Turnbull Wildlife Refuge
Friends Newsletter

Friends of Turnbull President's Report
Summer 2024

by Lorna Kropp

Spring Activities:

Earth Day is always a good start to the Spring/Summer volunteer workday, get outside season at the Refuge. Volunteers from both Friends and The Lands Council and scouts gathered to put bare root native trees and shrubs into pots to grow to future planting size. About 100 people of all ages showed up to shovel dirt and baby trees into a pot; engage with exhibits from The Lands Council, WA Department of Fish & Wildlife, Friends of Turnbull, Spokane Audubon Society, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and National Park Service Lake Roosevelt. The Blue Goose also appeared for the hike after all the work. All in all, a good day for working and playing and learning.

Earth Day 24 Tree Potting, hike +
A large group of all ages from The Lands Council, Friends of Turnbull, and the community celebrated Earth Day together with a little work, and play.

May Fest in downtown Cheney on the second Saturday in May is a fun activity. The Friends and the Refuge booths had activities for kids about native pollinators and the Refuge booth had the popular "touch table" with skulls and pelts from animals who live in our area. Thanks to our volunteers who took a two-hour shift: Lorna Kropp, Molly Zammit, Donna Burt, John Barber, Molly Kennington, and Diane Reid. Thanks to Cassandra Roeder, Refuge Manager and Jaelyn Wesche, AmeriCorps Volunteer, who met with visitors all day.

Pollinator Garden Spring 24

Members of the Pollinator Garden Committee were watchful and hopeful all Spring looking for signs that some of the seeds and small plants set out last Fall would make it through the winter and start growing in their new home. Most of the selected native plants are very slow starters as they spend most of the first year putting down a root system and not much energy goes into growth above ground in the first year. So we are hopeful that more will show up later. There was evidence of several plants which we got from the EWU Prairie Restoration project. (July 26 update - With continued watering, it appears that some of the plants have survived and when the Pollinator Committee went to weed they were pleasantly surprised with new growth on about 25 - 30 plants!)

In addition, the Pollinator Garden Committee decided to purchase a starter list of plants from Desert Jewels Nursery.

Plants from Desert Jewels Nursery:
1 flat of blanket flowers (21 seedlings)
1 flat of showy milkweed (21 seedlings)
1 flat of nettleleaf (21 seedlings)
1 flat of silky lupine (21 seedlings)
11 penstemon plants
10 Yarrow seedlings started from winter sowing at Lorna's house

Theese were planted at the end of May by committee members, and supplemental watering was set up. After two weeks, however, it appeared that this first group of tender, new plants became some critters' lunch. The committee continues to brainstorm and plan with Refuge Biologist, Molly Dixon, about attempts for this Fall and next Spring to try transplanting, and additional planting with some protections (wire cages).

The Pollinator Garden demonstration project will take several years and a lot of patience to succeed. For more information or to offer to help when the garden needs a workday, please contact a committee member, Michael Borysewicz (maborysewicz@gmail.com), or John Barber (blujayroscoe@gmail.com).

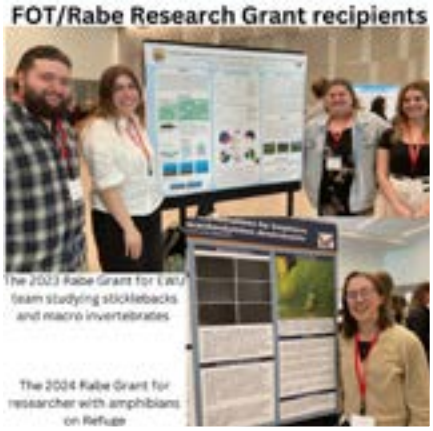
Nature Store Operation and News

The Nature Store is open and staffed by FOT volunteer "Refuge Ambassadors" for 4 days each week. Last year we started the 4-day week with the Refuge Resident Volunteers taking on Mondays, so we are proud that we have expanded enough to handle all 4 days with Friends' volunteers this year.

This year's operation has greatly been enhanced by the introduction of barcodes on all items and a barcode reader for check-out. The barcodes have eliminated the sometimes-confusing task of finding the items in the POS Square library and has made the records much more accurate for inventory.

Sales have been good this year. Three months into the season, Nature Store sales total $12,300. Here is a photo of the new Nature Store sign. We had it especially made to match the official F&W signage. Watch for it at the Pine Lake Overlook near the parking and bathrooms, letting visitors know that there is a Nature Store in the Administration Building! (FYI- Refuge staff did not like our homemade printed sign for the Nature Store - it did bring in more visitors who did not know about the store, though. Hopefully, the new one will do even more!!)

