

# Turnbull Wildlife Refuge Friends Newsletter



## Messages from the President by Lorna Kropp

### Fundraising for Environmental Education:

The FOT Board decided not to take on one large fundraising project this year and to try several smaller efforts to raise funds to cover the cost of the Environmental Education Intern. The Scenes and Songs for the Refuge was a start. FOTNWR was also the benefactor of the 3rd quarter charity giving by the employees of Metals Fabrication, Inc. We received \$2000 toward our goal of \$10,000.

If you did not have a chance to make a gift at Scenes and Songs for the Refuge, please consider making a gift during the coming "giving season." You can send a check or you can use the online donate button on the Website pages.

### Scenes and Songs for the Refuge Re-Cap

"There was sunshine! It was a very pleasant afternoon!"  
"It was a fun time and we had great music!"  
"We should do this again."  
"We set a record for one-day sales at the Nature Store."

Scenes and Songs for the Refuge started off with songster, Frankie Ghee and her back-up percussionist at 12:00 pm. The crowd enjoyed her style and variety of songs. The second band was the Eyer Family Band, consisting of two young girls on the fiddle and accordion with their parents on Ukelele, rhythm instruments and guitar. Their music was delightful and energetic as well as their presence before a crowd. The third performer was Friends of Turnbull member, Dan Burt on guitar and harmonica, sometimes assisted by Andrea Vaughn on rhythm instruments. Last up and headlining the event were The Plaid Cat at 3pm. There was some dancing, lots of toe-tapping and enjoyment of their music of "oldies and swing" songs.

All during the event visitors talked with and purchased items from the 5 artists who had paintings of various sizes, miniatures, postcards and greeting cards, fabric hangings, and craft items. The artists were: Ladd Bjerneby from Avenue West Gallery in Spokane, Janet Wilbanks, and Karen Simmons, both Cheney artists, Judy Sauer, a fabric artist from Spokane, and Carlene Hardt, wildlife photographer, and FOT member, also from Cheney.

The silent auction baskets drew much attention and competitive bidding as well. Joyce Alonso and the committee organized 6 baskets, plus two priceless up-cycled bistro table and 4 chairs sets decorated by two students of Molly Zammit – Haley and Alex Bedell. The decorations related to the habitats of Turnbull and were truly one of a kind. The Nature Store Outreach items included T-shirts, books, hats, bookmarks, magnets, photomugs and more. The final piece was a table of snacks and drinks to purchase by donation.

We are happy to report that we took in \$1200 more than expenses, so that our fundraising goal for the Environmental Education program has a good start.

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FOT supporters checking out the auction items



The Plaid Cat playing their "oldies and swing" songs.



Hi All:

The bookstore report will be short this month. Not a whole lot to report. Our sales for August were down quite a bit. Not sure if it was the weather or what, but we recovered well for September, and October is looking good so far. The Friends of Turnbull fund raiser was enjoyed by many. There was a table of Nature Store items for sale and many things were sold. A definite help for the bottom line for the store.

I did bring in a couple of new items over the summer and they have been selling well. May reorder them for next spring opening. I also am looking for some new things to replace items that have not sold as well. I have suggestions for some items and I am researching availability.

Our next major event is the Winterfest on December 7th. This will give people a chance to find special deals on Christmas gifts. I will be marking down prices on several items. Be sure to tell your friends to check out the store after they enjoy the events of the day.

Heather Johns has been a big help this year by having the store open on Wednesday part of the time. She also has washed windows, mopped the floor and dusted shelves. A big thank you to Heather. She has offered to assist me with the store duties next year. I am looking forward to teaming with her. If there is someone else that would like to work with us please let me know.

Kudos to our Nature Store volunteers. Our success depends on each one of you and your dedication to keeping the store open every weekend. I am working now and am finding I don't have as much time to spend on store business. Without the volunteers that keep the store open, we would not have the resources to help with environmental education at the refuge.

May your winter months be the best ever. Enjoy the holidays. Look forward to our reopening in the spring

**Visit our great website!**  
[www.fotnwr.org](http://www.fotnwr.org)

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## FOT Fall Activities

Lorna Kropp

Fall activities include the Community Planting Day (October 5), the Nature Store season closing at the end of October, and end with the Winterfest Celebration on December 7. Please save the date for the annual Chili Contest and a program by Woody Meyer, retired WAF&W Dept, about "Moose." (Plans for a bus tour of Refuge areas are still under negotiation.)

