



THE BOOMER

Quarterly Newsletter

Volume 6 Issue 3

Message From The President

Friends:

We have scheduled a Members' Meeting for March 8, 2018. The meeting will begin at 5:30 pm, with a light dinner, followed at 6 pm with the meeting and board meeting, and should conclude by 8 pm. The meeting will be held at the Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge. The Refuge is lo-

cated on FM 3013 between Sealy and Eagle Lake, TX. Please check the Refuge's website for driving directions. Please RSVP to Gary Woods at garykwoods@sbcglobal.net no later than 6 pm on Tuesday March 6, 2018. And: We need to increase our membership to increase our funding possibilities. It is probable that

the Refuge system will continue to be a victim of decreasing Federal funding, which is critical to saving the chicken. Your membership can make the difference. Please avail yourself of the attached membership form, or of our website at Attwater.org to join.

Gary Woods, President



Follow signs like this to wildlife viewing opportunities.

Booming-N-Blooming Time Is Here

The 24th Annual Attwater's Prairie-Chicken Festival, "Booming-N-Blooming" will be held on April 14th and 15th, 2018 at the refuge. A full event schedule and additional event information, starts on page 2.

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

www.attwater.org

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Did you know?

- In 2016, 86 million Americans 16 years or older participated in wildlife watching.
- They spent \$75.9 billion on their activities.
- Wildlife watching includes feeding, photographing and observing wildlife for recreation

Source: 2016 Nat. Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Associated. Recreation.

“Booming-N-Blooming”

Annual Event is Just Around the Corner

The 24th Annual Attwater’s Prairie Chicken festival, “Booming-N-Blooming”, will kick off Saturday, April 14, continuing through Sunday, April 15. The event features Attwater’s Prairie-Chicken viewing, special presentations by this year’s guest speaker, Mary O. Parker, and a performance by native American dancers. Van tours of the refuge are scheduled at set times of the day and guided birding and native plant walks are planned.

Winning artwork from this year’s Student Art Contest will be on display in the visitors center. The Friends will again be providing, complimentary bottled water and refreshments at the Friends “store”, as well as festival tee shirts, “Forever” tee shirts, tote bags and limited edition waterfowl art.

Most folks are aware that, because of Hurricane Harvey, this has been a difficult year for the Attwater’s Prairie-Chicken. We encourage everyone to come to the festival and show their support for the species and the all the hard work the refuge staff and their recovery partners do and will continue to do ,to recover this species. We look forward to seeing you there.

Guest speaker

Mary O. Parker is an award winning writer and nature lover who lives in central Texas. Her work includes dozens of articles on topics including travel, family, nature, conservation, education and pieces that appeal to the general audiences. Her work has appeared in Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine and Texas Highways Magazine.

She is the recipient of the 2015 Gabriele Rico Award in Creative Nonfiction and, in December 2016 one of her braided essays was short-listed for the Barry Lopez Prize in Creative Nonfiction.

Mary O is the author of Explore Texas--A Nature Travel Guide available through Texas A&M Press. The book is part of Texas A&M’s “Myra & David K. Langford Working Lands” series. The book is perfect for nature lovers who love to travel and travelers who love nature. We hope to have the book available for purchase at the friends store.

Mary O also offers writers creativity workshops at her ranch through her Red Belly Writing School. She will be presenting, “Nature Tourism and the Preservation of Biodiversity” at 10:00 am, both Saturday and Sunday during the festival.



Writer Mary O. Parker

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Native American Dance Demonstration

The Craig Hall Family dancers are scheduled to perform at 11:00 am Saturday April 14th only.

Always popular with visitors, this is their 3rd year at the festival. They will perform the traditional Prairie Chicken Dance as originated by the Blackfoot Confederacy. You can see the dance performed and learn about its origin and its cultural significance. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions, take photographs with the dancers and participate in a traditional round dance.



