

AMIGO

Aransas Matagorda Island Guardian/Orator

Spring 2015

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Water for Wildlife

Fresh water is critical, not only for Whooping Cranes but for all wildlife on the Refuge. While recent rains have filled many of our ponds and tanks, we still have a need for more dependable, year-round water sources. We are raising funds for this important project.

A Word from the President

Greetings!

What can **you** do to help the endangered whooping cranes? The answer is different for each of us. If you have a family and are working hard to make ends meet, you can take satisfaction that just by paying your membership dues you are helping the cranes. If you're not able to volunteer your time but you can help financially, you could help the cranes by making a generous donation to Friends of Aransas and give yourself a tax deduction at the same time. These dues and donations will be combined to help us fund projects to help the cranes. If you are one of the many retirees that have chosen to live in this area because of the many outdoor recreational opportunities, maybe you are finding you have some free time available. You could choose to become an active volunteer for our Friends group. Volunteering your time to work with the Friends of Aransas to help support Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and their mission of protecting the whooping cranes is very rewarding.

Declining budgets mean refuge staff can really use our help, and they are always very appreciative of all we do. However, in order to continue and even increase our work to help the refuge, our Friends group certainly needs more volunteers! Our six member board of directors has plenty of ideas about things we need to do to improve our organization, but they just don't have the time available to take on all of these projects. There are many ways that you can help. If you can spend two or three days a month

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at the refuge, we can use help working at our Nature Store, especially now that the Winter Texans that have been volunteering are heading north.

We have an even greater need for people to work on projects that will help us grow the size of our organization and increase its effectiveness. If you are willing to become more active in helping Friends of Aransas by volunteering your time, now is a good time. Send an email to president@friendsofaransas.org and tell me "I want to help" in the subject line. I'll keep a list of people that are willing to help by volunteering, and then periodically I will send out information about things we need help with.

Thanks to everyone for doing your part to help Friends of Aransas help protect our whooping cranes. Don't forget to tell your friends about Aransas National Wildlife Refuge and what a special place it is!

Fred Lanoue, President

Refuge Update



By Laura Bonneau, Visitor Services Manager

Spring has sprung here at the refuge! Warblers and other passerines are migrating through, alligators are bellowing, frogs are singing, snakes are moving, butterflies and moths abound, and the mosquitoes...well, we won't talk

about the mosquitoes. Let's just say that we're thankful for all the rain we've gotten and the effects it's had on MOST of our wildlife species. If you haven't been out in a while, it's time for a visit! Jones Lake is finally a lake again, and I can no longer refer to it as "Jones Meadow" in my head. It really is a beautiful time of year here. The cranes are on their way out, but there is still SO much to see!

Here are a few of the many (exciting!) things keeping us busy right now:

- We've hired a new Refuge Manager. Joe Saenz is the current manager at the Northeast Louisiana Refuge Complex, but he will be moving here in mid-June. We're excited to have him here, especially because he used to be the deputy manager here at Aransas!
- Jesse Harrand is our new Engine Boss on the fire crew. We're excited to have him on the staff. We'll also be hiring two seasonal firefighters for our summer burn season.
- Hurricane season preparations are well underway. Long-term forecasts predict that the next three years will be worse than the last ten years.
- Our maintenance crew and winter volunteers worked HARD on completing several Visitor Services projects. Thanks to Dave, Casey, and Marcos, as well as Kent and Lynn Sayre, Glenn and Shauna Wilkerson, and many other hard workers, we have the following structures built and/or repaired:

Alligator Viewing Platform,
Big Tree Trail Observation Deck,
Heron Flats Observation Deck #2, and
Boardwalk between the 2 towers.



- Our winter residential volunteer season is almost over. We had such a great crew this year and can't thank them enough for all their hard work: Glenn and Shauna Wilkerson, Penni Phillips, Jim and Charlotte Byram, Vicki Penwell, and Jim and Gail Graham. They will all be GREATLY missed!
- Anneka Lamb's term as Visitor Services Intern came to a close on April 30th, but the great news is that she'll be staying on with our biology crew



through the summer! Anneka has done so much great work for us, but perhaps her crowning achievement is the mural she spent countless hours creating in our Visitor Center lobby. It looks really wonderful!

- Shuttle tours have been popular this winter, and we couldn't have done them without the tireless efforts of our local and residential volunteers.
- With help from the Guadalupe-Blanco River Authority, we were able to flood our moist soil units at the Myrtle-Foester-Whitmire Unit. This will allow us to provide great habitat for migratory and breeding waterfowl and shorebirds.
- Last but not most definitely not least, we'd like to thank the Friends of Aransas for all the projects they've

taken on and all the hard work they've put into making the refuge a better place. Here are just a few of the great projects they've been working on for us:

Representing the refuge at community events - Texas Coastal Bend Travel Fair, Whooping Crane Strut, Earth Day Bay Day, World of Water, and Whooping Crane Festival.

Working to raise funds to rehabilitate and drill new water wells through the "Water for Wildlife" program; and

Providing support for the Fish and Wildlife Service Retirees' Reunion and a visit from Headquarters and congressional staff.

- Finally, if you haven't had a chance to check out this year's report on Whooping Crane wintering numbers, a record 308 birds were estimated! View the full report [here](#).

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Meet the Board



Fred Lanoue, President

My first real volunteer experience was the winter of 06/07 when I volunteered at Santa Anna NWR leading interpretive tours. I found that I really enjoyed the challenge of helping people connect to nature. That led to becoming a volunteer at Aransas when we moved here in 2007. When I got a chance to join our board of directors in January of 2012, I had two goals. I want to find ways to attract new members and also expand the opportunities for members to participate in our activities. I also want to develop new outreach programs to let everyone in our community know what a wonderful place our refuge really is.



