

Volume 17 Number 2
 June 2014
 OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER
 OF FRIENDS OF
 ANAHUAC REFUGE
 PO BOX 1348
 ANAHUAC, TX 77514

FREE Family Fishing Day!



Gator Tales
 FRIENDS OF ANAHUAC REFUGE

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!

Activities

- Crabbing
- Fish identification
- Fun crafts
- Target casting
- Fishing basics

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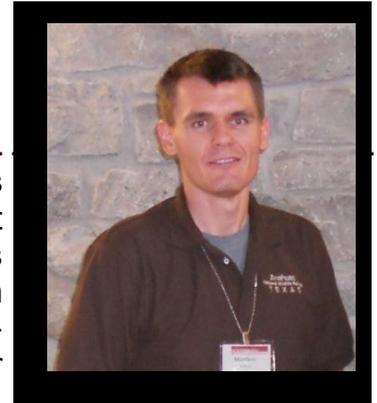
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Our Mission

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



Summer 2014 President's Message

This spring was certainly a memorable one. Hopefully by now, you have had a chance to see the new Visitor Information Station on the Refuge. It had been through a long journey, but it finally opened in March. The new building has already drawn more visitors to the Refuge with its expansive 360 degree views and educational displays inside. Our Nature Store Manager and FOAR board member, Kay Lovelace, and her crew of volunteers deserve a HUGE pat on the back for opening a new nature store for the THIRD time in the past five years.

The other big news this spring was the release of our 50th anniversary book. I want to thank Cindi Barrett and the book team again for completing the project. A significant amount of time and energy was spent on the project for nearly two years by the group of volunteers. I also want to thank those who supported the book project through financial and in-kind donations. Several local businesses in addition to Chambers County provided substantial support to allow the project to happen. If you haven't purchased a copy yet, I strongly encourage you to do so. The book not only supports the Refuge and FOAR, but it also promotes the local community.

I also wish to thank all of the RV volunteers who spent their time here starting back last fall. The Refuge would not be able to do their jobs effectively if it wasn't for them and we would not be able to keep the VC and VIS open without them. We wish you safe 'migrations' to your next adventure or back home.

Our busy year continues with Family Fishing Day on June 7th. FOAR will be supporting the event by providing volunteers to help with setting up and working in booths. We have seen a steady increase in attendance in recent years and we expect another great turnout this year. In July, FOAR will be sponsoring the summer day camp.

The Refuge staff has put together a great program that provides kids with hands-on experience with wildlife and nature over the course of a week.

Local volunteers and YCC students have assisted staff with hosting about 25 kids each of the past two years. We also continue to recruit local residents to work in the VC and VIS. If you are interested in volunteering with us in any of these roles, please stop by and let us know.

I always like to tell people that Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge (or any NWR) is "their" Refuge. What does that mean? Wildlife takes advantage of refuges because of the habitat they provide. The diminishing amount of wetlands along the Texas coast, for example, make places like Anahuac NWR a preferred spot for wildlife. For people, it is a place to experience nature around us. It can be easy for us to lose that as we get busy in our lives. Ask yourself, when was the last time you really experienced nature. Next time you go to the Refuge, or even in your own backyard, try this: close your eyes and just listen.

What do you hear? Birds chirping? Leaves rustling in the wind? Water running down a creek or washing ashore? That is nature. Come experience it this summer at your National Wildlife Refuge. ~MJ



Photo: Norman Welsh

Refuge Manager's Report

By Jimmy Laurent, Refuge Manager

Refuge Managers report June 2014

As things start to green up and the plants and flowers start to bloom its official that the summer is here! After having a somewhat wet winter we are already starting to see the effects of the lack of rainfall on the landscape. These conditions are causing species of concern such as the mottled duck and their broods to face serious challenges for survival without much freshwater. For the most part our cisterns are all but dried up from the lack of rainfall and small crevices can be seen on many parts of the refuge along our levees. If and when we do get rains and salinity levels are less than normal, we capitalize on utilizing our water rights and irrigation pumping system. This works great but only when salinities are at a level that's conducive to plant and animal life in the marshes.

Up until this summer our biological team was primarily one person, Patrick Walther. With only one Biologist for the 100k plus acreage we manage, this has been a difficult challenge. This summer the refuge will benefit from a cadre of folks to assist Patrick. This includes one permanent biologist, two term biologists, one SCA for the summer, and an intern. With this help, we can put more resources towards spraying invasive species, controlling exotics, running salinities across the complex, banding mottled ducks, help with the permitting process through the US Army Core of Engineers, and get back to following our habitat management plan more closely.

The refuge organic farm program is in full swing. All three refuge farmers are working hard to get their fields prepped (mowing, disked, planted, etc.) in preparations for the growing season. This program is important for many different rea-

sons. First, the farmers help to maintain approximately 2100 acres of habitat each year on the Refuge. Of those 2100 acres, about 1/3 remains in production each year and the farmers keep the first crop, with the refuge getting the second crop. That second crop is not taken and remains on the refuge for birds to forage and use for nesting purposes among other things. Another important element is that our farmers help keep levees mowed, treat invasive and exotic species. This is especially important as budgets have caused us to have a significant reduction in staff to help in those areas.

