

May 2017

THE BOOMER

Quarterly Newsletter of the Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge

Volume 5 issue 4

Message From The President

Dear Friends

The chicken has had a tough year and the survival count of wild birds is the lowest it's been in many years – primarily due to the untimely flooding and cool weather that affected the refuge during critical periods last year. However, we think better days are ahead.

Your entire board has been busy handling organizational business, and their efforts are greatly appreciated.

We also appreciate the goodwill and support of our members and the public. We need each of you, if our efforts to save

the chicken are to be successful.

Speaking of membership – many corporations and foundations judge an application for funding, not only on the merits of the program or project, but on the support the organization enjoys in the community, that is, members. We need you to support our efforts to save the chicken by joining the Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge. The easiest way is via our website at Attwater.org.

“Individual” memberships are only **\$20**, “Family” memberships are **\$30** and “Senior” and “Student” memberships are **\$15**. If

you join this calendar year, your membership dues will not be due again until October 1, 2018. Please sign up **ASAP**.

And, I hope you've seen the notice that we are having a combined member and board meeting on June 8, 2017. The meeting will be held at the Visitor's Center of the Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge and will begin promptly at 5:30 pm. We will be serving a light supper and refreshments. Please notify me at garykwoods@sbcglobal.net if you plan on attending.

Remember member, “failure is not an option.”

Gary Woods



Above: “BOOMER” the new APC mascot greeted festival visitors.

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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.

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

Did you know?

- Studies measuring creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving and reasoning all find these functions increase and improve when arts education is added to the educational mix.
- Art in the classroom improves student behavior and boosts creative learning.

New Transport Trailer Delivered

Last year the Friends organization entered into our second cooperative agreement with the Texas Coastal Program which provided financial assistance to allow us to accomplish specific projects that would benefit the recovery of the APC. Past issues of the **BOOMER** have mentioned a land plane and walk-in freezer, as well as the purchase of native prairie seed, all of which were funded through the agreement. This spring, the final task to be accomplished was the delivery of a custom fitted APC transport trailer. Designed to meet specifications laid out by refuge staff, this custom cargo trailer will safely transport as many as 88 birds from the captive breeding facilities in Texas and Oklahoma to the release sites in Texas. The unit is self-contained with its own electrical generating system. It has two air conditioners, with one serving as a backup, to keep the birds cool during summer transit. Custom racks hold transport boxes so that air can circulate over all surfaces. Two video monitors allow staff in the towing vehicle to watch and listen to the birds while underway. Temperature and carbon monoxide levels can be monitored and warnings will be given if temperature rise above set limits or if CO levels exceed safe limits. A warning light will let the driver know, should the unit loose its electricity. An additional circulating fan can be used to move cooled air around the trailer, should it be necessary.

This insulated trailer has double torsion axles for a safe and smooth ride, fire extinguisher, quick change jack, spare tire and wheel chocks. Its custom graphics, with partner logos, will help promote, to the public, the partnership that is working to save this species. Thanks to the generous consideration of many of the

vendors that worked with us, we were able to include 24 new APC transport boxes as part of the completed project.

Later this month, the trailer will make its first road trip with domestic chickens as passengers, to make sure nothing has been overlooked that would be detrimental to the transporting of APCs.



Above: The new APC transport trailer on display at this Year's festival for visitors viewing

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Above. The new transport trailer displaying its custom graphics.

Left. Interior of the new APC transport trailer with new transport boxes.

We would like to thank Nationwide Trailer LLC and Saifee Signs and Graphics for helping us bring this project to fruition.



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oldpartnersguy@gmail.com

with I want the Boomer in the subject line and we will add you to the mailing list.

Interested in reading back issues?

Visit www.attwater.org and you will find them archived on the publications page.

You can help with vital Red Imported Fire Ant suppression on the refuge by supporting the

"Fire Ant Control/Brood Survival Fund"

Visit our website, www.attwater.org for more information

APC UPDATE

WHAT the HECK is a Lek

John E. Toepfer PhD.

George M Sutton Avian Research Center, Bartlesville, Oklahoma

Over the years, in private and in public, Fran Hamerstrom made a point of chastising young paper presenters and even older ones about their use of the term "lek" when they meant "booming ground ." She indicated that the term was incorrect and that the proper name for a Greater Prairie-Chicken "lek" (note this usage) was a booming ground. Fred Hamerstrom ("Hammy") rarely got involved but would nod his approval. I was saved from this form of public embarrassment because when I started working on Greater Prairie-Chickens in 1967 with the late Professor Raymond K. Anderson and the Hamerstrom's, they only used the term booming ground. As a matter of fact, I did not know what the heck a lek was, but then, as I hope you will soon learn, neither do most prairie grouse. Over the years I have tried to educate the young and uninformed older prairie grouse researchers and managers about the term "lek". The results of Fran's and my limited efforts have obviously had very little success as the use of the generic term "lek" to mean display ground for many different species now permeates the literature on prairie grouse.

