

Bitter Lake News

May 2026

Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

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Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge

UPCOMING EVENTS AT BITTER LAKE

General Membership Meeting: Saturday, June 6 at noon. All are invited! Please bring a dessert or side dish to share. The board will supply pizza. Don Weld will be our speaker. He will give a presentation on the history of the refuge. If you can show up between 10:30 and 11:00 to help set up tables, it would be greatly appreciated. This is a great time to renew your membership, shop in the Nature Store and listen and learn from a great speaker. We hope to see you there!

Dragonfly Festival: Saturday, September 12 --- 9:00 – 3:00 pm. There will also be a program on Friday, September 11. Details will be in the next newsletter



Magical Dance of the White Egret -- Photo courtesy of Jerry Holm

Changing of the Guard



We are having to say good-bye to Whitney Kroschel, PhD, who has been serving as Bitter Lake Acting Refuge Manager. Her home base is the San Andreas National Wildlife Refuge near Las Cruces. She has been splitting her time between the two refuges for several months now. She says she has truly enjoyed working at Bitter Lake and will miss being here. We appreciate all the work Whitney has done keeping our refuge on track. It has been a pleasure to have her on the team, and we hope to see her again. Brooke Burrows from the Atwater Prairie Chicken Refuge down near Houston will be filling in as the next Acting Refuge Manager. She comes highly recommended by both Whitney and Lindsey Landowski. We also want to say “thank you” to Lindsey who has remained in contact with these Acting Managers and has been very supportive.

President’s Corner

By Merideth Hildreth

I love Springtime in the Pecos Valley as each day blossoms with miracles of new green leafing, blooms, fragrant flowers, happy pollinators, and bird song. Rain is in the forecast as I write this column. Be sure to join us at the Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center at high noon on Saturday, June 6, 2026 for the Friends Summer General Membership Meeting Pizza and Potluck. Don Weld will regale us with a history of Bitter Lake NWR. This is a wonderful opportunity to shop in the amazing Nature Store (thank you Jana for managing and stocking this gem), renewing your dues, and discovering ways you can participate in upcoming events. The April 18 Butterfly Trail Planting and Clean-up in celebration of Earth Day was fun and successful. We cleaned out a bunch of tumbleweeds and brush along the trail and in front of the Visitor Center. A crew also cleaned up trash from the Refuge entrance to the Visitor Center. Thank you to NMMI Cadets who helped with the planting and cleanup, Fish & Wildlife Staff, Friends Board members, and community volunteers who included Dr. Tomasz Jankowski, Class of 2026 President of Leadership Roswell. Thank you judges of the Dragonfly Festival Youth Art Contest: Artist Ginger Shockey, NMMI Chaplain Jacob Graham, Jan Alvarez (Bitter Lake NWR Volunteer), Rory Watts representing Central Valley Electric, Steve Alvarez, Retired from Fish & Wildlife Service (Bitter Lake NWR). We send our best wishes to Helen and James Ward who happily served as Refuge RV Volunteers over the past year and helped with the Nature Store and Visitor Center. Welcome Brooke Burrows, Acting Manager of the Refuge and thank you to Whitney Kroschel, PhD, for serving as the outgoing Acting Manager. Chaves County’s improvements to Red Bridge Road and Pine Lodge Road now provide easier access to the Refuge. Mark your calendars for the Annual Dragonfly Festival that begins with a program on Friday evening September 11 and festivities, tours, presentations, and Monarch release on Saturday, September 12. Be sure to bring your family and friends to Bitter Lake and enjoy nature, wildlife, birds, and the beautiful Pecos Valley Sunflowers. A word of

thanks to Patrick Collins for conducting weekly bird counts and regularly posting beautiful photos of birds and animals on the Friends FB page! Thank you to all the volunteers who give so much of their time to the Refuge and the Friends group that supports the conservation and education mission of Bitter Lake NWR and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Winter General Meeting



We had a great speaker for the winter membership meeting. Kin Han, the supervisory geneticist at the Dexter Fish Hatchery, shared her knowledge with the audience. It was interesting learning exactly what our local fish hatchery does. Kin was very knowledgeable and engaging.

