

Friends Forward



Spring 2010

National Wildlife Refuge System
www.fws.gov/refuges

From the Chief 2011 Vision Conference: Looking Forward



In 1998 — just a year after passage of the National Wildlife Refuge

System Improvement Act — more than 750 people came together in Keystone, CO, for an unprecedented gathering to chart a strategic course for the Refuge System. Since then, the resulting vision document — titled, *Fulfilling the Promise* — has served as an oft-cited guidepost in the journey to advance our mission. And it's served us well.

Now, as we face 21st century challenges, the landscape of conservation has changed — literally. Whether we're talking about rising sea levels, loss of wildlife corridors, changes in habitat, expansion of species range, or more introduced and exotic speices, it's time to generate new ideas and seek out new perspectives.

Continued on page 8

For the latest information on the Gulf Coast oil spill, visit <http://www.fws.gov/home/dhoilspill/index.html>. Follow the Service response on Twitter (USFWSHQ) and Facebook (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

The Legacy of Teddy Roosevelt in the 21st Century



President Obama signs a memorandum at the White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors.

President Obama addressed the White House Conference on America's Great Outdoors on April 16, promising to enrich the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt, "our greatest conservation president."

As the culminating act of his presentation to more than 600 invited participants at the White House conference, President Obama signed a memorandum launching America's Great Outdoors Initiative, which focuses on community-level efforts to conserve outdoor spaces.

People are encouraged to share information online about smart, creative ways communities are conserving outdoor spaces. Ideas are being collected on private and public lands conservation as well as reconnecting with the outdoors at <http://ideas.usda.gov/ago/ideas.nsf/>. The Department of the Interior also has a Web site to collect favorite stories of the outdoors at www.doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/Feedback.cfm.

"I am mindful that the first such conference was held over one century

Continued on page 6

Climate Change Requires Adaptation, Mitigation, Engagement

Climate change threatens to further imperil hundreds of species of migratory birds already under stress from habitat loss, invasive species and other environmental threats, according to the Department of the Interior's *State of the Birds: 2010 Report on Climate Change*. "Just as they did in 1962 when Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*," said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, "our migratory birds are sending us a message about the health of our planet."

Oceanic birds are the most vulnerable to climate change because they don't raise many young each year. Birds in arid lands, wetlands and forests are much less vulnerable, but such common birds as the American oystercatcher, nighthawk and northern pintail are likely to become species of conservation concern as a result of climate change.

Calling Alaska ground zero for climate change, Salazar said, "We must put science to work to help us adjust to



Gary Kramer/USFWS

These pintails as well as the American oystercatcher, nighthawk and King rail could become species of conservation concern as a result of climate change.

the impacts of climate change." He has announced that the first of eight planned regional Climate Science Centers will be located at the University of Alaska.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's proposed five-year Climate Change Strategic Plan highlights three strategies:

- Adaptation — planned management actions to reduce the impact of climate change on fish, wildlife and habitat;
- Mitigation — reduction of the Service's "carbon footprint" by using less energy, consuming fewer

Continued on page 6

SLAMM – A Window on the Future

The Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model — SLAMM — uses biological, topographic and tidal data as well as data on erosion and salinity levels to predict how coastal wetlands and shorelines migrate over time. "We can project that if sea level rises this much, here is what will happen to habitat," says former Refuge System coastal biologist Delissa Padilla.

"SLAMM gives us enough information to act," adds Padilla. And that is precisely what Lou Hinds, manager of Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, VA, is doing.

The SLAMM graphic shows huge areas of marsh and upland disappearing as the projections are shown in 25-year increments for the next 100 years. "It's a visual representation of sea level rise and what it will do to a refuge. That's worth its weight in gold. It sets the stage and spurs dialogue," says Hinds, who is using the SLAMM models during public hearings on the refuge's Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP).

Chincoteague Refuge has lost 133 yards of beach since 1964. "It is no longer responsible or sustainable to keep putting parking lots on that beach," says Hinds. The parking lots are on

refuge land but are maintained by the National Park Service; they are one of many transportation issues facing the refuge and the CCP offers alternative transportation plans. Hinds says, "We'll use the SLAMM model to show ourselves and the public what we are faced with. SLAMM enables people to get their minds around the plan."

The Refuge System has also applied SLAMM to other coastal refuges along the Atlantic, Gulf Coast and the Caribbean.

See SLAMM images at www.slammview.org. 

Tulare Basin: Latest Addition to Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System added a unit this spring with the acquisition of a conservation easement on 777 acres to create the Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area in central California.

