

# Bitter Lake News

## January 2026

### UPCOMING EVENTS AT BITTER LAKE

**Saturday, Jan. 31, 12:00 noon** – General Membership Meeting. All are invited! Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. The Board is bringing PIZZA as the main dish! Our speaker will be Kin Han, the supervisory geneticist at the Dexter Fish Hatchery. If you are able to show up between 10:30 and 11:00 to help set up tables, it would be greatly appreciated. This is the perfect time to renew your membership dues, bring friends out to enjoy the Refuge, shop for unique and special gifts in the Nature Store, and make a decision to volunteer in 2026. Plus, we need a quorum in order to conduct business.

**Wednesday, Feb. 4, 6:00** – Board Meeting at Roadrunner Mobile Home Clubhouse. Anyone is welcome to attend.

**Dragonfly Festival Committee Meeting** – Will be at 5:15 immediately before the Board Meeting at the same location.

#### **Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge**

4200 E. Pine Lodge Rd., Roswell, NM 88201 Contact phone: 575-244-6256  
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Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

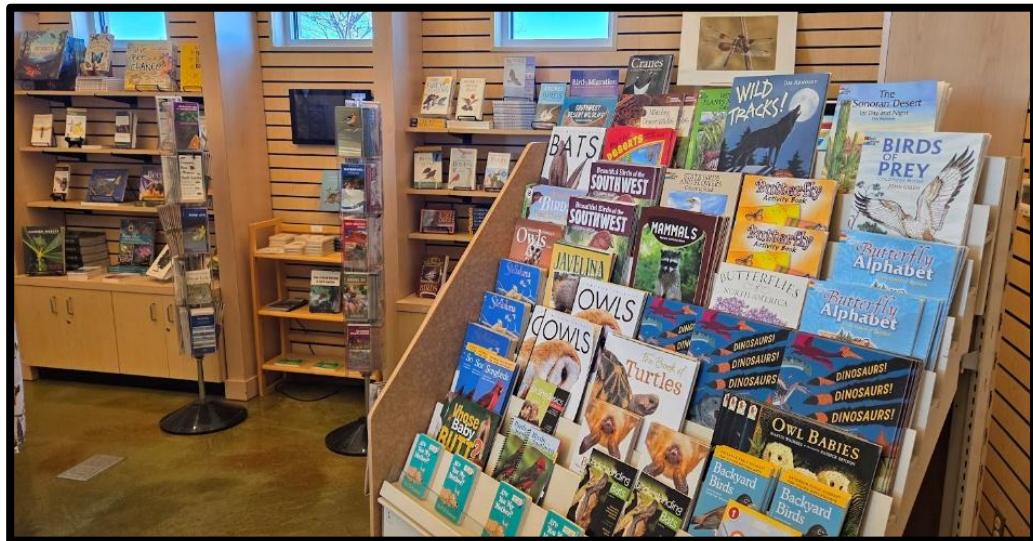
### **The Nature Store**

We'd like to encourage everyone to visit the amazing Nature Store in our Visitor Center.

Barbara Scheer began working on merchandise and stocking the store when the Visitor Center first opened in 2009. Later, Jana Burch took over the



running of the Nature Store and is the genius behind the entire operation today. If you are looking for unique gifts that reflect our local area, please come out to the refuge and shop around. All the profits earned by the Nature Store go to the Friends of Bitter Lake and benefit the Bitter Lake Wildlife Refuge. The Nature Store is open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Saturday.



