

Friends Forward



Spring 2011

National Wildlife Refuge System
www.fws.gov/refuges

From the Chief

“Now or Never”



Greg Siekaniec

Before the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on April 20, 2010, 10-year-old Olivia Bouler of Islip, NY, was just another 5th grader. Then she read about the disaster, “I just sat at the table and

sobbed,” she reported.

And she took action, first by drawing two birds – a sandwich tern and a brown pelican – for the National Audubon Society – and eventually drawing 500 birds that fetched \$200,000 in donations for environmental projects dealing with the oil spill. Today, she is a media darling – having been interviewed by the likes of retired CNN talk show host Larry King, and her book, *Olivia’s Birds Saving the Gulf*, has just been published (www.oliviabouler.net/).

How do we ignite that passion – let’s call it Aldo Leopold’s land ethic – in a million, or 10 million, 5th graders?

We looked at that question in Chapter 4 – the “Human-Nature” chapter – in the draft vision, now being presented to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Directorate as we work toward ratification of a guiding vision for the Refuge System during the July *Conserving the Future* conference in Madison, WI. There is no simple answer.

Certainly children can learn about nature from being on a national wildlife refuge. But many young people don’t

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Debbie McCremsky

Social Media Bring Vision Conference Home Virtually

Each of the nation’s approximately 230 Refuge Friends groups has been invited to send a representative to the *Conserving the Future* conference in Madison, WI, July 10-14. There, a reinvigorated vision will be ratified to guide the Refuge System for the next decade or so.

Scores of break-out sessions, workshops and lectures will be held throughout the four-day conference, along with plenary sessions for the 1,200 people gathered at the Monona Terrace Community and Conference Center. An array of technologies is being put into place to bring Friends into the conference from their own homes and offices.

Four major conference speakers have been confirmed: retired Admiral Thad Allen, national incident commander for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill; historian and prolific author Douglas Brinkley, whose latest book is *The Quiet World: Saving Alaska’s Wilderness Kingdom, 1879-1960*; Sylvia Earle, a former chief scientist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, now a *National Geographic* explorer-in-residence and a widely-read author; and *National Geographic* photographer DeWitt Jones, who is a widely-sought motivational speaker.

Jane Goodall, considered to be the world’s foremost expert on

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Congratulations!

Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge Complex, FL, has been named the 2011 Friends Group of the Year for its extraordinary dedication to developing a strong cooperative relationship among the refuge complex, community, local government agencies and other non-profit organizations.

The most striking example was the Friends' three-year effort to secure funding and public support to purchase Three Sisters Springs, critical winter habitat for the endangered West Indian manatee. The Friends also raised funds to conduct aerial surveys of manatee habitat and purchase a specialized net and truck for manatee rescues.

2011 Volunteer of the Year is **Denis Mudderman**, who has contributed more than 7,000 hours since 2005 at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, MN, during spring, summer and fall, and at Brazoria Refuge, TX, during the winter. Mudderman designed and maintains the Web site for the Tamarac Interpretive Association (www.tamaracfriends.org/), the refuge Friends organization.

Mudderman installed a camera in an active beaver lodge at Tamarac Refuge, providing streaming video to the refuge visitor center and the Friends Web site. He has developed photography workshops, collects oral histories and leads history tours. At Brazoria Refuge, Mudderman creates Discovery Center displays and helps plan the Texas Mid-Coast National Wildlife Refuge Complex Migration Celebration. In 2009, Mudderman received the President's Call to Service Award for the extent and versatility of his service.

Kenneth Litzenberger is Refuge Manager of the Year. As manager of

the Southeast Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Litzenberger demonstrated extraordinary vision and leadership in determining how best to deploy limited staff and critical resources. Litzenberger has worked on 19 national wildlife refuges in five states since he began his career with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1979.

Dave Mauser, Employee of the Year and wildlife biologist at Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex, CA, developed an innovative program to integrate wetlands and commercial agricultural

land at Tule Lake Refuge. Under Mauser's direction, more than 10,000 acres of wetlands have been created and 15,000 acres of farmland converted to organic farmland. Mauser has also been active in the water rights adjudication process, advocating for wetland ecology and waterfowl biology.