The Nature Store will be open during Winterfest hours for your holiday shopping items. Our Nature Store has many fine items for gifts with an environmental/wild-life theme or focus.

### Winterfest Schedule

- 10:30 am Bring chili pots to continue simmering
- 11:00 Program by Woody Meyer; "Moose"
- 12:00 Chili Potluck Lunch
- 12:45 Awarding the winner of the Chili Contest

(Hopefully, there will be two tours available: at 9am and 1pm.)



Winter birds at their finest! Winter Wings brings together birders and photographers of all stripes to learn and explore with top notch professionals and enthusiastic local guides. The Klamath Basin is renowned for its massive wintering population of Bald Eagles, but is prime habitat for many other raptors, including owls, as well as a stunning abundance and diversity of waterfowl. The 2020 Festival will feature nature cartoonist and writer Rosemary Mosco, wildlife photographer and cinematographer Gerrit Vyn, and author Nathan Pieplow. Join us for an extensive array of field trips, workshops, presentations, and receptions that highlight the wonders of the Klamath Basin in winter.

Dates: Thursday, February 13, 2020 through Sunday, February 16, 2020

Host site: Oregon Institute of Technology (Oregon Tech), 3201 Campus Drive, Klamath Falls, Oregon, 97601

Website: [www.WinterWingsFest.org](http://www.WinterWingsFest.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/winterwingsfest/>

Registration: Opens Dec. 7th 9 am PST

For information call 877-541-BIRD (2473) or email to [info@winterwingsfest.org](mailto:info@winterwingsfest.org)

# Refuge Happenings

by **Sandy Rancourt**  
**Visitor Services Manager**

Overall, it was a very busy summer. Several groups were involved in riparian and trail restoration projects.

## Cheney High Summer School Program

Cheney High Summer School offered their services again this year to get involved in another restoration project. Last year they restored a large section of the W. Blackhorse Lake Trail. In early July, 45 students and 5 teachers assisted refuge staff with a much-needed riparian restoration project at the Collin Leach Memorial Grove. Students worked with refuge biologist Mike Rule, biological AmeriCorps member Joseph Stewart and me removing hardware cloth cages from hawthorn, aspen and other native tree species in the grove. Although many groups have assisted us with this particular restoration project, Cheney High School was the first group to help plant this area over 16 years ago. It was very fitting for them to release trees, originally planted as saplings by former students, from cages they have now outgrown. We removed more than half of the hardware cloth cages from trees in this restoration site.



**Cheney High School Summer Program students on their way to the project site.**  
(S. Rancourt)



**A good pair of gloves is a necessity to remove the sharp hardware cloth cages.**  
(S. Rancourt)



**Cheney High School Summer Program students.**  
(S. Rancourt)



Biological AmeriCorps member Joseph Stewart assisting CHS students. (S. Rancourt)

On July 13th, 2 groups came out to work on separate riparian restoration projects.

### Fairchild Air Force Base (FAFB)

Twenty-seven members participating in the Airman Leadership School at Fairchild Air Force Base spent a hot, muggy morning removing hardware cloth cages in three sections adjacent to Windmill Pond. They also erected larger cages around aspen, willow and cottonwood to protect the trees from our industrious beavers. Dense thistle, wasps, rocks and other hazards did not deter the Leadership School students from doing their usual exceptional job.



Removing a hardware cloth cage from a very prickly hawthorn. (S. Rancourt)



Thumbs up says it all about this project. (S. Rancourt)



Once the hardware cloth cages were removed, larger cages were installed. (S. Rancourt)



In the restoration sites there are a lot of trees with hardware cloth cages that are ready to be released. (S. Rancourt)



FAFB Airman Leadership students give themselves a well-deserved cheer. (S. Rancourt)

### **Eagle Scout Project**

Just a short distance down the road from the FAFB members, another group was hard at work on a different restoration project. Eagle Scout candidate Teo Quinn and twenty-nine members from Boy Scout Troop 418 removed exclosures below Refuge Headquarters at the old Discovery School restoration site. Planted over 10 years ago, it was time for the panels to come down. Removing all the panels from two sections of restoration area was not only a very large challenge, but it also signifies the completion of a successful restoration project. The Boy Scouts were obviously up for the task. Teo did a great job of recruiting and organizing his troop. He also left the site neat and stacked all the panels to our expectations.



