

Friends *Forward*



WINTER 2008

National Friends Conference Coming in April

Building on the success of previous conferences and several regional workshops, the National Friends Conference will be held April 4-6 at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. The conference – the fourth of its kind sponsored jointly by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Wildlife Refuge Association – will bring together and strengthen refuge Friends organizations from across the country.

The conference is expected to attract as many as 250 people. Operating within budget constraints and the physical limitations at NCTC, the conference will not accommodate all the 200-plus Refuge Friends groups working across the country. Two Friends and the refuge manager from 80 to 85 Friends organizations will be invited.

The invitation list will focus on groups formed since 2005, the year of the last Friends conference, so groups that



have not previously participated get the opportunity to attend such a gathering. Additionally, the invitation list reflects a diversity of experience levels, group size and geographic location. Finally, an effort has been made to invite groups that are experiencing immediate threats from beyond the refuges' boundaries.

Awards for the Friends organization and volunteer of the year will be announced by the Refuge Association at a reception Saturday evening.

The theme for the conference is "Friends for the Future." Skills-building sessions and discussions will focus on integrating

current Service and Refuge System priorities, challenges to managing and supporting the Refuge System, and tools and opportunities for addressing them.

The conference aims to:

- increase the effectiveness and capacity of Friends organizations;
- promote and identify how Friends organizations can support Refuge System priorities and help the Service address key conservation challenges; and
- showcase programs that have strengthened the Refuge System. 🌱

Pass the News Around

Friends Forward newsletter is available online so you can pass the word around to everyone in your Friends organization and to prospective members. Due to financial constraints, a limited number of newsletter copies are mailed to Friends organizations and refuge staff at the national wildlife refuge address. Once you get your copy, send your Friends to <http://www.fws.gov/friends/home/frontpg-blue-600.asp> to get the latest edition. 🌱

From the Chief

Measured in Dollars and Cents

National wildlife refuges are a visible guarantee that there will always be places for wildlife in our nation and as our legacy. In late November, we also showed that national wildlife refuges are outstanding economic engines for scores of communities across the country.

Recreational use on national wildlife refuges generated almost \$1.7 billion



Geoff Haskett

in total economic activity during fiscal year 2006, according to a new report titled *Banking on Nature 2006: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation*. The report was compiled by our Fish and Wildlife Service economists.

The study also found that refuge visits supported almost 27,000 private sector jobs that produced about \$543 million in employment income. In addition, recreational spending on refuges

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2008 Mentoring Program in the Works

The Refuge System's Friends Mentoring Program provides invaluable guidance and customized help to refuges and Friends groups interested in establishing and sustaining a new Friends organization and partnership or building the capacity of an existing one.

Each mentoring team is composed of a board member or leader of a well-established Friends group and an experienced refuge manager.

In 2007, mentoring teams visited Friends organizations in Alabama, Alaska, Florida and Louisiana.

Applications for the 2008 program are due by March 14.

For more information about the program or to obtain an application, contact Trevor Needham at Trevor_Needham@fws.gov or 703-358-2392. 🌱

Remember the IRS

Friends groups that raise money through sales or other fund-raising activities need to submit an annual return to the Internal Revenue Service. IRS recently sent out notices to alert small, tax-exempt organizations (those with gross receipts of \$25,000 or less) that they are required to submit Form 990-N – also known as “the e-Postcard.” The e-Postcard, which must be submitted electronically, is an easy-to-use way to provide IRS with the information they need about your organization and its financial activities. Be careful not to ignore your notice: organizations that don't file risk losing tax-exempt status. 🌱

Putting a Face on a Mouse

A San Francisco Bay area refuge Friends group has published a lavishly illustrated child's introduction-to-nature storybook, *A Home for Salty*, which highlights the adventures of a salt marsh harvest mouse.

Why the focus on a mouse?

Endangered salt marsh harvest mice are found only in the San Francisco Bay's surviving patches of pickleweed, which provides mice with both shelter and food. San Pablo Bay encompasses the largest remaining continuous patch of pickleweed-dominated tidal marsh in the northern bay.

The book was published in August 2007 by the Friends of San Pablo Bay National Wildlife Refuge with the close involvement of Refuge System environmental educator Fran McTamane. Interns working under Fran's direction had helped develop the basic story of Salty over a 10-year period, using colored posters and hand puppets to depict a marsh mouse looking for a home.

