



Prairie Wind

Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
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Iowa PBS Showing of "American Buffalo"

By Madison Zink, Visitor Services Intern



Iowa PBS staff with Nancy Corona. Photo by Anna Golithly.

In celebration of National Wildlife Refuge Week, Iowa PBS showed excerpts of Ken Burns' newest documentary, "The American Buffalo" on Saturday, October 14th at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge visitor center. The documentary follows the 10,000-year journey of this magnificent creature which once ran wild across the Great Plains. This documentary highlights the connections of indigenous people to the American Bison, details the reasons this iconic mammal faced extinction, and the steps that brought it back. This event was a huge success, as both showings were filled to capacity. A total of 160 individuals visited the wildlife refuge to view Burn's newest production. In addition to the opportunity to preview this documentary prior to its official release, those who attended the second excerpt were given the chance to meet and question a panel of bison-experts. These panelists included Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge's first biologist, Pauline Drobney, along with Associate Professor of Biology at William Penn University, Pete Eyheralde. Visitors were welcome to ask questions that pertained to the American Bison as a whole, about the refuge herd, and information regarding cultural connections to this creature. Visitors were encouraged to drive the 5-mile Prairie Wildlife Drive auto tour to see these magnificent mammals that came so close to extinction, now thriving in Iowa's tallgrass prairie once again.

Spurs and Tails 2023

By Jim Johnson

Gene Hill, author of many books depicting the out-of-doors and environmentalism and columnist for Field & Stream magazine, once wrote the following about upland bird hunting, "At home a friend will ask, "Been bird hunting?" You will say that you have, and when he asks, "Have any luck?" You will think of what you have held in your heart instead of your hand, and then answer that you certainly did – without a doubt."

Approximately 80 pheasant hunters of all ages and many hunting dogs were in the open hunting fields at the Neal Smith NWR for the 2023 season opening on October 30. The fourth Spurs and Tails contest sponsored by the Friends to recruit, retain, and reactivate those interested in hunting and the environmental benefits supported by hunting was underway at 8:00 a.m. The day was clear but cold, damp, and windy conditions favored the pheasant rather than the hunter. Hot coffee, chocolate and dozens of donuts were provided by the Friends to encourage interaction among the hunters and the staff, friends, volunteers, and visitors who came to the Visitor Center. Many visitors including a girl scout troop and their sponsors who were also scheduled to meet that Saturday, were able to see up close the magnificent coloration of the ringneck rooster feathers and read about the history, anatomy, and significance of pheasant hunting to the Iowa economy.

Volunteers and Friends Board members staffed the measuring and registration tables from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Fifteen roosters were measured for primary tail length and spur length. Several more were brought in but not measured. The hunter with the rooster having the longest combined length of spur and tail was Mike Harryman of Cumming, IA. The 22 and 11/32 combined length was only 5/32 more than the second-place winner. First, second and third place winners received gift cards to sporting goods stores and all registrants received gift coupons to Goldies restaurant and a participation patch. The longest combined length measured in the four contest years was just 23 inches. This year's winner, as well as all of the previous winners, were healthy first year birds.

Hunters benefitted by the exercise, camaraderie, and as Gene Hill said, "what they hold in their hearts".

Manager's Corner

By Scott Gilje, Refuge Manager

Our new fiscal year kicked off October 1 with lots of uncertainty. Our biologist, Karen Viste-Sparkman, retired the end of September and is enjoying her time with a new puppy and lots of time to go birding. We were facing a possible government shutdown, but it was averted at the last minute. Now, we are waiting to see if it will happen this February. So, we continue to work and plan in the background for yet another possible shutdown.

The Secretary of Interior, Deb Haaland, made a visit to the refuge November 17 as part of an America the Beautiful press announcement. Refuge staff were able to spend a couple of hours with Ms. Haaland and our new Regional Director, Will Meeks, to talk about all the great work that is being conducted on the refuge and to stress the fact about our declining work force. The Secretary was appreciative about all the work our interns were completing and spent a great amount of time talking with them.



The refuge recently installed a Motus station at the visitor center. This station is designed to track birds on their migration by “pinging” them as they fly by. The Iowa DNR will be monitoring the site and report to us as birds come by in the spring and fall. Here is a link to learn more about the Motus wildlife tracking system: <https://motus.org>.

