

Bitter Lake News

August, 2026

Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

4200 E. Pine Lodge Rd., Roswell, NM 88201 Contact phone: 575-244-6256

e-mail: bitterlakefriends@gmail.com, <https://www.friendsofbitterlakenwr.org/>



Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

UPCOMING EVENTS AT BITTER LAKE

Saturday, Sept. 5 -- Free Dragonfly quilling class! Call 575-244-6256 to reserve your place in this fun, crafty class. Class will be held at the Visitor Center at 2:00

Friday, September 11 --- Karen Gaines will give a presentation at the Visitor Center on Dragonflies and Damselflies: 6:30 pm. The Astronomy Club will also have their telescopes for some star gazing

Saturday, September 12: Dragonfly Festival --- 8:30 am to 3:00 pm

10:00 --- ENMU professor of herpetology and director of the Natural History Museum in Portales, Drew Davis, will bring some live reptiles and will also have a presentation in the Visitor Center Auditorium

2:00 -- A presentation by Karen Gaines will also be held in the Visitor Center. Karen will bring some birds from her rehab center and discuss raptors.

*** call 575-244-6256 to book a tour or to sign your child up for the monarch butterfly release at noon ***

November 14th at 3:00 --- Cranes and Cocoa. Details will be on the Facebook page or the Bitter Lake website

President's Corner

By Merideth Hildreth

Summer has flown by, school is in session, and Patrick Collins posted photos of visiting Snowy Egrets on the Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge Facebook Page. The Dragonfly Festival is just around the corner, and Jana Burch has made sure the Nature Store is ready with cool shirts, caps, magnets, ceramics, books, and more! Join us on Friday evening September 11 at the Visitor Center for Karen Gaines' presentation and stay for star gazing with the Roswell Astronomy Club. Celebrate the 25th DRAGONFLY FESTIVAL on Saturday, September 12, 2026. Reserve your spot on a Birding, Dragonfly, or Wildlife Tour by calling The Nature Store 575.244.6256. Thank you to our Friends of Bitter Lake NWR Board members, Dragonfly Festival Committee, Bitter Lake and regional Fish & Wildlife Service staff for your tremendous efforts to organize and coordinate this year's festival. While we're waiting for a new Refuge Manager, a BIG THANKS to Whitney Kroschel, Brook Burrows, and Alyssa Lu for providing interim senior administrative and leadership support to the Refuge while managing their home

refuges and/or refuge projects, and to Wildlife Biologist Marianne Kelso with The National Wildlife Refuge Association for leading conservation work at Bitter Lake. This professional team has contributed greatly to organizing this Festival with Past President Don Weld. A huge THANK YOU to our sponsors who provided in-kind and monetary support and made this Festival possible! We welcome the agencies, non-profits, vendors, and volunteers who make this educational and outreach Festival so meaningful. We look forward to your help to release over 100 Monarch Butterflies! (I hope the milkweed is growing on the Butterfly Trail!) Once again, we look forward to Cadets from New Mexico Military Institute and Youth Challenge to assist with parking and set-up. Congratulations to Jayden Rodriguez, this year's grand prize winner of the Dragonfly Festival Art Contest and whose art is featured in this year's event posters and graphics. I appreciate the community in Roswell, Chaves County, the Pecos Valley, and surrounding region for your enthusiasm for the Dragonfly Festival. There will be dragonflies – AND cake at this 25th Celebration!

Dragonfly Art Contest

The art that was submitted for the Dragonfly Festival Art Contest was amazing, as usual. The winner this year is 4th grader Jayden Rodriguez from Monterrey Elementary School. Jayden was presented with his \$125 gift card and certificates in the school award assembly. His drawing will be featured on the festival t-shirt, and also on all the promotional posters. Congratulations, Jayden for being selected from the close to 400 entries that were entered this year.



Nature Store Highlight

Long road trip with bored kids? Kids who love to learn about nature? Kids that enjoy puzzles and art? The Nature Store has wonderful activity books that will entertain and enrich your child.



We also have a good selection of sticker books with a variety of themes, from butterflies to snakes. Another unique item found in the store are these hand designed, laser-cut tiles by local artisan Bob Darrow. There are several different designs, and they would make a wonderful gift for a friend or family member. Tiles cost \$15.