The awards, sponsored by the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, were presented at the 76th annual North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference on March 17. 🦋



Shirley Knudsen



USFWS



USFWS



Kelly Blackledge

Clockwise from top left – Friends of Chassahowitzka helped secure funding and support to purchase manatee habitat in Florida. Refuge Manager of the Year Kenneth Litzenberger, Southeastern Louisiana National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Volunteer of the Year Denis Mudderman installed a camera in an active beaver lodge at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge, MN. Refuge Employee of the Year David Mauser, Tule Lake National Wildlife, Refuge, CA.

You Have to Play to Win!

As the Internet grows, so do the number and cleverness of contests and other online fundraising opportunities. Are they worth the effort? It depends.

The Kilauea Point Natural History Association (Kilauea Point National Wildlife Refuge in Hawaii) eagerly accepted an invitation from Hampton Hotels to enter the 2011 Kilauea Lighthouse in its Save-A-Landmark contest (www.hamptonlandmarks.com/).

Anyone can nominate a landmark for consideration and everyone is encouraged to vote online to select the winners. The Kilauea Point Natural History Association pulled out all the stops “to get the word out and facilitate voting in as many ways as possible,” said the association’s executive director Jane Hoffman: a Facebook page, postal and email, a voting station at the visitor center, posters around Kauai Island, “bag stuffers” about the contest with every purchase at the visitor center bookstore.

Enthusiasm for the contest spread quickly. The local electric company included voting information with every bill. The Hawaii Community Foundation offered an unsolicited and unrestricted grant to the Association. The general manager of a rival hotel chain put a voting station next to his employee lunch room.

Voting lasted a month; the work paid off in many ways. Not only is the Lighthouse one of the five national winners in 2011, but record numbers of people clicked the “Donate Now” buttons on the Web sites for both the lighthouse and the Friends – and the Friends gained members in ten countries.

It was well worth participating, said Hoffman, even though it was

exhausting and occurred at one of the busiest times of the year for the Association. “But I found time to vote every day, using my Blackberry to cast votes while waiting in stores, airports, waiting rooms, even during TV commercials.”

Vote Now! Vote Often!

The Pepsi Refresh Challenge (www.refresheverything.com/) and Kickstarter (www.kickstarter.com) also require online voting. Students from Allamakee Community High School in Waukon, Iowa, wanted a \$5,000 Pepsi grant for a clean-up project at the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. The students produced a YouTube video about a plastic bottle being dropped from a school backpack, rolling along the road and ending up in the river. Although the group did not win the contest, refuge biologist Tim Loose says a lot of students learned about the need to clean up the river. Loose says the challenges that appear to win have a large group of well-organized people willing to vote every day. “Yes, you need to vote every day!” emphasizes Loose.

Kickstarter involves online donations rather than votes. Teens at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, CT, wanted to raise \$3,000 to bring the 50th anniversary photography exhibit from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the museum. The Youth@Bruce Committee not only raised more than their \$3,000 goal online, they received



Kilauea Point Lighthouse, HI, won the Hampton Hotels 2011 Save-a-Landmark Contest.

another \$2,000 in donations sent by mail, enabling them to mount the photography exhibit and help plan a variety of related educational events. There was an “ah-ha” moment when they realized some of their hard-earned funds needed to be spent on the incentives they had offered contributors – museum memberships, tickets to a special event, copies of *Arctic Sanctuary: Images from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*.

On a very local level, Friends of Sunhaze Meadows in Maine is a regular write-in candidate for a Bangor Savings Bank contest to distribute funds to community organizations. Friends president Jan Beckett says the benefit is getting Friends involved and trying to do something for the refuge. “May never win but still worth the try!” 🦋



from friend to friend

share your
success
stories

LOUISIANA

Twenty volunteers from Shell Oil Company brought their talents on two occasions to the Bayou Pierre Unit of Red River National Wildlife Refuge. From office worker to geologist, project engineer to supervisor, they helped the Friends of the Red River Refuge take a giant step forward in renovation of a 1930s farmhouse. Questar Exploration brought a bus load of volunteers from Oklahoma.

Shell initially contacted The Nature Conservancy to see how to engage volunteers. One email led to another and Friends vice president Lynn Stewart offered a “wish list” from the Friends’ Web site (www.friendsofredriver.org/volunteer.html). Two work days were organized with Shell employees from Houston. Shell also donated \$5,000 to the Friends. The volunteers demolished the kitchen, built an accessible bathroom, installed a ceiling fan, sanded, painted – and ate a homemade lunch compliments of a Friend.