FOT/Rabe Research Grant Recipients from EWU make reports



The 2023 recipients of the research grant for a study of presence and effects of non-native Stickleback fish in four ponds on Turnbull NWR. This was a follow-up or repeat study done by Biology students from EWU since the discovery of Stickleback in 30-Acre Lake in 1999. Students compared findings from 2011 and 2015 with their results in 2023. Of the four ponds studied, Stickleback were confirmed in two additional

(Cont. on page 3)

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ponds, Long Lake and Lasher Lake, but no longer in 30-Acre lake and never in the TLES pond near the EWU building on TNWR. The water quality and macroinvertebrate count in 30-Acre Lake have improved while the water quality and macroinvertebrate count in the two ponds with Stickleback have declined. They conclude that monitoring should continue to keep track of water quality and maintain potential habitat resources for waterfowl.

The 2024 recipient of the FOT/Rabe Research grant is Marion George, an EWU Biology Senior student, who is using the grant for her research on a bacterial pathogen found on the skin of amphibians. She completed her fieldwork this Spring, swabbing the skin of amphibians on the Refuge. Ms. George is performing rRNA genome sequencing to gain "insight into bacterial pathogen resistance and potential probiotics for Bd remediation." We look forward to hearing more from her as she completes her research over the next academic year.

Quarterly Refuge program reports
arranged by Cassie Roeder for the Board.

The Board has been busy making decisions to assist the Refuge programs, using money from the Rabe Trust, and donations, plus income from the Nature Store designated for Environmental Education. Cassie also has given the Board concerning details about the lack of Federal Budget for Fish & Wildlife, which is straining their current program. The definite numbers for the whole agency are not yet available except that, apparently, there will be reductions. (FYI)

Friends of Turnbull to fund work of Environmental Education Curriculum Contractor

A Friends' Board subcommittee of Molly Zammit and Joyce Alonso, plus an EE Consultant and FOT member, Denise Buck, worked with Park Ranger (Visitor's Service Manager), Josh Contois, to prepare a "Request for Proposal" for Curriculum Development at TNWR. The Proposal was sent out and circulated widely in our area. We expect that the result will enable classrooms of students, led by their teachers, to plan and carry out field trips at the Refuge to explore and investigate science topics such as habitats and animals in them, wetland ecology, migratory birds, and Channeled Scablands ecoregion geology. The EE Classroom has been remodeled a bit to accommodate the storage of Classroom field trip resource tubs. It will be good to re-start an active Environmental Education program at the Refuge. The Friends' Board has designated the EE Fund, which has received the profits from the Nature Store and other EE donations, as the source of funding for the Curriculum Contractor.

Your Friends' group Board has also agreed to fund 50% of the Refuge Biology program seasonal Biological Technician, who began work at the Refuge in May; your membership dollars, fund-raising and the Rabe Trust grant money at work.

Crew of 12 puts "Feather Friendly" bird tape on windows of the TNWR Administration Building

A crew of 12 plus Friends of Turnbull and Spokane Audubon members worked steadily from 9-12 on Saturday, June 8, 2024, to put bird tape dots on all the windows in the Refuge Administration building. We all took part in the first two windows, with Alan McCoy demonstrating, based on the training YouTube video. Then we started having people take on tasks, dividing into groups of 2-3's to get them done. We washed the windows with vinegar and water and wiped them down with alcohol. Then five volunteer pairs started with the tape for the windows and another group took on using up the film cut off from each large window for the doors. Everyone found a job and we were very efficient. The west windows were the most difficult as they were the messiest with bird droppings.

WALK FOR THE WILD
OCT 13–19, 2024
AMERICA'S WILDLIFE REFUGES
PUBLIC LANDS ALLIANCE

Walk for the Wild 5k Challenge...put it on your calendars!

Walk with us to thrive. Walk to make sure wildlife thrives.

Walk for the Wild is an annual event to demonstrate our commitment to deepening human connections with nature and to protect the thriving ecosystems we depend on.

Join us to raise awareness and support of National Wildlife Refuges & their partners while we strive to get people to walk a distance of 5K in nature in conjunction with National Wildlife Refuge Week, the second week of October.