Eagle Scout candidate Teo Quinn removing fence posts. (S. Rancourt)

### **Eagle Scout Project**

On July 24th, Eagle Scout candidate Jarom Jorgensen recruited 14 scouts from Troop 418 to assist him on a riparian restoration project off the Refuge's Auto Tour Route. We have been working with the Greenheart Exchange for several years, planting aspen trees in a small restoration area adjacent to East Blackhorse Lake. The aspen trees have since thrived in this sector



Well organized teamwork made for a very successful Eagle Scout Project. (S. Rancourt)

(Cont. on p. 7)

and are large enough to withstand browsing by moose and elk, but not from beavers. Jarom's task was to remove all the hardware cloth cages from the individual aspen trees and replace them with larger cages to protect them from beavers. In addition, Jarom and fellow boy scouts and their parents removed the fence panels around the site, which now looks fantastic.



**Eagle Scout candidate Jarom Jorgensen working on the East Blackhorse Trail Riparian Restoration project. (S. Rancourt)**



**Fence panels and hardware cloth cages were removed; the installation of large cages resulted in the completion of this restoration project. (S. Rancourt)**



**Hardware cloth cages are replaced with larger ones once the trees attain a certain size. (S. Rancourt)**

### **Bluebird Trail Restoration Eagle Scout Project**

Eagle Scout candidate Parker Yates chose trail restoration for his Eagle Scout requirement. Parker and 12 members from BSA Troop 418 worked diligently to lay three dump loads of wood chips on the east end of the Bluebird Trail. This section of trail gets swampy during the spring, so this project was much needed. Trail restoration is tough work. Parker and his crew arrived early, but this late date in September proved to be a warm day by the time they completed this project. Parker was very well organized, and the pile disappeared in no time. The trail of course looks great and should provide a good platform during the rainy season. This trail traverses ponderosa pine forest and meadow steppe. It is worth checking out if you haven't hiked it yet. Over the years, both staff and several volunteer groups have put a lot of effort into making this a very nice hike for the public.



**Eagle Scout candidate Parker Yates. (S. Rancourt)**



All the chips from this long pile were put on the trail.  
(S. Rancourt)



Wood chips are moved with wheelbarrows and fortitude.  
(S. Rancourt)

## Environmental Education & Outreach

Summer field trips and camps continued after the completion of our busy spring field trip season. Joyce Alonso, Chuck Kerkering and Fran Haywood facilitated a field trip for 30 young women participating in American Association of University Women Tech Trek, which encourages women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). All of these incredibly talented facilitators did a great job of teaching the young ladies about animal adaptations, aquatic invertebrates, birds and other natural wonders of Turnbull. These long-term refuge volunteers are so good that AAUW Tech Trek specifically requested that they lead their group again this year.



Joyce Alonso discusses the benefits of riparian habitat for neotropical songbirds. (S. Rancourt)



Fran Haywood provided a great deal of insight on animal adaptations in the EE classroom. (S. Rancourt)



Chuck Kerkering assists students with identifying aquatic invertebrates and discussing their underwater adaptations. (S. Rancourt)

## Outreach

### Photographic Society of America Tour

Chuck Kerkering also led a tour for 32 members of the Photographic Society of America attending a conference in Spokane. Chuck is an exceptional photographer, so who better to lead this tour than a photographer? Chuck reported having a good time with the group and how much he enjoyed leading the participants on a natural history tour of the refuge.

### FOT General Meeting

Friends of Turnbull hosted their annual general meeting in August at the Refuge and provided hamburgers for their potluck. Refuge Biologist Mike Rule gave a very informative talk on invasive species monitoring, control and management for the participants.



**Mike discusses invasive species management on Turnbull.**  
(S. Rancourt)

### **Field Trip Training Workshop**

Despite the snow we experienced at the end of September, we had beautiful weather for both training days on the Field Trip Program. New AmeriCorps members and staff and long-term refuge volunteers participated to learn how to lead field trips or as a refresher course. It is always a pleasure for me to train folks because of the people who participate. We are very fortunate to have such wonderful and dedicated volunteers and staff.