**Brad James,
Secretary**

I spent thirty years in the information technology industry, owning my own business and working for others. I retired from the Lower Colorado River Authority in 2013. I have a wife Michelle, and two sons, Nick and Spencer. I am a certified Texas Master Naturalist and spend my volunteer time working with the Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Friends of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge, Welder Wildlife Foundation and the Texas Master Naturalist State Organization. I enjoy wildlife photography, fishing, and bird watching. My photography work can be found at my [website](#).



Linda Lanoue, Treasurer

I was an accountant for most of my working life. Although I have no formal education in the field, I have been interested in nature & wildlife for as long as I can remember. I began volunteering for Aransas NWR when we moved to the area in 2007, and have been a member of the Friends since 2008. To date, I have volunteered over 3000 hours for the refuge. I feel fortunate to be able to give back to a place that means so much to me, and I enjoy being part of the refuge team.



Ron Smudy

My education is in forestry and botany. I worked for Kirby Forest Industries as Regional Forester, ExxonMobil as Process Control Trainer, and City of San Antonio as Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation and Director of Asset Management. I retired and moved to Rockport in 2009. I enjoy boating, fishing, travel, volunteering at the refuge

and spending time with the grandkids.

Irma Hernandez Schreiner

I'm a native Texan from The Rio Grande Valley, where I lived for 25 years before moving out of state. I just returned five years ago after a 39 year absence. (Guess now you know how old I am.) My husband, Jim, and I spent the majority of those years enjoying the pristine beauty and bounty of Alaska. While living in Anchorage, I had the opportunity to serve on two different boards of directors; one of these was the Alaska Botanical Garden. My formal education is in the biological sciences, but



most of my work was in sales. My life has been greatly enriched since I retired in 2010 and became a full-time volunteer. As a certified member of Mid-Coast Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist since 2011, I enjoy working on a variety of volunteer projects. Besides my volunteer work at The Refuge, I'm passionate about Padre Island National Seashore Division of Sea Turtle Science and Recovery where I help with turtle patrol, dispatching, and day or night hatchling releases. I'm happy to be back in south Texas, living in The Coastal Bend with Aransas National Wildlife Refuge almost in my backyard. I'm excited to be serving on the Friends Board of Directors; it's an honor to be working with my colleagues on the board, FAMI members, other Refuge volunteers, and all the dedicated Refuge staff.



Linda Swiggett

I was born and raised in San Antonio where I volunteered as a docent for the Witte Museum of Natural History, and for the Museum of Fine Arts. I spent most weekends in Flour Bluff, enjoying the coastal area with my grandparents. I moved to Rockport five years ago and became a Master Naturalist in 2013. One of our classes was held at Aransas Wildlife Refuge Where I was drawn to its beauty. The wild flowers and wildlife first captured my attention. I now have a favorite spot at the refuge we fondly call the Sanctuary Tree. Please join me at the refuge and discover the unique experience this tree has to offer. As a member of FAMI I volunteer in our Nature store and also enjoy leading bus tours.

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Our Nature Store continues to evolve in its new location, and we've received many positive comments. With our slow season coming up, we plan to make more improvements. Several of us were a little unsure about how things would be after the move. There have been challenges, but overall, everything is working out well. If you're in the area, please come by & see the store for yourself. We always welcome your comments & suggestions.

We had a wonderful volunteer team this past season. Many thanks to Barbara Ertl, Gary Ertl, Marty Lang, Sharon Lang, Fred Lanoue, Linda Lanoue, Clara Noble, Penni Phillips, Patrick Rios, Irma Schreiner, Linda Swiggett, and Shauna Wilkerson. We couldn't have done it without you!

If volunteering in the Nature Store sounds like fun to you, contact us at: naturestore@friendsofaransas.org.

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Donations

This fiscal year, we have received donations from the Knobloch Foundation, the City of Rockport, TX, and the U.S. FWS Retirees.

In November, the Knobloch family visited Aransas NWR,

along with representatives of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. At lunch, Friends board members Fred Lanoue, Linda Lanoue, and Irma Schreiner were given an opportunity to meet and talk with members of the family. As President, Fred gave a brief presentation about our organization and our work on behalf of the refuge. We later received a \$1000 unrestricted contribution from the Knobloch Foundation Trust.

In March, the U.S.F.W.S. Retirees Association held their annual reunion in Corpus Christi. As part of their activities, they spent one day at the refuge. The Retirees have donated \$400 to the Friends in honor of Lynn A. Greenwalt, U.S. Fish & wildlife Service Director 1974-1981. The funds will be used for a project to be determined by refuge management and the Friends board.

Also in March, for the first time, we partnered with the City of Rockport Parks Department in their annual Whooping Crane Strut race. In April, Mayor C.J. Wax presented Friends President Fred Lanoue with a check for \$735.00, to be deposited in our Water for Wildlife fund. This fund will be used to help rehabilitate old wells and drill new ones to provide reliable sources of fresh water for Whooping Cranes and other wildlife.



We sincerely thank these organizations for their generosity.

We have not listed individual donors due to privacy

considerations, 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 Water for Wildlife or Whooping Crane Funds. As always, we thank you for helping us to help the refuge.

Please remember that we are registered with Amazon Smile. If you shop at Amazon, please consider using their Smile program and choosing Friends of Aransas to benefit from your purchase.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/74-2836260>

Thank you to everyone for helping us help Aransas National Wildlife Refuge.

Memorial Donations

We have received Memorial Donations in memory of:

Craig McCown

Nell Wilson

Doris Wyman

Our thoughts are with the families 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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Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island NWR
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