

# Friends Forward



Winter 2012

National Wildlife Refuge System  
[www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges)

From the Chief

## Taking the Helm with Vision as Guide



Jim Kurth

I have stepped into the best job I can imagine during a most exciting time—chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System—just as all the stars have aligned for us.

The Refuge

System has rock solid support within top leadership. For the first time in my memory, we have a Fish and Wildlife Service Director—Dan Ashe—who says he has “refuges in his blood.” Not only did Dan serve as Refuge System chief from 1998 to 2003, but his father worked for decades for the Service. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar talks about wildlife refuges almost as often as I do.

And we have a Refuge Friends movement that is strong, vibrant and growing.

The hugely successful *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation* vision process engendered an unprecedented national conversation about conservation. Now we are moving smartly forward on implementation. Through *Conserving the Future*, we are poised to improve our science and resource stewardship. We are poised to launch an urban refuge initiative that will enable wildlife refuges to be more relevant to a broader cross-section

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Naturally Wild!

[www.fws.gov/refuges](http://www.fws.gov/refuges)

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## Vision Becoming Reality

Nine teams have been meeting over the past two months as they forge ahead to begin implementing the 24 recommendations in *Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation*, now online at [americaswildlife.org](http://americaswildlife.org), where the Executive Implementation Council has also posted the guiding Implementation Plan.

The process of building the *Conserving the Future* vision was one of the most transparent that government has undertaken. Now, the Refuge System plans to adopt that same transparency during

implementation. *Conserving the Future* will guide the National Wildlife Refuge System for the next decade, based on three pillars: wildlife and wildlands, a connected conservation constituency, and leading conservation into the future. Implementation is expected to be substantially complete within the next five years.

“The vision calls for us to be proactive in the face of vast changes in our climate, the landscape, and in the fabric of the American people and economy,” says Dan Ashe, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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## New Refuge Established

The 556th unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System has been established in central Florida. The Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area protects one of the last remaining grassland and longleaf pine savanna landscapes in eastern North America.

Two-thirds of the acreage—100,000 acres north of Lake Okeechobee—will be protected through conservation easements purchased from willing sellers. With easements, private landowners retain ownership of their land, as well as the ability to continue farming or ranching the land. The easements ensure the land could not be subdivided or developed.

“This is an outstanding example of the 21st century approach to conservation envisioned by President Obama when he unveiled his



Carlton Ward, Jr./friendsforward.com

*A new national wildlife refuge will protect the central Florida landscape.*

America’s Great Outdoors initiative last year,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “Working in close partnership with landowners, we are taking a major step to

safeguard the long-term health of the Everglades in the Kissimmee Valley, while ensuring the area’s ranching and farming heritage and economy remain strong.”

## New Faces in Washington

**John Segar** has been named chief of the Refuge System Fire Management Branch, based in Boise, ID. Segar started working as a wildland firefighter in 1979 while studying forest management at Virginia Tech. He came to the Service in 1992 as a zone fire management officer at Fort Niobrara/Valentine National Wildlife Refuge Complex, NE.

**Scott Covington** is the new Refuge System energy program coordinator. He will assist refuges with all aspects of energy development, with oil and gas issues now at the forefront. Covington began his career as a fisheries biologist in Vermont and Wyoming, later taking a position primarily addressing energy development for Wyoming.

**Kim Trust** is the new chief of the Branch of Wildlife Resources. She began her Service career in the environmental contaminants program in Alaska in 1993, where she provided technical assistance to refuges

throughout south-central Alaska. Most recently, she coordinated non-game and avian health and disease programs in the Division of Migratory Bird Management.

### 2012 National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Academy

The Refuge System is seeking applications for Friends Academy 5, to be held at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia the week of July 22. Friends leaders will gain a boarder understanding of the National Wildlife Refuge System and enhance their skills. All expenses are paid for by the Refuge System.

Refuge Friends in board or employee positions who have demonstrated excellence and a strong commitment to their Friends organization are encouraged to apply; only one application per Friends organization. The application announcement will be online at [www.fws.gov/refuges/friends](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends) in early March and will be open for 30 days. For more information, contact the National Friends Coordinator at 703-358-2392 or [joanna\\_webb@fws.gov](mailto:joanna_webb@fws.gov). See page 9 for more about the 2011 Friends Academy.

