

Turnbull Wildlife Refuge

Friends Newsletter



Messages from the President by Lorna Kropp

The 2019 Year's End report is quite hopeful. The FOT Board was notified on December 9th that the donation of the title to a small house in Spokane would be transferred to the Friends from the Kevin M. Rabe Living Trust as of December 1, 2019. Your Board was first notified of this gift in 2014, and has been waiting patiently for the resolution of the Trust since then. The Board had decided several years ago to sell the house and use proceeds for programming benefitting the Refuge Environmental Education programs. In a flurry of December meetings, phone calls, visits to the County Courthouse and calls to a real estate broker, insurance company and property management company, the process has now started which will result in a substantial income for Friends of Turnbull, thanks to the generosity of a man from Monterey, CA, who had a passion for the environment and wildlife and had ties to this part of the country. (Please see page 9 for complete details.)

In the Nature Store we finished the second season with updated technology and satellite internet service. We had good sales and look forward to involving a Management Team this next year, and hopefully a few new volunteers for the coming year. We thank Priscilla Bowen for taking on the Manager role from the Frobes and braving the new POS technology. Thinking about possibly volunteering? Spending 2.5 hrs. in the store each month offers a fun chance to greet and help visitors to the Refuge, as well as an excuse to get out to the trails before or after your shift!!

The 2019 Activities year ended on a high note with the WinterFest celebration on December 7. We made a new/old friend in Dick Jensen and Inland Empire Tours, whose two Refuge tours drew a sell-out of the 27 seats in record time. He is interested in considering a Spring wildflowers tour as well. We are looking for new leadership for the FOT Activities. The Activities Committee is open for a new crew.

We are happy to announce that the Friends of Turnbull has received a second quarterly employee donation from Metals Fabrication, Inc. on 12/31/19. That gift of \$650 will go toward the cost of the Environmental Education Intern. During the winter months the EE interns and staff are always busy making visits to classrooms around the region, bringing hands-on activities that engage students.

Make time to get out this winter; you can try out the Great Backyard Bird Count right where you are. The 23rd annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 14, through Monday, February 17, 2020. Please visit the official website at birdcount.org for more information.



Turnbull Settlers
Cheney Historical Society

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Friends of Turnbull Nature Store

Priscilla Bowen

This will be the last entry I write for the Newsletter. I have stepped down as manager of the Nature Store. It is time for new ideas, new merchandise, and new people. I will still volunteer occasionally as my new job allows, and I will assist in the transition by helping with orders, etc.

This is a difficult decision for me as I have been volunteering at the store from the day it was first opened. When my husband, Virgil, and I were onsite volunteers during the spring and summer, we often opened the store after hours when it was connected to the classroom. We were proud to be a part of all the activities. My life will always be connected to the Refuge.

October was the last month the store was officially open for business on the weekends. Our sales were okay. In November we had a few sales from special groups. One of our biggest days was the Fall Festival. Many items were sold. Some of our volunteers graciously covered the store for me as my work schedule interfered.

All in all, we had a good year and I believe we came out ahead of the game financially. We will start the year 2020 just fine.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved with the store over the two years I was manager. Nothing could have been accomplished without everyone's assistance. So many new things happened with the store; all the volunteers took them in stride and we made it work.

I leave with a heavy heart, but I wish the new team taking over the very best. I am available for questions (but not easy to reach). Leave a message.

This is not goodbye, just so long.

Priscilla

The Cornell Lab

Audubon

BIRDS CANADA
OISEAUX CANADA

The Great Backyard
Bird Count



Mid-February is the time of year when the world's hourglass flips over and birds slowly start to reverse direction—toward their spring (or, in the Southern Hemisphere, autumn) haunts again. The Great Backyard Bird Count is designed to capture that moment of stillness and give scientists a picture of bird populations at one extreme of the year. It's one long weekend that's perfectly situated as a good excuse to get out your binoculars and not put them back down again for 4 whole days. Here's how to make the most of it—for you and for the birds. Go to your favorite spot—or any spot. It doesn't have to be your backyard, it can be anywhere

It all starts with just 3 easy rules:

1. Count birds for at least 15 minutes on Feb 14, 15, 16, and 17, 2020
2. Keep track of how long you counted and how far you walked
3. Start a new count for each new place or day/time

Get ready to enter your sightings.

