



Friends of Trinity River Refuge

FOTRR

January 2022

Volume 3, Issue 1

Officers

President

Gary Holmes

Vice President

Chris Arceneaux

Secretary

Lisa Holmes

Treasurer

Shelli Ellerbe

Directors at Large

1. Bannie Cockerham

2. Steve Jouette

3. Vacant

4. Vacant

5. Vacant

Hello FRIENDS.....

The FOTRR and the Trinity River NWR had an outstanding year! We will share our 2023 accomplishments and recognize all our members and volunteers at the 2024 Friends of Trinity River Refuge Appreciation Dinner and Annual Membership meeting. We look forward seeing everyone and recognizing your importance to the Refuge and FOTRR.

At the meeting, we will review our 2023 projects: the award-winning Jr Ranger Program, our board improvement initiatives, the Environmental Justice Project with Furr High School and our very successful TRNWR Appreciation Day and *Walk for the Wild*. Additionally, we will elect 2024 officers/board members and review our annual reports

We have begun the Champion Lake Lodge Restoration! In December, the foundation contractors began leveling the floors and adding additional piers/beams under the structures. Our goal is to repair the dip in the lodge roof and re-roof both structures in 2024.

For your convenience, we had added PayPal buttons on our website to renew your membership and accept donations for the Lodge restoration. [The QR code on the right will take you to the Friends webpage.](#)



The Friends of Trinity River Refuge depend on your continued support to successfully assist TRNWR in its critical missions.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and join us in activities in 2024.

Thanks for your support.... Gary Holmes

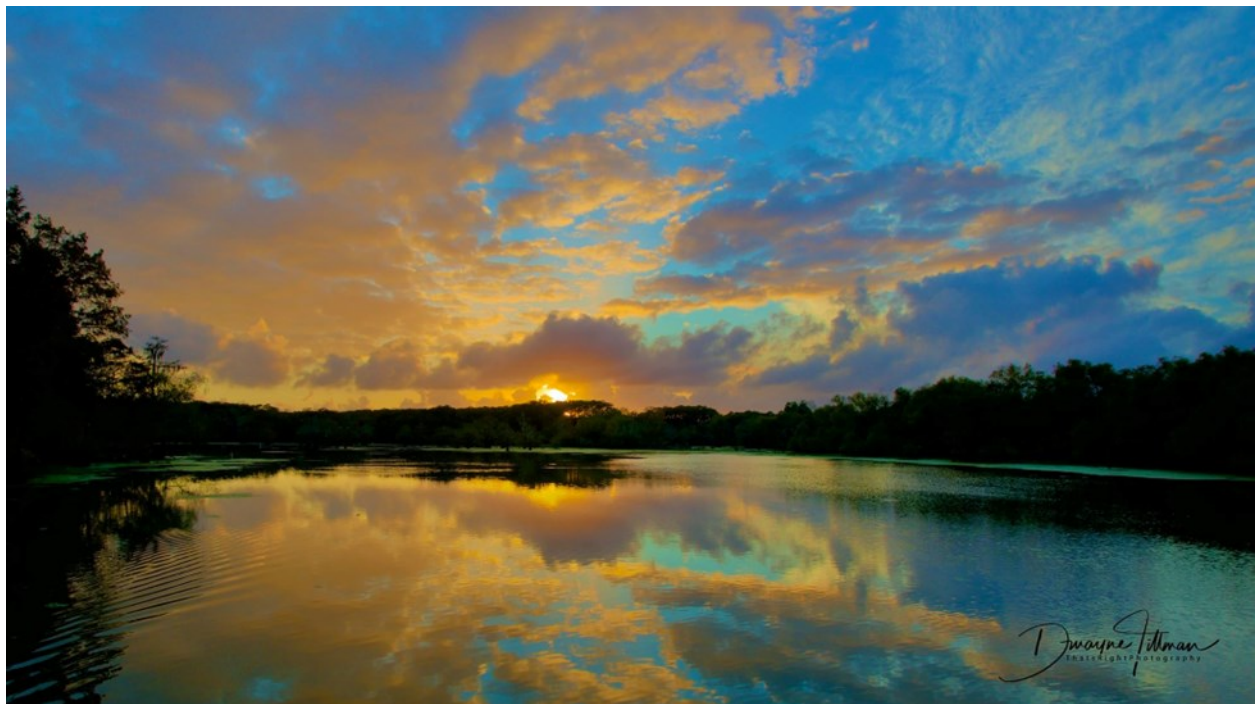
Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge

The Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge is the summer home of the one of the most elegant and beautiful hawks in America- **the Swallow-Tailed Kite**. The refuge is used during migration or nesting by nearly 50 percent of the neotropical migratory bird species in North America with 275 species identified on the refuge and over 200 species nesting on the refuge. It is a biodiversity hotspot with more than 650 vertebrate, 1700 insect, and 650 plant species documented on the refuge.



Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge was established to protect a remnant of the bottom-land hardwood forest ecosystem along the Trinity River. In addition to its important conservation mission, the refuge offers recreational activities- hunting , fishing, paddling, wildlife watching, photography, and environmental education. **Over 30,000 acres have been set aside and managed for the benefit of wildlife, habitat, and you**

The Friends of the Trinity River Refuge are committed to preserving and enhancing the refuge. **We invite you to join us in assisting this wonderful refuge where wildlife and people thrive.**



Friends Appreciation Dinner & Annual Membership Meeting



2024 Friends of Trinity River Refuge Appreciation Dinner & Annual Membership Meeting

Saturday, January 20, 2024, at 5:30 pm

at the Liberty Center in Liberty City Hall

1829 Sam Houston St, Liberty, TX 77575-4742

FOTRR Board Meetings....

The FOTRR Board has bi-monthly meetings throughout the year. The in-person meetings are held at the Trinity River NMR Office in Liberty. Some meetings may be Zoom meetings. All members and the public are invited.

2024- Board Meetings
2nd Monday- odd months

January 8, 2024
March 11, 2024
May 13, 2024
July 8, 2024
September 9, 2024
November 11, 2024



Friends Partnership Mentoring Visit

The Friends of the Trinity River Refuge participated in a Friends Partnership Mentoring Visit May 31-June 2, 2023, at the TRNWR headquarters. The purpose of the Friends mentoring program is to foster active, vibrant, and effective Friends organizations. The goal is to help a Friends organization and their Service site partner formulate a clear path forward so that they may work efficiently toward their mutual goals.



The Friends Partnership Mentoring Program is a peer-based, face-to-face coaching opportunity to build and enhance the partnership between a Friends organization and the Service site and to strengthen both organizations to enable them to accomplish their mutual goals.

Our visiting mentors were **Tim Miller**, La Crosse District Manager, Upper Mississippi River NWR and **Mike Engles**, Friends of Crystal River NWR. FOTRR participants were **Gary Holmes**, **Lisa Holmes**, **Chris Arceneaux**, and **Shelli Ellerbe**. TRNWR participants were **Dean Bossert**, Refuge manager and **Laurie Gonzales**, refuge biologist and Friends Liaison

The mentoring session has energized the FOTRR and has resulted in the following goals:

- Renovate the Lodge and Cottage site for Visitor Area and Environmental Education center.
- To create a public engagement campaign to increase awareness and support for TRNWR
- To increase FOTRR membership/participation and recruit new board members

The FOTRR has made great progress on these goals in the last six months.



Gary Holmes attends the National Friends Workshop

Funded by FWS

Key goals of the National Wildlife Refuge System are a connected conservation constituency, expanding community partnerships, and nurturing active and vibrant Friends partnerships. Friends are essential and valued ambassadors in their communities, and the Refuge System must continue to build on these successful citizen partnerships.

The National Friends Workshop is held at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, WV. The overall goals of the 3-day training were to provide Friends and Service employees with tools and strategies to build on existing knowledge and gain new skills needed to foster continued engagement in and support of the Service.



Gary Holmes was nominated by Dean Bossert, TRNWR manager, was accepted and attended the workshop on April 28 - May 1, 2023. **Gary's travel, NCTC lodging, and meals were covered by Refuge System headquarters.**

"It was a wonderful and inspiring experience. ,hope other FOTTR members can attend in the future"Gary Holmes



2024 FOTRR Board of Directors Election

We will elect our 2023 Board Officers and board members at the Jan 20, 2024 annual meeting. Nominations are:

