil Management in reverse. The farmer uses water to keep weed growth to a minimum, optimizing the size of the rice harvest. When ready for harvest, the field is drained so the equipment can get in to harvest the rice. Rice farming is actively done on the Refuge. Cooperative agreements are made with local farmers. The farmers have to commit to leaving the second growth of the rice plants for the birds. They harvest once and then flood the fields again.



**This is the newest Moist Soil Unit on the Granberry Unit of the Refuge. A Duck's Unlimited grant funded this construction. Note the geese flying in the background.**



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

places on the East Unit that have historically not had water due to drought conditions. This NFWF grant has helped the refuge make great strides in becoming "self-sufficient" (able to move water at any given time) and we all thank you, FOAR, for being able to take care of the business end of that deal.

As I said in the annual meeting, a large seismic operation is beginning in April on the refuge and many parts of southeast Texas. This large-scale operation was scheduled around as many events and other refuge functions as possible in order to prevent further disruption. Samson will begin seismic operations on the west side of the refuge and work their way east, also covering parts of McFaddin NWR. The refuge will have a third part composed of consultants to ensure refuge policies, rules and regulations are being met.

This summer we will continue to focus on treating invasive species. This includes the phragmites along Shoveler's Pond which had grown to the sides of the road along with the interior of that unit. The aerial spraying and hand work that the staff did really set it back. Now you can see across many parts of the unit.

The biological staff is preparing for another year of mottled duck banding and potentially several other banding opportunities. Beginning February 26 - March 12, the US Geological Survey, several University of Georgia folks, Refuge staff and volunteers will began efforts to band blue-winged teal. The primary purpose will be to check for viruses coming up from South and Central America and is part of the work being done nationally to look at issues with bird flu transmission and other bird spreading diseases. Locations will include rocket net sites at Anahuac and Cattail Marsh in Beaumont for certain.

Hopefully by the next newsletter we will have Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) on the Refuge. The YCC program has been going strong for some time now and is a great way to get kids involved in conservation. So grab your bug spray, water bottle and binoculars and **come out to see all the great things the Refuge has to offer.**

**Join our 50 for 50 Campaign!**

As you will read in the President's Message, FOAR has set a fundraising goal of \$50,000 in this, the 50th year of Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Our book publishing endeavor will be a major financial undertaking. Because of our many projects related to recovery from Hurricane Ike, our reserve funds are not as great as we would like. We also have had the opportunity to set up and stock a second Nature Store, which will ultimately pay back our expenses related to the store opening. One of our ongoing 2013 activities will be to set up our booth at various area festivals, such as GatorFest, the Rice Festival, and Feather Fest. There are several items we would like to be able to purchase and take with us to these events: a portable credit card device so that we can process memberships and sell merchandise; portable signs and banners; printed informational materials; a wagon or dolly to haul stuff; and DVD players to show people our wildlife. And those are just items to take to festivals! We also have a list of projects we hope to do on the refuge: wildlife web cams, water features, bird blinds, volunteer work days, . . . the list goes on. We will be seeking grants to help with some of our projects.

If you are inclined to contribute, you may do so online at [www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org](http://www.friendsofanahuacnwr.org) (there is a link right under the "50 for 50" logo). This link will allow you to use your PayPal account or a credit card. You may also contribute in person at one of our Nature Stores or you may send a check to Friends of Anahuac Refuge, PO Box 1348, Anahuac, TX 77514.



**If you are not able to contribute at this time, just come on out to the refuge and enjoy nature!**

*(President's Message, continued from page 1)*

**need YOU.** The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book is going to be a photographic story of 2013, which is the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the refuge. Once completed, the book will be a legacy that current refuge staff and Friends will be able to hand down to the next generation. For this ambitious project, we have begun our equally ambitious "50 for 50" fundraising drive. The goal is to raise \$50,000 this year to help fund the book as well as expand our already successful annual programs. These include our youth environmental education program in local schools, Volunteer-FOAR-a-Day, community outreach at public events, supporting the Nature Stores, and many other projects on the refuge that otherwise couldn't be done without the Friends.