# Protecting Habitat When the Sea Rises

By Heather Dewar

When Teddy Roosevelt created the first national wildlife refuge at Florida's Pelican Island in 1903, plume hunters were the main threat to the rookery island's birds. Warden Paul Kroegel fought back with simple weapons: a boat and a gun.

Now Pelican Island Refuge faces subtler threats, including a significant sea level rise by 2100. Refuge Manager Charlie Pelizza says salt-tolerant mangrove trees will protect part of Pelican Island; but if sea level rises more than one meter, everything within the refuge's original 5.5 acres will be underwater.

Pelizza knows some parts of the modern 5,400-acre refuge will be lost to the sea. But he and refuge partners are protecting its essential habitats by drawing information from a new weapon: the Sea Level Affecting Marshes Model, or SLAMM.

Since 2005 the Service has used this computer model to predict how sea level rise will affect coastal refuges. Coastal marshes are especially vulnerable to sea level rise, which can erode underwater banks, drown vegetation and cause increased salinity that kills plants.

SLAMM was developed in 1989 to predict these changes. Now in version 6, it is "the workhorse model for sea level rise planning on the Refuge System," says conservation biologist Brian Czech, the SLAMM analysis coordinator in the Refuge System's Division of Natural Resources and Conservation Planning.

The model starts with a landscape image and divides it into small cells, like pixels in a digital photograph. Elevation data are used to make



Sea turtle nests are exposed by higher tides at Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, SC.

the image three-dimensional. Each cell is coded as open water, beach, tidal flat, wetland or high ground. As the computer runs through various scenarios, the cells' coding changes and a new image emerges, showing the land as it would be at various sea heights.

Factors that go into the analysis include erosion, inundation, saturation of soils, barrier island overwash by storms, and accretion of sediment. Accretion is often the hardest to estimate and a source of uncertainty, Czech says. To get accretion data, scientists need semi-permanent instrument arrays that cost about \$10,000 apiece to set up and monitor. Only 30 refuges have them.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and its contractors have projected sea level rise effects for 132 of the 171 coastal refuges. Two more studies are underway. Other coastal

refuges won't be modeled because they don't have marshy coasts or lack the necessary elevation data.

Pelican Island Refuge is using SLAMM results to guide restoration of degraded wetlands on the refuge's mainland portion. The results are also useful in land acquisition and for public outreach on climate change.

Now the Service is using SLAMM data from all 75 Atlantic coast refuges to assess how sea level rise will change migratory bird habitats along the Atlantic Flyway. Similar multi-refuge analyses are planned for the other major flyways in future years.

*Heather Dewar is a writer in the Refuge System Branch of Communications.* 



# from friend to friend

share your  
success  
stories

## FLORIDA

**T**welve water trails at Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges are now featured on laminated paddling guides for visitors in kayaks and canoes. “We are not simply providing recreational access to paddlers,” says Peg Hall, a paddling project organizer with the **Friends of the Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys Refuges**. “We are providing a significant new connection between the people who live around here and the refuges.”

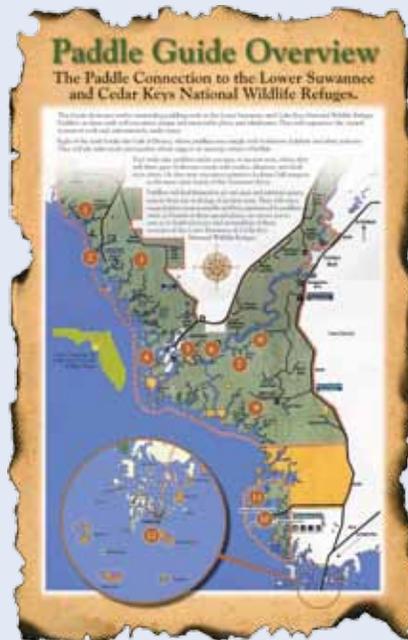
The front of each 11 x 17 guide shows a map, trail length, required skill level, time to paddle and directions. The back describes the various biozones along the trail—open water, salt marsh, transition marsh, and maritime hammock along the Shired Creek trail, for example.