Perpetual conservation easements were bought on two tracts of wetland habitat to create the new wildlife management area, which will be administered as part of the Kern National Wildlife Refuge in the southern San Joaquin Valley.

Plans call for eventual protection of 22,000 acres between Kern and Pixley National Wildlife Refuges. Ninety percent of the land in the wildlife management area will be conserved through the purchase of easements from willing landowners. Conservation easements provide for land to be managed for habitat purposes while allowing landowners to retain ownership. Many national wildlife refuges or wildlife management areas contain acreage protected by conservation easements.

More Room for Waterfowl

“We want to rebuild waterfowl population in the Pacific Flyway to the levels they were in the 1970s,” says Scott Frazer, a wildlife refuge specialist. He and Kern Refuge manager Dave Hardt have been working to create the wildlife management area for about a decade.

The pieces of land acquired this spring — the 627-acre Rancho Visalia tract and the 150-acre Santura Duck Club tract — are important building blocks in the effort to arrest and eventually reverse the recent decline in wetlands habitat, Frazer says. The tracts will help keep adjacent private wetlands habitat intact. The creation of the wildlife management area via conservation easements will also allow



Scott Frazer/USFWS

These wetlands were acquired via a conservation easement for creation of the Tulare Basin Wildlife Management Area, CA.

Kern Refuge to give private landowners advice on how to manage the wetlands to foster desirable plants — swamp Timothy (a tiny grass that produces lots of seeds), watergrass and millet — that will sustain migratory birds throughout the winter.

In addition, Frazer says, the Rancho Visalia tract contains a crucial uplands component and is home to the endangered San Joaquin kit fox.

Funding for the conservation easements came from the sale of federal Duck Stamps and was approved in 2009 by the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission. The Tulare Basin Wetlands Association, Tulare Basin Wildlife Partners, California Waterfowl Association and California Outdoor Heritage Alliance are among the non-governmental partners in the project.

Historically, Tulare Lake was the largest freshwater wetland west of the Mississippi River and provided habitat to hundreds of thousands of migratory waterfowl annually. While Tulare Lake has vanished due to water diversions for agricultural and municipal uses, remaining privately owned wetlands have been recognized in the Central Valley Joint Venture and North American Waterfowl Management Plan for their importance to migratory waterfowl and shorebirds of the Pacific Flyway. 🦢



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stories

WEST VIRGINIA

Resident Photographers

By Marquette Crockett

With so much beauty to enthrall visitors, Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the Friends of the 500th hosted seven professional photographers from April to October 2009 for month-long residencies, encouraging them to display their work at the Friends bookstore. The program is continuing in 2010.

The unpaid photographers receive housing on the refuge and are able to offer their work for sale in the refuge bookstore (with a small commission paid to the Friends group). In return, they conduct outreach programs on photography and nature, serve as photographers and volunteers for refuge events, and provide the refuge with hundreds of beautiful images. The photographers retain the rights to their photos but make them available to the refuge for its use. Laura Moul, the resident photographer in May 2010, offered workshops on digital cameras and travel photography. One photographer even developed a “photo blog” and updated images daily.

Members of the Friends group are using images for the first-ever Canaan Valley Refuge calendar, which will be sold to support volunteer activities.

Tips

- Vary the photographers by specialty: don't schedule several

landscape photographers if the refuge really needs photos of animals or plants.

- Find photographers by contacting local camera clubs and advertising in local newspapers and Web sites. Word spreads quickly.
- Decide early how to use the images and where they will be stored. Publications typically require much higher resolution than those used on the Internet.

Work closely with refuge staff so the photographers' activities do not disturb wildlife or habitat restoration.

Marquette Crockett is a wildlife biologist at Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

NEW MEXICO

A Friends Birding Adventure

Journey to Arenal Volcano and look for the elusive bare-necked umbrellabird. Get an up-in-the-branches perspective from the treetops at Arenal Hanging Bridges. And raise money for your Friends group at the same time?

That's just what Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge did in 2008 when Jon Morrison — the group's former president — found a travel agency attuned to a nature-loving audience to organize a one-week trip that attracted 13 travelers whose travel tabs included a \$250 donation to the Friends group. “We were all blown

away at the beauty and diversity we found ... including our quest for the bird most associated with Costa Rica, the resplendent quetzal,” says Morrison.

The Friends' first trip offered a photography workshop, cooking class and horseback riding. Since



Jon Morrison

The keel-billed toucan was one of 300 bird species seen during a birding adventure to Costa Rica sponsored by the Friends of the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

then, the trips have grown to two-week adventures with space for 12 to 15 participants. The trip price also includes a \$50 donation for a local conservation effort selected by the group while in Costa Rica.