Why do I and why did the Hamerstrom's, especially Fran who was such a bear for the proper use of words, take such issue with the term "lek?" The simple explanation is that using lek to refer to both the display behavior (lekking grouse) and the display ground proper is confusing and not specific enough because a wide variety of animals exhibit this type of behavior. A booming ground is indeed a lek but not all leks are booming grounds. Confused? Maybe this will help clear things up, the Lek is also the monetary standard for the European country of Albania, and in this usage a lek count has nothing to do with animals but would instead be a banking term. Indeed, a lek count is not unique to prairie grouse or even vertebrates. It cannot only refer to money but to one of over a hundred different animal species. Confusing indeed! The term "lek" by itself is not specific enough to refer to both the display activities and/or display grounds for various animals, especially the prairie grouse. In order to be exact, it is necessary to precede lek with a noun such as Greater or Lesser Prairie-Chicken, Greater Sage-Grouse, Sharp-tailed Grouse, Ruff, or Ugandan kob (an African antelope). Even hammerhead bats, wasps and spiders have leks. It seems that well over a hundred different species of vertebrate and invertebrate animals exhibit lekking or arena behavior.

This argument about lek and lekking is by no means new and has been raised before in the literature by several earlier grouse researchers. Hjorth (1970:201) indicated that the use of the term was confusing as "some authors use lek when talking about the place; others mean both activity and place. In the Swedish terminology from which the word is derived lek (= play) always refers to the activity; even fish and frogs collect for lek." Payne (1984:20) said, when referring to Ruff, "males gather in leks on individual arenas." Wynne Edwards (1962:194) also indicated that lek was "a word borrowed from Norwegian and Swedish" and meant "a game or play, and originally introduced to British readers by Lloyd (1867) in his account of the blackcock in Scandinavia." In these latter instances the assemblage of individuals involved "in play" is the lek, so when prairie grouse leave their display ground or arena one could indeed say that the lek left.

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Cont. from page 4 Lumsden (1965:4) indicated that the term lek could be used either as a noun or a verb, and that the exact derivation was not known. He further states that the "term lek may be from the Swedish word 'leka' meaning to play, which in turn was derived from the Old Norse 'leika.'" Lumsden, however, added, referencing Darling (1947), that "lek is derived from the Gaelic 'leac' meaning a flat place or slab". However, Lumsden emphasized that both the displays and display grounds of each of the prairie grouse has a very unique name: Greater Prairie-Chickens boom on a booming ground, Lesser Prairie-Chickens gobble on a gobbling ground, Sharp-tailed Grouse dance on a dancing ground, and Greater and Gunnison Sage-Grouse strut on a strutting ground. Yet all are leks, lekking grouse use arenas for their communal display to attract hens for breeding. See also Payne (1984) and Johnsgard (1994) for additional background discussions on lek, lekking, and arena behavior, and if you really want to be confused consult a dictionary or encyclopedia.

It is my opinion and concern that "lek" is too generic and confusing a term, and that the terminology presented by Lumsden (1965) over 50 years ago and described above is more accurate and specific and should be used in place of "lek" for the prairie grouse species. I realize that I cannot force anybody to change how or whether they use the term "lek." I can only make you stop and think about its usage. Each of you will have to decide for yourself what term you will choose to describe the displays and display grounds of the prairie grouse. But remember, when you just use the term "lek" or "lek survey" it is by no means specific to prairie grouse and no one, especially us older prairie grousers, knows what the heck you are talking about until you mention a species.

Please give some serious thought to all this. Try to give the prairie grouse their just due and use the established real names for their displays and display grounds. After all, there is only one bird in North America that booms, the Greater Prairie-Chicken, and it does that on a booming ground. I for one know that the Hamerstrom's and Harry Lumsden would agree. Now we just have to get the hyphen out of prairie-chicken, or maybe to avoid confusion we should just refer to them by their formal name: pinnated grouse. Maybe next time.

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Note - This article is an expanded version of the abstract of a paper presented in 1991 at the 19th Prairie Grouse Technical Council meeting in Billings, Montana while the author was Director of Fish and Wildlife for the Devils Lake Sioux (now the Spirit Lake Sioux) at Fort Totten, North Dakota. This article was originally published in the Fall 2003 North American Grouse Partnership (GP) Newsletter (www.grousepartners.org) and is being redistributed with GP permission. The Sutton Center is the newest Recovery Partner and will begin raising APCs for release at their new facility in Oklahoma. Watch for the next issue of the **BOOMER** which will include a story on this state of the art facility.

The 2017 APC Festival Was Truly For The Birds

Of course, the APC Festival is always for the birds, but this year, maybe a little more so than in the past. As always, the most popular activity is *prairie chicken viewing*, and participants were not disappointed. Full vans made the trip after trip to the viewing platforms.

The 5th Annual Student Art Contest's winning art work was on display which featured local student's interpretation of our *rare bird*. For the first time the Friends group offered, for sale, the new *Attwater's Forever tee shirt* and it appears to be a hit. Watch for an announcement as to when it will be available for purchase on our web site.

The Craig Hall Family Dancers performed again this year to an appreciative audience. They demonstrated the *prairie chicken dance* and taught the attendees about their Blackfoot culture and the dance's origins.