The \$10,000 project was funded by the refuge and executed by Friends. Visitors will borrow the guides and leave a deposit to cover the replacement cost. “Such a project must meet a clearly defined purpose that ties directly to the Friends’ goals as an organization,” advises Hall. Mark Gluckman—an avid paddler who originated the idea—believes the guides would work wherever there are safe waters to paddle. “Kayaking is a great way to experience nature,” says Gluckman. “It’s a fast growing sport, good exercise and anyone can do it.”

Gluckman also expects the Friends to form partnerships with local businesses willing to make the guides available, since the refuge headquarters is remote from most of the paddling sites. Hall’s goal is for the Friends to offer guided paddle trips and an interactive website where paddlers can add information about their refuge experiences.

## SOUTH CAROLINA

**T**he mission of the **Friends of Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge** is to support the



*Friends of Lower Suwannee and Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges created 12 guides to paddling trails on the refuges.*

refuge in protecting and preserving the longleaf-wiregrass ecosystem, in part by offering educational and civic activities. “Longleaf and Lunch”—a landowner demonstration day focused on managing longleaf pine—fit the bill perfectly.

Invitations to the free half-day event in October were sent to more than 200 area landowners. The event was also advertised on a Web site and in two local newspaper articles. Registration was limited to 25 people, the capacity of two vans provided by the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, a member of the Sandhills Longleaf Pine Conservation Partnership. The partnership—which includes the Friends and a variety of other government agencies and nonprofit organizations—strives to maintain, improve and establish the longleaf pine system in parts of South Carolina. Several partners contributed time, knowledge or funds for the landowner event.

Participants visited private lands in various stages of restoration—newly planted, 10 or 20 years old, regularly burned—and learned about longleaf pine management. Presentations by two attorneys on the tax implications of conservation easements were especially popular. Refuge manager Lyne Askins said, “The audience was very engaged and asked many questions. The event generated a lot of support for longleaf pine—and directly supported the key functions of the Friends.”

## MISSOURI AND FLORIDA

**T**he **Friends of Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge**, MO, collaborates with Missouri River Relief to offer a free, monthly speaker series featuring experts who discuss river issues, biology, hydrology and history. Topics have ranged from the Lewis & Clark expedition to mussels, pollinators,

bats and white nose syndrome, vireo migrations and the Osage Indians.

The series has expanded from a cabin on the refuge to two restaurants in Rocheport and Kansas City, with two additional presentations held in St. Louis. The speakers volunteer and the restaurants host the events at no charge.

Big Muddy Refuge Manager Tim Haller says the speaker series generates “networking opportunities with numerous professionals and interest groups involved in natural resource management. Most speakers have a correlation with the Missouri River which provides the life line of the refuge.”

The “**Ding**” Darling Wildlife Society, FL, partners with The Sanctuary Golf Club, where free weekly lectures are regularly filled to capacity (100 people); this year, the lecture will be presented twice—10 a.m. and 1 p.m. on Fridays from January through March.

The lecture series was started eight years ago as a way to bring people back to the J. N. “Ding” Darling

National Wildlife Refuge after Hurricane Charley. “It has proven to be very effective in bringing people to the education center and gaining some new members,” says executive director Birgie Vertesch.

The first lecture of 2012 featured Anne Morkill, manager of the Florida Keys National Wildlife Refuge Complex, speaking on climate change. Larry Richardson, a wildlife biologist and photographer at Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge, will talk this year about using remote cameras to capture images of the Florida panther. Speaker topics are frequently scheduled to coincide with new exhibits or special events at the refuge.

## WISCONSIN

“It’s all about relationships,” says Tom Kerr, project leader at St. Croix Wetland Management District, to explain the many successes of the relatively new **Friends of the St. Croix WMD**. Established in July 2010, the group’s 50 members have



*Friends of the St Croix Wetland Management District, WI, offered patches for Boy Scout Conservation Day.*

generated several thousand dollars worth of grants, organized two Friends and Neighbors Night Out events and hosted 450 Boy Scouts and their families for the district’s first Conservation Day.

The local high school principal and two biology teachers came to the first Friends and Neighbors Night Out in 2010, leading to a service learning day when Friends and students planted 4,000 plugs of prairie forbs.