Morrison recommends taking another group's trip first to see how it works. Then you can work with a travel agency to create a specialized tour. “Be flexible,” he cautions. “Have alternate plans if a site is closed. A volcanic eruption closed one of the sites we were supposed to

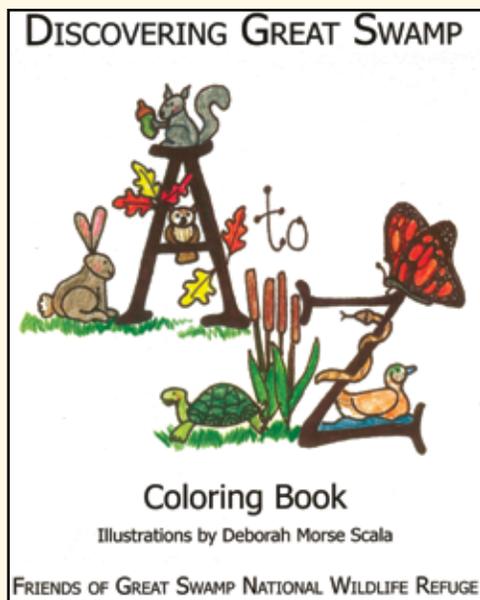
visit. We made itinerary changes the week before our trip left.”

For more information about the Friends' 2011 Costa Rica adventure, February 5-19, go to www.holbrooktravel.com/FriendsoftheBosque.

NEW JERSEY

Great Swamp from A to Z

Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge created their own educational tool — a coloring book that covers topics ranging from ants on the aster to the “zabulon skipper butterfly and the pickerel frog as he makes the ‘zzzzzzzzzzzz’ snore.” Friend and refuge volunteer Deb Scala came home with the idea after a family vacation; Scala and three other volunteers in the refuge’s Discovery Den set to work. Dorothy Smullen and Gail Rappaport brought science and teaching experience to the table. Scala was the artist; Judy Schmidt brought a thorough knowledge of the refuge.



Members of the Friends of Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge created Discovering Great Swamp: A to Z Coloring Book.

The Friends’ board enthusiastically endorsed the idea, helping to assemble a master list of plants and animals for each letter of the alphabet. Scala drew the species in their habitat and added a sentence or two for each page. Scala sought help from a high school biology teacher for the letter X: “The xeromphalina mushrooms on a decomposing log are part of nature’s recyclers.”

“I can’t believe how much I learned doing this project,” said Scala, “gaining a much better understanding of habitat and wildlife.”

The Friends are seeking a grant to give the coloring book to every school group that visits the refuge. For the moment, *Discovering Great Swamp: A to Z Coloring Book* is sold in the Friends Nature Shop for \$4.30.

TEXAS

Viva the Ocelot!

The Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge have created a Facebook page for their prized species, the ocelot. *Viva the Ocelot!* features images from one of many refuge trip cameras, including a sequence with one of the few known females on the refuge playing with her kitten.

The Facebook page also promotes two Friends programs — Adopt an Ocelot and the annual Ocelot Conservation Festival. Within its first two weeks, the site had more than 100 fans. Nancy Brown, a Friend as well as public outreach specialist for the South Texas Refuges Complex, hopes the site will create national awareness about the ocelot and the challenges it faces. “We have struggled to draw attention to this highly charismatic animal.”



Friends of Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge created Viva the Ocelot! — a Facebook page dedicated to the endangered ocelot.

The trip camera recently showed the female ocelot dangerously close to the auto tour loop on the refuge. As a result, the refuge began opening the road one hour later and closing one hour earlier. With the Facebook page, says Brown, “we can announce and explain the road closing and information will spread locally much more quickly.”

Pass the News Around

Pass the word to everyone in your Friends organization and to prospective members that Friends Forward and Refuge Update are available online at www.fws.gov/refuges. Multiple copies are also mailed to each Friends organization — please distribute them to board members. Let us know if you need additional copies.

Do you have news to share from your own Friends organization? Do you have your own newsletter? Send your news and newsletters to: Karen_Leggett@fws.gov, National Wildlife Refuge System, Branch of Communications, 4401 N. Fairfax Dr., Arlington, VA 22203.

The Legacy of Teddy Roosevelt in the 21st Century—Continued from page 1

ago by one of my favorite presidents, one of our greatest presidents — and certainly our greatest conservation president,” said President Obama.

