



Habi-Chat

Newsletter of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association

Volume 9, Number 1

Spring 2003



Snow Flurries and Sea Turtles



On January 24, 2003 Central Florida experienced snow flurries for the first time since the 1980s. The flurries are an unusual sight for this area known for its warm weather and came as quite a shock to many of our northern visitors. The recent drop in temperatures also had a severe effect on some of our local wildlife.

Biologists from Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge (MINWR), Canaveral National Seashore (CNS), Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC), and Dynamac Corp. rescued 28 cold-stunned juvenile green sea turtles and one loggerhead sea turtle from Mosquito Lagoon. Unfortunately the loggerhead later died. Sea turtles cannot tolerate the extreme cold weather central Florida experienced over that weekend. The turtles were taken to a temporary indoor facility at the Refuge where they were kept warm while awaiting release. Fourteen of the turtles were found



Dynamac employee takes measurements. Photo by Marc Epstein.



Wally the turtle awaits release. Photo by Heather Batson (CNS).

to be suffering from fibropapilloma, a disease that causes tumor-like growths and can be fatal. Ten of the infected turtles were transferred to rehabilitation centers in Clearwater and the Keys. The remaining 18 turtles were released Thursday, January 29. Wally, the largest of the turtles, was fitted with a satellite transmitter enabling his movements to be monitored. MINWR, CNS, FFWCC, Dynamac, UCF students, and NASA assisted with the release that was observed by members of the local media. Be on the lookout for sea turtle programs at MINWR and CNS this summer.

Beth Homa



Recovering green turtles. Photo by Cheri Ehrhardt.



President Theodore Roosevelt. Photo courtesy of USFWS.

“It is hereby ordered that Pelican Island in Indian River in section nine, township thirty-one south, range thirty-nine east, State of Florida, be, and it is hereby reserved and set apart for the use of the Department of Agriculture as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds.”

Unnumbered Executive Order by President Theodore Roosevelt, March 14, 1903

One hundred years ago with these 54 words President Theodore Roosevelt set in motion a series of events that led to the establishment of our National Wildlife Refuge System that we enjoy today. The NWRS, which includes 540 national wildlife refuges and encompasses 95 million acres of land, is the largest complex of lands in the world dedicated to wildlife. Look inside for more information about the upcoming Centennial Celebration.

Message from the President

We join with others throughout the world in mourning the loss of the seven astronauts of STS-107 on February 1, 2003. With the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge located on the Kennedy Space Center, home of the Space Shuttle, we feel a special closeness with the space program. I know a number of our members work at the Space Center or are former employees of the space program. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families of the astronauts.

I recently had the opportunity to attend two conferences of Friends of Wildlife Refuges. The first conference was the Association of Friends of Florida NWR, hosted by Lake Woodruff NWR in Deland, Florida. Several Florida refuges were represented and a great deal of time was spent with Lou Hinds, Supervisor of Florida's refuges, discussing the Centennial Celebration at Pelican Island NWR March 14-16 of this year. Lou asked for volunteers to work at the event and financial assistance for the purchase of refreshments. MIWA stepped up and offered several volunteers and donated \$1,000 for this worthwhile cause. Other Florida refuges are doing the same. There is more about the Celebration elsewhere in this issue of the *Habi-Chat*. I hope each of you have an opportunity to attend this historical event.

The second conference was the Centennial Refuge Friends Conference in Washington, D.C. hosted by the National Wildlife Refuge Association, National Wildlife Refuge System, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Department of the Interior. A great deal of sharing of ideas and networking among refuge friends and staff members was accomplished. You will be hearing more about this in future issues of the *Habi-Chat*.

On Monday, February 3 over 200 participants of the conference visited their respective Senators and Representatives. Unfortunately, our Senators and Representatives were unavailable, however we were able to meet with their staff members. As you may know, the staff members have a great deal of influence with their superiors. The staffers of Senators Graham and Nelson, and Congressmen Feeney and Weldon were very supportive of the Refuge System and MINWR in particular.

The Association looks forward to a continued successful year in supporting the MINWR.

**Warren Camp,
MJWA President**



President Emeritus English (1st from left) and Current President Camp (6th from left) meeting with staffers in Senator Graham's Washington Office. Photo courtesy of Betty Camp.



The purpose of the Merritt Island Wildlife Association is to promote conservation, awareness, and appreciation of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and to provide assistance to Refuge programs.

Board Members

President	Warren Camp	Board Members	Sam Beddingfield, Jim Butts, Judy Dryja, Bud Ferguson, Robert Hutchison, Fred Mastin, Forrest McCartney, Lee Solid, Ned Steel, Diane Stees & Laurilee Thompson
Vice President	Dan LeBlanc		
Treasurer	Jim Pedersen		
Secretary	Darleen Hunt		
President Emeritus	George English		

Refuge Manager	Ron Hight	USFWS Liaison	Dorn Whitmore
	NASA Liaison	Mike Sumner	

The Merritt Island Wildlife Association (MIWA) is a nonprofit, cooperating association for the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. *Habi-Chat* is published quarterly. For MIWA information, call 321-861-2377.