When a local Scout leader was invited to a Friends meeting, the idea for Conservation Day was born. The event was funded with grants from the WalMart Foundation, the National Wild Turkey Federation and others. A neighboring farmer offered his field for parking. There were hikes and exhibits as well as opportunities to remove invasive buckthorn and earn merit badges.

The real value of Conservation Day, says Kerr, was getting “450 people on *their* wetland production area where they could learn what the Service is doing and experience a beautiful day outside. It’s the first step in stewardship of our WPAs.” After the event, the Friends signed up two new members and the WMD Facebook page signed up 35 new fans. 



*The Friends of Big Muddy National Wildlife Refuge, MO, sponsors a popular speaker series on the biology and history of the Missouri River.*

Steve Hillebrand

## It Pays to Conserve

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service contributed about \$4.2 billion in economic activity and supported more than 32,000 private sector jobs as a result of national wildlife refuges and other public lands managed by the Service, according to a recent report commissioned by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The report also shows that the total value of ecosystem services provided by habitat in the Refuge System is more than \$32 billion each year. Ecosystem services include all the functions performed by nature that benefit people, such as climate regulation, waste treatment, water supply, and carbon sequestration, among others.

Produced by Southwick Associates, the 2011 report includes data on the economic value of natural resource conservation, outdoor recreation and historic preservation. All together, the economic impact in the United States—including from the Refuge System—is \$1.06 trillion dollars—more than the gross domestic product of Australia.

### Key findings:

- Outdoor recreation generates \$88 billion in federal and state



Laura Hubers

*Outdoor recreation—including skiing at Waubay National Wildlife Refuge, SD—generates \$88 billion in federal and state tax revenue.*

tax revenue. The study measured camping and skiing as well as hunting, fishing and wildlife observation.

- The property value of homes near parks and protected areas is typically about 20 percent higher than similar homes elsewhere.
- About \$2 billion was spent on construction and maintenance activities related to recreation

and conservation, supporting about 41,000 jobs.

- \$222 million spent by the Department of the Interior on land acquisition contributed about \$427 million in economic activity and supported about 3,000 jobs.

The full report is available online at <http://bit.ly/uYl1co>.

## From the Chief—Taking the Helm with Vision as Guide—Continued from page 1

of Americans. And we are poised to mentor new conservation leaders to help our Refuge Friends blossom in a 21st century America.

As a student of Refuge System history, I well appreciate the role that Refuge System Chiefs—men like J. Clark Salyer, Dan Ashe and Greg Siekaniec—have played in the conservation of our nation's resources. But every chief needs a good deputy: That is why I

selected Cynthia Martinez, an 18-year veteran of the Service and a former manager at the Desert National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Nevada. She came to the Washington Office about 18 months ago to become chief of the Division of Visitor Services and Communications. She oversaw the team that created the ground-breaking *Conserving the Future* process. She began her Service career as a SCEP in the Arizona Ecological

Services Field Office. She brings exceptional experience and a boatload of energy.

Cynthia has worked directly with Friends during her years at wildlife refuges. She understands as I do the enormous and pivotal role of Refuge Friends organizations. With your help and with *Conserving the Future* as our guiding document, we can move conservation to new heights.

## Vision Becoming Reality—Continued from page 1

Implementation of the recommendations will be complex. Some actions may require policy or organizational change. Some require a review of ongoing activities. Others may initiate broad new programs.

Jim Kurth, chief of the Refuge System, chairs the Executive Implementation Council, which includes top leadership in the Service's eight regions and in the Refuge System's headquarters. Service employees make up the nine implementation teams—planning; strategic growth; scientific excellence; community partnerships; urban wildlife refuge initiative; communications; hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation; interpretation and environmental education; and leadership development.

Each team is developing work plans and strategies to implement specific recommendations. Quarterly progress reports will be available online at [americaswildlife.org](http://americaswildlife.org).