Not long after refuge manager Christy Smith arrived at San Pablo Bay Refuge, the Friends took *Salty* on as their first substantial project. Smith contacted Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, award-winning

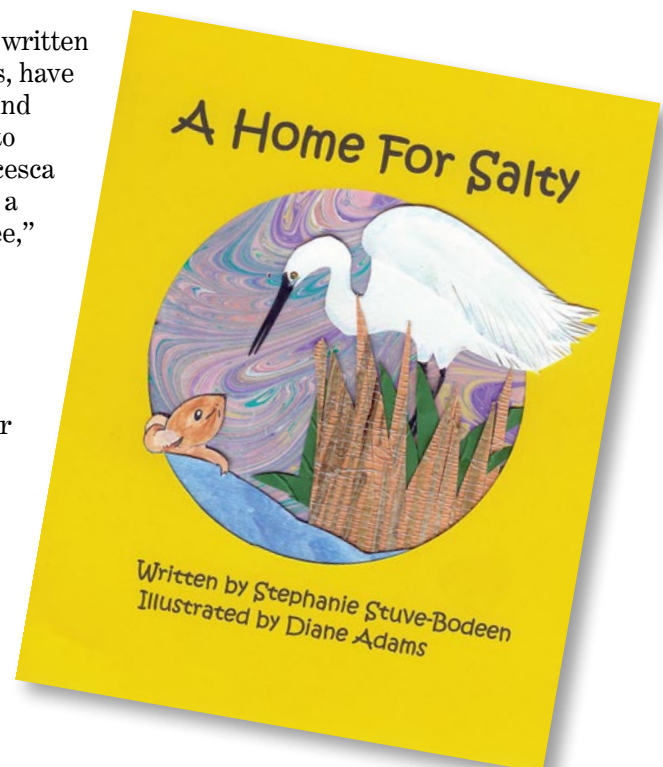
children's author and wife of Tim Bodeen (who was then manager of Midway Atoll Refuge), and asked if she would turn the story of Salty into a children's book. Stephanie subsequently brought in Diane Adams to illustrate the book. The project took two years.

To cover production costs, members of the Friends group solicited \$11,000 in contributions from two local refineries and an environmental/redevelopment firm.

More than 200 copies of *Salty*, written for elementary school students, have been given to teachers all around San Francisco Bay, according to Friends group president Francesca Demgen. “*Salty* puts a face on a little mouse you hardly ever see,” she says.

There's a lot of educational information packed into the 30-page book. It includes thumbnail descriptions of other species, among them harbor seals, snowy egrets, western sandpiper, white-tailed kite, black-tailed jackrabbit and the endangered California clapper rail. There's also a mini-section entitled, “About Endangered Species.”

Copies are available for \$7.55 in bookstores at San Pablo Bay Refuge and San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge and other environmentally-related outlets, including Point Reyes National Park bookstore. If you'd like to see or purchase a copy, contact the Friends group at www.pickleweed.org. 🌱



Online Training Helps People Fight Invasive Species

In collaboration with the Center for Invasive Plant Management, the National Wildlife Refuge System has designed an online training course for people interested in fighting one of the single greatest threats to the Refuge System – invasive species.

The Refuge System has worked aggressively to combat invasive species, targeting more than 280,000 acres of refuge lands. Yet an estimated 1.72 million acres remain untreated.

The new invasive species Web site, www.fws.gov/invasives/volunteersTrainingModule, includes video, text and photos that provide background on the Refuge System and information about the science and management of invasive plants. The site also includes links to government and private Web sites dealing with the issue.

In 2003, the Refuge System joined The Nature Conservancy, the National Wildlife Refuge Association and the U.S. Geological Survey in training volunteers to use hand-held GPS devices to map invasive species on national wildlife refuges.



Kudzu, the invasive plant that is the scourge of the South, where it has spread rapidly, is just one of invasives that is threatening national wildlife refuges.

“We want volunteers to be able to engage their communities on the issue of invasives,” said Jenny Ericson, national invasives volunteer coordinator for the Refuge System. “The online training provides practical tools on how to prevent and control invasive plants. Volunteers can be our greatest advocates in the fight against this major nationwide threat to wildlife and habitat.” 🌱

Draft Friends Policy Is in the Works

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has completed its review of the draft of the first-ever “Friends Policy,” developed to help expand the Refuge System’s growing partnerships with Friends organizations. An updated draft is expected to be published in the *Federal Register* this spring; Friends groups and others will have an opportunity to review and comment on the published guidelines before they become official Service policy.