Newsletter Editor	Beth Homa	Technical Consultant	Sandee Larsen
Habi-Chat Committee	Beth Homa, Sandee Larsen, Diane Stees & Dorn Whitmore		



100 Years of Wildlife Conservation in America March 13-16, 2003

Time Capsule Dedication

Thursday, March 13; 1:00 pm / Indian River Mall, Vero Beach

Kick-off a weekend of events to celebrate the 100th birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

- Unveiling of the time capsule display, with artifacts from some of America's 540 national wildlife refuges
- Entertainment by The Peabody Orlando Ducks, Challenger the bald eagle, and President Theodore Roosevelt

Centennial Celebration Ceremony

Friday, March 14, 10:00 am*
Riverview Park, Sebastian

Celebrate the 100th birthday of the National Wildlife Refuge System at America's first — Pelican Island.

- U.S. Postal Service First Day of Issue Ceremony for the Pelican Island commemorative stamp
 - Entertainment by Voices of Liberty from the Walt Disney World® Resort
 - Performance of President Theodore Roosevelt
 - Live wildlife demonstration by Jack Hanna of Wild Animal Adventures

* Arrive early to avoid traffic delays. Event opens at 9:00 am. Satellite parking available.



Arlo Guthrie Concert and Fireworks

Friday, March 14, 7:00 pm
Riverview Park, Sebastian

Live music by Pete Harris and Sebastian's own Arlo Guthrie.

Sponsored by the City of Sebastian and Sebastian River Area Chamber. Fireworks to follow.

11th Annual Pelican Island Wildlife Festival

Saturday & Sunday, March 15 & 16, 9:30 am - 4:00 pm
Riverview Park, Sebastian

- First day opening of Centennial Trail and Observation Tower at Pelican Island NWR
 - U.S. Postal Service Pelican Island stamp booth
 - Exhibitors ■ Arts and crafts ■ Kid's activities ■ Live music
- Environmental education activities ■ Boat tours to view Pelican Island
 - Food ■ Seminars ■ Live wildlife shows by Jack Hanna of Wild Animal Adventures and Jim Fowler of Wild Planet

Events free and open to the public. For the latest event information, plus information on EcoFest (March 9) visit pelicanisland.fws.gov.



All times are subject to change.

Pelican Island NWR Celebrates 100 Years

On a tiny five-acre island in an East-Central Florida lagoon sprang a wildlife movement that still marches on. Hardly more than a mangrove-spotted sandbar, Pelican Island was the catalyst for the largest set of lands set aside specifically for wildlife -- the National Wildlife Refuge System. Designated the first national wildlife refuge in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt, Pelican Island, and the National Wildlife Refuge System, celebrate 100 years on March 14, 2003.

It began when the State of Florida, through the efforts of the fledgling Florida Audubon Society and the American Ornithologists' Union, successfully fought to pass a state law protecting non-game birds in 1901. But Paul Kroegel, a German immigrant who lived near the island, watched as market hunters decimated the island's populations of brown pelicans, egrets, herons and spoonbills for their plume feathers used to adorn women's hats. Kroegel, with the help of Frank Chapman, a member of the American Ornithologists' Union, and other concerned researchers and citizens soon convinced President Theodore Roosevelt that the island needed protection. Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge was created in 1903 and Kroegel was commissioned the first federal Warden of the Island. With a badge, a boat and duty admirably, warding off trespassers, vandals and illegal hunters.



First Warden Paul Kroegel and his protected pelican. Photo courtesy of USFWS.

Pelican Island is the birthplace of a great American ideal - that wildlife and wild places should be protected in perpetuity. After setting aside Pelican Island, President Roosevelt would go on to establish an additional 54 national wildlife refuges during his two terms as President. Today, this System consists of 540 refuges in every state and 5 US territories spanning 95 million acres. The story of Pelican Island is the story of conservation success. After 100 years, brown pelicans continue to roost and nest on Pelican Island, joined again by egrets and herons. Roseate spoonbills return every summer and the endangered wood stork has taken up residence. Today, after 100 years, Florida continues to play an integral role in wildlife conservation.

Sandy Edmondson, Refuge Ranger



Brown Pelican perched on boundary sign. Photo courtesy of USFWS.

Did you know...

- Wildlife refuges are home to more than 700 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 reptile and amphibian species, and more than 200 species of fish.
- Wildlife refuges provide habitat for more than 250 threatened or endangered plants and animals, including manatees, bald eagles, and the California jewelflower.
- Each year, millions of migrating birds use refuges as stepping stones to rest as they fly thousands of miles south for the winter and return north for the summer.