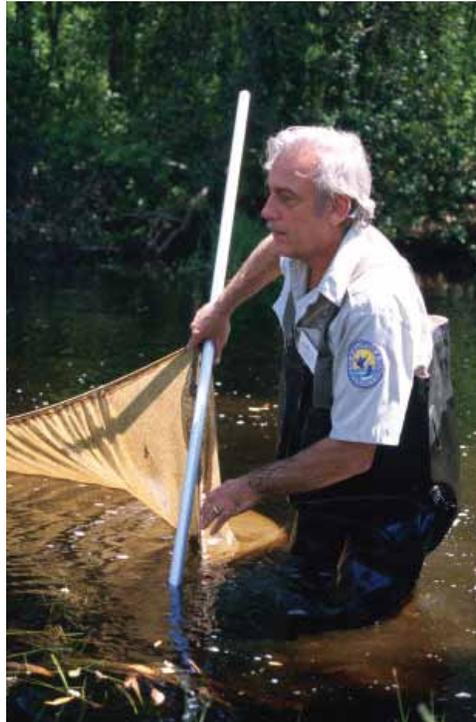
### Community Partnerships

The Community Partnerships team is working on the two recommendations that directly affect Friends and volunteers:

**Recommendation 11:** Develop and nurture active and vibrant Friends groups or community partnerships for every staffed refuge or refuge complex.

**Recommendation 12:** Develop a national strategy for recruiting, coordinating and supporting a more self-sustaining volunteer corps, while creating new opportunities for community involvement in implementing refuge priorities.

Marge Kolar, refuge chief in the Pacific Southwest, asked to co-chair this team because “I have felt throughout my career that



*A volunteer seins for aquatic wildlife at Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, GA.*

volunteers and Friends are among the most important assets we have as refuge managers and we need to encourage and support them.” Her co-chair is Ken Grannemann, Washington Office Division of Information Technology and Management chief.

The team has already identified four key projects or objectives:

- Develop a “how to” handbook for staff who work with Friends, volunteers and community partnerships.
- Incorporate Friends and community partnerships into a national strategic plan already being drafted for volunteers.
- Improve training and mentoring both for Friends and staff.
- Provide enhanced, easily accessible web-based tools for Friends, volunteers and

community partners, such as a comprehensive recordkeeping system for volunteers.

“We have a two-pronged recommendation related to Friends groups. One is to ensure vibrant and active Friends groups and the second is to establish new groups,” says Grannemann, “but our initial focus will be on promoting the vibrancy of existing groups.”

Friends groups are independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations whose specific mission is to support a particular refuge or refuges. Community partners are other groups that have a formal relationship with a refuge to pursue common objectives. The Community Partnerships team plans an online survey of refuge managers to help determine opportunities for improved work with volunteers, Friends and community partners.

The team also will be working to reinvigorate and expand the volunteer program so local communities are more aware of the benefits of having a refuge in the area and more people become involved in stewardship of refuge resources. An expanded pool of volunteers is also envisioned as a source of future Friends members.

“We’re very interested in providing the support Friends need,” adds Kolar, who says the implementation team has been reading all the comments posted on the Web site and discussed during the conference. Friends may continue to share ideas with her at [Margaret\\_Kolar@fws.gov](mailto:Margaret_Kolar@fws.gov). 🦋

# Success Begins in the Board Room

By Joanna Webb

How often do you attend meetings that run too long, are dispiriting, lack organization or seem to be entirely pointless? Bad meetings waste time, wear people down, cause lack of attendance, and often result in decisions that lack overall buy-in for ultimate success. And even worse, we have come to accept bad meetings as part of normal operating procedures.

It's very likely that if you aren't putting energy and time into planning and holding productive meetings, then chances are your projects outside the board room lack effectiveness.

Here are a few important strategies to improve your meeting effectiveness:

- 1) Participants should be reminded at least one week in advance with an announcement that includes the purpose, a draft agenda, location, start and end times, minutes from the previous meeting, and a recap of action items.

- If a vote is needed, ensure the necessary number of board members will be present.

- If the meeting is not about lobbying or soliciting donations, ensure the refuge manager and the Service liaison receive an invitation.

- 2) Start on time, stick to the agenda and end on time.
- 3) Jointly develop a set of ground rules and review them prior to the start of every meeting.
- 4) Silence does not mean consent. Ask every attendee for his/her opinion prior to making a decision.
- 5) Capture decisions and action items in writing. Ensure that the notes are sent out within a week of the meeting.
- 6) Five minutes before the meeting is scheduled to end, summarize



Greg Siekaniec, deputy director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, leads a meeting at the 2011 Friends Academy.

decisions, set a date for the next meeting, draft an agenda for the next meeting, and evaluate the meeting by asking participants what went well and where improvements could be made.