President -Gary Holmes

Vice President -Chris Arceneaux

Secretary - Marissa Palmer

Treasurer -Shelli Ellerbe

At– Large Members

Lisa Holmes

Steve Jouette

Jessica Campbell

Bannie Cockerham

Memorandum of Agreement Between the USFWS and FOTRR

A partnership agreement that allows the FOTRR to proceed with fund raising and renovation for the historic Casa de la Patos Hunting Lodge

This agreement is hereby entered into by and between the **Friends of Trinity River Refuge**, Inc. (hereinafter referred to as the “Friends”), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity, organized and doing business under the laws of the State of Texas since 2000, and the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** (hereinafter referred to as the “Service”), **covering certain fundraising and construction activities which would benefit the Service and the people of the United States** under the authority of the National Wildlife Refuge System Volunteer and Community Partnership Enhancement Act of 1998.

The purpose of the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge is for “the conservation of the wetlands of the Nation in order to maintain the public benefits they provide” and “for use as an inviolate sanctuary, or for any other management purpose, for migratory birds”.

The bylaws of the Friends state that the Friends of Trinity River Refuge, Inc. was incorporated in the State of Texas on the 2nd day of August 2000, to promote appreciation and conservation of wildlife and habitat through environmental education and natural history experiences.

The Service would benefit from financial support for **a project that would renovate two buildings that would provide a visitor contact area and provide an area for interpretive, educational, and citizen science opportunities for the public.**

The Refuge seeks to enter into this **Agreement with Friends to receive funding for renovation of the historic Casa de la Patos Hunting Lodge into an environmental education center** through this effort and whereas the benefits to the Refuge are consistent with the intent of Congress in authorizing the Refuge as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge Appreciation Day

In conjunction with National Wildlife Refuge Week

The Trinity River Wildlife Refuge Appreciation Day and Walk for the Wild was held on Saturday, Oct 7, 2023. We had over **110 participants and volunteers** join the Friends of the Trinity River Refuge for a fun and educational day at the beautiful Champion Lake Public Use Area to show our appreciation and support for the Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge.



Our national wildlife refuges are more than just beautiful places; they're a testament to conservation and our commitment to protecting the natural world.

National wildlife refuges play a pivotal role in protecting and conserving endangered and threatened animals and plants, ensuring their survival and recovery. They serve as safe havens where these imperiled creatures can find refuge and thrive once more. NWR's are the only system of public lands and waters in the U.S. that is

devoted to wildlife conservation and the many benefits it provides to the natural world as well as to the local communities where we live, work, and play.



Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge Appreciation Day

Volunteers and Activities

We had over 25 volunteers from the **FOTRR, The Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club, Lower Trinity Basin Texas Master Naturalists, Houston Canoe Club**; and the **Houston Association of Sea Kayakers**. The volunteers contributed over **291 volunteer hours** in event publicity, planning, preparation, and work on the day of the event. The event was a great success due to our wonderful Volunteers!

Activities included:

The Big Sit Bird Count with Lower Trinity Valley Bird Club. Visitors were able to help identify and learn about local birds with the bird club experts.

Tour of the Historic Casa de Los Patos Lodge with Friends of Trinity River NWR learn about the interesting architecture, history, and exciting future of the 1940's log structures.

Interpretive Speakers with the Lower Trinity Basin Texas Master Naturalists to learned more about nature with our local certified master naturalist

Kayak Instruction with Houston Association of Sea Kayakers

Educational Exhibits and information booths with Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge Staff and the Texas Master Naturalists



Walk for the Wild

Our first WFTW was a success!

Walk for the Wild is a national event to get people moving a 5K distance in support of their local national wildlife refuge.

Our walk was along the lake levee and through the bottomland forests. Participants visited the interpretative stations and enjoyed the beautiful trails at Champion Lake.



Paddle for the Wild- with the Houston Canoe Club. A 5K paddle course on the Pickett Bayou for experienced paddlers



Our Walk/Paddle for the Wild raised \$890 which will directly support wildlife conservation, nature trails, and environmental education on the TRNWR.

FOTTR Grants in 2023

One of the important goals of the FOTTR is to pursue and manage grant funds for projects that benefit TRNWR. In 2023, we received \$20,000 in grants:



1. Environmental Justice through Community Science: The purpose of this project was to meaningfully engage high school students on the east side of Houston who are faced with long-standing social and environmental justice issues.