**A unique gift would be our newly designed crane t-shirt! The artwork on the shirt was created by local artist Cate Erbaugh. It is available in short sleeves, and a long sleeve version should be in the shop any day. This is an item that cannot be purchased anywhere but the Bitter Lake Nature Store!**

## Dragonfly Festival Thanks!

The Dragonfly Festival does not magically happen every year. A lot of work goes into making it happen. A committee begins meeting in February to start planning and organizing. Steve Alvarez has headed up the efforts every year since the inception of the festival in 2001. Linda Taub and Jana Burch spent the day working the Nature Store, while Cathy Everitt and Eloise Elliott ran the front desk. Frank Everitt kept the big tent organized, and Rita Burnett and Amanda and Joe Mason kept the kitchen going and fed all the volunteers. Game and Fish brought their Poach Coach and Rivers and Streams interactive display and set up the archery. Assisteens helped Jan Alvarez with the arts and crafts on the patio. NMMI cadets were on hand to assist with parking. It takes a whole crew to drive the shuttle and tour vans. We appreciate Don Weld, Sue Westin, Floyd Bell, Patrick Collins, Jimmy Masters, Steve Smith, Jim Montgomery, and Milton and Brittany. Don Weld was on the radio promoting the event, and Christina with the Roswell Daily Record did newspaper advertising and visited the Festival. Refuge volunteers, Helen and James, put posters out. We appreciate the help of everyone! Thank you!



## Steve Alvarez

### So Long, Farewell, Good-bye

Steve Alvarez arrived at Bitter Lake in 2000. The Friends of Bitter Lake was just being organized when he arrived, and Steve immediately became a part of the group. At that time, Bitter Lake was a fairly unknown part of the Wildlife Refuge System, and the Regional Office rarely took the time to visit our refuge. With the first Dragonfly Festival in 2001, which Steve was an integral part of organizing, national publications began to visit the refuge and reporting on the dragonflies. The office in Washington D.C. sat up and took notice of the unique nature of Bitter Lake. At the time, Joe Skeen, a local sheep rancher, also served as a congressman in the House of Representatives. The Friends group organized Joe Skeen Day, and Skeen fell in love with the refuge. He worked tirelessly to obtain funding for the amazing Visitor Center that bears his name. Steve was present during the construction and used his experience from different refuges across the country to implement many ideas that were incorporated into the final design. The Center changed the entire atmosphere of the refuge. Since that time, the refuge has grown in popularity and is much better known around

the country. National Geographic has visited and created a film which can be viewed at the Visitor Center. Steve had a huge part in all the growth that has been experienced since his arrival here. We congratulate Steve on his 40 years of service with the Wildlife Refuge System, and he is going to be greatly missed at Bitter Lake. We are happy for him and Jan and excited for their future plans traveling and enjoying their retired life. Thank you, Steve, for the difference you have made at Bitter Lake!

*Sue Briney's letter to the  
friends  
following the death  
of her  
husband,  
Bill Briney*

To all your wonderful  
Friends,

Your kind words  
and thoughtfulness  
were, and are, so  
appreciated. Bill's time  
at Bitter Lake, working  
with you beautiful  
people, were his best  
times, and that brings  
great comfort to me.

Love to you all,

Sue Briney

## Refuge Miscellany

- We welcome Whitney Kroschel, PhD, who serves as Refuge Manager of San Andres National Wildlife Refuge near Las Cruces and is appointed as Acting Refuge Manager of Bitter Lake NWR. Hopefully, a new permanent manager will be in place soon since the hiring freeze has been lifted.
- Melissa Frye, who works for Fish & Wildlife Service and collaborates with BLM, will serve as temporary acting biologist. We wish Carl Jacobsen, who served as Bitter Lake NWR's Biologist, all the best in his new position with a refuge in California. Biologist Marianne Kelso will continue her work on the Refuge. Matt is working as a biology intern.
- The Oxbow Trail repairs are still not complete, but the trail is usable.
- On Oct. 15, the peak number of cranes were counted on the refuge. We had 14,500 visiting cranes in 2025.
- Donations are still being collected for the Bill Briney Memorial Fund.

***The mission of the Friends of Bitter Lake NWR is to uphold the refuge's creation and stewardship of quality wildlife habitat: the refuge's environmental, educational and scientific projects: projects and programs to increase the public's understanding and enjoyment of the refuge: and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge system.***