



Reflections

DECEMBER, 2016 NEWSLETTER FOR FRIENDS OF ST. MARKS WILDLIFE REFUGE

Reflections newsletter is a benefit of membership for Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge. It also serves as an important supplement to the Friends' web site, www.stmarksrefuge.org. Both the newsletter and the web site provide members and the public information about volunteer activities and events at the Refuge.



Teaming Up For Members
Helen Stewart and Yvonne Zola



Helen Stewart (left) and Yvonne Zola (right) are very active volunteers who work as a team to track memberships of those individuals who are Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge. The "team" tracks members in GiftWorks, which is a donor management data base program where membership recording

and record-keeping can be monitored. The team is, more or less, the Friends' keepers of the records.

Just as the photo (above) shows, they do it joyfully. They enjoy coming to the Refuge every Monday for several hours to perform their work. The GiftWorks program is housed on a single computer, so while Helen may make adjustments to the data base, Yvonne assists the Friends' Board Treasurer (John Haines), who is, conveniently, present when the team works.

"We trade off, back and forth," says Yvonne. "Helen has been volunteering longer than me, and she works with the data very well. I've only been here several months, but she is a very good teacher, and I am learning fast," remarked Yvonne.





In addition, the team also volunteers for the Refuge in other ways throughout the year. "I work special events," said Helen. "I just recently worked the Monarch Festival. And, on that subject, Yvonne is very active throughout the spring and summer with the milkweed initiative."

Both Helen and Yvonne have previous experience with the State and private business working with data bases, as well as other applications. A basic love of the Refuge, and many visits through time, led the team to begin their volunteer work. "I often come to the Refuge to ride my bike, kayak, hike, and especially to take photos. I have just always come here to relax," said Yvonne.

And, lest you think that Helen is only interested in juggling numbers, she has spent much of her free time over the past seven years at the Tallahassee Senior Center contra dancing. "Contra dancing has its roots in English Country Dance," said Helen. "That is my real interest. But, I have to travel if I want to go the English route. So, this coming year, I'm headed to St. Croix for a week."

Thank you Helen and Yvonne. We greatly appreciate your work and talents.

Photo captioning: (center, above) Helen assists in packaging wildflower seeds that are given to visitors during the Monarch Festival. (bottom) Yvonne works near the Whooping crane pen. Photo credits, top, editor; bottom two photos, Chantal Blanton





Hancock Bank Employees Spend 'Workday' at the Lighthouse

The St. Marks Wildlife Refuge is happy to announce that the November 18 Hancock Bank Workday was a resounding success.

Fifteen Hancock Bank employees came to the lighthouse ready to work.



After a safety briefing and a video on the history of the lighthouse, the Hancock personnel went to work with brooms, vacuum, rakes, rags, and cleaners. The keeper's quarters were cleaned thoroughly inside and out, and the lantern room windows were cleaned and brass vents and handles in the restored lantern



room were polished to a bright shine. All agreed that the view from the lantern room is spectacular. WTXL came to the lighthouse and interviewed Hancock employees and Refuge personnel. The workday was featured in an article in the Tallahassee Democrat not long after their workday. Refuge staff and Friends thoroughly enjoyed hosting this enthusiastic group of volunteers for a

very productive and enjoyable day for all. The Friends sincerely thank Hancock Bank for their support and for pitching in to clean up the lighthouse.



Article credit, Tom Baird; Photo credits, Betsy Kellenberger



Karen Willes Brings Smartphone Camera Technology to the Refuge

Are you tired of your bulky 35mm camera? Do the complex camera settings sometimes get in the way of your enjoyment of photographing wildlife when your shots need to be quick and

spontaneous?

Karen Willes has answered both the weight and frustration concerns by digiscoping with her iPhone, and it does all the F-stop or ISO figuring for her. (Digiscoping is the practice of shooting digital photographic images through a spotting scope, allowing for great magnification in the field.)



Karen's interest in digiscoping started through curiosity and has evolved into friendship. "I became interested in using this technique as I watched Tara Tanaka, who came to see the Whooping cranes frequently through the years. She has won numerous international contests with her digiscoped images and now captures



video in addition to using her mirrorless camera for still photos. Tara is my mentor and she's the best," Karen said. On the other hand, Karen has started using her iPhone for digiscoping as well as her mirrorless camera. Now, she has become renowned in her own right; she is frequently recognized in celebrated photo contests and she has had her work published by the Florida Wildlife Federation, Operation Migration, St. Augustine Alligator Farm, Camp Denali, and Audubon magazine to name only a few organizations.