The policy, which is being driven by the dramatic and steady increase of Friends organizations over the years, is designed

to promote consistency and clarify issues and requirements involved in Friends partnership building efforts.

More specifically, the policy addresses a wide range of increasingly pressing questions that face Service employees, among them what should be included in an appropriate and required agreement with a Friends organization and how much insurance should be required or encouraged for activities undertaken by Friends groups. The draft was prepared by a national Friends policy team whose members are headquarters, regional office and field station representatives. 🌱

Special Place in History

Throughout the month of February – celebrated nationally as Black History Month – Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge (VA) and its Friends group will be spotlighting the swamp’s special place in African-American history. Two factors have helped make the refuge a highly popular destination for those interested in the rich history of the swamp and America.

One is the swamp’s official designation as an important station in the Underground Railroad. The other is the recent unearthing of the remains of camps that some runaways built on high ground in the heart of the swamp.

“People come from all over the world to hear the story of the runaway slaves and the life they led,” says Bill Freeman, president of the Great Dismal Swamp Coalition, the refuge Friends group.

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From Friend to Friend

Music for Entertainment – and Fund-Raising

Two Friends groups – one on the Gulf coast, the other in New England – are staging musical events to raise money, attract members and introduce scores of people to the wonders of national wildlife refuges.

In Florida, the Friends of Chassahowitzka National Wildlife Refuge, located about 65 miles north of St. Petersburg, are planning their seventh “Wood, Winds and Water” musical fund-raiser for March 9. “We decided to feature woodwinds primarily because, at the start, we had a member who majored in music,” says Lace Blue-McLean, vice president of the Friends organization. “She said, ‘What about woodwinds?’ It proved to be a great idea!”

Now the concerts by woodwind trios have become the group’s premiere fund-raising event and, in the process, evolved into one of the area’s major social events. The Friends group uses proceeds for a variety of projects. “We recently bought a boat for the refuge complex,” Blue-McLean said. “We’re also underwriting the monthly survey of manatees.” The refuge complex – more than 30,000 acres of saltwater marshes and bays – is home to, among scores of other species, the endangered West Indian manatee.

The March 2007 concert included a dinner at a local country club, attended by more 200 people who paid \$50 a ticket. The audience included supporters of the refuge and members of the refuge staff as well as a mix of business owners and local politicians. “We had a small display about the refuge, a silent auction and the Friends president said a few words about how the money would be used,” Blue-McLean said. “But it was primarily a night of entertainment.”

Meanwhile, in Turners Falls, MA

The Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center have been offering evenings of musical entertainment once a month for the past year. On average, 30-40 people turn out for ‘coffeehouses’ orchestrated by the Friends group. During the two-hour performances at the center, musicians serve up a rich array of music performed, depending on the night’s program, by folk, bluegrass and Dixieland groups and by individuals holding forth on flutes and accordions.

“We live in an area that is very rich in artists and musicians, so we started out simply approaching musicians that we know or have heard of,” says Anne Jemas, president of the Friends board. “Now, musicians contact us and send us their CDs in hopes of playing at the coffeehouse.”

Notices appear in flyers and newspapers as well as on the Internet and on community cable TV. The coffeehouses have already become a reliable source of income for the Friends group, which supports the Discovery Center. During intermission, the center’s museum store and exhibitions are open to concertgoers, and the Friends group sells coffee and snacks. Donations are taken as admission at the door, ranging from \$6 to \$12, depending on ability to pay.



Musicians playing for Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center offer a rich array of music for monthly evening performances.

The donations are usually shared with performers.

The Discovery Center, located on the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, is dedicated to educating the public about the watershed of the Connecticut River, the longest river in New England. (Three other Friends group support other activities of the refuge, whose range extends over 7.2 million acres in four states.) The center, housed in two renovated mill buildings, is operated cooperatively by the state Department of Conservation & Recreation, the Friends group and the refuge.

“The coffeehouses are starting to have a regular following,” deputy refuge manager Beth Goettel says. The Friends hope that people who come to hear the music will eventually join the organization.

Turning a Barracks into a Monument

The Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association in California is moving forward with plans to renovate a former Civilian Conservation Corps barracks – a valuable heritage resource that has been abandoned for several years – and turn the structure into a secondary visitors station. The barracks is located on Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge

The undertaking is being underwritten by a \$10,000 Preserve America Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. If all goes well, the site will open to the public this summer. Interpretive panels are being developed to portray the history of the camp as well as the history of the refuge.

