

# AMIGO

## *Aransas Matagorda Island Guardian/Orator*



Photo credit to Klaus Nigge who also took the photographs in the June, 2010 National Geographic article on whooping cranes. Also, Klaus Nigge has a new book out of his crane photographs published by Texas A & M University Press entitled "*Whooping Cranes - Images from the Wild*". This book is now available in the FAMI Bookstore.

The whooping cranes have had a tremendous summer. Habitat conditions looked excellent throughout the summer with good water levels. Forty-six chicks fledged from a record 74 nests, the second highest total of fledged chicks ever, surpassed only by the 49 chicks in 2006.

Biologists from The Crane Trust, International Crane Foundation, and Canadian Wildlife Service in mid-August captured 9 of the juveniles just prior to fledging and radioed them. Currently, signals are coming from 8 of the 9 birds captured, with a possible malfunction from the unit on one of the birds. Combined with the 2 cranes radioed last winter, 10 whooping cranes will be tracked via satellite in the fall migration. As of September 28, one of the radioed cranes was in North Dakota, 2 were in Saskatchewan, and the rest were all still in Wood Buffalo National Park.

Written by Tom Stehn with information coming from Dr. Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, The Crane Trust and Lea Craig-Moore, Canadian Wildlife Service.

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## The Federal Duck Stamp Program



Artwork selected for 2010-2011 Federal Duck Stamp.  
American Wigeon by Robert Bealle of Waldorf, MD.

Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps, commonly known as "Duck Stamps," are pictorial stamps produced by the U.S. Postal Service for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. (They are not valid for postage.) President Franklin D. Roosevelt established the Duck Stamp program in 1934. Purchase of the stamp was required for hunting migratory waterfowl. The program became one of the most successful conservation endeavors in U.S. history. Today, Federal Duck Stamps have a much larger purpose and have become a highly effective way to conserve America's natural resources.



**First Federal Duck Stamp.**  
Design by J.N. "Ding" Darling

Since 1934, sales of Federal Duck Stamps to hunters, stamp collectors & other conservationists have raised more than \$750 million that has been used to acquire more than 5.3 million acres of habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. The stamps are a vital tool for wetland conservation. Ninety-eight cents out of every dollar generated by the sales of Federal Duck Stamps goes directly to purchase or lease wetland habitat for protection in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Waterfowl are not the only wildlife to benefit from the sale of Federal Duck Stamps. Numerous other bird, mammal, fish, reptile, and amphibian species that rely on wetland habitats have prospered. Further, an estimated one-third of the Nation's endangered and threatened species find food or shelter in Refuges established using Federal Duck Stamp funds.

On June 21<sup>st</sup>, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission (MBCC) approved \$5.3 million in Federal Duck Stamp funds to add more than 1,849 wetland acres to six units of the National Wildlife Refuge System. One of the selected Refuges is San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge, in Texas, where 288 acres will be acquired for protection of a wetland complex that provides winter, migration and resident habitat for waterfowl, wading birds and neotropical migratory birds.

Besides serving as a hunting license, conservation tool, and collector's item, a current year's Federal Duck Stamp also serves as an entrance pass for National Wildlife Refuges where admission is normally charged. They are available for purchase at many Post Offices and at the Aransas NWR Visitor Center. The stamps are valid July 1- June 30.

In 1989, the first Junior Duck Stamps were produced. Contests are held in each state annually. The 2010-2011 national winner of the Jr. Duck Stamp contest was 18-year old Rui Huang from Columbus, OH who painted a Hooded Merganser. Junior Duck Stamps are now the main feature of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Junior Duck Stamp environmental education program, teaching students across the nation "conservation through the arts." Revenue generated by the sales of Junior Duck Stamps funds environmental education programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 2 territories (American Samoa and the Virgin Islands).