As we prepare for the upcoming winter season, I just want to wish everyone a safe and enjoyable New Year.

Madison Zink, Visitor Services Intern



My name is Madison Zink, a recent graduate of Central College in Pella, Iowa with a Biology and Spanish degree. Due to Central's close proximity, I had heard many things about Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge; however, I truly didn't realize just how privileged I was by being offered this position until I made my first visit! I am very excited to learn under Nancy the next six months along with working alongside the many volunteers I've had the privilege to meet. College may have given me many skills in the biology field; however, the visitor services internship allows me to use both my past experience along with my enthusiasm to work with the public through creative educational opportunities. This amazing facility, the wildlife surrounding it and the people that keep it running have already taught me so much and I'm blessed beyond measure to be a small part in it all. Feel free to say “hi” if we haven't met yet, I am ecstatic to get to know every person who has a part in running this refuge along with learning from them!

Farewell to Friends President Joan Van Gorp

By Sidney Algreen-Hunter



Former Congressman Neal Smith with Joan Van Gorp. USFWS photo.

If you've visited the Refuge in the last 10 years, you've likely seen Joan Van Gorp while there. And if you haven't seen Joan in person, you've come across something, whether it be a display, the Nature Store, or beautiful prairie, to which Joan has contributed.

Volunteering with the Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge since 2007, Joan became the President of the Board in 2013. After 16 years as a volunteer on the Board, Joan stepped down from the board this October. “Since I arrived at the refuge in 2016, Joan has been a champion for Neal Smith NWR,” explained Scott Gilje, Refuge Manager. “She is always here, taking days off from her job just to come out and make sure the nature store items were ordered or just to get the mail.”

In her tenure, Joan racked up a huge list of accomplishments. While the complete list would never fit in this newsletter, a few highlights include involving the Friends Board in a national mentoring program, numerous updates to the Visitor Center from outdoor restrooms to wifi and a working theater, recruitment of volunteers, cultivating many interns, and seed for new prairie plantings.

Through all of her contributions, one of Joan's largest was creating long-term goals and a larger vision for the Board. To do this, Joan found a mentoring program. Cheryl Groom, previous Deputy Refuge Manager, shared, “Joan was the force behind getting a Friends Mentoring visit, which really galvanized the Board into achieving all they have. It was a long two days, but the action items that came out of the mentoring visit gave the board focus and energy, which had been limited for a few years.”

In 2020, the Friends Board was awarded the Friends Group of the Year by the National Wildlife Refuge Association. The award recognizes outstanding contributions by a group of dedicated volunteers who provide essential services to the National Refuge System. Joan accepted the award on behalf of the Friends Board, an award that is a direct result of her many hours of work over the years.

Perhaps the biggest hole that will be left in Joan's departure will be the conversations and relationships she built. So many volunteers, Board members, and refuge staff (both past and present) noted how much they enjoyed working with Joan, her positive attitude and talents she brought to the refuge. (And all the food she brought as well, numerous compliments about the cookies, holiday treats and other goodies).

With Joan gone, the Friends Board is looking ahead to continue the work Joan started. Sue Tew-Warming will serve as the interim Refuge President. Along with the role of President, there are other vacancies on the Board needing to be filled. Visit the Friend's website, www.tallgrass.org, to learn more about the Board and volunteer opportunities. And true to Joan's nature, she is still volunteering and contributing at the Refuge in different capacities. If you see Joan, please thank her for her years of volunteer service and her many accomplishments along the way. The Friends nor the Refuge wouldn't be what it is today without her!