**National Wildlife
Refuges Centennial**



March 14, 2003





Species in Focus...Blue Goose

Visit any national wildlife refuge in the country and you will probably notice there is one species you can always count on seeing. Found on boundary signs, brochures and exhibits, it may not be a rare bird, but it has indeed become a respected one.

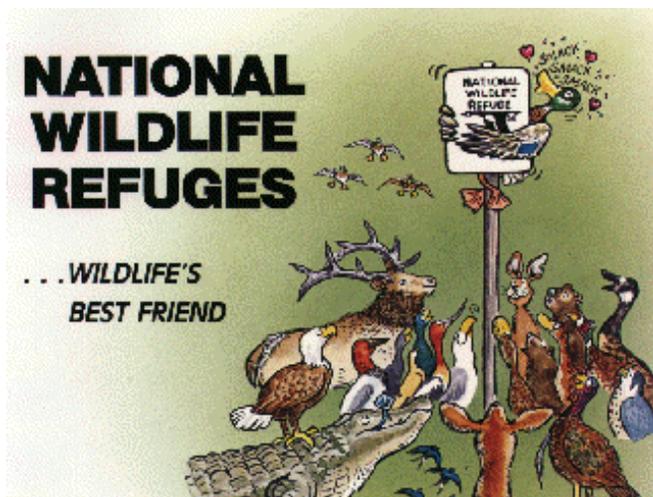
The Blue Goose, the symbol of the National Wildlife Refuge System, was created by J. N. "Ding" Darling. A Pulitzer Prize winning cartoonist, Darling created the Blue Goose while serving as the Chief of the US Biological Survey (the forerunner of the US Fish and Wildlife Service). Rachel Carson, scientist and chief editor for the USFWS 1932-52 wrote of the emblem 'Wherever you meet this sign, respect it. It means that the land behind the sign has been dedicated by the American people to preserving, for themselves and their children, as much of our native wildlife as can be retained along with our modern civilization'.

Merritt Island NWR was recently visited by the Blue Goose, who assisted with some overdue filing, and checked on our plans for the Centennial Celebration. Be on the lookout for the Blue Goose as you visit your national wildlife refuges.

Beth Homa

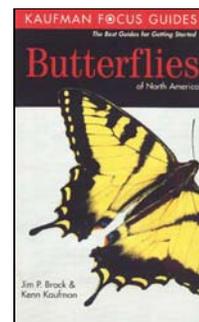


Blue Goose hard at work preparing for the Centennial Celebration.
Photo courtesy of Blue Goose.



Noted Author Kenn Kaufman to Speak at Refuge VIC

Publisher Houghton Mifflin requested that MIWA host noted author, **Kenn Kaufman**, originator of the Kaufman Focus Guide series. Kaufman will be presenting a program at the MINWR VIC Tuesday, March 18, 2003. The program, *A Birder Looks at Butterflies*, will promote his upcoming Focus Guide, *Butterflies of North America*. Best known for his books and articles on birds, he has also interest in butterflies for many years. A book signing will follow the program. If you have ever attended any of his programs, you know how interesting and informative they are. Don't miss this one! For more information please contact Nancy Corona, Refuge Ranger, at 321-861-0667 or visit the website at <http://merrittisland.fws.gov>.
Sandee Larsen, Bookstore Manager



Local Artists Visit Refuge for Inspiration



Brevard Watercolor Society (BWS) members were treated to a very special tour of the Refuge by Dorn Whitmore and Judy Dryja, followed by a complimentary luncheon and a slide presentation of art photography by Mark Epstein. The visit was arranged by Darleen Hunt as a kick off for a BWS art show that will be held at the Refuge VIC after a renovation and bookstore expansion, possibly this summer. Sixteen watercolor artists photographed wildlife and landscapes on a crisp sunny morning as resource material for their paintings. More information about the show dates will be provided later.

Darleen Hunt, MIWA Officer

Dates to Remember



Centennial Celebration at Pelican Island NWR
Thursday, March 13 through Sunday, March 16
For more information visit <http://pelicanisland.fws.gov>



Kenn Kaufman Program
Tuesday, March 18, MINWR VIC
Call Nancy Corona, 321-861-0667, for more information.

MIWA Members-Only MINWR Historical Tour
Saturday, March 22, MINWR
Call MIWA office, 321-861-2377, for more information.



Welcome Back Songbirds Festival
Saturday, April 26, MINWR VIC



This year's festivities will include seminars on birding, bird walks, children's activity center, Refuge tours and more. Most activities are FREE of charge. This year's event will also include Centennial activities and education. Call 321-861-0667 or visit our website (<http://merrittisland.fws.gov>) for updated information.

Bookstore Buys...