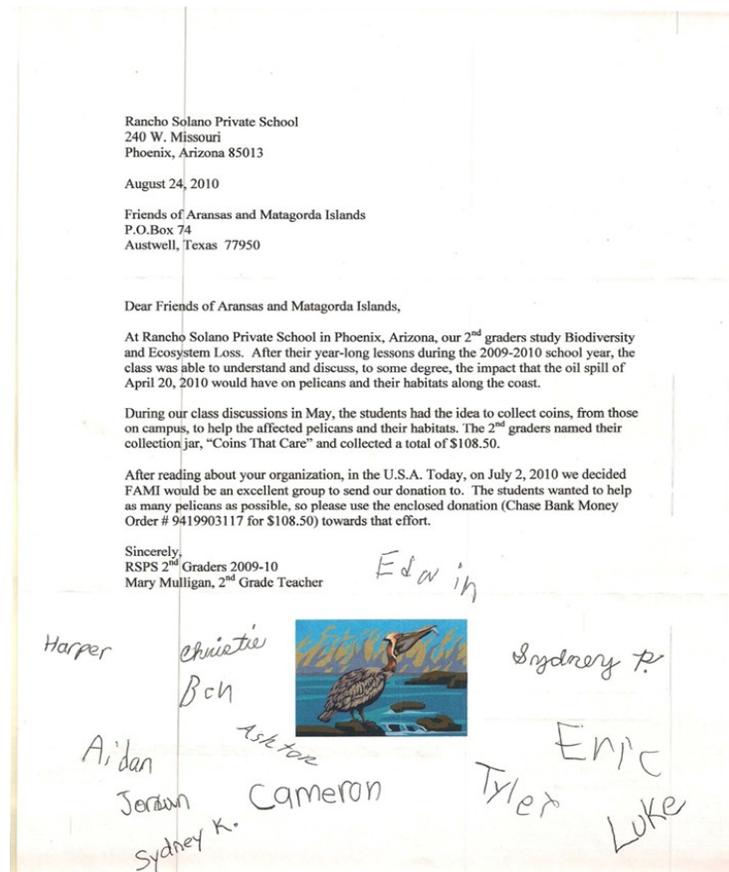
Aransas NWR has become the new State Coordinator for the Texas Jr. Duck Stamp contest. At the beginning of 2011, we'll mail information to schools statewide and expect to receive approximately 600 pieces of artwork. Judging will take place in March with submission of winning artwork to the national contest usually held at the end of April in Maryland. Any student in kindergarten through high school can enter the contest. Teachers, parents, students, or anyone interested can attend the state and national contests. It will be a very exciting event for Aransas. Volunteers interested in helping, please contact Bernice Jackson or Tonya Stinson.

Article submitted by Bernice Jackson/Photos from <http://www.fws.gov/duckstamps/federal/stamps/fedimages.htm>

## FAMI RECEIVES TWO SPECIAL DONATIONS

**ARTICLE COURTESY OF CINDI BARRETT**

The letter below speaks for itself. It is one of two donations FAMI received recently.



The second donation FAMI received recently came from Chuck Naiser, Peter Fischer and Mike Wilson. Chuck is a local fishing guide who had witnessed redfish feeding off of San Jose Island with Texas Longhorns grazing nearby. He described this to Rockport artist Fischer. Mr. Fischer created an original oil painting of title "Texas Royalty, Grazing the Shore of San Jose Island". Four hundred giclee prints were made of the painting and offered for sale through Mike Wilson's flyshop in Houston. Former President George H. W. Bush was presented with print #41. All three gentlemen were concerned about the plight of the whooping cranes during the drought of 2008-09. They decided to devote a portion from the sale of each limited edition giclee print to FAMI. Chuck, Peter and Mike visited the Refuge during the Volunteer Appreciation Event on September 11 and presented a check for \$5000 to Sam Burnett, FAMI Treasurer. If you'd like to see this special print that is helping the Refuge look at [www.ifly.org](http://www.ifly.org).



Photo by: Don Jeane

Fall is in the air, tree leaves are changing color, and people are preparing for hunting. At Aransas, fall equates to the arrival of whooping cranes and other migratory birds, prescribed burning, National Wildlife Refuge Week, hunting season and the arrival of winter resident volunteers.

We fully welcome the cooler temperatures, refuge hunters and fisherman, whooping cranes and the much needed assistance and hard work provided by our winter resident volunteers. As reported previously, we fully anticipate the arrival of a record number of whooping cranes which could reach a total of 290 birds. The birds will have quite the buffet to choose from with a bumper crop of acorns, blue crab, and plenty of freshwater. Tom Stehn reported yesterday that a total of 26 cranes were observed in a lake in Saskatchewan, Canada. This sighting is a rarity since whooping cranes usually travel in smaller groups.

The old observation tower will remain in place during the winter to facilitate whooping crane observation. The faulty new tower will be removed within the next two weeks back to the tree line where the structure is stable. We hope to reconstruct the new tower material in the footprint of the old tower with added support to eliminate the sway issue.

Our Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) was signed and approved by our Regional Director, Dr. Benjamin Tuggle on September 9, 2010. There are numerous step-down management plans which are identified in the CCP, two of which have been started: Visitor Service Plan and the Land Acquisition Plan (LAP). The LAP which consists of a Preliminary Project Proposal (PPP) will identify lands which consist of suitable whooping crane habitat which will be instrumental in the downlisting and possible recovery of the species. Lands to be acquired may consist of both fee title acquisition and conservation easements. The LAP will include an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement which will be open to the public for comment.