Our yearly YCC (Youth Conservation Corps) program will begin the second week in June and will go through August 1st. We have a total of four kids this year with one of those kids returning as the youth leader. In addition to the four YCC kids, we have hired a YCC (adult) leader. This person will be responsible for shuttling the kids to projects and the overall safety during their time on the refuge. Last year, the YCC program was able to assist the staff with an assortment of projects. This year, I hope to continue those efforts but also enhance their knowledge of what it is Anahuac NWR does but more importantly what the USFWS stands for and our mission relating to conservation.

FREE Family Fishing Day will be held on June 7th. This continues to be a great refuge event and a wonderful way to connect kids with nature. The event is free to the public and is the only day that a fishing license is not required in the state of TX. So come along and enjoy lots of fun and activities along the East Bay and see what our refuge has to offer!



Nature Store Report

By Kay Lovelace, Nature Store Manager

FriendsOfAnahuacNWR.com/BookProject

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF OUR REFUGE

★
1963

★
2013

ANAHUAC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE 50TH YEAR BOOK

Photo: Mike Lloyd

In 1963, Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge was created in order to protect waterfowl and neotropical migratory songbird habitat along the upper Texas coast. 50 years later, the refuge is still going strong and preparing for the next 50 years of habitat conservation and environmental education. The Friends of Anahuac Refuge captured the work done on the Refuge during the anniversary year by creating a photographic story of events, places, and people on the Refuge in 2013.

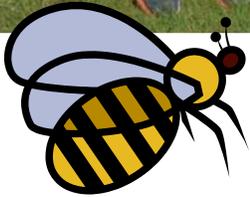
Contact bookfoar@gmail.com if you have any questions about the book or your purchase.



Gator Tales

Here is some good news. The new Visitor Information Station on the Refuge is officially OPEN!! It has new exhibits, a new nature store, and an amazing view! Come out this weekend for a walk through the Butterfly Garden, help with a volunteer work day, and then enjoy the view!

SUMMER DAY CAMP



The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Friends of Anahuac Refuge are proud to announce the opening of the registration period for kids, 6 years old to 12 years old, to participate in the Jr. Ranger Summer Day Camp at Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge (Anahuac NWR). Registration will begin on May 16th, 2014.

The Summer Camp is July 14th – 18th, 2014 and will be from 9am – 3pm, with early drop-off and late pick-up available (for \$5.00 extra/day). During this 5 day Summer Camp, the following topics will be covered:

- Plants
- Birds
- Reptiles/Amphibians
- Insects
- Wetlands



Cost for the camp is \$90.00 per week, or \$20.00 per day. Discounts are available for siblings and Friends members. Enrollment is open until July 7th, 2014. Registration forms can be picked up at the Anahuac NWR Office & Visitor Center at 4017 FM 563, Anahuac, TX 77514.

Outdoor Education

Once again, the Friends supported the Outdoor Education Program on Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge. Refuge staff and volunteers taught various science topics to over 1,000 children in grades K-5th. Children from Barbers Hill, Anahuac, Devers, and China ISD participated this year. Local teachers said the classes really helped their students with science concepts and were very appreciative of the time that the volunteers spent teaching. A big THANK YOU to all the volunteers!!!



Events

Family Fishing Day (June 7th) -

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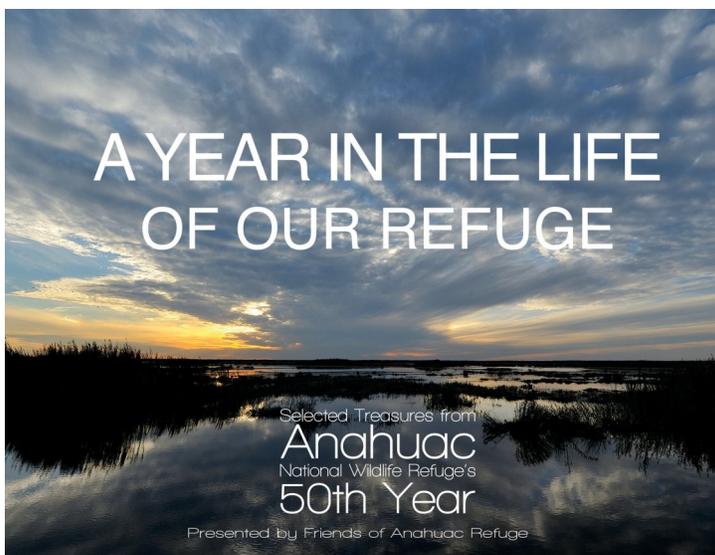
Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

(June 9th) - Look for applications at the Visitor Center, starting June 9th.



Summer Day Camp (July 14th - 18th) -

Registration for Summer Day Camp at Anahuac NWR begins May 16. Topics including plants, birds, reptiles, amphibians, insects, and wetlands will be covered during the week. Registration forms are available at the Visitor Center on Hwy 563.



**Order your book
ONLINE!**

<http://friendsofanahuacnwr.com/BookProject>



On April 27, 2014, FOAR's Big Sit team observed over 80 species of birds from the Rookery Overlook on the Skillern Tract. Even though the conditions were windy and thunderstorms threatened the area, the team had a Big success! Thanks to the team!!

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

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Vice-President — Travis Lovelace

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- \$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