**“One last scoop” From left to right:**  
**Chuck Kerkering; Peggy Goodner-Tan; EE AmeriCorps member, Kaitlin Abell; Sarah Valverde;**  
**Biological AmeriCorps member, Erik Lewis; and administration clerk, Jack Vudthiyanon.**  
(S. Rancourt)

# Wildlife Observations

by Mike Rule  
Wildlife Biologist

Summer ended in a flurry, a snow flurry that is. Our first measurable snow fell on 9/28/2019, just seven days past the fall equinox. This is a record, the earliest measurable snow since 1926. Shortly after this first snow, several large flocks of western bluebirds with a few mountain bluebirds, were seen on the refuge, a more common sighting in mid to late October. We also have been seeing quite a few almost black woolly bear caterpillars. Folklore says that the greater black area on these fuzzy, black and brown caterpillars means an earlier and harsher winter.

Prognosticating the weather, however, is best left to the experts. Dr. Bob Quinn, retired Eastern Washington University geography professor and past FOT board member, has been forecasting our winter weather for 49 years with uncanny accuracy. He recently gave us his forecast in an October 3, 2019 Cheney Free Press article by Paul Delaney. In summary, Dr. Quinn's analysis of ocean temperatures in the North Pacific indicates a warmer and wetter winter, with below normal snowfall in the lowlands and higher than normal snow in the mountains. Read the article to get all the details. It will be kind of a mixed bag regarding recharge of refuge wetlands. Only time will tell.

Although fall colors are starting to develop in the area, the presence of leaves on many of our deciduous trees during the recent snows has resulted in a lot of drooping trees and some breakage. Aspen are just beginning to show color, hawthorns have turned a multitude of red and orange hues, and the wine-collared dogwoods contrast beautifully with our recent snow.

Moose are abundant this year, it is rare to not see one or more during a visit to the refuge. Looking at the wildlife observations that folks record at the front desk, moose are definitely the most popular animal noted. Their winter coats are on and they are stunning in their velvet brown outwear.



**Spectacular color on the sometimes underated black hawthorne. M. Rule**



**Red-osier dogwood is peaking right now. Mike Rule**



**Bull moose in front of the refuge office. Mike Rule**

A number of snakes have been observed out on the roads and trails, warming in the sun. The early onset of cold weather has taken them by surprise.



**A yellow-bellied racer sunbathing on the Stubblefield Lake Loop trail. Mike Rule**

River otters have been making a regular appearance in the wetlands of the Pine Creek System. Recently four otters were observed in HQ Pond. Startled by the take off of several mallards, they dove underwater with a splash then resurfaced, snorting their indignation.

The refuge's land bird monitoring season ended its 25th year on August 23rd, making it one of only a handful of M.A.P. S monitoring stations in service for this long. It was a good year, with 152 birds captured, representing 30 species. The most common species captured included willow flycatcher, western wood peewees, Wilson's warblers, song sparrows, gray catbirds and black-capped chickadees. A fair number



**Northern Waterthrush. A rare capture at our MAPS Station Mike Rule**



**Very accommodating Northern Saw-whet owl. Mike Rule**

of woodpeckers were also captured, including downy and hairy woodpeckers, red-shafted flickers, and red-naped sapsuckers. Notable captures included a northern waterthrush, young ruffed grouse, and a very calm and stoic northern saw-whet owl, who took all the handling and photo-taking in stride.

To follow-up on the introduction I gave on invasive species management at the FOT general meeting, we have surveyed over 2000 acres of the refuge this year, including the new 1,500-acre acquisition east of Refuge HQ. Besides providing valuable information on the status of weed infestations on these areas, we also have been mapping the presence of milkweed, a plant critical to the Monarch butterflies' annual life cycle, and documenting the presence of the threatened plant species, Spalding's catchfly. Several new stands of milkweed have been located and will be added to our monitoring database for Monarchs and several catchfly plants were located in prairie habitat on the new Jolly Jack acquisition.