The barracks is one of three surviving buildings that were part of Camp Tulelake, constructed in 1935, a few years after Tule Lake Refuge was established. Over the years, the barracks has provided shelter for Depression-era CCC workers, interned Japanese-Americans and German and Italian prisoners of

war. Underscoring the site's significance, Camp Tulelake – one of only few CCC camps remaining – was declared eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.

Record Year for Sea Turtle Patrol

The volunteer Sea Turtle Patrol at Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge (TX) had its most successful year in 2007; the group kept an eye on a record eight sea turtle nests that produced 807 eggs. An extraordinary 83 percent of the eggs produced hatchlings. More nests were located in 2007 than had been found in the previous four years combined. The patrol includes a number of members of the Friends of Aransas and Matagorda Island refuges.

The Sea Turtle Patrol was launched in 2003, when it appeared that endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtles were nesting on the island. The first nesting was actually sighted in 2005. Since then, the number of nests has grown along with the number of patrollers. Along with a record number of nests, the 2007 patrollers also found 23 stranded turtles representing four species – loggerhead, green, Kemp's Ridley, and hawksbill. Eight sea turtles were found alive and taken to the Animal Rehabilitation Keep for treatment; six recovered.



Randall Schorp

The Sea Turtle Patrol at Matagorda Island National Wildlife Refuge in Texas was launched in 2003, when the endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtle was first suspected of nesting on the island.

New Group Off and Running

The Supporters of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge (FL) – barely a year old and 90 members strong – are already a whirlwind of activity.

With a gung-ho president, Denise Williams, a retired captain with the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Officer Corp, the group has already received two grants, hosted a photography workshop, hosted a trash cleanup day, staffed a booth at a local seafood festival and recruited people in the community to participate in a Turtle for the Day tour. And that is only a partial rundown of the group's 2007 accomplishments.

In 2008, a priority will be developing environmental education programs with elementary schools in the region, including those in Tallahassee, the state capital, Williams says.

The Friends group's highly focused activities have involved lots of planning and the application of practical tips provided by Refuge Friends and Fish and Wildlife Service Mentors. A visit by mentors in spring 2007 provided the organization with highly useful "here's how" advice on matters such as recruiting new members, fund-raising and launching new projects in cooperation with the refuge staff. Participating in a Fish and Wildlife Service regional meeting and training sessions at the National Conservation Training Center left the St. Vincent Friends with a Rolodex full of solid contacts.



Supporters of St. Vincent National Wildlife Refuge in Florida is barely a year old and already has about 90 members.

Any advice for fledgling Friends groups? "Be patient; develop your resources a little at a time and build on what you have," Williams says. "Start networking and never stop. I've done a lot of e-mailing to other Friends groups and to Refuge System staff that really paid off. Everybody is willing to share their expertise." ❁

News Wanted!

We welcome stories about your refuge Friends group's activities and accomplishments as well as articles about the contributions of individual Friends. In most cases, your contributions should be no longer than 300 words.

Deadlines are: Summer 2008, April 19; Fall 2008, July 18. Please submit high resolution photos (300 dpi) to illustrate your story. Send materials to Martha_Nudel@fws.gov. ❁

The Juice of the Vine

The Willamette Valley of Oregon is the main wintering habitat of the Dusky subspecies of the Canada goose, and, in an unrelated vein, the heart of Oregon's wine industry, which is showing greater interest in sustainable viticulture programs. The two came together August 11, 2007, when the Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex combined a tour of three refuges and three neighboring wineries to raise funds and members.

Tyee Winery near William L. Finley Refuge, Ankeny Winery near Ankeny Refuge, and Van Duzer Winery near Baskett Slough Refuge were on the tour route. The planning wasn't without some apprehension. "This was only our second major event and our first fundraiser," said Dave Butcher, interim president.

During the tour, refuge staff provided nature interpretation as nearly three dozen participants walked the Rail Trail at Ankeny Refuge and the Rich Gaudagno National Recreation Trail at Baskett Slough Refuge, and toured

the historic Fiechter house and barn at William L. Finley Refuge. Participants had wine and snacks at Ankeny Winery, while they discussed wine making at Van Duzer Winery. The day closed at 7:30 p.m. with dinner and a Celtic concert at Tyee Winery. The tour cost \$75 per participant.

The Friends netted approximately \$500 and five new members – a great payback. "We made a great impression on people who probably never knew how wonderful our three little refuges are," said Willamette Valley Refuge Complex manager Doug Spencer.

