
Taking Flight

**An Introduction to
Building Refuge Friends Organizations**



Greater sandhill cranes ©John and Karen Hollingsworth

A National Wildlife Association Publication

Taking Flight

An Introduction to Building Refuge Friends Organizations



National Wildlife Refuge Association
1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20007

2002

This book was made possible by funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and shall not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government.

In Memory
of

Mildred Miller Clark
1923-1997

Mildred was co-editor of the
Refuge Reporter
and was
a true champion
for the
National Wildlife Refuge System.

A Message from Evan Hirsche

President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association



In 1994, the Board of Directors of the National Wildlife Refuge Association made an important decision. They agreed that citizen support groups (“Friends”) were critical to the protection and perpetuation of the National Wildlife Refuge System. For this reason, the Board added Friends group development and training to their strategic plan.

At that time, no formal programs existed to support Friends groups. Many established refuge Friends groups were struggling with issues such as board organization, developing strong partnerships with refuge management, effective advocacy, and fundraising. Newly forming organizations were also struggling with basic issues such as how to write by-laws and apply for non-profit status.

For this reason, the National Wildlife Refuge Association launched the Friends Initiative in October 1996 with grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, Plum Creek Foundation, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

When we began the Initiative, it was clear that one of our first priorities would be to create a handbook on how to get a Friends group started – everyone was asking for some form of written “How to Do It” guide. We decided that the best way to write this guide was to ask the experts – go to the experienced Friends groups and ask them “What are the Keys to Success in organizing a Friends group?” In January 1997, we held a workshop that was attended by private citizens and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff that were the Friends experts. These people shared their knowledge with us and this handbook is a compilation of their work.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association is pleased to provide you with this handbook. We hope you will join us and your fellow citizens in supporting our National Wildlife Refuge System by starting or joining a Friends group. The personal rewards are tremendous and our refuge system will benefit immeasurably from your help.

National Wildlife Refuge Association

Board of Directors, regional representatives and staff

Officers

Curtis “Buff” Bohlen

Washington, DC
Chairman

Walt Stieglitz

Micco, FL
Vice Chair

Ann Harvey

Wilson, WY
Secretary

Neal Sigmon

Arlington, VA
Treasurer

At Large Members

Bill Ashe

Sudbury, MA

Gail S. Baker

Niceville, Florida

Molly P. Brown

Virginia Beach, VA

Edith T. Eddy

Menlo Park, CA

Robert C. Fields

Beaverton, OR

Karen Hollingsworth

Pembroke, ME

David H. Houghton

Montpelier, VT

Molly Krival

Sanibel, FL

Cal Lensink

Buffalo, MN

Joe Mazzoni

Rancho Murieta, CA

William H. Meadows

Washington, DC

Thomas Wathen

Takoma Park, MD

Regional Representatives

Robert C. Fields

503-645-3510
bifields@aol.com

Joe Mazzoni

California/Nevada
916-354-1076
mazzsr@ranchomurietaabc.com

Larry Smith

Southwest
505-293-0454
lsmith6@prodigy.net

George Hoffmann

Great Lakes — Big Rivers
608-787-0540
gwhoffmann@aol.com

Phillip S. Morgan

Southeast
770-972-6294
philm4@juno.com

David H. Houghton

Northeast
802-223-1373
david.houghton@tpl.org

John Martin

Alaska
907-299-1443
jmartin@alaska.net

Staff

Evan Hirsche

President
NWRA
1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW,
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20007
(202) 333-9075
Fax (202) 333-9077
Email: ehirsche@refugenet.org

Gretchen Muller

Project Manager
Email: gmuller@refugenet.org

Debbie Harwood

Office Manager
Email: dharwood@refugenet.org

National Wildlife Refuge Association

1010 Wisconsin Avenue, NW
Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20007

Phone: (202) 333-9075
Fax: (202) 333-9077
E-mail: NWRA@refugenet.org

Mission and Focus

The National Wildlife Refuge Association is the only national membership organization dedicated solely to protecting and perpetuating the National Wildlife Refuge System. Our mission is to protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System, lands set aside by the American people to protect our country's diverse wildlife heritage. We advocate increased Congressional funding and improved policies to maintain a healthy and properly managed wildlife refuge system capable of sustaining diverse plants and wildlife. Combining a Washington, D.C. headquarters, regional representatives and members from around the country, the NWRA is a leader, mobilizing citizen support for refuges.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association works to ensure that our national system of wildlife refuges is protected today and for generations to come. Since its 1975 founding, the National Wildlife Refuge Association has also worked to:

- Increase public awareness, involvement, and support for wildlife refuges
- Promote cooperation among varied conservation and environmental groups
- Protect individual refuges from threats to wildlife habitat
- Improve the management and protection of the Refuge System by providing information to administrations and Congressional decision makers
- Influence legislation that defines the future of the Refuge System
- Advocate for adequate funding and improved policy guidance for the Refuge System
- Network with Friends groups and supporting their actions on behalf of refuges.