A recent article written by USFWS Refuge Chief Jim Kurth discussed the effects of the outdoors on employees in office settings. Research found that something as simple as stepping outside for fresh air and seeing the sky relieved stress and increased job performance. If stepping outside for a few minutes during the day can do that much for somebody, imagine what spending a day at a wildlife refuge can do! **The future is bright** for the refuge and for the Friends. Whether you live in the city or out in the country, **get outside** for some fresh air and blue skies this spring at **YOUR** Anahuac NWR! See you on the refuge!

# Anahuac has birds, oh yes, indeed!

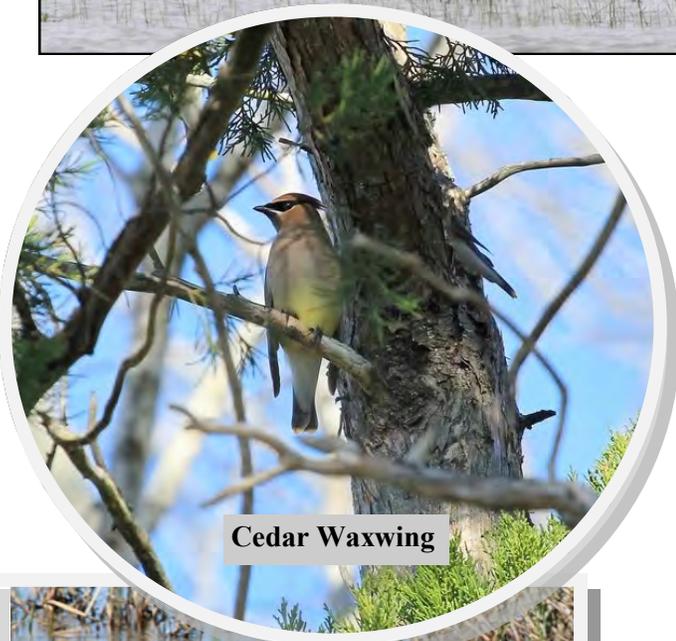
Here's just a small sampling of birds seen recently on our Refuge. You can see more photos on our website and on our Facebook page. Those who participated in the Birding Blitz (see next page) took delight in the assortment. Unless noted otherwise, these photos were taken by Bill Powell, one of our RV volunteers. He describes himself as an "avid amateur" in both birding and photography. This is the third year Bill and his wife Carol have spent a few months as RV volunteers at Anahuac NWR. Look for more information on our RV volunteers in the next issue. We have several who just keep coming back, and we love having them!

Tundra Swans - these birds caused a great stir among birders, many of whom flocked to the refuge to see them.