National Wildlife Refuge Week 2024 kicks off with Urban Refuge Day on Saturday, October 12th. National Wildlife Refuge Week runs October 13-19, 2024. The Friends of Turnbull will host a Walk for the Wild event on Saturday, October 12, 2024, at the Refuge in conjunction with Urban Refuge Day. Last year we raised over $1000.00 that was combined with profits from the Nature Store to pay for an intern at the Refuge. **The event is free.** Our goal this year is to get 100 people to participate in the Walk for the Wild who have never been to the Refuge and raise $5000.00. We invite you to walk, volunteer, and/or donate to this fundraiser at Turnbull!

Administered by Public Lands Alliance (PLA), the official national strategic fundraising, friend raising, and marketing partner to the National Wildlife Refuge System, Walk for the Wild provides a platform for Refuges and their nonprofit partners to get people moving in nature and help generate important funding to advance their missions.

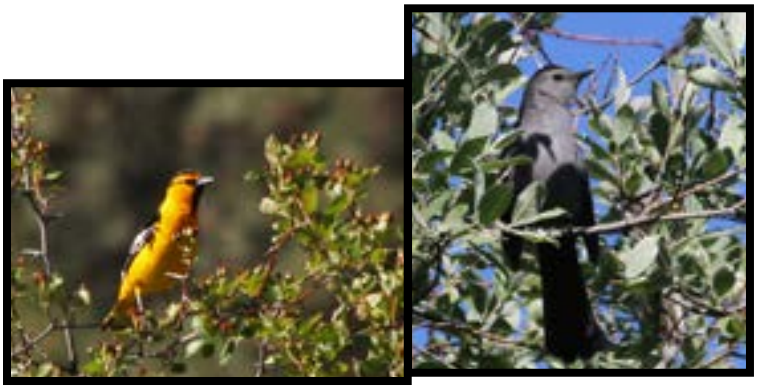
Over the past three years, *Walk for the Wild* has raised more than $90,000 to support National Wildlife Refuge programs and nonprofit partners. Thousands of people have joined in celebrating National Wildlife Refuge Week and have participated in *Walk for the Wild* events hosted throughout the nation. We look forward to continuing this annual tradition again in 2024 and are excited to raise more funds and engage even more people than ever before

Carlene at Turnbull - early Summer pelican returns!

It's early Summer and the American White Pelicans are back! The pod of Pelicans was busy eating on Middle Pine at Turnbull NWR. They are social birds and work in groups of 5 to 20 to herd fish into the shallow water for easy feeding.

As I walked along, I spotted a *bright*, flashy bird with a black and white wing patch. It also had a black line through the eye and a black throat patch. It was a male Bullock's Oriole, a summer visitor to Washington!

I also spotted a Gray Catbird perched high up on a branch. It had a small black cap and blackish tail. They are important predators of insects, and are especially important at controlling infestations of gypsy moth larvae.



Imagine my surprise to see a Bald Eagle being chased by an Osprey! In one of my pictures, it looks like the Bald Eagle had a small fish, maybe the Osprey wanted to challenge the Eagle for it?

I always enjoy the colors of the wildflowers and it is especially nice to see the bumble bees pollinating the wild flowering plants.

One day on the drive tour, there were two adult Trumpeter swans on a mound on Kepple Lake. One of the swans was preening and it scolded and warned its mate that there was *not* enough room for both of them!

Towards the end of the drive loop, a friend and I spotted a young coyote with its head down most likely hunting some small rodent. I saw it jump and pounce on something and then it began to wander off but not before it glanced my way aware of our presence on the road.

All photos by Carlene Hardt

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program of USFW

presented by Brian Walker

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program of USFW was established in 1987. At this time there are about 220 biologists at Refuges, Hatcheries and Ecological Services programs, working with 30,000 landowners across the nation. The National Priorities are 1) Species Conservation; 2) Habitat Connectivity; and 3) Resilient Ecosystems. Brian works with landowners and organizations in Eastern WA. There are also Partners biologists at Yakima and Leavenworth Fish Hatcheries.

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife program supports the voluntary efforts of private landowners to enhance habitat and support the efforts of Refuges and other public lands. With a budget of $25K Brian works with non-profits, and volunteers doing in-kind support. His funding is separate from the Refuge's budget, but he utilizes Refuge equipment in support of his projects. He cannot work on State or Federal property. Brian is currently working in Spokane, Whitman and Lincoln Counties. He provides technical assistance to landowners, helping them design and implement wetland/habitat restoration projects, forest thinning, pest management, NRCS assistance, beaver dam (artificial/Analog) construction with pine stems. He has an interagency agreement with NRCS, implementing the Farm Bill. He also works with The Lands Council, and the Inland NW Lands Conservancy. He is working with multiple private landowners and has about a dozen projects going. Volunteers are very important to his program. He currently is restoring and expanding the native tree nursery located at Turnbull Refuge.