You'll need [a free eBird account](#), or if you have a Project FeederWatch or NestWatch account, you can use that. This allows all your data to go smoothly into the central eBird database, for scientific to analysis.

See the [official GBBC FAQ page](#), and the [Participant Toolkit](#) for more explanations and examples.

Visit our great website!
www.fotnwr.org

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Refuge Happenings

by Sandy Rancourt
Visitor Services Manager

Every year seems to pass more quickly, with some help from the weather these days. Considering that started to snow in September, we didn't experience our typical beautiful fall colors out at the Refuge. Weather, however, was not a deterrent for schools participating in our Fall Field Trip and Night Hike Programs. We were booked with a diversity of schools and organizations, ranging in age from pre-school to high school. Turnbull also hosted a few events, including our fall community planting event, FOT's Winterfest, and tour for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE).

Community Planting Event

On October 5th, Turnbull hosted its fall community planting event. It was a chilly but sunny day with a good turnout of 77 participants. It was a very productive event; we accomplished everything that we set out to do with volunteer assistance. Our planting efforts were concentrated on the far west side of the Pine Creek Restoration Area in an old farm field area with good soil and fewer rocks. Volunteers, Refuge staff, AmeriCorps members and SCA interns planted over 75 native saplings. A protective fencing barrier was erected around the newly planted area. We also sectioned off a very large enclosure, installed well over a decade ago, by erecting some dividers. This will help us manage that larger area more efficiently. Groups who participated included Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Spokane Audubon Society, Friends of Turnbull, Spokane Falls Community College (SFCC), and EWU Eagle Up Program. Bethany Bleam, a Girl Scout from Troop 6008, earned another badge at our community planting event. She was quite an impressive young lady, who obviously loves Turnbull and wanted to give back to the community. She did a great job of organizing her troop's participation. EWU's Eagle Up Program, which has partnered with the Refuge for 15 years, assisted with planting and erecting protective fencing.

Long term Refuge volunteers, Marian and Russell Frobe, signed in volunteers, and Joyce Alonso provided great assistance by weeding pots in our nursery. That is not an easy task, considering that sweet clover is wrapped around the roots of many of the seedlings. FOT provided the food and board members John Barber and Molly Zammit cooked the hamburgers to feed the participants.



Turnbull was a host site for EWU's Eagle Up - a freshmen and transfer student orientation program (S. Rancourt)



Cooperative effort is key to planting a tree at Turnbull. (S. Rancourt)



SFCF enjoyed their visit at Turnbull, planting trees. (S. Rancourt)

SCA intern Jared Lamm (center) and volunteers at the community planting. (S. Rancourt)

Environmental Education and Outreach

Cheney High School EE Stewardship Program.

In early April, our spring field trip season began with over 600 Cheney High School sophomore and freshmen biology students participating in our EE Stewardship Program over a 4-day period during the high school’s transition to teaching biology to freshmen instead of sophomores. We received an unexpected request from the high school this fall. They asked to return again in October instead of next spring with their new freshmen students. (It is possible that the torrential downpour they experienced last April might have been a deciding factor.) Turnbull hosted the new biology freshmen classes in mid-October. The 250 students participated in two days of activities, learning about wildlife and habitat. Classes were rotated among three stations. Refuge biologist Mike Rule led the riparian restoration station, I led aquatics, and Kylie Gaard, Refuge volunteer Tina Penny and new AmeriCorps member Katie Abell led the nature walks. The weather cooperated and the students really seemed to enjoy themselves out at Turnbull. Special thanks to the following volunteers and Refuge staff for making this such a rewarding experience; Russell and Marian Frobe, Tina Penny, Peggy Goodner-Tan, Sarah Valverde, Dianne Latta, SCA intern Jared Lamm, AmeriCorps members Erik Lewis and Kaitlin Abell, Dustin Cousins, Kylie Gaard, Brian Walker and Refuge maintenance workers, Steve Fox, Darold Hagedorn and Joe Veilleux.



