

# AMIGO

*Aransas Matagorda Island Guardian/Orator*

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## Dues Reminder

Membership renewals were due by October 1, except for Life Members. Thank you to everyone that has renewed! If you have not, already done so, please [renew now](#).

Fall 2015

## Friends of Aransas Board of Directors

Fred Lanoue - President

Brad James - Secretary

Linda Lanoue - Treasurer

Irma Hernandez Schreiner - Director

Linda Swiggett - Director

## A Word from the President



## Greetings!

Project Leader Joe Saenz & his staff have the Refuge looking great! We're all excited about a lot of the activities going on now & expected in the near future. You can read about a few of them elsewhere in the newsletter. If you haven't visited Aransas National Wildlife Refuge recently, now's a great time to come out.



### Quick Links

[FAMI Website](#)

[FAMI Facebook Page](#)

[Aransas NWR Website](#)

[Aransas NWR Facebook Page](#)

The past few years Friends of Aransas has scheduled their annual members meeting in December. Last year's meeting was a lot of fun, but I noticed that some of our more active members were not there. Planning a meeting in December can be difficult because with the approaching holidays, everybody seems to have a pretty full schedule. Another factor is that many of our members are "Winter Texans", and a lot of these folks don't arrive in the Coastal Bend until after the holidays. This year we have decided to try something different. We have scheduled our annual members meeting for Saturday January 23rd to see if we can increase attendance. Please put this date on your calendar and plan to be there.

One final thought concerning the upcoming year's end. Please remember that Friends of Aransas & Matagorda Island NWR is a 501 (c) (3) organization and your donations are fully tax deductible. You can either donate to our General Fund, which we use to help the refuge in many small but important ways, or to one of our restricted funds. These are the Crane Fund, Water for Wildlife, and our newest fund, Connecting Kids With Nature, dedicated to helping children get outdoors and make a connection to nature. You may donate through our [website](#), or mail a check to P.O. Box 74, Austwell, TX, 77950. Please consider making a generous donation today.

Thank you to all the volunteers that continue to contribute their time to both FAMI & the Refuge. We appreciate everyone's help & support.

Fred Lanoue, President

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## Refuge Update



By Laura Bonneau, Visitor Services Manager

Things have been busy with people coming and going! Anneka Lamb completed her biology internship and is attending Prescott College in Arizona, and Pathways intern

Daniel Jackson returned to school at Texas A&M-Galveston after completing his first summer with the FWS. We wish them both lots of success! Three new Student Conservation Association interns started this month: Christopher



Kevin Son & Hannah Plumpton,  
Visitor Services Interns

Smith (biology), Hannah Plumpton (visitor services), and Kevin Son (visitor services). We look forward to working with them!



Bret Beasley

We also bid farewell to Bret Beasley. Bret is moving to Charleston, South Carolina, to be a Fish and Wildlife Biologist with the FWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program. He'll be working with private landowners and other partners

and we're sure he'll do a wonderful job, but we're going to miss his hard work and passion.

Six refuge staff members (Joe Saenz, Keith Westlake, Greg Birkenfeld, Felipe Prieto, Laura Bonneau, and Jennifer Brown) attended a Friends mentoring workshop in July. We look forward to working with FAMI on many great projects.

USFWS staff members and FAMI attended Aquafest at the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor in August. We had hands-on outreach activities including mammal pelts and a make-your-own-nature-journal craft. Many of the 313 people who participated in our activities were visiting the area and learned about the Refuge for the first time, but approximately 25% were Rockport/Corpus Christi residents who had visited the Refuge in the past. We encouraged the locals to visit again and see the beauty in their backyard.

The refuge is participating in the Coastal Bend's Texas Nature Challenge through November 2. Teams can visit the refuge and complete a challenge that they can download online or obtain from the visitor center front desk. More information can be found at the Texas Nature Challenge website.

Work began in August on an Invasive with Volunteers project at the Tatton Unit. The project to control mesquite is being led by FAMI. We appreciate all the hard work FAMI volunteers have done already!

Keith Westlake worked with Keven Kreigel (Texas Parks and Wildlife) to band mottled ducks on the Whitmire Unit. A total of 6 ducks were banded and all came from moist soil unit 3.

An American Conservation Experience (ACE) crew from Arizona completed herbicide application for Chinese tallow on the north boundary of the Aransas Unit.

Fire Management staff assisted on severity details to South Texas and also participated in wildfire assignments in California and Idaho. A little over 2,000 acres were burned on the Tatton Unit to help with brush encroachment in August.

USDA assisted the Refuge with control of feral hogs on Matagorda Island, Myrtle Foester Whitmire, Tatton Unit, and the Black Jack Peninsula. The much needed action will go a long way towards protecting wildlife and their habitats.

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## Whooping Crane Update



*Photo by Gary Ertl*

by Wade Harrell,  
U.S. Whooping Crane Recovery Coordinator  
Report dated September 15, 2015

Fall migration has begun and we are starting to get some reports of whooping cranes moving south out of their breeding grounds in Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP). We usually expect to see the first whooping cranes arrive at Aransas NWR in early October. The whooping crane migration from Wood Buffalo to Aransas is about 2,500 miles in length and can take up to about 50 days to complete. Having high quality habitat to stop and rest along this migration is critical to maintaining and growing the whooping crane population.

[Read the full report.](#)

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**Rail Trail**



Here's something many of us are excited about: plans are underway to replace the bridge that goes from the end of Rail Trail to the road! Our maintenance crew would be grateful for some help with this project. The original date had to be changed due to uncertainty about a government shutdown. It has been rescheduled for October 26 - 30.