Nancy Curry (Meeting Minutes, April 19, 2024)

Turnbull NWR Fire Program Presentation

by Ken Meinhart, Fire Management Specialist

Turnbull NWR's CCCP lists habitat management as a main goal; therefore the fire strategy and habitat management goals are aligned. They have two goals and strategies in managing a fire on the Refuge:
1) suppression and building resilience;
2) preparedness and managing fuel.

Turnbull has one engine at the ready to suppress any fire. An engine includes five people: the Captain and four firefighters. There is also one engine at LPO with a Captain and four firefighters. Both engines work closely with other agencies in an Interagency agreement with BLM and DNR so that the closest resources are available to all. At this time, all agencies are struggling with worker retention. The national fire strategy also is struggling with fire as a natural management tool, which in some cases may mean "let it burn". However, at Turnbull NWR that is not an option. The strategy has to be suppression and limiting the spread to meet the goal of preservation of life, property and resources, with 1.5 billion dollars in property value within the buffer area to Turnbull NWR.

Turnbull's Fire Plan was first created in 2001, along with a national Fire Plan, and all agencies were required to get their landscape in more resilient condition as "fires will happen." Turnbull's Fire Plan includes cutting smaller trees among the Ponderosa pines and piling to make slash piles which must be cured for 6-9 months before being burned during the wintertime. It normally takes 3 months for the Turnbull Engine Crew to burn piles. When they do burn, they have to manage smoke so that the wind does not blow smoke into Spokane. They also have to pay a fee per ton of smoke.

Ken reported that they were very pleased with the result of the controlled burn the Fire Crew conducted last Fall in the second week of October, 2023. The preparation with thinning, logging and slash pile creation had taken several years. The result, however, is a much more traditional-looking, Ponderosa stand with openings among the trees. This Spring the wildflowers have grown spectacularly in the burned area. Visitors can see the contrast between the north side of the entrance road and the south side, which has not yet been managed.

National Wildlife Refuge Association
refugeassociation.org

Funding Challenges of the National Wildlife Refuge System

The world's largest network of lands and waters dedicated to wildlife conservation

An Eroding Refuge System

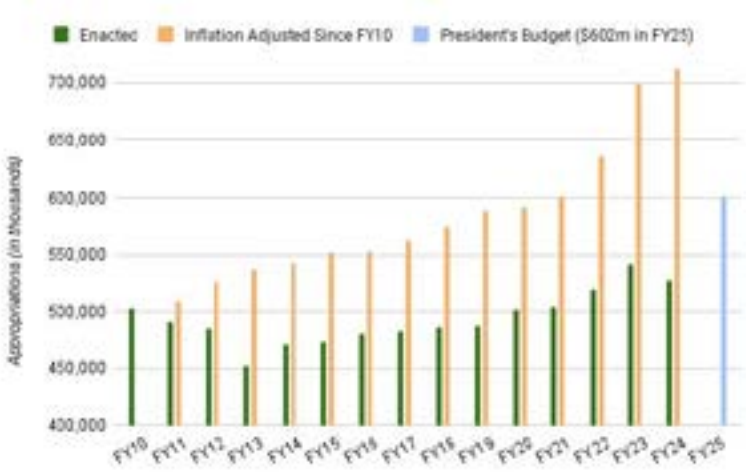
Our national wildlife refuges are essential for protecting biodiversity and climate resilient habitats, providing community-driven conservation, and expanding wildlife dependent recreational opportunities nationwide. However, increased funding needs paired with a stagnant budget has led to a Refuge System that is quickly eroding in habitat management and an ability to even keep refuges open.

The $503 million appropriated to the Refuge System in FY2010 is worth approximately $730 million today (as of April 2024), yet actual funding sits at a mere $527 million. The failure to offset the impacts of inflation has resulted in a Refuge System long strained under the weight of critically low staffing levels and lost capacity. In this age of rapidly worsening biodiversity and climate crises, we must invest as much funding as possible today so these protected areas are available tomorrow for shifting conservation needs.