Staff changes which will occur soon are the departure of Cass Palmer, Assistant Fire Management Officer, moving to Panther NWR in Florida, Darrin Welchert, Wildlife Biologist, moving to Squaw Creek NWR in Missouri, Carey Strobel, Wildlife Biologist (Oil/Gas Specialist) resignation. Recent hires are: Brad Strobel, Wildlife Biologist, and Casey Kelly, Maintenance Worker. Please join me in welcoming our new employees and wish a farewell to those departing.

We look forward to a very productive winter season with the arrival of a record number of cranes and some new staff and resident volunteers.

#### From the desk of the President

Submitted by: Annie Clayton



Dear Friends,

This being my last letter as your President, I would like to take a moment and thank some people. First I would like to thank my fellow board members both past and present for their help and support during the last four years. Secondly, I would like to thank Refuge Manager, Dan Alonso for his support of both me and the friends group. It has been a pleasure working with so many wonderful people. I also need to say thank you to the members who have given freely of themselves to the betterment of FAMI and the Refuge. The last (but not least) thank you goes out to John Noll, our Photography Club leader. We have accomplished many things over the last four years and I hope to see continued growth as the organization moves forward. In parting I ask that each and every one of you support your new President, Hal Suter, as you have me. I would like to encourage you all to come out and get involved with the refuge in a way that is of interest to you. There are many opportunities and ways to do so.

The Hummer/Bird Festival was a huge success this year. We stepped up and tried to fill the gap as book vendor for the festival and with the help of Sandra Skrei-Mock of Naturally Curious we did a good job. Our sales for the three days were over \$3600.00 and I couldn't have done it without the help of our booth volunteers, Sandra and Cindi Barrett.

Be sure to stop by and say hi when visiting the refuge and bookstore.

# WELCOME

Finally Fall!

One of the greatest things about fall in the coastal bend is encountering the fresh faces and voices of our over-wintering birds. On the heels of our first, and long awaited, cold front I saw a pulse of activity at my humming bird feeder and spotted my first Swainson's hawk of the season. I'm sure many of you with your eyes to the skies have noticed the beginnings of migration as well. What you may not have noticed was among the new birds there is a new face in the biology program at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, so let me take a minute to introduce myself.



My name is Brad Strobel, and I was hired in the beginning of September as the lead biologist at ANWR. However, unlike the whooping cranes which seem to arrive to a ticker tape parade every year, my arrival is more like that of the chipping sparrows. Slowly, I showed up a little bit here and a little bit there until suddenly here I was. I grew up on the banks of the Wisconsin River in Merrill, Wisconsin. I spent summers there chasing small mouth bass and winters chasing walleye or snowshoe hare.

In 2004, I earned a degree in wildlife ecology and management from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. In 2005, I enrolled in a Masters program at Texas Tech University and conducted research on red-shouldered hawks on the Rob & Bessie Welder Wildlife Refuge in San Patricio County. Simultaneously, my wife Carey was conducting her research on white-tailed hawks on Matagorda Island. During this time Carey and I each served as an unpaid field technician for the other. While, I needed someone to help carry a ladder to hawk nests, she needed someone to grab her legs when the Matagorda Island mosquitoes began to lift her off the ground. After completing my masters in 2007 I jumped headlong into my Ph.D. and continued my research on the Welder refuge. I have worked in Alaska on spectacled eiders, in Wisconsin on woodcock, in Minnesota and North Dakota on waterfowl and now

on raptors in south Texas. As you can imagine, for a biologist with an interest in bird conservation and management there is no better place than the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

In my experience Friends and volunteer groups are essential resources which help us reach our conservation and education goals. I am impressed and excited to see ANWR has such an active friends group and I hope to work with many of you in the near future. Until then if you have any questions or just want to say hello drop me a line (brad\_strobel@fws.gov).