The Craig Hall Family Dancers

Festival Schedule

Saturday

7:00 am....Prairie Chicken viewing

8:30 am....Guided birding walking tour

10:00 am...Guest speaker's presentation

10:30 am...Refuge van tour

11:00 am...Native American dancer presentation

12:00 pm... Refuge van tour

12:30 pm...Guided native plant walking tour

1:30 pm.....Refuge van tour

All day.....Student art contest display, complimentary refreshment, Friends store, static displays

Sunday

7:00 am....Prairie Chicken viewing

8:30 am....Guided birding walking tour

10:00 am...Guest speaker's presentation

10:30 am...Refuge van tour

12:00 pm... Refuge van tour

12:30 pm...Guided native plant walking tour

1:30 pm.....Refuge van tour

All day.....Student art contest display, complimentary refreshment, Friends store, static displays

APC UPDATE

Lamentations of a Dinosaur

Michael E. Morrow, Wildlife Biologist

Attwater Prairie Chicken National Wildlife Refuge

Recently, I picked up a book that was given to me some time ago by prairie-chicken researcher, Attwater's prairie-chicken recovery team member, and my good friend Dr. John Toepfer. The book's title, *Wisconsin Grouse Problems* by Wallace Grange, belies the thesis for the book. It talks about difficulties facing three species of grouse in 1948 Wisconsin: ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and prairie-chickens. As I read the book, I was reminded that the struggle prairie-chickens, including Attwater's, have endured over the course of relatively recent history, is a pattern that has been repeated time and again across North America. During the last 100 years or so, prairie grouse have vanished from one disappearing grassland parcel after another across what was once a vast prairie sea. Before that, there were thundering herds of bison, and flocks of passenger pigeons that darkened the sky – all gone. I thought of the quotes from some conservation pioneers that I have posted on a file cabinet at the entrance to my office regarding the seeming futility of our efforts to slow the inexorable loss of the beauty and majesty that once existed:

"A little repentance before a species goes over the brink is enough to make us feel virtuous.

When a species is gone we have a good cry and repeat the performance." **Aldo Leopold**

"In the environment, every victory is temporary, but every defeat is permanent." **Thomas Jefferson**

And I found myself asking "Can we really make a difference? Is it all worth it? And then I read Grange's description of prairie-chicken booming, and I was reminded why I care – why we **MUST** make a difference. Anyone that has ever heard prairie-chickens booming in the spring can identify with Grange's description. Grange expressed much more eloquently than I ever could the beauty of this harbinger of spring, and how empty the prairie seems when it is gone. While Grange wrote about Wisconsin prairie-chickens, the sentiment he expressed applies everywhere prairie-chickens exist (ed). And so, I bring you Grange's narrative verbatim, and hope that it touches you the way it did me.

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Photo by : Nappadol Paothong

Prairie Chicken Booming

“The booming of the prairie chicken is an unforgettable musical event. The sound has great resonance, a peculiar low rolling tone and is mystifyingly subtle. One hears it and starts out afoot to trace the sound to its source, which is apparently just over in the next meadow, but to his surprise finds that the booming has come to him across the cool, moist April-laden marshes for more than a mile. At close range the sound is not particularly loud so that one wonders how in the world it could have carried so far.

It is a sound of earliest morning, characteristic of the cool days of the young spring, a little before the advent of warm days, cherry blossoms and oaks in full leaf. With the coming of late spring the sound fades more and more from the season and is finally lost like a wild flower which bloomed but a few days ago and will not now be seen again until another year.

No sound from human lips can even approximate the booming of the prairie chicken or convey more than the faintest idea of tonal quality, which is at once wild and peaceful, stirring and unobtrusive.

So far as words can suggest the sound, the best imitation of it is one that a farmer friend once made. He said that every morning when he got up, out there in his meadow a flock of chickens always greeted him: ‘You ole fool! You ole fool,’ and that he liked the way they rolled the o’s in fool.

