



THE BOOMER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge

Volume 4 issue 3

Message From The President

Our recent election in September has led to some reorganization:

Ron Jones, Past President, who should be enjoying a well-earned respite, is chairman of the Nominating Committee and the Habitat Acquisition, Restoration and Enhancement Committee, as well as a member of the Strategic Planning Committee and the publisher of our acclaimed newsletter, "The Boomer."

Jane Meldahl, Vice President, is also in charge of membership and development of the organization's logo, as well as being on the Audit Committee and the Art Contest Committee.

Eliot Tucker, Treasurer, is also Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, a member of the Audit Committee and a member of the Fund Raising Committee.

Mark Sleeper, Secretary, is also Chair of the Art Contest.

Sumita Prasad, Member At-Large, is Chair of the Social Media Committee and the Fund Raising Committee.

Jim Hluchan, Member At-Large, is Chair of the Cooking Committee and member of the Habitat acquisition, restoration, and enhancement Committee.

Brian McBride, Member At-Large, is Chair of the Audit Committee, which include the development of policies and procedures.

Carol Davis, Member At-Large, is a member of the Fund Raising Committee.

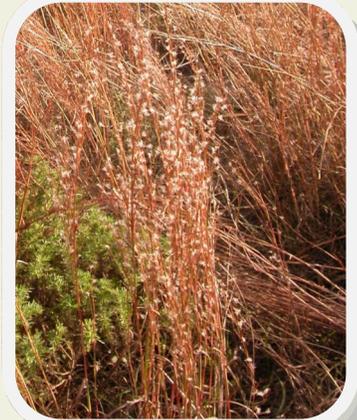
Cynthia Lurix, Member At-Large, is a member of the Art Contest Committee.

Paul Lurix, Member At-Large, is a member of the Social Media Committee.

Exciting News: Refuge personnel reported that they witnessed a flock of more than forty chickens this summer. In addition, some chickens are usually observed during refuge tours conducted on the first Saturday of each month. Contact the Refuge at 979-234-3021 to reserve space on a tour.

See you there.

Gary Woods, President



Above: Little Bluestem grass ready for Harvest. Photo by John Magera

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4th Annual Student Festival Art Contest Announced



The Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge and Blisswood Bed and Breakfast are pleased to announce the 4th annual Student Festival Art Contest. The contest is open to students from kindergarten through grade 12 in Brazos, Bellville, Columbus, Rice and Sealy school districts. Contest information including rules and entry forms for each of the three divisions, are available on our website at: www.attwater.org

Did you know?

- It was a record year again at the APC rearing facilities.
- 463 captive reared APCs were released on the refuge this year.
- Another 38 captive reared birds were released at a prepared site in Goliad

Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge, P.O. Box 212 Eagle Lake, Texas 77434

Prairie Restoration

Tools in the Prairie Management Toolbox - Part II

Terry Rossignol, Refuge Manager

Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge

In the last newsletter, I discussed the benefits of prescribed fire as it pertains to prairie management. Continuing with the habitat management theme, I'd like to discuss prairie restoration and how we carry out this very important activity on the Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge.

About 70% of the refuge consists of native coastal prairie habitat. Prior to the establishment of the refuge in 1972, most of the land was a working ranch with some cropland areas scattered throughout. Peanuts, soybeans, watermelons, rice, and other crops were planted in these areas. More than 20 years ago, refuge personnel began restoring these previously cultivated areas back to native grasses in hopes of providing additional coastal prairie habitat for the Attwater's prairie chicken (APC) and other prairie wildlife species.

The process was, and still is, a learning experience and it takes time and patience. In a good year, we restored less than 50 acres. Back then, we baled native grasses (square bales) on the refuge in the fall (late October/early November) when little bluestem grass was seeding out. Then, the following spring or fall, we spread the bales across a prepared (previously cultivated) field using a manure spreader. The fruits of our labor were often not seen for several years.

As we continued to learn the process, we began baling the seed using the large round-bale process and literally "un-rolled" these large bales across a prepared (previously cultivated) field. A few years later, we literally could see rows of little bluestem grasses appearing in the field where we "unrolled" the round bales.