- Long-sleeved denim shirt with embroidered eagle. Retails for \$34.99 (XXL \$36.99).
- *Common Birds and Their Songs*. Colorful beginning guide to 50 common North American birds including a 65-minute audio CD. Retails for \$22.00.
- Sterling silver jewelry: turtle and tree frog pins by artist **Sara Edelman**. Retails for \$24.00-26.00.
- Watch for new Centennial items coming soon.



Don't forget to bring your MIWA membership card to receive 10% off purchases.



MIWA Members pose on the new Pelican Island Overlook. Photo by Molly Bartels.

Visitor Information Center Hours

Monday through Friday
8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday*
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

*VIC is closed Sundays from April-October

The Refuge is open daily from sunrise-sunset, except during Shuttle launch operations.

Pelican Island Centennial Cruise

Twenty-seven MIWA members were treated to a member-only trip hosted by Refuge Liaison Dorn Whitmore. The trip included a sea turtle talk at Coconut Point Park, a visit to Pelican Island NWR, and a boat tour around Pelican Island. Members were also granted a special visit to the Pelican Island overlook, which will be dedicated March 14 during the Centennial Celebration. Afterwards the group dined at Captain Hiram's in Sebastian. Thank you to Dorn and Sandee for organizing such a great trip! Hope to see you at the next one.

Beth Homa



MIWA Minute

The birding season has started and we are seeing good visitation at the Visitor's Information Center. Many new items are available at the Bookstore, so please stop by and browse. Remember, all proceeds from bookstore sales go directly into Refuge projects.

MIWA would like to thank **Holiday Inn Riverfront KSC** for renewing their annual corporate membership. Their support is greatly appreciated. Membership is at an astounding 580, the highest count ever. Please take advantage of your members-only field trips and your 10% discount on purchases at the Bookstore.

MIWA would like to thank the following volunteers who donated 100 hours or more in 2002:

Bev Campbell	Liz Kanjorski	Ray Scory	Joanne Napieralski	Dolores Neumann
Cary Salter	Bob Anderson	Mary Ann Theis	Dave Rich	Karl Eichhorn
George Baker	Betty Salter	Walt Kanjorski	Dottie Fringer	Marge Hand
George Schoen	Mel Fringer			

In appreciation of their accomplishments they have been awarded complementary individual memberships. A big **Thank You** also goes out to all the volunteers for their dedication to the Refuge. We would also like to thank **Scott Lueders**, Sales Promotion Representative for the KSC Visitor Complex, for applying for and receiving grant funds for MIWA.

Feel free to call MIWA's direct line, 321-861-2377, if you need membership or retail information. I'll see you at the Refuge.

Sandee Larsen, Bookstore Manager



Sea Shells through History



MALACOLOGY is the branch of zoology dealing with mollusks. SO WHAT? Well mollusks are the animals without bones (invertebrates) that build shells as their support (exoskeleton). These soft animal blobs must be very proud of their accomplishments because these structures are among the most prized of all nature's vast array of creations.

Most of us collect something, and some have many hobbies. My fascination for more than forty years has been seashells. I am an amateur Malacologist, although some may use the term Conchologist. The latter is a much more restrictive and inaccurate term. You may ask (please do), "What is the attraction of sea shells?" and I'm glad you did.

The most obvious attraction is appearance. The great variety of beautiful colors and shapes is immediately appreciated. Sea shells have been used for centuries as decoration and in many forms of art. The "Great Masters" enhanced many of their works with shells. Their use in mythology and as religious symbols is documented from more than 2000 B.C. in the Egyptian "Middle Kingdom". St. James the Apostle is pictured wearing a scallop shell with his pilgrim robes. In Greek mythology Aphrodite, Goddess of Love, stepped ashore from an open scallop shell. When Aphrodite became Venus in Roman mythology she was still pictured with the scallop shell.



There is a mystique surrounding shells that doesn't exist with many other collectibles. Shells are found in all regions of the world, and new species are identified each year. No one knows how many "Mother Nature" has printed or minted. Some rare species have disappeared only to be rediscovered more than one hundred years later, and rare, valuable specimen today may be found in great abundance next year. Seashells have been used as money and for barter. In some primitive cultures they were utensils for cooking and eating, as well as for other chores. The greatest expansion in collecting occurred in the late Renaissance when sea-faring nations began exploration. European royal families funded these great adventurers. Scientists and naturalists accompanied them on the voyages. Flora and fauna was collected from far-flung lands. Many treasures were returned to the royal families and competition began for the greatest accumulation of beautiful seashells. These collections became the study materials of 17th and 18th Century authorities that established much of the nomenclature and knowledge used by today's **MALACOLOGISTS**.

Future articles will present some special Florida and world-wide sea shells and expand on some of the points in this contribution.

Emmet B. (Bud) Ferguson, MD, MPH, MIWA Board Member