There are other versions too, including ‘You damn fool,’ ‘You dumb fool,’ ‘Damn ole fool,’ etc., all quite consistent as to the essential idea the chickens are allegedly trying to convey. However, it is equally well expressed: ‘ooo-oooooo-oooo,’ which suggests the somewhat pigeonlike cooing quality contained in the sound.

Anyone who has often heard booming prairie chickens comes to associate the sound with its country; especially with meadows and marshlands, and to the author the sound will always say ‘central Wisconsin,’ by association at least. Somehow it symbolizes and partakes of the whole environment which is unique; an entire experience; a quality irreplaceable. Somehow, if the prairie chicken must go, there will be gone an era in that period of American history when the prairies, the unkempt but lovable burned and brush lands, the forgotten cutover hinterlands, were vast, unconquered and without visible end in time. All of the orderly forests, the dairy herds and the modern mechanical miracles of man will not suffice to substitute for the prairie chicken and its country or to assuage the nostalgia of those who have known them if the species must be lost.

Let us hope and work to the end that the prairie chicken will not be lost, but will prosper so that the lusty booming will come to the ears of future citizens of the state!”

Amen, Mr. Grange!

Prairie Chicken Booming was from: Grange, Wallace B. 1948. Wisconsin Grouse Problems, Chapter 16, pages 173–174. Publication 328, Wisconsin Conservation Department. Madison, Wisconsin.

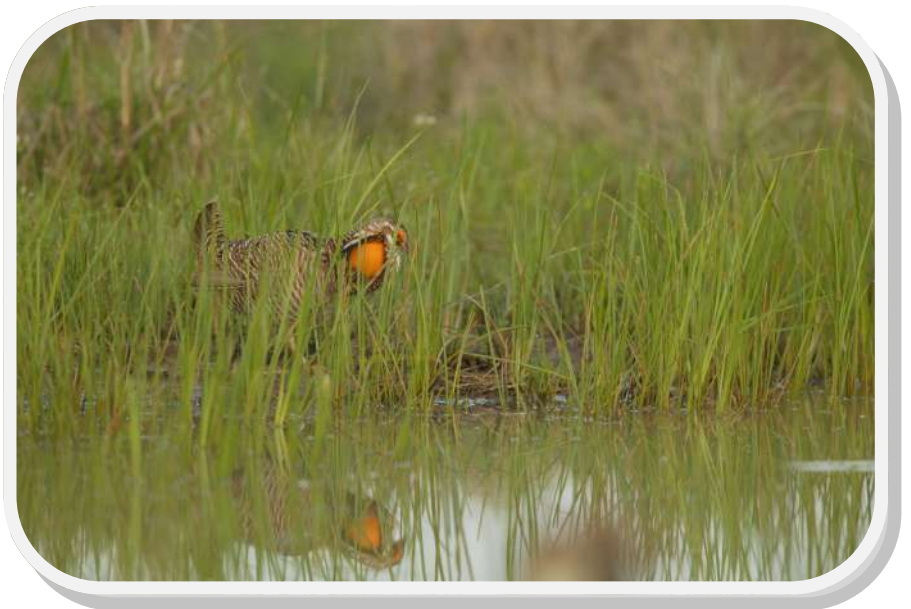


Photo by: Noppadol Paothong



Employee Spotlight

Jeremy Petruncio

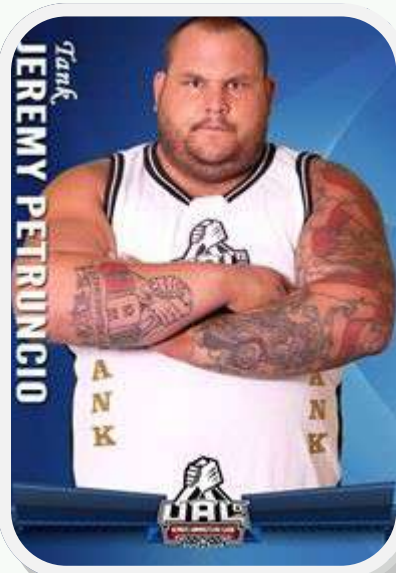
Maintenance Mechanic

We want to welcome Jeremy “Tank” Petruncio to the refuge family. He is one of the newer members of the team. Jeremy and his wife Melissa have 5 children and found their way to the refuge from Barstow California. Previous to joining the Service, Jeremy was a heavy mobile equipment repairer at the U.S. Marine Corp Logistics Base Twenty Nine Palms. After 8 years of living in the California desert, they are happy to be making their home on the Texas prairie.