For additional help and resources, feel free to contact Joanna at 703-358-2392 or Joanna\_Webb@fws.gov. Joanna is national Friends and partners coordinator for the Refuge System. 

## Q&A send us your questions

### Why Bother with a Strategic Plan?

By Susan Snider

The thought of writing a strategic plan can be a daunting prospect. Let's focus on why a strategic plan is important for any size

organization, what resources are needed to create one.

A good strategic plan should clearly reflect the Friends' vision, values and mission as well as milestones for measuring success. A good plan will also foster communication, build commitment and set priorities. From the strategic plan will flow a business plan, which details the operational requirements (revenue and expenses) for implementing the plan over the next one to three years. The strategic plan also provides

consistency in developing marketing and fundraising materials.

Developing a strategic plan can take anywhere from one day to one year depending upon available resources, including time, money and the number of mission-related issues for which critical choices need to be made. Start by answering the question, "Why does the Friends group exist?" The answer will direct the development of all other aspects

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# Meeting Friends

By Katie McVey

In October 2011, more than two dozen Friends leaders gathered at the National Training Conservation Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, WV, for the 4th Annual Friends Academy. I was at NCTC at the same time for the Refuge Management Academy, a three-week course for new and aspiring refuge managers. My class had the good fortune to share two sessions with Friends.

We were treated to an inspiring speech by former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service director Lynn Greenwalt, who spoke of a

“conservation family” and identified refuges with both struggles and successes. He reminded us of the path we need to take to “save dirt” in the 21st century, and it resonated with me, the refuge staff and Friends at my dinner table.

In our next session, Friends and refuge staff shared one major goal they had for their refuge within the next two years. It was hard to tell Friends from staff. The goal was always to enhance the refuge. Main themes included increased communication and transparency between Friends and staff, reasonable expectations for when

accomplishments can be achieved, better use of Friends’ skill sets, and remembering that we are on the same team.

Jeramie Strickland, wildlife biologist at Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge, said, “Personally, I feel that our Friends group (and the national Friends network) is a critical component to our station’s and the entire Refuge System’s success.”

*Katie McVey is wildlife refuge specialist at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Utah.* 

## Reflections on Friends Academy



*Friends of Maine Seabird Islands, one of 24 Friends groups represented at the 2011 Academy, helps Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge protect fragile seabirds like the Atlantic puffin.*

“The Friends of Dahomey started a Facebook page and a blog; we are upgrading our webpage, we have initiated efforts to collaborate more closely with other community organizations. All of

these are efforts to increase communication with our members and engage more of them in our projects and to recruit more members from a wider range of people in the community.” *Alan Barto, Friends of Dahomey Refuge, MS*

“We are trying to stop approaching every project as if the Friends’ membership is the only interested group. Working with partners expands our reach and can increase the resources available to us.” *Deb Staal, Friends of Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge, ID*

“Our Friends group at Dungeness does not have unique problems... We already had plans to restart the newsletter and develop a Web site. When I returned from the Academy, I was very energized to get things going, so we did just that.” *Kermit Reister, Friends of Dungeness Refuge, WA*

“The value of the sessions was realizing that we all struggle with similar items and learn from others’ experiences. I was able to share start-up successes and other ideas for beginning our own nature store.” *Stephanie Martin, Friends of Maine Seabird Islands, ME* 

## Diversity in Birding

According to the 2010 census, more than 35 percent of Americans fall into “non-white” categories of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. A 2006 report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service showed that these groups made up less than 10 percent of the birdwatching community. A regional Focus on Diversity conference at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum, PA, in October 2011, set out to change that. Nationally known birder and author Kenn Kaufman noted that “if we’re going to have protection for places like this refuge, we need to have a lot more people interested in birds.”

Gary Stolz, manager of Heinz Refuge, added that “national wildlife refuges such as Heinz provide important opportunities for people to explore, enjoy and learn about the environment within reach of our nation’s growing urban population. We have lots of beautiful wildlife right here within the city limits.”