Thanks and good birding, Brad

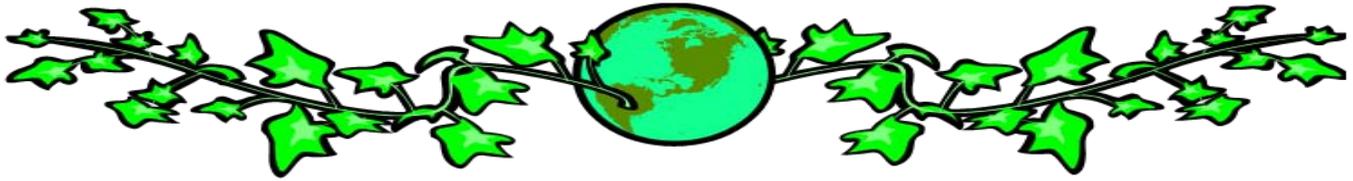
Article & Photo by Brad Strobel

Pepsi Refresh Grant Update

Submitted by Cindi Barrett

Well as Grant Coordinator I have to tell you all that I'm burning the midnight oil on this grant proposal. For three consecutive months I have stayed up until midnight trying to get our grant application submitted on the Pepsi Refresh website at the first of each month. Unfortunately, I haven't been successful. I haven't given up on this grant process yet and will try again on Halloween. Maybe the goblins and ghosts will help me get this grant proposal into the running for voting.

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## Going Green

Submitted by Cindi Barrett

Last year we added a box on the membership application for Going Green. About 25 members checked the box and have been receiving the AMIGO electronically. We have email addresses for about 70 of our members but have only been sending the electronic version to the members who checked the box. As you renew your membership this year, help us go green and reduce mailing expenses by checking the box to receive your AMIGO electronically!

The Board of Directors voted to try the Constant Contact® email service for a year. We're going to use this to go green on the newsletter distribution. We're also going to use the service to keep our members informed about events at the Refuge. New items in the bookstore and special sales will also be communicated through Constant Contact®. Our first communication to members was the notice you received about the National Wildlife Refuge Week event on October 16.



So please help us in Going Green by checking that box to receive your newsletter electronically.

Thank You from Annie Clayton.....

FAMI as an organization relies solely on volunteers to accomplish anything.

The following people have given freely of their time over the last three months to benefit both us and the Refuge. Thank you for all of your hard work.

**Hummer/Bird Festival Store Booth Volunteers:**

- Juanita and CL Davidson
- Brenda Steuer
- Sam Burnett
- Barb Threatt
- Harvette Green

**Adopt-A-Trail Maintenance Volunteers:**

- Bill Farnsworth      Marie Eggert
- Paul Julian          Kris Kirkwood
- Karen Lee Rystad
- Ron Smudy
- Bonnie Heckman

A special thank you goes out to Refuge Staff member Tonya Nix for being the one to get soaked loading the truck after the festival.

Thanks to:

- Ron Smudy who also helped us pack up and load after the festival.
- Barb Threatt and Diane Pletcher for folding t-shirts in preparation for the festival and picking up and delivering display racks from Austin.
- Sherrie Krause for helping out while I had to go out of town unexpectedly.
- Harvette Green for inventory help.
- Nicole Alonso and Miranda Farias for help with the front desk over the summer.
- Cindi Barrett for doing the multitude of phone calls and correspondence that I didn't have time to get accomplished plus anything and everything else I asked of her.

### Annual Meeting Notice

The annual meeting will be Saturday December 4<sup>th</sup> at the Refuge. We will once again be offering the Whooping Crane tour aboard the Skimmer with Captain Tommy Moore. That will be followed by lunch and a short business meeting. We are also offering a one day FAMI members only book sale. You will receive an additional 10% after the standard membership discount of 15% off on select books the day of the meeting only. Renew your membership so you'll receive a invitation to the Annual Meeting.

Submitted by: Annie Clayton

## ARANSAS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE HOSTS RIFLE HUNT FOR WHITE-TAILED DEER AND FERAL HOGS

Submitted by Bernice Jackson



The Rifle Hunt will consist of four hunts on alternate weekends (Saturday and Sunday), November 6-7 and 20-21, 2010 and December 4-5 and 18-19, 2010. For each of the four hunt weekends, 100 permits will be issued for the 19,668 acre Rifle Hunt Area. Each permit is valid only for the weekend specified. Permits for each weekend will be issued on a first come, first served basis. The fee is \$125 per adult hunter and \$62.50 per youth hunter for both days. Cash or non-expiring money orders (made out to U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) per hunter per hunt are accepted as payment. Do not mail cash. Hunters may submit applications together and hunt as a party. Permit applications are available on the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge website: <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/refuges/texas/aransas>. By mail, completed applications and fees must be received at the Refuge Visitor Center or post marked no later than two weeks prior to your preferred hunt weekend. In person, if permits are available, applications will be accepted through 12:00 noon on the Friday scouting days. Permits can be picked up at the check station on your scouting day.

To obtain more information about the Archery or Rifle Hunts, call the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge at (361) 286-3559 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.

### Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island NWR will be participating in the Big Sit event on OCT. 10, 2010.