“Upon taking office, Theodore Roosevelt — avid birdwatcher, bear hunter — set out on a tour of the American West that would change his life and the life of a nation forever.

“Few pursuits are more satisfying to the spirit than discovering the greatness of America’s outdoors,” the president continued. “And when we see America’s land, we understand what an incredible bounty that we have been given. And it’s

our obligation to make sure that the next generation enjoys that same bounty.”

President Obama went on to highlight four priorities:

- Building on successful local conservation efforts.
- Helping farmers, ranchers and property owners protect their lands for future generations.
- Helping families spend more time outdoors, in line with First Lady Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign.

- Fostering a new generation of community and urban parks.

As he opened the White House conference, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar noted, “We need to identify landscapes of national significance and move forward on protecting and enhancing rivers and waterways.”

Salazar also drew attention to the importance of protecting and restoring nature in urban areas. Today, more than 185 national wildlife refuges are considered “urban” refuges, serving metropolitan areas with populations of 50,000 or more. 

Climate Change Requires Adaptation, Mitigation, Engagement—Continued from page 2

materials, and sequestering carbon in vegetation; and

- Engagement — collaboration with citizens to meet varied challenges.

Refuges Meeting the Challenge

Individual refuges are already employing these strategies in varied ways:

- Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, NM, is monitoring the appearance of new species of dragonflies as they move northward from their historical habitat.
- Dikes and drainage ditches are being removed to restore natural hydrology, limit saltwater intrusion and expand

tidal marsh habitat at Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge, NC; San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA; Bandon Marsh National Wildlife Refuge, OR; and Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, WA.

- San Andres National Wildlife Refuge, NM, converted a system of remote cameras that monitor habitat use to solar power, reducing the number of driving trips needed to maintain the cameras.
- In the Lower Mississippi Valley, about two dozen industries, conservation organizations and national wildlife

refuges have restored more than 120,000 acres of habitat, planting more than 22 million trees that will capture 33 trillion tons of carbon during the next 90 years.

By building knowledge and sharing information, the Refuge System and its partners — including Friends — will be able to combine expertise and creativity to help wildlife resources adapt in a climate-impacted world.

For more information visit www.fws.gov/home/climatechange. 

Soaring to New Heights

A Guide to Creating a Sustainable Friends/Refuge Collaboration

“I can’t imagine managing a refuge without a Friends group. It’s the best thing we’ve ever done.” This comment from Dave Hilley, manager of Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, KS, sets the tone for a new publication from the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Soaring to New Heights provides inspiration, case studies and practical

advice organized according to five key elements of success:

1. A Solid Collaboration
2. Strategic Thinking
3. A Well-Managed Organization
4. Understanding FWS Systems and Nonprofit Management

5. Celebrate and Evaluate

Soaring to New Heights is available online at www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/publications.html. Chapters may be downloaded, searched and printed individually or as a complete document.



Q&A *send us your questions*

Q: What guidelines should Friends groups establish for funding school field trips to their refuge?

A: Tight budgets have forced many schools to reduce or eliminate field trips. Faced with requests for “bus money,” many Friends organizations have wrestled with how to set guidelines to make the best use of their own scarce resources. Some dispense funds on an ad hoc basis. Others have specific programs or guidelines.

The **SEWEE Association** (South Eastern Wildlife and Environment Education Association) provides programs for more than 8,000 students every year at Cape Romain, Ernest F. Hollings ACE Basin and Waccamaw National Wildlife Refuges in South Carolina. SEWEE Association executive director Karen Beshears says a local



Children have fun while learning valuable lessons at Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge, CA.

foundation provides a major operations grant each year, a portion of which is set aside for students in the Waccamaw Earth Stewards program. “We were targeting the poorest schools and the program involved two to three visits to refuge sites,” explains Beshears. “As our offerings for Waccamaw have grown and we now have a Center for the one-day programs, we decided to keep the bus payments for only those original schools or we would be overwhelmed.”

The **Friends of the Bosque** (Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, NM) offer “bus scholarships” to schools that take a guided refuge tour or curriculum-based field trip. Local schools receive 100 percent of their travel cost. Schools outside of the area receive 75 percent of bus costs. Friends executive director Leigh Vradenburg says the maximum per school per field trip is \$250, “which helps us not to deplete our funding too quickly ... and the check is not mailed until the trip is finished.”

The **Tamarac Interpretive Association** (Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, MN) created a bus fund, with priority given to kindergarten, third grade and middle school students who lack other environmental education opportunities. Teachers must be willing to engage in pre- and post activities in the classroom and evaluate the field trip.