The Fledging Birders Institute partnered with the refuge, with support from the Friends of Heinz Refuge, to bring together nature center managers, educators and other community leaders to begin engaging new audiences



in birdwatching. Conference participants were challenged to set realistic goals for reaching new, broader audiences with birding opportunities. They were encouraged to develop simple action plans to achieve these goals in the coming months.

“We need to create opportunities, repeated trips, mentors, colleagues and ongoing support,” said Paul Baicich, a member of the Refuge System Birding Team.

“Birds provide the ideal gateway to nature as they are beautiful and can be found virtually everywhere at anytime,” says Dave Magpiong, a middle school science teacher and founder of the Institute, which promotes birding for young people. Magpiong is looking for other regions and refuges interested in hosting similar conferences.

Videos of the Heinz Refuge conference and other resources are available at <http://fledgingbirders.org/>.

### Q&A Why Bother with a Strategic Plan?—Continued from page 8

of the organization, including programming, fundraising and board development.

The Friends/refuge collaboration adds a unique dimension to the planning process. As Friends groups, we are dedicated to supporting the National Wildlife Refuge System. Our relationship with the refuge is critical to our success. Key to successful collaboration is

communication. Good communication means that expectations, roles and responsibilities are aligned between the parties. As *Conserving the Future* notes, the common ground for Friends and refuge staff is our shared passion for wildlife and our love of wild places; these should be reflected in your mission, vision and strategic plan.

#### Additional Resources:

*Soaring to New Heights, A Guide to Creating a Sustainable Friends/Refuge Collaboration*  
[www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/SoaringToNewHeights.html](http://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/SoaringToNewHeights.html)

*Susan Snider is president of the Friends of the Norwalk Islands of Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge, CT.* 

# Calendar

## Plan Ahead

### February 2

World Wetlands Day

### March 14

109th Birthday National Wildlife Refuge System

### Spring 2012

NEEF (National Environmental Education Foundation) Grants up to \$5,000 to strengthen Friends through funding organizational capacity building; 25 grants to be awarded in spring cycle. [www.neefusa.org/grants/every\\_day\\_grants](http://www.neefusa.org/grants/every_day_grants)

### Spring/Fall 2012 National Wildlife Refuge Friends Group Grants

Spring proposals due April 30  
[www.nfwf.org/refugefriends](http://www.nfwf.org/refugefriends)  
[Teal.Edelen@nfwf.org](mailto:Teal.Edelen@nfwf.org)

### Take Pride in America Volunteer Awards Nomination

[www.takepride.gov](http://www.takepride.gov)

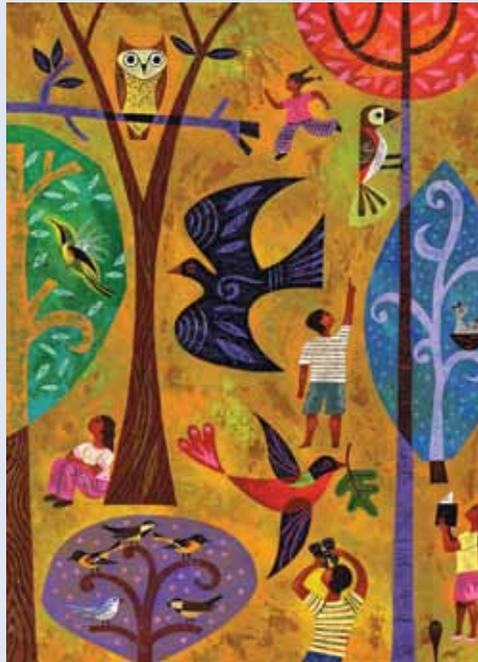
### National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Academy Nominations

Contact [Joanna\\_Webb@fws.gov](mailto:Joanna_Webb@fws.gov)  
or call 703-358-2392

### May 12

#### International Migratory Bird Day—20th Anniversary

Request discounted materials for special events at [bday@birdday.org](mailto:bday@birdday.org)  
[www.birdday.org](http://www.birdday.org)



Rafael Lopez designed this poster for International Migratory Bird Day 2012.