Above: A combine harvests seed on the Refuge. Photo : John Magera

Later, we contracted Native American Seed (NAS) out of Junction, Texas, to harvest the native grass seed on the refuge by using a combine. After NAS cleans and processes the seed, we then plant the grass seed using a special planter the following spring or fall. This is currently the method that we use today. This method has allowed us the ability to plant and restore up to 300 acres in a really good year. To date, more than 1,600 acres have been planted to native grass seed on the refuge with about 800 acres still left to restore. One 550-acre field in particular that we began restoring more than 20 years ago has supported nesting Attwater's Prairie Chickens. *Cont. on P.5*



Going to Abilene?

Don't Forget to Vote



We don't mean the election that just passed but the **Quarters 4 Conservation** election happening through September 2016 at the Abilene Zoo. The zoo is an APC Recovery Partner and has chosen three candidates from which zoo visitors can choose to receive their conservation votes. Our Attwater's Prairie Chicken will be running against the Ocelot and the Turtle Survival Alliance. The winner will receive \$10,000.00, runner-up \$5,000.00 and last place \$2,500.00. Actually, everyone is a winner in this contest, but we want our candidate to leave the others in its prairie dust. Twenty-five cents of every zoo admission will go to the conservation fund and visitors will be given a special coin for voting purposes. The election is already underway. So if you plan on visiting Abilene or the Abilene area, or will be driving through, take the opportunity to visit one of the nicest zoos in Texas and **VOTE** for the APC.

If you have friends, relatives or business associates in the Abilene area, invite them to visit their zoo and while there, vote for our APC. Funds provided by the zoo will go to the Friends group to support recovery efforts of the APC with special interest in controlling red imported fire ants.



You can help with vital RIFA suppression by supporting our "Fire Ant Control/Brood Survival Fund"



Follow us on [twitter](#). I am pretty sure you have read that statement before. Social media can be a very important tool for keeping the public and our membership informed about our activities and efforts to recover the Attwater's Prairie Chicken. Our organization has not used this opportunity well but, thanks to board member Sumita Prasad and her Social Media Committee, we are making the effort to improve. So we ask you to "follow us on twitter" and retweet so we can reach as many supporters as possible.

Working together, we can make a difference.



Our Mission:

The mission of the Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge is to support the purpose and objectives of Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR and promote the recovery of the Attwater's prairie chicken and the Texas native coastal prairie ecosystem for this and future generations.

More Help for Monarchs

By Dan Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service



I spent much of the morning on August 20 at beautiful Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge with Senator Amy Klobuchar working on monarch butterfly conservation. Life is good! Senator Klobuchar is an exceptional advocate for monarchs in Congress, and it is stirring to hear the passion she has for them. As a bonus: We had plenty of kids with us, ready to become monarch scientists and add to our data on the butterfly.

By now, I think a lot of people know that time is running out to secure the future of the monarch butterfly, one of North America's most recognizable wildlife species.

As recently as 1996, the estimated population of monarchs wintering in Mexico topped 1 billion. This year, the Mexican overwintering population numbered only about 56.5 million butterflies.

Some of the problem has been blamed on timber harvesting in Mexico, climate change and disease – and we must address those factors – but the accelerating conversion of native prairie habitat in Midwestern states to crop production and livestock grazing has hurt the monarch and other pollinators.

Working with partners – such as the Monarch Joint Venture, the National Wildlife Federation and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – we're seeking to restore and enhance more than 200,000 acres of habitat for monarchs on public and private lands this year, while also supporting more than 750 schoolyard habitat projects and pollinator gardens nationwide.



Above: Monarch butterfly larva feeding on milkweed.

We're also reaching out to our counterparts in Canada and Mexico to work together to save this North American insect.

But we can do more.

That's why I'm proud to announce we have committed to spending \$4 million starting in October to support partnership-driven, landscape-scale monarch conservation projects. This funding will enable us to focus with our partners on conserving breeding and migration habitat in priority areas.

These places include spring breeding areas in Texas and Oklahoma, summer breeding habitat in Minnesota and other Midwest Corn Belt states, and areas west of the Rockies important for the western monarch population.