2023 Photography Contest Winners

Best of Show – Red-bellied Woodpecker by Scott Olson

Youth Best of Show – Stare Down by Sophia Juhler

Birds

First – Red-bellied Woodpecker by Scott Olson

Second – Tough Nut to Crack by Jorgen Rose

Third – Eastern Meadowlark by Jason Krogman

Bison

First – Mama and Baby by Barb McGraw

Second – Hungry Eyes by Jason Krogman

Third – Red Dog Breakfast by Matt Brotherton

Elk

First – Just a Nibble by Jorgen Rose

Second – Elk in the Prairie by Greg Punelli

Third – Call of the Wild by Matt Brotherton

Landscapes

First – Winter on the Prairie by Greg Punelli

Second – Oak Savanna Trail by Jonathan Bluck

Third – Prairie Drive by Lynn Perkins

Other Wildlife

First – Masked Bandits by Matt Brotherton

Second – Butterfly Migration by Jim McGraw

Third – Web Designer by Greg Punelli

People Enjoying the Refuge

First – On Point by Jorgen Rose

Second – Tallgrass Trail Dog Walk by Cara B. Stone

Third – Little Explorer by Jaci May

Plants

First – Wandflower by Janie Lawson

Second – Purple Petals by Greg Punelli

Third – Canada Wild Rye Grass by Warren Terpstra

Youth Winners

Bison

First – Stare Down by Sophia Juhler

Second – Try Me by Sophia Juhler

Third – Evening Stroll by Brayden Breckenridge

Landscapes

First – Prairie Layers by Emily Hutchings

Second – Prairie Plants by Teddy Hutchings

Other Wildlife

First – Bee-autiful by Sophia Juhler

Second – Buzz by Brayden Breckenridge

Third – Beauty by Brayden Breckenridge

People Enjoying the Refuge

First – On the Trail by Emily Hutchings

Plants

First – Full Bloom by Sophia Juhler

Second – The Blossoming Prairie by Sophia Juhler

Third – Prairie Grass by Teddy Hutchings



Best of Show
First Place Birds
Red-bellied Woodpecker
By Scott Olson



First Place Bison
Mama and Baby
By Barb McGraw



First Place Elk
Just a Nibble
By Jorgen Rose



First Place Landscapes
Winter on the Prairie
By Greg Punelli



First Place Other Wildlife
Masked Bandits
By Matt Brotherton



First Place People Enjoying the Refuge
On Point
By Jorgen Rose



First Place Plants
Wandflower
By Janie Lawson

Saying Goodbye - Part 2

By Karen Viste-Sparkman, Refuge Biologist

Part 1 of Karen's article was published in the Fall 2023 issue. Read it in your copy or on the Friends website. See the 2024 Spring issue for Karen's book recommendations.

Throughout my career, I have fought to protect and restore the ecosystems that the refuge supports in the ways I best could. Other people may have other gifts to offer to help the tallgrass prairie, oak savanna, and sedge meadow. Here are some suggestions if you need inspiration:

Support the Friends of Neal Smith NWR. This organization makes such a difference to the refuge! The interns that the Friends sponsor get work done that staff couldn't otherwise do. The Friends have purchased land, equipment, and supplies for the refuge, provided food for events, supported research and monitoring, and lifted staff morale, as well as lobbying for the refuge. In addition to donations of money, the Friends need people to get involved. There are open positions on the board for people who want to make a difference. Please consider stepping up!

Join the National Wildlife Refuge Association. This non-profit is an umbrella organization for individual refuge Friends groups. It "defends the integrity of the National Wildlife Refuge System with advocacy, restoration and research." They valiantly fight for refuge funding.

Get political. Vote, write to your congressional representatives, and lobby to support the National Wildlife Refuge System. Many other refuges are also facing staffing crises. There is a dire funding shortage and change is needed to maintain these wonderful places for wildlife and people.

Plant native. If you have a yard, plant some native plants. Learn about the Homegrown National Parks campaign and other initiatives to support native plants and wildlife at the local level. Research plants appropriate for your area that will benefit pollinators and other wildlife.

Volunteer. There are many opportunities at the refuge. Work at the front desk, pull invasive species, or conduct monitoring. Go the extra mile and get certified to apply herbicides (we use the most benign ones that are effective), a critical part of managing certain invasive species on the refuge. There are trees to girdle, seeds to collect, plants and critters to identify, errands to run. Of course, even managing volunteers takes time, so if you feel you could lead others that would be a welcome gift!

In addition to feeling good about making a difference, there are other rewards to getting involved. Even after all these years, I am still learning new things. Thanks to the science of artificial intelligence, there are now phone apps to help you identify species. This has opened my eyes to a new world of wonder that seemed difficult to access before. In recent years, the interns and I have found new species of fungi, insects, spiders, and more on the refuge. I always enjoy the moments of awe when I'm out in nature. Those special moments of experiencing the beauty nature—the colors of a sunrise or sunset, the damp feel of the foggy morning air, the citrus smell of gray-headed coneflower seeds or the sweet aroma of milkweed blossoms, the burbling sound of the bobolink's song, the roughness of the compass plant's leaves, and so many more sensory events—will happen more often when you put yourself outside in nature. Soak it in.