Visit us on RefugeNET!

www.refugenet.org

For up-to-date information on the Friends Initiative, NWRA, legislation, refuge activities, and more . . .

History of the Friends Initiative

1994	1995	1996	1997
------	------	------	------

October National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) adds Friends group training and development to its strategic plan.

1994	1995	1996	1997
------	------	------	------

December NWRA submits Friends Initiative grant proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Goals of the project included identifying existing Friends groups, helping new groups get started, and developing a resource handbook.

1994	1995	1996	1997
------	------	------	------

March President Clinton signs Executive Order on the Management and General Public Use of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

May US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) sponsors a workshop: From Executive Order to Collective Action. Participants Friends groups as the highest priority for strengthening the refuge system.

NFWF hosts first Friends Initiative Roundtable to discuss building Friends groups and implementing NWRA's Friends Initiative.

October NWRA officially begins work on the Friends Initiative project.
FWS receives funds to sponsor a Friends mentoring program to provide one-on-one training to refuge staff and new Friends group members. It also receives funds to conduct a Friends workshop for refuge managers.

National Audubon Society launches its Audubon Refuge Keepers (ARK) program designed to stimulate citizen action on refuges through local Audubon chapters.

1994	1995	1996	1997
------	------	------	------

January NWRA sponsors first meeting of Friends group leaders and FWS staff. "Keys to Success" are discussed and an outline for a handbook is developed.

NWRA begins national surveys of Friends groups and refuge managers.

March FWS launches its Friends mentoring program.

July FWS sponsors its first workshop for refuge managers and park superintendents on Friends groups.

August NWRA publishes first Refuge Friends Group Directory.

October FWS funds Friends mini-grant program. \$100,000 to \$125,000 will be made available to Friends groups. The program is administered as a cooperative effort between the FWS, NWRA, NFWF, and NAS.

November NWRA launches Friends Initiative phase two, to include workshops, networking opportunities, improved communications systems, and direct technical and financial assistance.

1998	1999	2000
January	Audubon's ARK Program grows to more than 35 refuge support groups.	
August	NWRA, NAS, NFWF and FWS disburse 50 mini-grants to Friends groups, for a total of \$180,500, to support start-up and capacity-building activities as well as specific projects.	
October	First regional network of Friends groups, the Friends of Refuges Mid-Atlantic (FORMA), begins to take shape.	

1998	1999	2000
March	NWRA and Audubon host 20 Friends groups in Washington, DC for an advocacy bootcamp. Friends lobby their lawmakers for increased Refuge System funding.	
November	NWRA hosts the Friends Academy, a three-day workshop to build Friends groups' skills in the areas of board development, fundraising and volunteer management.	

1998	1999	2000
March	NWRA publishes its second resource manual, entitled <i>Building Your Nest Egg: An Introduction to Raising Funds for National Wildlife Refuge Support Groups</i> .	
May	Audubon's ARK Program includes more than 75 refuge support groups.	
May	NWRA's new president, Evan Hirsche, makes Friends a top priority in the Association's five-year business plan. NWRA and FWS begin to plan the first annual National Refuge Friends Conference.	
November	Fifteen Friends groups participate in a pilot media project, providing grassroots support for the efforts of the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE). Project is highly successful, with widespread media coverage of the Refuge System funding crisis.	
February	More than 220 Friends, representing 102 refuges and 43 states, gather in Washington D.C. at the first annual National Refuge Friends Conference for a weekend of skills-building and networking sponsored by the FWS and NWRA. More than 130 Friends lobby their lawmakers for increased refuge funding.	

“Friends Group” is defined as any formal organization whose mission is to support the goals and purposes of its associated refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System overall. This includes Friends Organizations and Cooperating and Interpretive Associations.

“Why are you involved in the Friends group?” *

“The refuge is a part of our community.”