*Photo by Greg Lavaty*



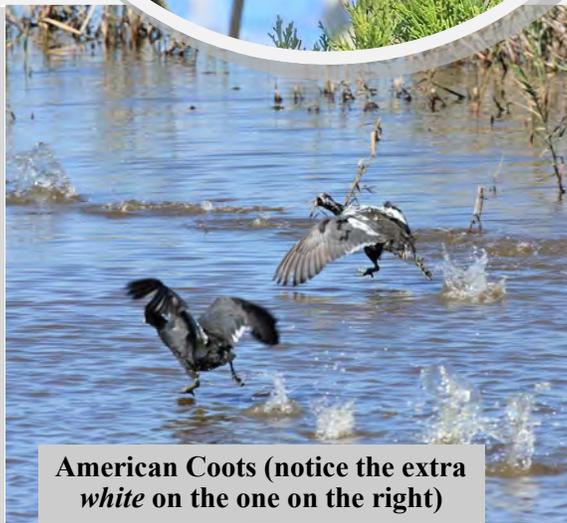
**Pileated Woodpecker**



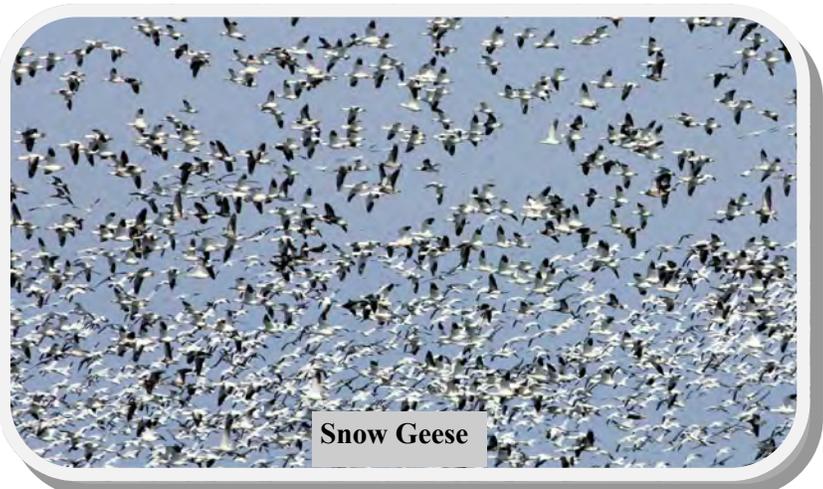
**Cedar Waxwing**



**Red-Breasted Mergansers**



**American Coots (notice the extra white on the one on the right)**



**Snow Geese**

# Chambers County Bird Blitz a Blast!

Article and photos by Tamie Bulow

Over twenty birders, ranging in age from 12 years to Senior Citizen, and interest level from beginner to county lister, enjoyed a fabulous day in Chambers County on January 20 – perfect weather, lots of birds, great camaraderie, with a bonus cattle drive thrown in for flavor! This was an add-on to the meeting of the Texas Ornithological Society (TOS) meeting in Katy. TOS Century Club members and hopefuls have the goal of 100 bird species in each county visited. They were not disappointed that day. The goal was to get 100 species of birds in Chambers County in one day, and succeed they did, with a total of 103 species. Birding sites included the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, Anahuac NWR and Skillern Tract, Robbins Park in Smith Point, and White Park.

Thanks to leaders and helpers Bruce Neville, Betty Vermiere, and Barbara Tilton for corralling the group, spotting and identifying the birds.



Leader Bruce Neville and his band of Bird Blitzers at Anahuac NWR



Bird Blitz participants enjoy good looks at the two Tundra Swans visiting Anahuac NWR.



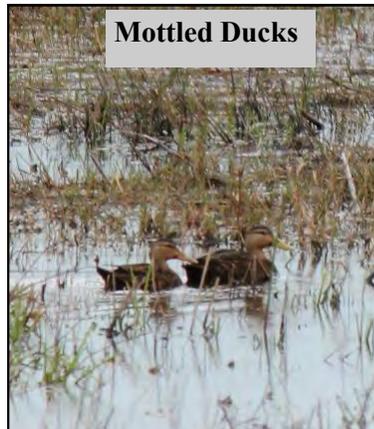
Checking for a Ross' goose among hundreds (thousands?) of snow geese

Check [chamberswild.com](http://chamberswild.com) for the full story and a link to the list of birds seen that day.

Here are more birds seen recently on the Refuge. These 3 photos were taken by Stephanie Martinez.



Sora



Mottled Ducks



Red-Tailed Hawk

## Challenge/invitation to wildlife photographers

While the Refuge has many interesting birds, there is a lot of other wildlife. For the next issue of Gator Tales, let's have some photos of critters other than birds: Reptiles, mammals, insects, amphibians, fish, arthropods, annelids, etc. If you've had an interesting encounter with one of these critters, write up a couple of paragraphs, or just send photos to Newsletter Editor Carolyn Harris at [crharris1221@gmail.com](mailto:crharris1221@gmail.com). The next issue will go to press in late May.

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.

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