Karen is a retired musician who holds a master's degree in music from FSU. Upon retirement in 2014, she began spending more time exploring digiscoping and helping others understand how it works. On a frequent basis, Karen teaches a smartphone photography class at the Refuge. In it

she describes this relatively new concept of attaching a smartphone to a spotting scope using a special adapter. Karen said, "A segment of the class allows participants to roam the region of the Visitor Center and use the spotting scopes that we were able to purchase with grant funding. Then the fun continues when students come back inside to view and edit their work on their phone or tablet."

Karen is making many of our Refuge wildlife residents and visitors famous with her outstanding imagery. The photos here show her at the Refuge, and just a couple of her recent works.

Her next smartphone photography class will be held February 11, 2017 from 1:00-4:00 PM. Call the Refuge at 850-925-6121 to sign up.

Captions: Karen Willes at the Refuge, top; Vermillion flycatcher, middle; eagle photo and image directly below were taken at the same place just off the road, and the two demonstrate clearly the power of the scope, bottom.

All Photo Credits, Karen Willes



Last Minute Stocking Stuffers at the Nature Store



Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge Nature Store is a great way for you to support a great cause and get wonderful gifts. Now that the holidays are upon us, the Nature Store is a terrific way to find the perfect gift for a friend or loved one, while at the same time, help the Refuge.

The store is located in the Visitor Center at the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge. The store carries items that highlight the animals, plants and the ecology of the Refuge. All profits go to support Refuge programs and projects. Friends'

members receive a 10% discount.

Shown here are only a few of the gift items that





are being highlighted for this holiday period - plush toys, designer earrings and great coffee mugs. Other gift ideas can be seen by going to the [Nature Store web page](#) on the Friends' web site.

Photo credits, left, editor; above, Joanne Harrington



Thank you, Wilma Fong - We'll Miss You



Sadly, it has come to my attention as Reflections editor that another volunteer has left our ranks at the Refuge. Wilma Fong died recently; she is the wife of George Fong, and both have been active in helping with Refuge efforts through the years.

Of note, both George and Wilma were founders of the Florida Pesticide Residue Workshop, which has been an annual event for 53 years. In its infancy, FPRW involved only a handful of concerned individuals, whereas it is now an international event attracting attendees from both governmental and private laboratories. Pesticide

detection and analysis would not be what it is today without the continued work through time given by George and Wilma.

Wilma was an infrastructure volunteer with FPRW, performing logistical work that allowed the workshops to run seamlessly. She worked side-by-side with George. Also, Wilma often assisted George when he came to the Refuge to volunteer. On a broader scale, their combined volunteer work with FPRW is a humanitarian gift of global importance.

Wilma is one of the more silent volunteers who has given so much to the St. Marks Wildlife Refuge over time. We will miss her.

Photo credit: FPRW



Friends' Membership Announcement

Mark your new 2017 calendar now. The Friends will host a **Winter Biscuit Breakfast**, Sunday, February 5, from 11 am - 1 pm. The breakfast will be a great way to warm everyone up for the First Sunday discussion by FWS veterinarian, Dr Samantha Gibbs. More specifics on this programming will be provided in the January issue of Reflections and Friends' web site.

Friends' News at the Refuge

Visitor Center White Board Highlights Daily Wildlife Sightings

Before entering the Visitor Center, look to the left of the walkway, and take a quick glance at what other visitors have recently noted at the Refuge. (For a broader spectrum of sightings, you can always check the

Friends' web site to review [current bird surveys](#).) The white board was master-minded by RV volunteer and bird tour leader Matt Johnstone. Thank you, Matt, for this useful sighting tool.

Here, volunteer, Bill Phelan makes a note of spotting a Bronzed cowbird. Bill volunteers his time working with the Florida Trail maintenance crew. He is also an avid bird-watcher, and as noted here, he is always happy to share that knowledge with others. Thank you, Bill.



Have you considered including the Refuge in your will? We would appreciate hearing from you if so. The Friends of St. Marks Wildlife Refuge can provide information and guide you through the process. Just call the Refuge at 850-925-6121, and ask to be contacted by the Friends' Development Committee, or [email us](#).