Submitted by: Barbara Bruns

A **'Big Sit Day'** will be observed at the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

Time: daybreak til dusk

Place: inquire at Visitor Center for the birding spot

We are registered as the **'Aransas NWR whoopers'** and wish to extend a special welcome to anyone who would like to help at the bird-a-thon. It's free, it's fun! Sign up for an hour or the whole day!

Maybe we can win the 'Golden Bird' prize for FAMI (details on Birdwatcher's Digest website).

This will mark our third year to participate in this event and we think this is a perfect way to begin the first day of **National Wildlife Refuge Week**.

THE BIG SIT! is like a Big Day, or a bird-a-thon in that the object is to tally as many bird species as can be seen or heard within specific hours. The difference lies in the area limitation (17' diameter circle) from which you can observe.

The annual Big Sit!\* will take place on Sunday, October 10, 2010.

For more info, please contact Barbara Bruns at 361-575-5505 or the Refuge (Bernice Jackson) 361-286-3559.



I hope to see everyone on Oct 16 for activities related to the Aransas NWR National Wildlife Refuge Week celebration. We still need at least two more photo club members to conduct photo walks for the general public that day. Let me know if you are interested in participating in that way, you can email me at [anwr.npc@earthlink.net](mailto:anwr.npc@earthlink.net)

Submitted by John Noll

Aransas National Wildlife Refuge

Celebrate  
**National Wildlife Refuge Week**

**October 16, 2010**

**10 a.m. - 4 p.m.**

**FREE  
EVENT**

**Hunting & Fishing Demonstrations**

**Pier & Wade Fishing**

**Bike Rides, Kayaking and Guided Tours**

**Wildlife Lectures, Expert Speakers**

**and much, much more!**

**Food & Drink Vendors—All Day**



**6 Miles South of Austwell, TX - FM 2040  
Phone: 361-286-3559 Fax: 361-286-3722**



October 2010						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2 *
3 *	4 *	5 *	6 *	7 *	8 *	9 **
10** *	11	12	13	14	15	16* *
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

### Oct. 2-10th - Aransas Archery Hunt

**Oct. 9-10th - Rockport-Fulton Seafair, come visit the Refuge booth near the water.**

### Oct. 10th - BIG SIT !!!

**Oct. 16th - Free Event to celebrate "National Wildlife Refuge Week"**

### Oct. 16th - Fee Free Day

**Nov. 3 thru Jan. 24 - Aransas NWR will display the 2010 Texas Jr. Duck Stamp exhibit with winning artwork from the contest.**

**Nov. 6 - Van Tour Training (contact Refuge if you're interested in becoming a Van Tour Volunteer.**

### Nov. 6 & 7 and Nov. 20 & 21 Rifle Hunts

**Nov. 11th - Veterans Day and Fee Free Day**

**Nov. 25th—Thanksgiving Day. Visitor Center closed, Tour Loop open.**

November 2010						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3 *	4	5	6 * *
7 *	8	9	10	11 *	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 *
21 *	22	23	24	25 *	26	27
28	29	30				

### Dec. 4th - ANNUAL MEETING

### Dec. 4 & 5 and Dec. 18 & 19 Rifle Hunts

**Dec. 18th - Brock Miton, TPWD, will be speaking on Hunting.**

**Dec. 25th - Christmas Day. Visitor Center closed, Tour Loop open.**

\*Prior page "National Wildlife Refuge Week" flyer contributed by Vicki Muller.

December 2010						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4 * *
5 *	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18* *
19 *	20	21	22	23	24	25 *
26	27	28	29	30	31	

# Membership Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Other Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Check here to go green, indicating that you will read your newsletter online and no longer receive it in the mail.**

## Membership Categories

- Senior (age 62+) - \$10.00
- Student (up to age 21) - \$5.00
- Individual - \$15.00
- Family - \$25.00
- Life - \$300.00
- Business - \$150.00
- Corporate Sponsor - \$500.00
- Additional contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Senior Couple (ages 62+) \$20.00
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total Amount Enclosed

**Memberships expire  
September 30<sup>th</sup> each year.**

Make checks payable to:

Friends of Aransas & Matagorda Island

Mail to: P. O. Box 74

Austwell, Texas 77950

## FAMI Mission Statement

Friends of Aransas of Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge (FAMI)

will work to support and assist the Aransas and Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge Complex in its goal of enhancing habitat and wildlife and encouraging compatible wildlife-dependant public uses of the refuge through educational, interpretive, scientific and other activities appropriate to the mission of these Refuge.

Friends of Aransas/Matagorda Island  
National Wildlife Refuge  
P O Box 74  
Austwell, TX 77950