I still have much to learn and appreciate, and I plan on doing that during my retirement. I will be moving back to Oregon, where I plan on cultivating native plants in my yard, birding, walking my dog with my husband, traveling, and volunteering for local conservation efforts. While I am sad to leave my friends here and feel regret at leaving the refuge during this critical time, I will trust that things will improve with help from our Friends.



Youth Photo Contest First Place 2023 Winners

Left to right: *Stare Down* by Sophia Juhler; *Prairie Layers* by Emily Hutchings; *Bee-autiful* by Sophia Juhler; *On the Trail* by Emily Hutchings; *Full Bloom* by Sophia Juhler



Friends 2023 Year in Review

By Sharon Tinker, Friends Board

2023 was another busy year at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge with the Friends engaged in many activities and transitions. The year started with the annual members meeting Spring Fling on March 25th. Drake University Ecology and Botany Professor, Tom Rosburg, was the guest speaker and shared information on loss of Iowa tallgrass prairie and native biodiversity. Thirty-four members and guests attended in addition to the Board members.

Concert on the Prairie returned in a more informal Tallgrass Tunes format on June 9th, after several years absence due to the COVID-19 interruption. Sydney Algreen-Hunter and Sue Tew-Warming organized the event with participants bringing lawn chairs and blankets and a food truck replacing the catered meal. The night included guided prairie walks, a nature artist on site, hand pies, and Jonny Lipford providing wonderful music with his Native American flutes for the 124 participants and 24 volunteers.

The Friends were a sponsor of the North American Prairie Conference held in Altoona from June 25th to 29th. They talked to many prairie enthusiasts at the Friends table and opened the Prairie Point Nature Store at the refuge for conference field trip participants. The Friends funded Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge participation in Jasper County's "Great American Roadtrip" to promote small businesses on June 2nd and 3rd.

Rachel Ruden coordinated the Friends participation in the national "Walk for the Wild" event to raise visibility and funding for National Wildlife Refuges on October 7th. Nine people participated in a group walk at the refuge. The event raised \$578 for the Friends. Joan Van Gorp coordinated the annual photography contest. There were many high-quality photos taken at the refuge during the year that the judges evaluated in October. Several of the winning photographs can be found in this newsletter. Jim Johnson organized the annual Spurs n' Tails Contest on October 28th, the first day of pheasant season, with prizes going to the hunters whose pheasants had the longest spur and tail feather. The contest encourages people to get outdoors and publicizes hunting on the refuge.

Ciana Olson from Southeast Polk High School received the 2023 Friends Scholarship and will be studying animal ecology at Iowa State University. The Friends used a National Park Trust Grant to reimburse bus transportation costs for several school field trips. The Friends received a Prairie Meadows Community Betterment Grant and a grant from the Van Meter Advised Fund through the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation to purchase an Action Trackchair for handicapped access to the prairie.

The Friends funded stipends for four biology interns, a Visitor Services intern, and an Iowa STEM Council extern during the summer and a biology intern during the fall. They also purchased four new intern workstation laptops with software to improve their efficiency. The Friends supported the refuge by purchasing native tallgrass prairie

seeds to plant the Curry tract when it was added to the refuge and stickers and other items given to refuge visitors during special events like Bison Day and routine visits. Some of the seed purchase funds were the 2022 Walk for the Wild income.

The Friends and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation sold the 74-acre Van Ryswyk North inholding property to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for expansion of the refuge. This land parcel is north of the bison and elk enclosure and was the last purchased by the Friends and INHF for refuge expansion.

Loren Lown and Austin Steinkamp joined the Board replacing Daryl Howell and Mark Lyle who had each served on the Board for several years. Joan Van Gorp and Sydney Algreen-Hunter plan to leave the Board at yearend. Rachel Ruden attended Friends training at the National Conservation Training Center.

Volunteer Marie Harms worked with Sydney Algreen-Hunter and Board members to move the Friends website to a new host company that will be easier to maintain. Marie also refreshed the website design and updated the content. Austin Steinkamp converted Friends financial reporting from spreadsheet to QuickBooks.

Friends membership has grown from 301 at the beginning of the year to 330 in November. Refuge Visitor Center hours were reduced to only Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, due to lower U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staffing at the refuge, reducing sales in the Prairie Point Nature Store.