Cont. on P.6

Cont. from p.2 Getting native grass seed every year, however, is not a guarantee. On several occasions, coastal prairie pastures ripe with seed and ready for harvest would get hit by a wet and windy cold front that literally would shake the seeds off the plant just a day or two before the harvest equipment was planning to arrive. Also, harvesters are not allowed to gather seed on the refuge if conditions are too wet to prevent deep rutting of the prairie with tractors and other equipment. The opposite is also true...drought conditions sometimes prevent the plants from forming seed due to a lack of rain. What little seed that may be produced is not worth the effort of harvesting. This was especially evident during the drought of 2011.

In an effort to obtain and provide sufficient quantities of locally adapted native prairie seeds for prairie restoration projects throughout Southeast Texas, refuge personnel are actively involved with the Prairie Seed Council (PSC), a partnership of state and federal agencies and conservation organizations formed a few years ago. All involved in this group realize the importance of maintaining and restoring coastal prairie habitat to help conserve the many wildlife species that depend on prairie habitat for their existence.

The need to continue coastal prairie restoration efforts is vital to the existence and survival of the Attwater's prairie chicken.



Above: Planting prairie hay with a bale buster. Photo by FWS

Note: To learn more about the prairie restoration process visit our publication page at www.attwater.org



Pardon our mess. The long awaited rerouting and refurbishing of the auto tour route is underway. While there may be some inconvenience during construction, the improved route should please everyone.

Refuge Around the Corner



The last of this year's captive bred birds arrived at the Refuge on Nov.1. Dr. Morrow along with refuge interns and staff from the Houston Zoo then placed them in their temporary home in a release pen.

The Christmas Bird Count is Just Around the Corner

The Attwater Christmas Bird Count will be held on Wed. Dec. 16, 2015. The event is open to all birders and is one of the highest inland bird counts, for diversity in the country. A hot dinner will be provided, at the Refuge, for all participants following the event. If you are interested in participating, contact Sumita Prasad at :

sumita@utexas.edu

“ Because no matter who you are, no matter where you live, our parks, our monuments, our lands, our waters—these places are your birthright as Americans”
President Barack Obama

Cont. from P 4. Monarchs

We'll also expand work with partners to increase the availability of seed for native milkweed and nectar plants; education and outreach programs; and other large-scale efforts across multiple geographies.

Why all the attention on monarchs? It's not just because they're beautiful, an integral part of North America's wildlife, and representative of other pollinators.

The monarch is also the perfect species to introduce kids to conservation and help them develop a love for nature. Few other beloved, well-known species thrive in backyards like monarchs when the right habitat is created for them.

I've planted native milkweed with kids across the nation this year. To see the smiles on their faces as they dig in the dirt is incredibly uplifting.

Together, we can ensure that the monarch continues to be seen and enjoyed across the nation's landscape. I'm optimistic we will succeed.

Hey Fourth Graders !

See America's natural wonders and Historical sites for **FREE**. The **Every Kid in a Park** program allows you and your family free access to hundreds of parks, lands and waters for an entire year. Seven Federal natural resource agencies, including U.S. fish and Wildlife Service are participating through August 31, 2016.

Our country is full of dazzling landscapes where you can play and learn. They protect our wildlife and resources. They let us look at the past and protect our history. Keeping them public supports a healthy planet.

Visit: <https://www.everykidinapark.gov/> for full program details and to download your free pass. Educators, there are opportunities for you too, so don't miss out.



Membership



Interested in becoming a member or want to renew your annual membership? It is now easy to do ,on-line at

www.attwater.org

We are happy to remind everyone that we are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Any donations you may make are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law and tax code.

Donors should consult with their tax advisor.

Please consider Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge in your charitable giving.





The picture above was taken November 3, 2015. It is of the 550 acre Renz Unit discussed in the prairie restoration article on page 2 of this issue of **THE BOOMER**. In the 1980s this area was planted to Soybeans, watermelon, peanuts and Rice. In recent years, as a result of years of hard work, prairie chickens have been documented nesting on this restored prairie.

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