Grade Level Art Winners for 2026

Kindergarten:

- 1st: Juliet Coronado, Pecos
- 2nd: Ava Romero, All Saints
- 3rd: Georgia Evans, All Saints

First Grade:

- 1st: Dayra Chapa, Pecos
- 2nd: Esme Vega, Sunset
- 3rd: Nevaeh Vigueria, All Saints

Second Grade:

- 1st: Caleb Lueras, Valley View
- 2nd: Maeve Meador, Military Heights
- 3rd: Joycelyn Dunkin, Berrendo

Third Grade:

- 1st: Glory Chapa, Nancy Lopez
- 2nd: Sunny Rae Vanorden, Del Norte
- 3rd: Paige Johnson, Del Norte

Fourth Grade:

- 1st: Jayden Rodriguez, Monterrey
- 2nd: June Tew, Chaves Co. Homeschool
- 3rd: Sophia Gutierrez, East Grand Plains

Fifth Grade:

- 1st: Daniel Jimene, Nancy Lopez
- 2nd: Dannabel Cruz, East Grand Plains
- 3rd: Joselyn Zavala, Valley View

Bitter Lake History Tidbit

75 years ago this summer, there was a fish fry held at Bitter Lake.

Approximately 750 men, women, and children enjoyed eating 500 pounds of fish! This was the most successful fish fry that the Chaves County Game Protection Association ever held. At the time, this was an annual event.



If you come to the Dragonfly Festival and have your kiddo signed up for the butterfly release, here are some interesting facts about these colorful flyers. As a fat, black, white, and green striped caterpillar, a monarch eats nonstop. They only eat milkweed and grow 3,000 times larger than they are when they hatch. Milkweed is poisonous and eating it makes the caterpillar toxic to predators. Summer butterflies



only live 2 to 3 months. But when it is time to migrate, a super generation will develop. These butterflies are able to live up to 9 months, enabling them to travel up to 3,000 miles from Canada and the northern US all the way to Mexico, where they spend the winter. To find their way, these tiny travelers use the sun, and they also have a magnetic compass in their bodies which will guide them on cloudy days. An adult monarch butterfly weighs less than a paperclip. Think about something so fragile traveling such an incredible distance.

Special Visitor to Bitter Lake



A Long-tailed Duck came through to visit Bitter Lake this summer. He is the light-colored bird in the pictures, and he has been hanging out with the Ruddy Ducks, which is the duck with the bright white spot on his face. What is so amazing about his visit is that he came all the way down from the high Arctic. According to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, this duck's breeding grounds are up along the northern

edges of the continent, and even along the coasts of Greenland and Siberia. They spend the summers along the coast, but not tropical coasts! They visit seaside coasts in Canada and the northeast United States. The Long-tailed Duck is an amazing diver. They can dive up to 200 feet, where they catch invertebrates and small fish. We hope our visitor made it back to colder climes and deeper waters but are grateful for his trip to New Mexico.



Bill Briney, a Founding Father of Friends of Bitter Lake

The Bill Briney scholarship fund has been officially set in place. An award will be given to a Department of Biology research student under the jurisdiction of Eastern New Mexico University.

Refuge Miscellany

- Alyssa Lu is the Acting Outdoor Recreation Manager. She is working on hiring a GS-12 Project Refuge Manager.
- Bitter Lake is now part of the Northeastern NM Refuge Complex. The other refuges in this group are Las Vegas, Rio Mora, and Maxwell Refuges. The Pecos River Watershed ties all these refuges together.
- Emergency funding has been allocated for repairs on the biology building for both electrical
- work and the roof. The Visitor Center received funding for a new roof and an HVAC unit.
- A controlled burn for salt cedar control will be this fall.
- Remember Bitter Lake is a day use refuge only. There is no fishing, no overnight camping, and for the safety of both your pet and the wildlife at the refuge, please keep your dog on a leash. Rattlesnakes have been spotted, so for you and your pet's safety, stay on the trails.
- All the roads and highways that were damaged in the flooding have been repaired. Access to the refuge is very direct this year, via Main Street and East Pine Lodge Road or from Hiway 70 turn north on Red Bridge Road.
- The Oxbow Trail has been repaired and is ready for hikers to enjoy.

Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge	Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge
Membership Form	Membership Form Instructions
	
☐ Individual \$25 ☐ Family \$35	
☐ Business \$50 ☐	
Date: _____	
Name: _____	
Address: _____	
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____	
Email: _____	
Phone: _____	
Are you interested in volunteer opportunities?	
Mail to: Friends of BitterLake NWR 4200 E. Pine Lodge Rd. Roswell, NM 88201	
	Just two easy steps to join: 1. Complete the form on the left side of the sheet and mail it with your dues to the Refuge. 2. Complete the Membership Card below and keep it for your records.
	(Fold Here)
	
	Friends of Bitter Lake Membership Card
	www.friendsofbitterlakenwr.org (575) 244-6256 E-mail: bitterlakefriends@gmail.com
	Name: _____
	Date: _____
	*Note: Membership expires 1 year from above date.