

## Otter Slough Boardwalk

On July 19th, the final screw was driven to complete the 364-foot boardwalk that spans Otter Slough. This structure is the key element of the Otter Slough Trail that is being developed near the offices of the Brazoria National Wildlife Refuge. It was built with funds from a \$25,000 Heritage Grant from the 2011 Dow Gives - Community Grants Program awarded to the Friends of Brazoria Wildlife Refuges (Friends). This grant was augmented by \$9,000 from donations to Friends from Kathrine T. McGovern that are designated to be used on capital projects at the BNWR. While the understructure of the boardwalk was constructed by the refuge staff, the decking was installed by a crew of eleven volunteers, nine of whom are COT members, who collectively invested 107 hours in the effort. These volunteers were Ed Barrios, Marty Cornell, Gerald Forrest, Billy Heck, Jim Hillis, Jerry Krampota, Mike Mullins, Leo Novak, David Plunkett (Friends), Archie Pratt, and Tom Taroni (Friends). I would be remiss if I failed to mention the supervisory role of "George", a four-foot alligator who kept watch during the construction process.

Attention will now be directed to construct an information kiosk, photo blinds, and the path of the 1.5 mile loop trail. These items are part of a \$5,000 grant to Friends from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Completion of the trail is targeted for early fall, when it will be open to the public either Monday through Friday during normal business hours or by special arrangement at other times.

The trail meanders through the Otter Slough wetlands and is designed to provide the public with enhanced birding and other wildlife viewing opportunities. Its path contains the slough and areas of coastal prairie and scrub woodland, an ideal environment for both resident and migrating birds. Trail parking is in front of the refuge office building, which is at the end of the gravel-surfaced refuge entrance road on FM 2004 located about halfway between FM523 and Chocolate Bayou (near the FM2004 crossing of Austin Bayou). Feel free to drive out and take a look.

Marty Cornell