It was a privilege to have her with us for the meeting, and everyone left with full tummies and new information about how our wildlife is being protected and preserved.

Earth Day Butterfly Trail Clean-Up



It was an enthusiastic crew who showed up to get the Butterfly Trail ready for another summer. Plants were put in the ground, tumbleweeds were pulled from the

bushes, and everything looks much better after the strong spring winds did their utmost to rearrange all the landscaping they could. Thank you to all the workers who volunteered their time for this effort. We are especially grateful to the NMMI cadets who raked, pulled, bagged, and were invaluable helpers.



Nature Store Highlight



Visit the Nature Store inside the Visitor Center and check out these oh-so-cute and very unique earrings! The leather ones are so lightweight, you will not even realize they are dangling from your ears. The Jabebo earrings are actually made from cereal boxes. How clever is that? And how do they make those cereal boxes so pretty and shiny? They are very reasonably priced at between \$12 to \$16. The perfect gift for a nature loving friend.

Local Artist focuses on Bitter Lake's Smallest Animals

Roswell Artist-in-Residence, Eliza Williams, has focused on Bitter Lake's tiniest residents as the inspiration for their latest exhibit at the Anderson Museum. The



Photos courtesy of Roswell Daily Record

landscape, the sky, and the creatures of Bitter Lake are where they have gotten the

ideas for their art. The featured pieces at the museum focus on the feelings, loves, and fears of a praying mantis and an orb spider. Eliza has exhibited nationally and internationally. We are honored that they have taken the time to experience and study the often overlooked creatures and the beauty that make up Bitter Lake.





Christina Stock Photo
Roswell-Artist-in-Residence
Ash Eliza Williams demon-
strates the planned layout of
one art project of the upcom-
ing exhibit "Bitter Lake."

Bill Briney, a Founding Father of Friends of Bitter Lake

We are still taking donations for the Bill Briney fund. The goal is to establish an educational benefit to assist students whose are pursuing a degree that would enable them to work in an environmental field. Bill was instrumental in working to create the Friends group at Bitter Lake. Bill was very active in working with the founding members of the Friends. His interest in environmental issues led him to spend numerous hours working with the biologists at the refuge. He served as president and worked on organizing the interior of the Visitor's Center as it was being constructed. He was the founding father of the Nature Store, located inside the Visitor's Center.

Refuge Miscellany

- The 6-mile auto loop tour is being resurfaced with help from other refuges.
- Emergency funding has been allocated for repairs on the biology building for both electrical work and the roof. The Visitor Center is also looking at having repairs done on the roof. The housing units are being restuccoed.
- 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.
- Controlled burns: Burns were started in March, with 2 of 3 units on the list. The north unit burn has been postponed until fall due to the high winds that began in March.
- The Oxbow Trail is hikeable, but repairs are still in progress, so hike at your own risk.
- The Dragonfly contest entries have been judged, and the prizes presented to the students who were selected winners of this contest. Congratulations to all the students who created entries! They are amazing!

<p style="text-align: center;">Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Membership Form</i></p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Individual \$25 <input type="radio"/> Family \$35 <input type="radio"/> Business \$50 <input type="radio"/> </p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Address: _____</p> <p>City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____</p> <p>Email: _____</p> <p>Phone: _____</p> <p>Are you interested in volunteer opportunities?</p> <p style="text-align: center; color: red; margin-top: 20px;"> Mail to: Friends of BitterLake NWR 4200 E. Pine Lodge Rd. Roswell, NM 88201 </p> </div> </div>	<p style="text-align: center;">Friends of Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Membership Form Instructions</i></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p>Just two easy steps to join:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;">(Fold Here)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <div> <p style="text-align: center;">Friends of Bitter Lake Membership Card</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> www.friendsofbitterlakenwr.org (575) 244-6256 E-mail: bitterlakefriends@gmail.com </p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p style="font-size: small;">*Note: Membership expires 1 year from above date.</p> </div> </div> </div>
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