“It makes a huge impact when such a large group lends a collective hand,” said Friends president Nancy Menasco. With additional help from local high school and middle school students, Menasco says about 2,000 volunteer hours have been devoted to the restoration project. Menasco organizes the work by posting a detailed list of tasks in each room of the farmhouse, so anyone can walk in and get to work.



Lynn Stewart

A Shell employee volunteered to help the Friends of Red River National Wildlife Refuge renovate an old farmhouse.

The Friends plan to use the restored farmhouse as a visitor and education center on the remote Bayou Pierre Unit and also as housing for researchers from nearby Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA.

WASHINGTON

“Put on your hawk eyes and leave the city behind,” says the friendly voice to visitors driving the River S Discovery Auto Tour Route at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, a 4.2-mile loop that is open daily during daylight

hours. The Friends created two audio tours – fall/winter and spring/summer – available as podcasts from iTunes and also on CDs. (www.ridgefieldfriends.org/index.php)

Visitors can borrow the CDs from a contact station at the start of the tour route. Friends executive director Marguerite Hills says not only are the CDs routinely returned, but they are incredibly well received, based on a feedback form that accompanies each CD. Hills adds that hundreds of visitors have subsequently expressed interest in receiving regular information about the refuge.

The CDs were created with a \$5,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The funds paid for a scriptwriter who worked with refuge staff and a sound lab that provided services at cost. Volunteers voiced the tapes after training from a drama coach, also a volunteer.

The scripts are informative but often lighthearted: “Everyone but the driver should look into the tree canopy now...” says one.

Bird calls match each of 14 markers along the route.



Listeners are reminded that Ridgefield Refuge is part of a system of more than 550 wildlife refuges. They are also encouraged to look at the bird sightings listed at the contact station and consider volunteering.

FLORIDA

By Pam Darty, refuge ranger

Eight men carried timbers down the River Trail leading to the historic Suwannee River. Rays of sunlight pierced through the bottomland hardwoods as Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge forester Daniel Barrand started up the auger. The River Trail at refuge on Florida's Gulf coast was about to become a tree trail, with engraved signs on pine posts identifying trees along the way.

Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges, led by board director John Thalacker, worked with Barrand to identify the trees. There were lively discussions about the common names of some trees being associated with historic uses such as the *carpinus caroliniana* or hornbeam, once used for oxen yokes.

"As time goes on, and more foliage is spotted, we hope to add other signs," says Thalacker. "The whole

objective is for Floridians and visitors to become acquainted with the refuge as a great outdoor resource in our own backyard."

The Friends butterfly garden was also refreshed during the work day. False rosemary, blanket flower, passion fruit and coral honeysuckle were showing off bright colors by early March.

OREGON

Like other heavily visited refuge areas, Haystack Rock is in danger of being "loved to death" by as many as 200,000 visitors a year. School groups travel long distances to explore its delicate marine gardens. Above the high tide line, the rock provides nesting habitat for six seabird species. As one of 1,853 islands, reefs and rocks in the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge, the upper rock is wilderness, off limits to visitors.

To educate and monitor visitors, the Friends of Haystack Rock joined the refuge, the state, the town of Cannon Beach and conservation groups to fund the Haystack Rock Awareness Program (HRAP). A graduate student's survey found that

visitors who learned about Haystack Rock's ecology before their visit were more respectful of the resources. But delivering such pre-visit education to visitors is a challenge.

The Friends and HRAP came up with a 21st century strategy: they made a video about "tide pool etiquette" and posted it on YouTube: <http://bit.ly/f2e9xd>.

Dave Pastor, a professional videographer and Friends board member, filmed and edited the eight-minute video. Pastor donated the equipment while HRAP staffer Donna Lenius wrote the script. With all the participants donating their time, the video cost HRAP nothing.

When teachers plan a visit, HRAP staffers send them a link to the video, which provides an introduction to coastal biology and species identification as well as reminders to walk only on sand or bare rocks. 🐦



The Haystack Rock Awareness Program encourages visitors to tread gently on reefs and rocks of the Oregon Islands National Wildlife Refuge.



Refuge forester Daniel Barrand and botanist Friend Ed Blazey identify trees along the River Trail at Lower Suwannee Refuge, FL.

Donna Lenius

Pam Darty

The Book Shelf

B*ring On the Birds*, written and illustrated by Susan Stockdale (Peachtree Publishers, 2011), mixes rhymes and fun facts with elegant, stylized paintings to introduce children to familiar and exotic birds, including owls and cranes, puffins and hummingbirds, woodpeckers and roadrunners. 