Lessons Learned

- Make sure you include an "ice breaker" so participants can meet one another. Making new acquaintances can be a great membership persuader.



Rick A. Brown/Moose Photo

People on the wine and refuge tour sponsored by the Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex not only toured three great local wineries, but also got a chance to bird watch.

- Plan your marketing. Relying on personal invitations may not be enough to fill the bus or the event. Consider partnership organizations, placards in shop windows, and announcements in your local newspaper's events calendar.
- Work closely with refuge staff. Their donated time is invaluable. 🌿

From the Chief

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generated nearly \$185.3 million in tax revenue at the local, county, state and federal level.

The economic benefit that flows from national wildlife refuges is almost four times the amount appropriated to the Refuge System in fiscal year 2006. We've always known that refuges enrich Americans' lives; now we can show that we also repay the American taxpayer in dollars and cents.

By the way, out-of-town visitors accounted for 87 percent of total retail sales. That means people so value the recreation and amenities refuges offer that they travel a distance to get to one.

The report collected data from 80 national wildlife refuges. The economists analyzed recreational participation in and expenditures for freshwater fishing, saltwater fishing, migratory bird hunting, small game hunting, big game hunting and non-consumptive activities, including wildlife observation. In calculating total economic activity, they included money spent for food and refreshments, lodging at motels, cabins, lodges or campgrounds, and transportation.

Some refuges returned far more than four times their 2006 budget. Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge in Ohio, for example, is renowned as a migration stop for song birds. The refuge generated more than \$5 million in economic return and created more than \$1.4 million in job income. It returned \$20.79 for every federal budget dollar.

You can read the full report on the Web at http://www.fws.gov/refuges/pdfs/BankingonNature2006_1123.pdf

So, what does this mean for Refuge Friends organizations? First, here is another piece of information you may want to share with your congressional representatives, after discussing it with your refuge manager. Second, this is great information for those in your community who might become partners in your next project but don't fully understand the critical role of a national wildlife refuge.

The *Banking on Nature* report outlines the economic value of refuges to their local communities. But in our pride about the economic statistics, we have to keep one thing uppermost in minds: national wildlife refuges and the dedicated people who manage them are our greatest assets. 🌿

Q: How do you create a board committee?

A: Whether it's for membership, education, habitat projects, fundraising, bookstore, congressional relations or special events, board committees have been highly successful for many Friends organizations. But before creating a committee, make sure you need one. If you can explain in a sentence why a committee is necessary, you have the first building block.

Keep in mind that a one-person committee is not a "committee." A committee needs three or more – preferably five – members. That enables the group to make informed decisions, complete requisite tasks and maintain energy for its work.

The chairperson is the glue that holds a committee together. No committee can succeed without a chair who makes it their job to:

- help the committee identify its work.
- call and lead meetings.
- provide support to each member and encourage completion of tasks.
- recruit new members.

Make sure committee members understand their decision-making authority – and are held accountable for their decisions. A committee's progress should be monitored through regular reports to your Friends board. Routinely assess whether adequate resources and time have been allocated for the committee.

When mission, roles and responsibilities are properly defined, committee members have a stake in the process. With the proper nurturing, your committee will be off and running. 🌱

Calendar of Friends and National Events

March 3–5: "Education Programs for Youth: School's Out" training course, National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV. For more information, contact Georgia Jeppesen: Georgia_Jeppesen@fws.gov, 304-876-7388.

March 14: Refuge Friends Mentoring Program applications are due. To request application kit, contact Trevor Needham: Trevor_Needham@fws.gov, 703-358-2392

May 1: National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program applications due. New online application process being developed for 2008. For more information, contact Trevor Needham: Trevor_Needham@fws.gov, 703-358-2392; or Ellen Gabel: Ellen.Gabel@nfwf.org, 202-857-0166.

May 21–23: "Developing and Working with Friends Organizations" training course, National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV. For more information, contact Trevor Needham: Trevor_Needham@fws.gov, 703-358-2392.

May 28–30: "Grant Writing for Conservation" training course, National Conservation Training Center, Shepherdstown, WV. For more information, contact Ora Dixon: Ora_Dixon@fws.gov, 304-876-7314. 🌱

Marine Debris Challenges Refuge System

The National Wildlife Refuge System's 177 coastal refuges (including those along the Great Lakes) offer some great places to birdwatch, fish and observe elephant seals, sea turtles and a host of other marine wildlife. Unfortunately, they are also inundated with marine debris that washes up on refuge shores every year.