The new *APC transport trailer* was on display and "Boomer" the new *APC mascot* posed for pictures with his new fans and fended off canine visitors.

Other activities included: native Plant walks, refuge driving tours, bird walking tours and a presentation by Aaron Tjemeland, with the Nature Conservancy of Texas, on native Texas plants. The Friends had even merchandise available and provided complimentary refreshments.

This year's event attracted 350 visitors from at least 17 states and 5 foreign countries, including as far away as Australia. If you have never attended this event, I encourage you to put it on your calendar. It is always on the second weekend in April, unless Easter conflicts.

We hope to see you next year.



Above: Boomer, the new APC mascot poses with the new transport trailer



At right: The Craig Hall Family Dancers, members of the Blackfoot Confederacy, preformed at this year's festival and posed for pictures with visitors. This is their second year to perform at the event and continue to be popular with festival attendees. Photo by: Sumita Prasad

Student Art Contest Winners Announced

The winners of the 5th annual Student Festival Art Contest were announced at the Annual Prairie Chicken Festival in April. Entries covering grades K-12, were received from three area school districts. Art committee chair, Sandy Venneman and committee members Jane Meldahl and Cynthia Lurix awarded the grand prize to Nicolas Frischknecht. Nicolas is an 11th grade student at Columbus High School in Columbus, Texas. His art instructor is Jenna Leopold. Nicolas's depiction of a male Attwater's prairie-chicken earned him a \$250.00 scholarship and a plaque. His winning artwork also appeared on this year's prairie chicken festival tee shirt.

First, second and third place winners were also chosen in 3 categories, Logo (9-12th), Poster (6-8th) and Coloring (k-5th). Winners received a plaque or ribbon and a cash prize of \$50.00, \$25.00 or \$10.00. Honorable mention ribbons were also awarded. All winning artwork was on display in the refuge visitors center during the festival. We want to thank **Blisswood Bed and Breakfast** and board member Carol Davis for once again sponsoring the contest.



Above: Grand prize winning artist, Nicolas Frischknecht, displays his award plaque and models a festival tee shirt emblazoned with his winning artwork. Photo by Jenna Leopold

LOGO CONTEST WINNERS

First Place
Jenna Templeton
Columbus High School
Grade 11
Instructor: Jenna Leopold

Second Place
Madelyn Peacock
Rice High School
Grade 10
Instructor: Clayton Bowen

Third Place
Gabriella Garamilla
Columbus High School
Grade 12
Instructor: Jenna Leopold

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POSTER CONTEST WINNERS

First Place

Jessica Buford

Brazos Middle School

Grade 8

Instructor: Michael Parthum

Second Place

Ashlyn Vojtek

Brazos Middle School

Grade 8

Instructor: Michael Parthum

Third Place

Hayden Miles

Brazos Middle School

Grade 7

Instructor: Michael Parthum

COLORING CONTEST WINNERS

First Place

Lexi Ybarra

Columbus Elementary School

Grade 5

Instructor: Joyce Templeton

Second Place

Joshua Vazquez

Eagle Lake Intermediate School

Grade 5

Instructor: Illeen Coyle

Third Place

Hallie Bonewald

Columbus Elementary School

Grade 5

Instructor: Joyce Templeton

HONORTABLE MENTION

Erika Garay, Logo, Columbus High School, Grade 12, Instructor: Jenna Leopold

Maricela Espinoza, Poster, Brazos Middle School, Grade 6, Instructor: Michael Parthum

Nathalia Garcia, Poster, Brazos Middle School, Grade 7, Instructor: Michael Parthum

Liliana Martinez, Poster, Brazos middle School, Grade 6, Instructor: Michael Parthum

Miranda Muegge, Poster, Brazos Middle School, Grade 6, Instructor: Michael Parthum

Alma Martinez, Coloring, Eagle Lake Intermediate School, Grade 5, Instructor: Illeen Coyle

We would like to thank these organization for supporting this year's Attwater's Prairie Chicken Festival.





Grand Prize winning artwork, 5th Annual Student Festival Art Contest, by student artist

Nicolas Frischknecht

Membership Application

Yes, Please enroll me as a Friend of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge

New Membership -or- Renewal Date: _____

Name (s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Annual: \$15 Student or Senior (62 or older), \$20 Individual, \$30 Family

Make checks payable to: Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge and mail to:

Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge

P. O. Box 212

Eagle Lake, Texas 77434

Friends Enter into a New Cooperative Agreement

The Friends of Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge has signed their third Cooperative Agreement with the Texas Coastal Program . Under this new agreement , we will be working with another Houston nonprofit, TXRX Labs to develop, prototype, field test and construct a new

generation of radio tracking transponders and receivers for the Attwater's prairie-chicken. These new transponders will replace 40 year old technology currently being used. Expectations are to develop a unit that is more efficient, lighter, smaller, with replaceable batteries, and at sizeable cost saving per unit, over current hardware in use. We will be working closely with TXRX Labs and staff of both the refuge and the Texas Coastal Program. This new hardware will also be made available to others organization that may be able to utilized this design.

"In the environment, every victory is temporary, every defeat is permanent."

Thomas Jefferson