Those with carpenter skills are especially needed, but others can help, too. Email [Laura Bonneau](#) or call her at (361) 286-3559 ext. 236 to get more information, or sign up for a day or days.

FAMI will supply water, Gatorade & insect repellent.

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**Interpretive Pollinator Garden**

*Coming Soon to Aransas National  
Wildlife Refuge....*



## **POLLINATOR GARDEN**

Thanks to the Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island (FAMI)



FAMI was recently awarded a grant through the National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program to create an interpretive pollinator garden. The garden will be created beside the visitor center and will feature native plants known to attract butterflies and other pollinators.

*Thank you to Jen Brown for creating our poster!*

We have been awarded a grant through the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation to create an interpretive pollinator garden at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. The grants were awarded through the National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program, a collaborative effort between the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge Association, National Audubon Society, and Enbridge.

The garden will be created in an unused area beside the Visitor Center parking lot, and will feature native plants known to attract Monarch & other butterflies, as well as other pollinators. It will serve both to provide safe, insecticide-free habitat for native pollinators, and educate the public about the benefits of, and relationship between, native plants and pollinators.

The garden will have a pathway and bench for better viewing & enjoyment. There will be identification labels for the plants, and a large interpretive sign at the entrance. Once it is open, we hope to have volunteer interpreters that will explain about the importance of pollinators and their relationship with native plants.

This is a long term project, with a lot of different volunteer opportunities. We will be reaching out to other groups and individual members of the community to help with this project. We hope to have a social get together for all the volunteers upon completion. If you're interested in becoming involved, or would like more information, please [contact us](#).



This is what the area looks like now.

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**Tatton Unit**



FAMI is partnering with Aransas National Wildlife Refuge to treat and monitor invasive Honey Mesquite on the Tatton Unit of the Refuge. The Refuge received a grant to work with Friends and Refuge volunteers to mechanically remove mesquite, and apply herbicide from a UTV. The Tatton Unit is the largest remaining section of coastal prairie in the area. Without treatment, mesquite will continue to spread and cause additional strain on all flora and fauna that rely on these valuable and limited grasslands.

The project is currently on hold until cooler weather. When it starts up again, we will be looking for more volunteers. If you're interested, please [email](#) for more information.

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## Christmas Bird Count

Photos by Fred Lanoue



The annual Aransas National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Bird Count will be held December 22, 2015. Paul Swacina will again head it up, with Steve Reisinger joining this year as co-compiler. This is a great opportunity to enjoy a day of birding

and take part in one of the oldest citizen science projects in North America. Reported observations help in the study of long-term health and status of bird populations across the continent. Everyone is invited to participate. Birders of all skill levels are welcome; even beginners can help by spotting birds that other team members can help identify. There is no charge for participation in the count.



To get more information, or sign up, please [contact Paul Swacina](#).

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## Nature Store Update



Things were pretty slow in the Nature Store through the summer months. With fall, and cooler temperatures, we'll be getting a lot busier. We will definitely be needing more volunteers, as we hope to expand our open hours. If you would like to become one of our store volunteers, please contact the [store manager](#).

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## HummerBird Celebration



by Linda Lanoue

We had a great time at our booth at the HummerBird Celebration. Thank you to Ron Smudy for his help in transporting our merchandise & supplies. Without his help and truck, we would not have been able to have a booth. I had the "Dream Team" helping me staff the booth. Patrick Rios, Fred Lanoue, Melanie Konarik, & Linda Frank were absolutely super. Our sales were very good, and the five of us talked with around 700 people. It's always good to be able to reach out to people about the Refuge & our organization.

Project Leader Joe Saenz & Visitor Services Manager Laura Bonneau were able to join us on Friday & Saturday, along with Interns Hannah Plumpton & Kevin Son, to represent the Refuge. Interested visitors enjoyed being able to get management insights about the Refuge from Joe & Laura. Hannah & Kevin are new to the Refuge and their enthusiasm and joy about being at Aransas NWR is wonderful.

On Saturday, it was announced that passengers on the tour boat were treated to a sighting of an early arrival Whooping Crane! It's exciting to have at least one member of the flock here already & know the others are on their way!



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## Upcoming Events

**Annual Membership Meeting 1/23/2016. More information will be sent to members.**



**Refuge Events:**

10/12-10/18 - National Wildlife Refuge Week - Plans are underway. Check our website or Facebook page for updates.

Hunt Season:

10/3-10/11 - Archery hunt

11/2-11/5 - Scouting for rifle hunt #1

11/7-11/14 - Rifle hunt #1

11/16-11/19 - Scouting for rifle hunt #2

11/28-12/5 - Rifle hunt #2

12/7-12/10 - Scouting for rifle hunt #3

12/12-12/19 - Rifle hunt # 3

For details on the hunt visit Aransas Passes & Permits

Fee Free Days:

10/11 - To kick off National Wildlife Refuge Week

11/11 - Veterans Day

No entry fees are charged on those days.

**Every day is a great day to visit your National Wildlife Refuge!**

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## Donations

We do not list individual donors without permission, but we greatly appreciate everything we receive. You can contribute to our general fund, or specify that you want your donation go to a special purpose, such as the Whooping Crane or Connecting Kids with Nature Fund.

As you do your shopping, please remember if you shop at Amazon, using their Smile program earns a small contribution to FAMI. You pay the same price for the same goods & services as using regular Amazon.

As always, we thank everyone for helping us help Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

## **Memorial Donations**

We have received Memorial Donations in memory of:  
George Binder

Our thoughts are with the family and friends of the departed.  
We thank those that honored their memories by making  
donations that will help to preserve habitat and native wildlife  
for generations to come.

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