Friends of Boyer Chute and Desoto National Wildlife Refuges, IA, which hosts 3,200 students a year, seeks grants to cover travel costs. Sue Hix, vice president of **Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge, MN**, says her group is developing standards for distributing transportation funding. “We will likely ask that the group pay at least a nominal amount toward the bus, perhaps a dollar per student. We may also build in incentives to encourage repeat visits and empower teachers to lead their own groups.” A class could receive more transportation assistance if it planned two or three visits during the

school year or the teacher agreed to participate in a free workshop on using outdoor classrooms. 

Blue Goose Fund

Refuge Friends, Inc. created a Blue Goose Fund two years ago to transport underserved school groups to Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, MN.

The fund grew to \$70,000 with a double-match offered by the Minnesota Valley Refuge Trust — which has its own unusual story. The Minnesota Valley Trust was established in 2000 to mitigate the impact of flights sent over Minnesota Valley Refuge from the new north-south runway at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The trust was expected to expand the refuge, build an environmental education and visitor center and create new visitor access and education opportunities. The Blue Goose Bus Fund fit the bill.

The Friends raised its own funds with memorial contributions, private donations, small foundation grants, a silent auction and a “No Kids Left Indoors Walleye Dinner,” sponsored by the Optimist Club. The Optimist Youth Foundation is also providing scholarships to young people with college majors in natural resources.

Schools in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area that are part of the Refuge Partner Schools Program are eligible to apply for transportation funding, allowing students to visit the refuge three times during the school year. During the current school year, more than 2,500 student visits are supported through the Blue Goose Fund. 

Chief, continued from page 1

So, in spring 2011, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be gathering again — Refuge Friends, partners and staff — to encourage a new generation of conservationists to build on our nation's conservation legacy and formulate the concepts and vision that will guide us for the second decade of the 21st century. This is a huge undertaking. We expect about 1,200 people coming together at a single location — and we're still in the selection process for a location. But we will also bring thousands more "into" the Vision Conference virtually — through a host of new media methods that we haven't tried before.

For the 2011 Vision Conference to be successful, we have a tremendous amount of preparatory work ahead. We've already started down the planning road, using a Service-only Web site to have staff nominate themselves to one of five Core Teams that will do the springboard work for our discussions at the Vision Conference. The Core Teams are: Conservation Planning and

Design; Conservation Delivery; Inventory, Monitoring, and Science; Relevance to a Changing America; and Leadership and Organizational Excellence.

Right on the heels of naming 50-60 people to the five Core Teams, we are organizing Refuge System work groups to do the essential, behind-the-scenes work that such a conference demands. And we're already doing much of the planning work virtually — on a Web "SharePoint" site where everyone involved can see and edit documents. The Core Team nomination process and using SharePoint for our early planning are just two ways we are using new technology that didn't even exist as we worked towards the Keystone conference.

So, not only are we planning for the 21st century, but we're also using 21st century technology everywhere we can.

Where do the Refuge Friends fit in?

Refuge Friends will be with us as part of the 1,200 people gathering to further the

vision of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Many will be in attendance at the Vision Conference. Others, we hope, will be among the thousands more who join us as we use new technology to bring you onsite without asking you to increase our carbon footprint — and our budget — by making you get on a plane.

The Vision Conference will not only set our path for the next decade. We also believe by using new media — including Webinars, Facebook, Twitter and more — we will increase the public recognition of the Refuge System and the legions that will bolster the ranks of Friends groups across the country.

We have high expectations that you will join us, and we plan to keep you posted on how and when you can participate. For now, consider joining Facebook and Twitter: you'll find the Fish and Wildlife Service already communicating on both and gearing up to communicate yet more fully as the social media develop and change. 

Calendar

June 14

Nature of Learning Grant Application Deadline

Grants of up to \$10,000 will be awarded on a competitive basis to support education projects focused on the causes and effects of climate change on refuges and citizen science partnership programs. More information at www.nfwf.org/natureoflearning/.

June 21–24

Connecting People with Nature through Birds — training

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, UT. For educators, naturalists, outreach specialists and others

involved in educating people about birds. Details at www.birdday.org/education/training.

Contact Jim_Siegel@fws.gov, 304-876-7479

July 7–9

Grant Writing for Conservation — training

National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV
Contact Linda_Lufkin@fws.gov.

September 1

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grant Application Deadline —

Special Emphasis on Birding Projects www.nfwf.org/ Search for "Friends Group Grant Program"

Updated event information: www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/calendar.html.

FriendsForward

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