The Staffing Crisis

The number of full-time employees (FTEs)–already a fraction of the other comparable federal land agencies at ~2,500 FTEs–has decreased by 27% since FY11. This has made it difficult for the Refuge System to manage its vast network of lands and waters and to fulfill its mission of conserving wildlife and habitats. No refuges are fully staffed, and more than half of refuges have zero staff on site. Many refuges are closed to the public and are completely unmanaged.

As an example of these dire staffing challenges, approximately 204 law enforcement officers currently patrol 850 million acres of land and water. Excluding the water acres, that's an average of 440,000 acres per officer, leaving much of the Refuge System virtually unprotected. In many cases, one officer alone is responsible for an entire state, and several states have no officers. Similar examples can be made of impacts from the loss of biological, maintenance, and visitor services staff.



Refuge System Operations & Maintenance Appropriations
FY 2010 - FY 2024 Appropriations vs. Consumer Price Index (CPI) Inflation

The Refuge System needs at least $2.2 billion to effectively fulfill its conservation mission, provide opportunities for wildlife dependent recreation, and connect communities to nature.

The President's FY25 Request of $602.3 million is an important step towards that goal.

PROGRAM STAFF	FY2011	FY2022	FY2024 *approximate
Wildlife and Habitat Management	1,562	1,201	1,178*
Refuge Maintenance	712	523	489*
Refuge Visitor Services	640	470	457*
Refuge Law Enforcement	250	214	204*
Conservation Planning	80	16	18*
Total FTEs	**3,244**	**2,424**	**2,348***

Rising fixed costs are also eating into increases in appropriations–increases that are not keeping up with inflation. It costs the Refuge System an estimated $3 million for every one percent raise in payroll costs. Without base increases in the budget to cover these fixed costs, several much-needed positions are eliminated every year. At least $2.2 billion in annual funding is needed to provide the resources to adequately staff and manage the Refuge System. The President's budget request of $602.3 million is an important step towards that goal.

A Growing Refuge System

Despite only minor increases in funding for the last 13 years, the Refuge System has added 18 new refuge units and hundreds of millions of acres of marine national monuments. It has also added new services, such as the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program launched in 2012 that seeks to address inequalities in recreational access and conservation participation. This program has dramatically changed the way conservation is delivered to communities, and visitor numbers have grown to over 67 million visitors a year--an increase of 46% since FY2011. While the additional acreage, the creation of the urban program, and the increased visitors have enhanced the Refuge System and benefited the communities around these refuges, this growth has also put more pressure on the already stressed and underfunded System.

USFWS staff shows a young visitor a Monarch caterpillar on a leaf/credit USFWS

Public Lands Disparity

The Refuge System and the National Park System protect our nation's natural places and have similar land bases--95 million acres and 85 million acres, respectively. But their wildly disparate funding levels paint a grim picture for the only system of federal lands focused primarily on wildlife conservation and habitat. The National Park System receives $34 per land acre and has 1 staff per 4,200 acres. In comparison, the Refuge System receives $5.55 per land acre and has 1 staff per 39,191 acres. When accounting for water acres, the Refuge System budget is a mere .62¢ per acre. An increase in funding is necessary to bridge this gap and meet essential conservation goals.

Conservation Planning Backlog

A backlog of 200 Comprehensive Conservation Plans (CCP) has also strained the System as funding for planning has largely been eliminated due to budget cuts. Planning is at the core of Refuge System management, but more than 60% of refuges have an outdated CCP or no plan at all. Increased funding for planning and management staff will allow the US Fish and Wildlife Service to begin to address this backlog and provide more of the tools it needs for active water management, habitat management and restoration, and invasive species eradication.

USFWS staff planting Seaside Goldenrod to improve Roseate Tern habitat/credit USFWS

Volunteers relocating loggerhead turtle eggs to a site less vulnerable to ocean changes/credit USFWS

Volunteers Add Needed Capacity

Volunteers are a significant part of the Refuge System workforce and participate in almost every aspect of refuge work. They provide additional free labor equaling 20% to the Refuge System workforce and account for over a million hours of work every year. Volunteer programs are critical for the operation and maintenance of refuges, as the Service is unable to meet these needs alone while operating on a shoestring budget. Unfortunately, many volunteer programs have been cut back or completely eliminated due to lack of supervision from professional full-time staff or necessary infrastructure. For the Refuge System to realize its full potential, sufficient funding to support a vibrant corps of volunteers is essential.

For more information, please contact Libby Marking (lmarking@refugeassociation.org)

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