– Molly Brown,
Friends of Back Bay,
Virginia Beach,
Virginia.

“I live here.”

– Jackie Peoples,
Partnership for the
Sounds, Columbia,
North Carolina.

“A love of wildlife and the Refuge, as well as the time to give of my talents.”

– Marilyn Kloosterman,
“Ding” Darling Wildlife
Society

“As a long time volunteer in the field of recreation and parks with an interest in wildlife and conservation, I wanted to try and make a difference.”

– Harlen Tucker,
Friends Of
Patuxent Wildlife
Research Center

*Friends Survey,
NWRA, 1997

Our Vision . . .

Our Vision for the Friends Initiative is to promote the development of local Friends organizations that will provide an independent citizen voice for the protection, conservation and enhancement of fish and wildlife and their habitats for the benefit of present and future generations.

The National Wildlife Refuge Association is committed to strengthening existing and perpetuating the creation of new Friends organizations that:

- Are informed of and support the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System;
- Provide a positive community influence and act as a doorway to the public;
- Are independent advocates working to protect the natural resource;
- Strive to influence support for the local refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System overall;
- Cooperate with other Friends organizations locally, regionally, and nationally and participate whenever possible in collaborative programs with these groups as well as with the National Wildlife Refuge Association;
- Strive to maintain a relationship of cooperation and mutual respect with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel; and
- Adhere to high ethical standards of behavior applicable to private nonprofit charitable organizations and adhere to all reporting requirements and other regulations as required by state and federal law.

About this handbook

When the National Wildlife Refuge Association launched the Friends Initiative, it was clear that a basic guide book was needed to help citizens form new refuge Friends groups. Around the country, citizens were “reinventing the wheel,” spending precious time and energy figuring out how to file for non-profit status or deciding what the Board of Directors would do.

Taking Flight is written for use by both citizens and refuge staff who are working to form a new Friends group. Because there is so much information we could offer in this handbook, we had to make some difficult decisions about what to include and what to leave out. To help us, we decided that the book should do the following:

- Give new or forming Friends groups and refuge staff the tools to get started during the first year of organization.
- Give Friends groups and refuge staff an overview, a distillation of information in a quick, easy, and readable format.
- Teach Friends groups and refuge staff the importance of forming and maintaining relationships that are built around the natural resource.

To write this handbook, we consulted the experts – those citizens and refuge staff who had experienced a long history of success with a Friends group. The National Wildlife Refuge Association convened a meeting in January 1997, where these Friends experts described the “keys to success” in organizing and developed a model process for building a Friends group. This handbook is a compilation of their stories, insights and wisdom.

As you form your Friends group, you will have many questions that are not fully answered in this book. However, we believe that *Taking Flight* provides the basic tools you will need to get started. We hope you will agree that this book is a useful tool in building your organization.

Note: The National Wildlife Refuge Association grants permission to reprint any part of this handbook. Please credit *Taking Flight* and National Wildlife Refuge Association in any copies made.

National Wildlife Refuge Association Friends Meeting, January 1997

Meeting Participants, Speakers, Observers, and Facilitators

Friends Groups

Helen Bain	Friends of Bon Secour NWR	AL
Edgar Bristow	Atlantic Audubon	NJ
Molly Brown	Friends of Back Bay	VA
Kurt Buchholtz	Rocky Mountain Nature Association	CO
Edward Crozier	Friends of Minnesota Valley and NWRA	MN
Ann Haines	Friends of the Minnesota Valley NWR	MN
Beverly Heinze-Lacey	Friends of Parker River NWR and NWRA	MA
Richard Hickner	Friends of Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge	TX
Carol Kolash	Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society	CO
Molly Krival	Ding Darling Wildlife Society	FL
Florence LaRiviere	Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge	CA
Emerson Learn	Friends of Bosque del Apache	NM
Jane Storm	St Marks Refuge Association	FL
Penny Thomsen	Friends of Walnut Creek NWR	IA
Tana Watt	Friends of Mashpee NWR	MA
Frank Wolff	Friends of Blackwater NWR Association, Inc.	MD

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Janet AdyNational	Education and Training Center	WV
Rick Coleman	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 1	OR
George Constantino	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 7	AK
Tony Leger	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5	MA
Patricia Martinkovic	Long Island NWR Complex	NY
Phil Norton	Bosque del Apache NWR	NM
Allyson Rowell	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Refuges	VA
John Stasko	Back Bay NWR	VA
Tom Worthington	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 3	MN