Susan Stockdale

Great blue heron and mottled duck

Calendar

June 4

National Trails Day

www.americanhiking.org/ntd.aspx

July 10 – 17

Conserving the Future Conference, Madison, WI

www.americaswildlife.org

July 19

Take Pride in America Awards ceremony (www.takepride.gov/)

September 2

National Fish and Wildlife Fund

grant deadline – emphasis on birding (www.nfwf.org – Search “Friends grants”) or contact Michael_Carlo@fws.gov

September 24

National Public Lands Day

www.publiclandsday.org/

October 9 – 15

National Wildlife Refuge Week

New National Friends Coordinator



USFWS

Joanna Webb has joined the Refuge System’s Division of Visitor Services and Communications as the new national Friends and partnership

coordinator. She started her U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service career at Patuxent Research Refuge, MD, and was mostly recently a refuge ranger at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, FL.

Webb will focus on building national training, mentoring and grant support programs for both Friends and staff working directly with Friends. She also will seek new partnerships for visitor services programs.

“I hope to hear from as many Friends and staff as possible,” says Webb, as she begins to evaluate the Friends Academy, Friends training courses at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV, and the Friends mentoring program. Feel free to contact her at 703-358-2392 or Joanna_Webb@fws.gov. 

Social Media Bring Vision Conference Home Virtually—Continued from page 1

chimpanzees, won’t appear in person. Instead, she will send a video message. Others are also expected to send their messages electronically.

The day-by-day conference schedule will be posted www.AmericasWildlife.org well before the conference starts. The Web site will also be a continuous avenue for nationwide participation. Live streaming video will be aired at www.AmericasWildlife.org/live.

During plenary sessions, Friends will be able to submit questions from their own computers as speakers also take questions from the floor. Blogs will be routinely updated from

the conference and posted at www.AmericasWildlife.org/blog. Scores of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees will act as reporters throughout the conference, creating videos and writing blogs, tweets and Facebook entries about plenary sessions and workshops. Photos will be continuously posted on Flickr.

“This may well be a first for the Fish and Wildlife Service,” said Refuge System Chief Greg Siekaniec.

“Up to now, the *Conserving the Future* process has been the most transparent we could create as core teams posted their outlines online and the draft vision drew comments

for about 60 days online. The bold ideas forum drew thousands of votes online as we looked for new directions for the Refuge System. Now, by using the latest in technology, we will be bringing thousands of people into the ratification process while we keep our carbon footprint as small as possible,” Siekaniec continued.

The July-August issue of *Refuge Update*, the Refuge System’s bimonthly newsletter, will focus on the conference. It will be available in early July at www.fws.gov/refuges/. 

Q&A *send us your questions*

FAQ: Do Friends organizations award scholarships?

Several Friends organizations take great pride in using hard-earned funds for scholarships to encourage young people to pursue careers in conversation.

The Friends of the Prairie Learning Center at Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, IA, is offering its second annual \$1,000 scholarship to a senior at Prairie City Monroe High School. As community coordinator for the Friends, Joan Van Gorp says refuge staff helped identify a list of college majors in natural resources. The Friends work through a national organization called Dollars for Scholars (<http://scholarshipamerica.org/dfs.php>) which matches the Friends contribution and manages all financial transactions with the winning student. The Friends portion of the scholarship may be renewed each year.

The Kilauea Point Natural History Association, HI, is using Facebook



The path to a career in conservation is aided by Friends scholarships. (Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, WA)

for the first time to advertise its Daniel Moriarty Memorial Scholarship, named in memory of a former refuge manager. One or two scholarships of \$2 - \$3,000 are given each year to students in Hawaii – ideally from Kauai – who have been involved in environmental community service projects.

The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, WA, provides two \$1,000 awards each year to seniors in Pacific County, WA, majoring in conservation or environment fields.

The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society, the Friends organization for the J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, FL, is offering its first permanently endowed scholarship this year, funded by a \$50,000 gift from a longtime Friend and volunteer.

This new Jane Werner Environmental Scholarship is one of five separate scholarships managed by the Society this year. The Society will establish a permanent scholarship with a minimum donation of \$10,000. The Richard Bailey and Jack & Dolores Clarke Scholarships are funded with one-time donations. A concessionaire at the refuge, Tarpon Bay Explorers, has offered two annual \$1,000 scholarships for the past six years. Last year, the Society’s executive director Birgit Vertesch says the caliber of the applicant pool for the Tarpon Bay scholarships was so strong that the Society provided two additional \$1,000 awards.