**Medusahead wild-rye, once established, can completely displace most native plants. Mike Rule**

This year we also have revisited over 100 previously located occurrences of medusahead wild-rye, an invasive annual grass that is increasing throughout the grasslands and sagebrush steppe of the western U.S. We sprayed these areas in the spring with glyphosate herbicide; we will be following up this fall with an additional application of herbicide and direct seeding of native grasses. The native grasses are less sensitive to the herbicide we are using, which is very effective on winter-emerging annual grasses such as medusahead. We are optimistic that our early detection of infestations of this non-native grass will allow us to get the upper hand.

#### **Milkweed and Monarchs. USFWS**





The low-pitched trumpet came from behind us. Turning, I spotted two large white birds that then flew right over us. Their translucent flight feathers glowed in the early morning sun. Their wingspan, more than 6-foot, created a moving shadow across Fir Island. Long white necks extended in front of solid bodies, and elephantine black legs and feet were tucked tight against their underside. More than 25 pounds each, these Trumpeter Swans flew with grace, style, and dignity.

The pair circled the field a quarter-mile east of our location, then set their wings, dropped their black feet, and landed without a stumble among several hundred swans. A few trumpets and calls drifted toward me from the crowd. Most of these largest of North America's waterfowl seemed to be resting on the green grass.

The trachea in these birds is more than three feet long, about a half-inch in diameter, and has a volume three to four times what one might expect for a bird this size. The trachea folds back and forth in the chest and creates the resonating chamber for the beautiful call that caught my attention.

In the summer of 1968, I flew with my sister from Pennsylvania to Yellowstone National Park. Finding a Trumpeter Swan was a priority, I wanted to be able to brag to my high school birding buddies about the western birds we discovered, including this rare swan. In the 1800s and early 1900s, hunting decimated Trumpeter Swan populations. They were shot for their skins, flight feathers and, undoubtedly, meat.

In 1935, only 69 birds were known to exist, although probably some undiscovered flocks occurred in remote parts of Canada and Alaska. In 2005, a continent-wide survey estimated that the population had grown to more than 34,000, a conservation success. Stopping the hunt and protecting habitat were critical, but also the birds adapted to wintering on agricultural lands, accessing novel food items. In winter, lead poisoning and collisions with power lines are now the major mortality issue.

These birds looked stunning through my spotting scope. Dirty-gray, full-grown cygnets accompanied many pairs. We had seen half a dozen flocks of similar size already that morning. In 1968, my sister and I searched Yellowstone for several days and found only two individuals. They swam on the far side of a small river, and our view was through thick vegetation.

Managers have introduced the species into several eastern states where they now breed. A few even winter in birding spots that I visited in Western Pennsylvania and Ohio as a high school student. Scientists at Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology have analyzed eBird data to provide a much more refined abundance map than are currently available in birding guides or on other websites.

<https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends/truswa/abundance-map>

It shows that the Salish Sea and south into Oregon are important wintering areas for our west coast population. These birds then migrate through British Columbia to breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska. The Central Rockies population had expanded substantially from the range in 1968, and birds are found in a band from the northern prairies across the Great Lakes.

A pair and two full-grown gray cygnets began running, head and neck extended while flapping their wings. They quickly became airborne, banking to the left while climbing up over the flock, before turning to fly north away from us.

See: Fink, D., T. Auer, A. Johnston, M. Strimas-Mackey, M. Iliff, and S. Kelling. eBird Status and Trends. Version: November 2018. <https://ebird.org/science/status-and-trends>. Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Ithaca, New York.

Photo by Thomas Bancroft

Friends of Turnbull NWR  
P.O. Box 294  
Cheney, WA 99004

*The Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, a nonprofit organization, supports the mandate of the refuge to protect and enhance wildlife and their habitats through education, research, habitat preservation and restoration.*

Got email? Add it to your membership form for quick activity updates!

### Membership Application

YES! I want to support the Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge and its programs with my membership.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, and Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership: (Circle one)

Individual \$15  
Family \$25  
Business/Group \$35  
Patron \$100  
Benefactor \$500  
Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Endowment Fund Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer \_\_\_\_\_  
Nature Store \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee \_\_\_\_\_  
Environmental Education \_\_\_\_\_  
Where needed \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed payable to  
Friends of Turnbull N.W.R.  
P.O. Box 294  
Cheney WA 99004