

CHASE LAKE FOUNDATION

NEWS RELEASE: For immediate use.

The Pelican was TR's Favorite Bird

MEDINA – The pelican was Teddy Roosevelt's favorite bird according to Dr. Jerome Tweton who portrayed President Roosevelt at the 20th anniversary banquet of the Chase Lake Foundation.



Tweton reported that Roosevelt had spent many days in observing the American brown pelican as he and his Roughriders group awaited in Florida to be deployed to Cuba. He also noted that the first national wildlife refuge to be established by executive order by President Roosevelt was for the preservation of the American brown pelican. Thus it was no surprise that Roosevelt also issued an executive order August 28, 1908 establishing the Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge to protect the American White Pelicans that have nested there. The Chase Lake refuge was among the first refuges established by Roosevelt and the second refuge he established in North Dakota.

Tweton said Roosevelt wanted to be remembered as the "Conservation President." His interest in nature began in boyhood and continued as a student at Harvard where he wanted to become a "naturalist." Tweton also noted that while Roosevelt was an avid hunter, and had come to North Dakota initially to kill a buffalo, he quickly recognized the need for the preservation of wildlife, natural landscapes and habitat for the future. His North Dakota experience in the Badlands helped confirm his conservation ethic, which became a hallmark of his presidency, Tweton explained.

Roosevelt considered himself a "Progressive Reform Republican," and was constantly fighting the special interests that sought to profit from timber, mining, and natural resources without regard to the future, Tweton said. Through the use of executive orders, Roosevelt not only set aside bird and wildlife sanctuaries, but also set aside vast areas of the country as national forests and parks. Tweton said that Roosevelt was in a constant fight with Congress and the corporate special interests over his use of executive orders to establish national forests and reserves.

Finally, he said, Congress passed a law restricting the right of the President to use executive orders to set aside lands. Thinking that Congress would likely override a veto, Roosevelt signed the restrictions into law,. However, Tweton said, before signing the law, he had the last word by staying up all night and issuing executive orders to set aside an additional 28 bird sanctuaries and another 150 national forests.

As part of the twentieth anniversary observance, the Chase Lake Foundation held a Pelican leg band raffle and an auction which featured a variety of birding goods, including binoculars and framed photographs by Rick Bohn of Woodworth. The fundraising effort will underwrite the Foundation's ongoing activities in operating the Chase Lake Visitors and Information Center in downtown Medina, maintaining its web site at chaselakefoundation.com, and developing additional tourism opportunities.



Chase Lake Foundation President Karl Limvere of Medina noted that “birders and tourists come from all over the world to see what is in our backyard.” The Foundation has established the Medina-Chase Lake Birding trail, which is the only signed birding trail in the region. The foundation is also developing and planning additional birding trails in the area, and improving the accessibility for observing the pelicans and their nesting areas at Chase Lake. Limvere also reported that Chase Lake and the Missouri Coteau is considered as one of the world's top 100 birding areas by the American Bird Conservancy.

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