Not only do these scholarships provide valuable funds to students, says Vertesch, but “they also show potential donors about the chance to do something similar for themselves or to honor loved ones. The scholarships also showcase the importance we attach to cultivating the next generation of environmental leaders.”

Chiefs Corner—Continued from page 1

but rather in cities where chances are slim to hunt, fish or just turn over a rock to see what’s underneath. How do they experience and learn to appreciate nature when the roar of traffic obliterates the song of a bird?

Technology may be one answer – and one that some wildlife refuges have used successfully. Other answers? We have to enlist our allies – Refuge Friends, schools, communities, faith-

based organizations – to reach the next generation of conservationists.

One participant on the *Conserving the Future* Web site (<http://americaswildlife.org/>) recalled the youngster who came to a refuge for her fourth trip with her elementary class and asked, “Can we just go exploring today?”

A desire to explore is just what we want to encourage, but how we do that is a question still being explored. After all, we

want to create opportunities for millions of youngsters who, like Olivia Bouler, are driven to help the environment. “We are houseguests on this earth, and we’re very messy,” said Olivia. “It’s time to clean up. Now or never.”

See “Flat Blue” Fly Nationwide



Love “Flat Stanley” – that fanciful, storybook, cut-out character who has

traveled the nation and the world? Then take a look at Flat Blue – the traveling Blue Goose that will send you skyward, and will be part of the *Conserving the Future* conference in mid-July in Madison, WI.

You can find Flat Blue online, <http://americaswildlife.org/flatblue/>, where you will see an easy-to-print version of the Blue Goose, the Refuge System’s decades-old symbol of conservation.

Print Flat Blue and take him on an adventure, including your favorite spots on any wildlife refuge. Introduce Flat Blue to your local schools, which

can include Flat Blue in their curricula and perhaps take their classes to wildlife refuges to see nature up close, maybe even meet staff.

Make sure to take a photo and tell the story of your adventure with Flat Blue. Upload photos to Flickr or your Facebook page. Share stories online: <http://americaswildlife.org/flatblue/>. 

America’s WILD READ

Looking for a great read? The National Conservation Training Center has just the title: *Anthill*, a novel by renowned biologist and conservationist E. O. Wilson.

The training center is leading a virtual book club – called America’s WILD READ at www.AmericasWildlife.org/WildRead –

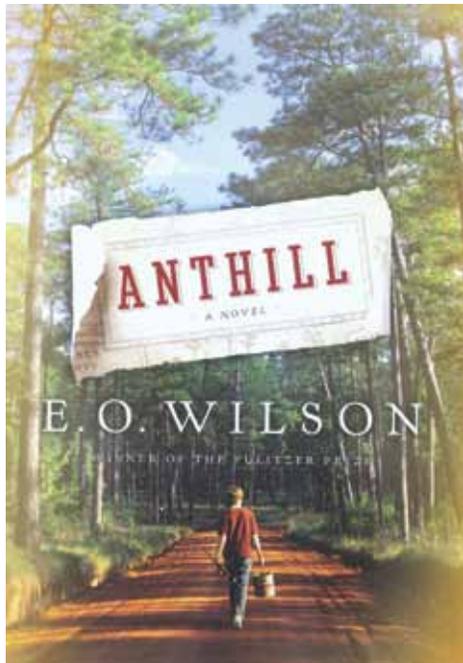
as a lead-up to the *Conserving the Future* conference. Moderators will begin facilitating online discussions on June 1.

Participants will also be reading Aldo Leopold’s essay “Thinking Like a Mountain” and a contemporary essay by Curt Meine.

Anthill is a magical tale about a boy who grows up determined to save the world from its most savage ecological predator: human beings.

Scholars, retired Refuge System leaders, poets, environmental authors and educators will be the moderators, who will respond to readers’ insights and help explore deeper themes in the book and essays. “By reading epic stories about a sense of place in nature, Americans can discover deeper insights about themselves and the world around them,” said Karene Motivans, a course leader at the training center who conceptualized

the online book club. Anne Post, chief librarian, and Sarah Gannon-Nagle, training center communications manager, are also on the team. 



The virtual book club “America’s Wild Read” will be discussing E.O. Wilson’s novel *Anthill*.

FriendsForward

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