National Wildlife Refuge Association and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

William Ashe	National Wildlife Refuge Association	MA
Karen Hollingsworth	National Wildlife Refuge Association	CO
Kathleen Pickering	National Fish and Wildlife Foundation	DC

Speakers and Observers

Angeline Andrew	National Wildlife Refuge Association	NH
Sarah Bevilacqua	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5	MA
Jim and Mildred Clark	Refuge Reporter	VA
Anne Criss	National Wildlife Refuge Association	DC
Dan Ashe	US Fish and Wildlife Service, External Affairs	DC
Ronald Lambertson	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 5	MA
Robert Shallenberger	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Refuges	VA
Robert Streeter	US Fish and Wildlife Service, Directorate	DC
David Tobin	National Wildlife Refuge Association	DC
Lora Wondolowski	National Audubon Society	DC

Facilitators

Jim Feldt and Wes Wyens	Institute of Community Area Development/University of Georgia
----------------------------	---

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, we want to thank the participants in the National Wildlife Refuge Association's Friends Meeting held in January 1997 at Virginia Beach. It was their ideas and comments that have formed the backbone of this handbook. This handbook would not have been possible without their help. The full list of names is provided earlier in this section.

We would also like to thank the many people who reviewed and edited the draft version of this handbook, including: Janet Ady, Sarah Bevilaqua, Molly Brown Edward Crozier, John Fillio, Malcolm Fraser, Ann Haines, Karen Hollingsworth, George Hoffman, James Lacey, Molly Krival, Patricia Martinkovic, Phil Norton, Allyson Rowell, Frank Wolff, and Thomas Worthington. In addition, we want to thank Angeline Andrew for helping us gather background material for this handbook and Laurie Hagar for designing the handbook's layout.

Special thanks goes to Karen Hollingsworth who provided the photographs that appear throughout this handbook.

In addition, we especially want to thank John ("Jack") Fillio and the staff at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge for making room for us under really tight conditions. They have welcomed us with open arms and we have greatly enjoyed their camaraderie and good humor.

We also want to acknowledge Allyson Rowell for her support and interest in the Friends Initiative. She has been instrumental in gaining support for the Initiative throughout the US Fish and Wildlife Service. We have appreciated her good sense of humor and sincerity, which has helped keep us moving forward.

And finally, we want to thank all the Friends groups and US Fish and Wildlife Service staff who have supported this effort with their ideas, suggestions, and encouragement.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

What is the National Wildlife Refuge System?	2
What Are Friends, and Why Are They So Important?	5

THE MODEL PROCESS

Model Process Diagram	9
A Model Process for Starting a Friends Group	10

THE CORE GROUP

Forming the Core Leadership	14
Words of Wisdom from Other Friends Groups	17
Core Group Checklist	19

DEVELOPING THE RELATIONSHIP

Building a Relationship Between Friends and Refuge Staff	22
Typical Wildlife Refuge Staff (diagram)	23
Words of Wisdom from Other Friends Groups	27
Guiding Principles for the Friends and US Fish and Wildlife Service Relationship	28
Relationship Building Checklist	31

MISSION AND VISION

Mission, Goals and Objectives	34
Goals vs. Objectives	37
Mission and Vision Checklist	39

BUILDING THE ORGANIZATION

Building the Organization	42
The Board	45
Committees	47
The Stages of Board Development	48
The Legal Stuff	49
To Be or Not to Be a Nonprofit Organization?	50
To Be or Not to Be a Cooperative Association?	52
Board Membership Checklist	55
Organization Checklist	57

PLANNING

On Planning	60
Words of Wisdom From Other Friends Groups	63
Planning Checklist	65

Table of Contents (continued)

MEMBERSHIP

Building Membership.....	68
Group Dynamics	69
Membership Checklist.....	71

FUNDRAISING

Funding	74
Words of Wisdom from Other Friends Groups	76
Fundraising Checklist.....	77

OUTREACH

Communicating	80
The Newsletter and Membership Brochure	83
Words of Wisdom from Other Friend’s Groups	84
Outreach Checklist	85

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Celebrate Your Successes	88
Words of Wisdom from Other Friend’s Groups	88
Celebrate Success Checklist.....	89

RESOURCES

Where Do You Go From Here?	92
Internet Resources	93
Resources from the NWRA	93
Bibliography.....	94

APPENDICES