Overall, coastal wildlife refuges account for some 30,000 miles of shoreline and 20 million coastal acres.

For almost two decades, volunteers on the Hawaiian Islands and Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuges have collected and catalogued marine debris, including lost commercial fishing gear and a variety of plastic trash that has become an all too common problem across the world's oceans and coastal habitats. That such trash accumulates even on remote atolls in the middle of the Pacific Ocean highlights the challenges coastal national wildlife refuges face.

The scale of marine debris ranges from hundreds of tons of small plastics covering entire shoreline landscapes to large, abandoned vessels wrecked

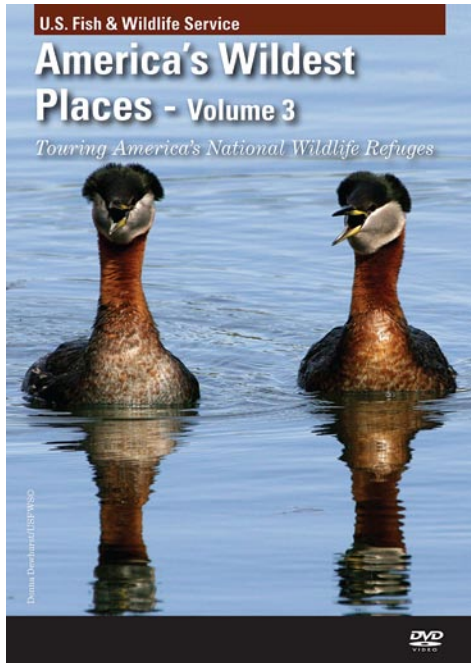
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Dave Patte/USFWS

Laysan albatross sits amid marine debris at Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

DVDs Offer Tours of National Wildlife Refuges



Can't think of the perfect gift? Here's a solution: a DVD containing spectacular footage of some of America's outstanding national wildlife refuges.

Volumes 1, 2 and 3 of the "America's Wildest Places" DVD collection can be ordered singly for \$6 apiece or in sets for \$18. You can order at <https://vcart.velocitypayment.com/fws/>. Postage and handling cost an additional \$2.50 regardless of the number of DVDs ordered.

- In Volume 1, you'll marvel at the takeoff of endangered whooping cranes at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge in Texas, the profusion of ducks and other waterbirds at Wisconsin's Horicon Refuge, and the secretive red wolf in the swampy tracks of Pocosin Lakes Refuge

in North Carolina. The video tours eight national wildlife refuges.

- Volume 2 takes you to New Mexico's annual fall sandhill crane extravaganza at Bosque del Apache Refuge, the sights and sounds of languid southern bayous at Noxubee Refuge in Mississippi and the prairie hillsides of the National Bison Range in Montana. Six refuges are featured.

- In Volume 3, travel from Vermont's watery Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge to the parched deserts of Cabeza Prieta Refuge in Arizona. You'll explore the diversity of wildlife habitats that have been protected as you visit six national wildlife refuges from Alaska to Massachusetts. 🌿

Special Place in History *continued from page 3*

"We're trying to help the Refuge staff tell it."

Toward that end, the Coalition has obtained a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for informational kiosks and posters at the refuge. Others signs are being prepared for trails that take visitors near areas that provided shelter for not only marooned slaves but also for enslaved canal workers and displaced and disenfranchised Native Americans.

The Coalition's bookstore, a major source of income for the Friends group, attracts many visitors. "We sell an enormous number of books devoted to the history and the folk lore surrounding the Underground Railroad and the maroons," says Freeman. "Our visitors seem a little less interested in T-shirts and trinkets."

"So many people come in and ask about the Underground Railroad and maroons - 'Who were they?,' 'Where did they live?,' 'How did they sustain themselves?,'" a refuge staff member reports. "It's opened us up to a whole new audience, including church and school groups." 🌿



Art courtesy of Cornell University Library, Making of America Digital Collection

David Strother

Friends *Forward*

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Marine Debris

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on Refuge System coasts and reefs. Refuge System field staff, volunteers and partners work vigorously to remove, quantify and contain marine debris. Projects range from beach cleanup by volunteer groups to multi-agency partnerships that collect hundreds of tons of submerged or shoreline debris.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) recently launched a marine debris Web site, <http://marinedebris.noaa.gov/about/welcome.html>, to provide information and resources to state and local authorities, the private sector and international partners - and even teachers and youngsters - on how they can help solve the problem. 🌿