Working with Furr High School (Furr) and the Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (Tejas), the Friends supported activities that increased engagement of young Brown and Black adults through community science, digital media communications, and professional development. **The grant was for \$19,100 and included activities on the refuge and in Houston.**



2. Outdoor Mini-Grant: Outdoor cooking equipment from Retired FWS Employees. A **\$843.00** grant to purchase equipment that will be used for **youth activities on the TRNWR.**

Lodge and Cottage Restoration

The screen doors are finished!

We started the screen project in Nov. 2019, Now after three years (including a 13-month Covid delay), we have finished restoring 25 window screens and three screen doors! Also, we restored the exterior window frames.

The screen restoration was needed to seal the building from carpenter bees, wasp, and mud dauber intrusions.

Since 2020, we have had **twenty Saturday morning workdays** (3.5-hour/workday) with a total of **35 volunteers**- who have contributed **825.45 hours** with labor value of **\$20,636.25**. Many volunteers have been from the **Lower Trinity Basin Texas Master Naturalist**



Thanks to the Master Naturalist and all our volunteers in the past 3 years.

Lodge and Cottage Restoration

Contractor goals for 2024


We will continue to have volunteer workdays in 2024; however, our goals this year will require contractors for foundation and roof work. By the end of the year, **we will have solid, weather-proof buildings!**

In December, we **started the foundation work** which includes the leveling of both buildings and replacing the termite shield on all piers. Under the cottage, an additional beam and piers were added down the middle of the building to correct floor sagging. In the Lodge, two new sets of beams and piers were added. The foundation repair should be completed in January.

The **40-year-old roofs have deteriorated**, and the buildings have many leaks. The desperately needed roof work will require two projects.:

- On the east end of the lodge, the roof deck has dropped 3-4 inches which must be corrected before the building can get a new roof. A contractor will remove the old decking, re-brace the trusses, and shim the deck until it is level.
- After the deck is repaired, a roofing contractor will install new roofs on both buildings and the connecting breezeway

The FOTRR memorandum of agreement with FWS allows us to begin **fundraising and construction activities to restore the lodge/cottage.**

Champion Lake Lodge Renovation Fund 	Support the 2024 projects:	
	Foundation repair-	\$20,000
	Roof deck repair-	\$6,000
	New roofs-	\$30,000
	2024 project total-	\$56,000
Contribution options		
	\$100	\$250
	\$500	\$1000
	\$5,000	\$10,000

Please consider donating to our 2024 projects.

All donations are tax deductible, the FOTRR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity

FOTRR 2024 Volunteer Opportunities

Contact us if you would like to

- Participate in FOTRR workdays and activities
- Serve on Lodge Renovation & Utilization Committees



We are moving from the dream of Lodge/cottage renovation to the great challenge of making the Casa de los Pathos Environmental Center a reality. We will need volunteers and support to meet this challenge— let us know if you can help with donations of time, expertise or funds



Membership Information

FRIENDS OF TRINITY RIVER REFUGE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

_____ Regular Membership \$30
_____ Family Membership \$50
_____ Sustaining Membership \$100
_____ Corporate Membership \$200
_____ Donation _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



Membership dues are renewable January 1 of each calendar year.

Please make checks payable to:

FRIENDS OF TRINITY RIVER REFUGE

MAIL TO:

Friends of Trinity River Refuge

Box 12

Liberty, TX 77575

Visit our web page at: <https://www.friendsoftrinityriverrefuge.org/>

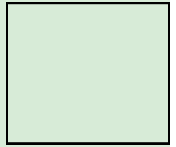
Friends of Trinity River Refuge

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We're on the Web!

<https://www.friendsoftrinityriverrefuge.org/>

About Our Organization

Mission Statement of the Friends of Trinity River Refuge:

To support, expand, promote, and enhance the refuge and its use for recreational, educational, and scientific research purposes.

To accomplish this mission the Friends will:

- *Serve in a cooperative partnership with refuge management to provide funds, volunteer labor, and in-kind resources as required to meet the needs and goals of the refuge.*
- *Promote public awareness of the participation in conservation goals and activities on the refuge through educational, scientific, civic, and charitable activities.*
- *Provide assistance to Refuge personnel on projects to develop and improve the Refuge's visitor programs and public use facilities.*
- *Serve as an advocate for the acquisition of wetlands and associated habitats within the Lower Trinity Floodplain.*



<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Trinity-River-Refuge-94940271167>