### May 18

Endangered Species Day  
[www.fws.gov/endangered/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/endangered/index.html)

### June 2

National Trails Day  
[www.americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/](http://www.americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/)

### June 2 – 10

National Fishing and Boating Week  
[www.takemefishing.org](http://www.takemefishing.org)

### June 9

Get Outdoors Day (Fee Free Day)  
[www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/](http://www.nationalgetoutdoorsday.org/)

### September 29

National Public Lands Day (Fee Free Day)  
[www.publiclandsday.org](http://www.publiclandsday.org)

### October 7 – 13

National Wildlife Refuge Week  
The Big Sit! <http://bit.ly/yfnjPt>  
or [Michael\\_Carlo@fws.gov](mailto:Michael_Carlo@fws.gov)  
Fee Free Day October 14

### November 10 – 12

Veterans Day Weekend (Fee Free Days)

### December 2012

American Hiking Society  
National Trails Fund  
Awards from \$500 - \$5,000 to build and protect hiking trails, improve hiker safety and accessibility, and build constituency to support hiking  
[www.americanhiking.org/our-work/national-trails-fund/guidelines/](http://www.americanhiking.org/our-work/national-trails-fund/guidelines/)

### December 2012

Celebrate Urban Birds (Cornell Lab of Ornithology)  
Mini grants of \$100 - \$500 to hold a Celebrate Urban Birds event. Apply in December to host event in following year  
[www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/community/minigrants/mini-grants-2012/mini-grants-2012](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/celebration/community/minigrants/mini-grants-2012/mini-grants-2012)

# Congratulations!

The National Wildlife Refuge Association and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation named the **Coastal Wildlife Refuge Society**, NC, supporting Alligator River and Pea Island National Wildlife Refuges, as the **2012 Friends Group of the Year**. CWRS sponsors kayak, canoe and tram tours, red wolf howlings and kindergarten wildlife clubs. Funds raised from the annual Wings Over Water festival provide transportation grants to bring students from nine North Carolina counties to the refuges. “No matter what the need, the Society steps up to the plate, whether it is building a walking, providing materials or funding critical unmet needs of the refuges,” says Bonnie Strawser, refuge visitor services manager.



Mark Ducey/USFWS

**Kate O'Brien**, wildlife biologist at Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge, ME, “is committed nearly to the point of distraction in conserving our natural

resources,” says refuge manager Ward Feurt of the **2012 Employee of the Year**. Feurt adds that “her innovative management ideas, especially with respect to the state endangered New England cottontail rabbit, have made the refuge restoration leaders.” O'Brien is also the most published wildlife biologist in the Northeast Region this year and is acclaimed for her work with outside organizations and the public.

The **2012 Volunteer of the Year** is **David Govatski**, from Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge,



*David Govatski, Volunteer of the Year*

MA. Govatski developed a new way of building wetland trails that is now used by other trail organizations. “Dave is accessible, available, enthusiastic and energetic,” says refuge manager Andrew French, “often using his personal truck, chain saw, brush cutter and numerous other tools to perform his many generous volunteer contributions.” Govatski has volunteered on the refuge since 1997, when he helped form the Friends of Pondicherry, a unit of Silvio O. Conte Refuge.



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*Charlie Pelizza, Refuge Manager of the Year*

of the Refuge System, Pelizza manages a three-refuge complex with 250 volunteers and more than 200,000 visitors every year. Pelizza has been a key player in planning the new Everglades Headwaters

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**Charles Pelizza**, manager of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge, FL, is the **2012 Paul Kroegel Refuge Manager of the Year**. A 32-year veteran

National Wildlife Refuge. He has a close working relationship with local residents and such partners as the University of Central Florida, which is now creating a coastal research center on Archie Carr National Wildlife Refuge.

The **Friends of Maga Ta-Hohpi Waterfowl Production Area, SD**, received The Wilderness Society’s 2011 Group Achievement Award, recognizing outstanding efforts to build name recognition for the Huron Wildlife Management District.

“Whatever it takes, the Friends rise to the occasion!” were the closing remarks when the St. Petersburg Audubon Society presented the **Friends of Tampa Bay Refuges, FL**, with its Conservationist of the Year award for 2011. 

## FriendsForward

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