Memories of a Dear Volunteer

By Nancy Corona, Visitor Services Manager



Long-time volunteer and friend of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, Kerald Yearns, passed away this fall. Kerald donated nearly 3,000 service hours, assisting the refuge in a variety of ways. For many years, Kerald was the steward for the refuge's butterfly garden, pulling weeds

and planting new species of native plants. His work helped highlight the beauty and diversity of the prairie plants for visitors. Additionally, Kerald collected and cleaned seeds, assisted with special events, and presented public programs. Kerald's love for learning, teaching, and working hard to help bring back the tallgrass prairie left many positive impacts on refuge visitors, volunteers, staff, and the tallgrass prairie. Kerald will be missed, but his legacy will carry on through the visitors he taught and the prairie he nurtured.

Monarch Madness 2023 - Crazy as Ever

By Nancy Corona, Visitor Services Manager

On a beautiful Saturday in September, seventy or so volunteers helped the imperiled monarch butterfly by participating in a tagging event. Volunteers and refuge staff set out in teams and netted monarchs at several refuge locations. To do so, refuge staff purchased monarch tags through the Monarch Watch Tagging Program, a large-scale community science project initiated in 1992. Tagging monarchs help scientists gather information about this species' spectacular fall migration through a mark and recapture process.

The procedure involves carefully netting a monarch butterfly, placing an identification tag on one of its hindwings, and then releasing it. The tagging information is then entered into the Monarch Watch database. Citizens that find a tagged monarch can report their observations to Monarch Watch. This data is used to track their movements as they migrate south from Canada and the United States to their wintering grounds in Mexico. The more scientists and land managers understand the monarch's migratory behavior, the better they can implement practices to save this declining species.

Monarch Madness is held annually on a Saturday in mid-September during the height of the monarch's migration through Iowa. During previous years, monarchs tagged at the refuge, have been recaptured on their wintering sites in Mexico. We hope you can join us next year for this event. Additionally, you can investigate ways to support this magical migrant by visiting: <https://www.fws.gov/story/small-efforts-can-make-big-difference-monarchs>



Photos:
*Left, tagged monarch.
Photo by Tenlea Turner*
*Right, Amanda Yancy.
Photo by Mike Cox*



Time to renew your Friends Membership?

Our Friends members are our greatest asset in providing funding for the refuge and the many events and programs offered to the public. We value each and every donation no matter the amount. If you haven't renewed your membership, an easy way is online through our secure website. This takes just a couple minutes and is so vital for the Friends to continue our goals to promote awareness, support, education and appreciation for the natural ecosystems of the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge. Can we count on your donation? Go to www.tallgrass.org / Click on "Get Involved" / "Become a Member"

You Can Make a Difference!

The power of a Friends group is its members. Please support this all volunteer, non-profit organization with your tax-deductible gift and be a part of the learning, growing and discovery happening at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge every day. Thank you!

____ \$25 -- Big Bluestem Friend ____ \$50 -- Bison Buddy
____ \$100 -- Savanna Saver ____ \$250 -- Prairie Patron
____ Other -- \$ _____

Be sure to find out if your company will match contributions.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Date _____
E-mail _____

You may make your donation online and choose to make that gift recur monthly, quarterly or annually. Or you may make a one-time gift!

Please make checks payable to Friends of Neal Smith NWR, PO Box 114, Prairie City, IA 50228

Winter Events

By Nancy Corona, Visitor Services Manager

Nature Tots

Saturday, January 6 from 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Saturday, February 3 from 10:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Children ages 3-5 accompanied by an adult are invited to attend a free, fun, and educational program. Activities will include: storytime, a nature craft, and an exploration of the tallgrass prairie (weather allowing). Lessons focus on engaging children's senses and using hands-on and interactive activities. Registration is requested. To register or to get additional information, please call 515-994-3400 or email nancy_corona@fws.gov.

Photography Tips and Tricks – Indoor Session

Saturday, January 6 from 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Join photographer Mike Cox for fun, indoor, photography activities to help chase away the winter blues! Mike will lead a variety of activities to get your creative juices flowing! This program is open to all ages and skill levels. The following equipment is recommended but not required: tripod, wide angle lens, remote shutter release, and camera. A flash and macro lens might be helpful as well. Smartphone photographers are welcome, too! To register or to get additional information, please call 515-994-3400 or email nancy_corona@fws.gov.