Jeremy is classified as a maintenance mechanic but has come to realize he has to be a jack of all trades. Any day, he may find he has to be an equipment operator, plumber, carpenter, electrician, mechanic, HVAC technician, welder/fabricator, or even a farmer. He is positive that there isn't much he is not willing to do to take care of refuge facilities and equipment with the intention of allowing the biological staff to focus their time on the prairie chickens.

When asked what he enjoyed most about working on the refuge he responded that, “The refuge is so serene and to be able to see all of these creatures first hand is amazing. The staff are awesome people and I can see us all growing into an even greater team.” He considers, “working for the Service as one of the best jobs I could ever dream of”.

While Jeremy currently holds an ABA in organizational management, he would like to go back to college and get a bachelors degree in biology that would allow him to apply for management position in the future.



When asked about interests outside refuge duties, he mentioned enjoying sports and weight training and though it may be difficult to tell from the pictures, Jeremy is currently ranked 9th in the world as a super heavy weight arm-wrestler. His motto is, *If you don't know me google me or youtube me.*

Welcome to the team Jeremy and may you have a long productive career.



Eagle Lake Municipal Park

Local Site Added to the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department has added the Eagle Lake Municipal Park to the Matagorda/Rio Colorado Loop of the Central Texas Coast portion of the Great Texas Coastal Birding Trail. The park joins a list of area sites which includes Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR. Currently, a park boardwalk takes visitors through a dense woodland to the shore of Eagle Lake. Now a local nonprofit is hoping to raise funds to improve the site and expand facilities which has the potential to attract birders, ecotourists and other visitors, as well as providing learning opportunities for school groups and local families.

Revitalize Eagle Lake, Inc. in partnership with the City of Eagle Lake, is seeking funding for development and expansion of the site. Revitalize Eagle Lake is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation chartered in 1983. They are a volunteer organization with no paid staff with the purpose to foster, promote, maintain, and encourage the civic, social and general welfare of the City of Eagle Lake. They were previously the recipient of a grant to develop a comprehensive plan for the park.

They are now embarking on fundraising for phase one of the new development. This phase includes trail expansion, boardwalks, a new viewing platform over the lake and improvement to the existing trail. The estimated cost for this first phase is \$300k. They are applying for foundation and public grants but are seeking donations to demonstrate local support. Your donation, large or small, will demonstrate that the park is important to Eagle Lake and that the City is looking ahead to preserve and improve use of its natural beauty.

***Tax deductible donations can be made to: Revitalize Eagle Lake Park
Fund, P.O. Box 642, Eagle Lake, Texas 77434***



Above: Area covered by the Central Texas Coastal Trail.

Left: Wetland habitat at Eagle Lake Municipal Park

Cont. on P.8

Cont. from P.7



Current wildlife viewing facilities at Eagle Lake Municipal Park

Christmas Bird Count a success

Participants in the December 20, 2017 Attwater Christmas Bird Count enjoyed relatively pleasant weather while enduring a long day in the field. A hot meal was provided by the Friends group while the days counts were tabulated.

A complete list of the species observed will be published in the May issue of the BOOMER.



"The unutterable beauty of a blossom, the grace of a high flying bird. The roar of the wind in the trees. At one time or another in our lives, nature touches you and me and all of us in some personal way."

From: Sharing Nature With Children by Joseph Cornell

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

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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