National Rubber Ducky Day Scavenger Hunt

Saturday, January 13 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In honor of National Rubber Ducky Day, the refuge has welcomed 10 rubber ducky guests to hide themselves throughout the visitor center exhibits. Try to find all of 10 by following hints and riddles. Go to the front desk and tell the volunteer a few fun facts the ducks taught you to win a prize! This scavenger hunt is directed towards children ages 5-10, but all are welcome!

Second Saturday Stewardship

Saturday, January 13 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 10 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Volunteer to help build more tallgrass prairie by cleaning/preparing native prairie seeds for planting. This inside activity involves removing the unwanted parts of the plant, such as stems and leaves by hand, leaving just the seeds. Individuals, families, and groups are welcome to participate. Enjoy hot chocolate and snacks while helping to build prairie. For additional information and to register contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400

Bird Watching and Bagels

Saturday, January 20 from 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Brave the chill and enjoy an introduction to the world of bird watching. Meet at the visitor center lobby at 8 a.m. The program will start with a quick lesson on binocular usage and bird-watching tips and tricks, followed by a walk along one of the trails. Free loaner binoculars will be available for check-out and free bagels and hot chocolate will warm participants up after the walk. This event is geared for participants ages 8 and older. For additional information and to register contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400

Photo Editing, Part 1

Saturday, January 20 from 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Join Photographer Mike Cox for this indoor photo session. Learn tips and tricks that will help you bring your photo captures to life! Mike will cover file formats, various editing programs, data management, and basic photo editing and exporting utilizing Adobe Lightroom. For additional information and to register contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400

Winter Photo walk

February 3 from 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Join Photographer Mike Cox for an outdoor photo walk along the ½-mile Overlook Trail loop to explore nature's winter beauty. The surface of the trail is concrete and wheelchair accessible. All ages and skill levels are welcome! Enjoy a free cup of hot cocoa after the program. For additional information and to register contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400

Make Your Own Nature -Themed Valentine Cards Thursday, February 8 - Saturday, February 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

In celebration of Valentine's Day visitors are welcomed to make their own Valentine's Day Cards out of natural materials found on the prairie. A craft table will be available to visitors all day; however, for those who would like to collect their own material, a guided tour into the prairie will take place at 12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. (weather permitting).

Birding & Bagels

Saturday, February 17 from 8:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Brave the chill with us and enjoy an introduction to the world of bird watching. Meet at the visitor center lobby at 8 a.m. The program will start with a quick lesson on binocular usage and bird-watching tips and tricks, followed by a walk along one of the trails. Free loaner binoculars will be available for check-out and free bagels and hot chocolate will warm participants up after the walk. This event is geared for participants ages 8 and older. For additional information and to register contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400

Photo Editing, Part 2

February 17 from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Photographer Mike Cox will present an indoor live photo editing workshop. Participants are encouraged to bring their laptops to work with Mike during the class. Sample images will be provided to class participants. Topics covered: advanced editing, exporting, watermarking, and printing. Mike will be utilizing Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop during this class. For additional information and to register contact nancy_corona@fws.gov or call 515-994-3400



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"Thank You" to Our Refuge Volunteers and Supporters

To our Exceptional Volunteers and Supporters,

As we approach the end of the year, we want to express our thanks for your unwavering commitment to the mission, vision, and goals of the refuge and the Friends. It is only with your love, caring, and support that we can bring the love of nature and an understanding of her needs to more than 300,000 visitors each year.

You have invested physical labor, your time, and financial resources to support multiple refuge programs and goals. Just ask any of the staff or interns to describe the impact your volunteerism and support has meant to the refuge. They will show and tell you the amazing effects that your work and support have created.

On behalf of the Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge Board of Directors, we extend to you our heartfelt gratitude for your devotion, energy, enthusiasm, ideas, and inspiration. Any and all the achievements of the past year are due to your encouragement and support.

We wish you a very happy holiday season, full of family and friends, and the joy of prairie tranquility. Be certain that we will continue to cultivate an environment wherein all can enjoy, learn, and participate in the vistas and poetry of the prairie.

With out greatest gratitude,

Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge
Board of Directors

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is published by

**Friends of
Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge**

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and Volunteer Coordinator

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Prairie Wind is a newsletter about the activities of Friends of Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge and the Refuge.