It was a new experience from start to finish for the high school biology students, who were very much engaged. (S. Rancourt)



Wetland vegetation provides habitat and safe haven for a diversity of aquatic invertebrates. (S. Rancourt)



One hundred six native saplings were planted by students with help from staff and volunteers (left corner, Marian Frobe, center Russell Frobe, right corner Mike Rule and biological AmeriCorps member Erik Lewis.) (S. Rancourt)



That's not aquatic! The woolly bear caterpillar provided the students with a close up look at one of our terrestrial species. (S. Rancourt)



Mike Rule demonstrates the correct way to plant a sapling. (S. Rancourt)



The Refuge provides binoculars for students on the nature walk, which they really enjoy. (S. Rancourt)



Tina Penny gathers her group for a nature walk. (S. Rancourt)



It's another beautiful day in the Turnbull neighborhood (S. Rancourt)



EE Contractor Kylie Gaard and EE AmeriCorps member Katie Abell assisting the little ones with making their animal tracks. (S. Rancourt)

Field Trip, Night Hike & Winter Outreach Programs

In addition to the work with Cheney High School, it was a very busy fall with requests from teachers for field trips. Our Fall Field Trip Program is as popular as the one provided in the spring. I was kept pretty busy scheduling, but it is always rewarding to know that environmental education is still in demand. We had a nice mix of schools and organizations visiting Turnbull for a field trip or night hike experience, including preschools, private, public, and homeschools, and scouts, with students ranging in age from toddlers to adults. Turnbull also participated again at Camp Wooten near Pomeroy. This has been a great partnership for over a decade. We provide facilitators and equipment, and the school provides food and lodging for our facilitators. AmeriCorps members Kaitlin Abell (EE) and Erik Lewis (Bio) facilitated aquatic ecology programs for 90 students over the 2-day period. The members reported having an enjoyable visit at the camp.

Another popular program is our night hikes. There is nothing quite like being outdoors in the dark to experience the Refuge with all of our senses. Girl Scouts and S. Pines Elementary came out to experience Turnbull at night, and we all had a blast. The program is packed with activities for students of all ages that highlight our senses and compare them to those of nocturnal wildlife.



Kylie leading a fall field trip. (S. Rancourt)



Former AmeriCorps member Jennifer McGovern tells students the Native American folktale of How the Bat Came to Be in preparation for the night hike. (S. Rancourt)

Outreach

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)

We had a great group of folks from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education visit Turnbull on October 27. Twenty-four AASHE members, who were attending their annual conference in Spokane, participated in a field trip to Turnbull. I provided an introductory PowerPoint presentation about the Refuge's environmental education, volunteer and partnership programs. Following the presentation, Mike Rule and I provided a walking tour for the group, exploring the different habitats found on Turnbull. Attendees learned about Refuge management programs and about the many native bird and mammal species found in this unique ecosystem. Prior to their arrival to Turnbull, Mike Marxen, USFWS Ocean Conservation Planner in Hawaii, oriented the group on the bus with a basic overview, orientation and history of the National Wildlife Refuge System, including Comprehensive Conservation Planning for Refuges. At the end of our tour, pretty much everyone visited the Friends' Nature Store. Although it was closed for the season, Priscilla Bowen, FOT's Nature Store Coordinator, opened it for several hours for the AASHE members.



Katie shows Trentwood Elementary students a cattail, a common plant found in wetland habitat. (S. Rancourt)



Biological AmeriCorps member Erik Lewis helps EE out twice a week during the winter months. (S. Rancourt)

At the end of October I sent a winter outreach announcement to all the educators we work with, and we are already booked for the winter season. Turnbull provides a variety of age appropriate classroom programs for local schools. Since everything is at no cost to the schools, we are very popular. It really is a great experience for all. The programs cover a diversity of subjects, including endangered species, birds, mammals, habitat and more. We are also scheduled to participate in five science fairs hosted by elementary schools so our winter season should fly by as fast as the fall.



AASHE participants. (S. Rancourt)



Mike talks about native bunch grasses and invasive species (S. Rancourt)



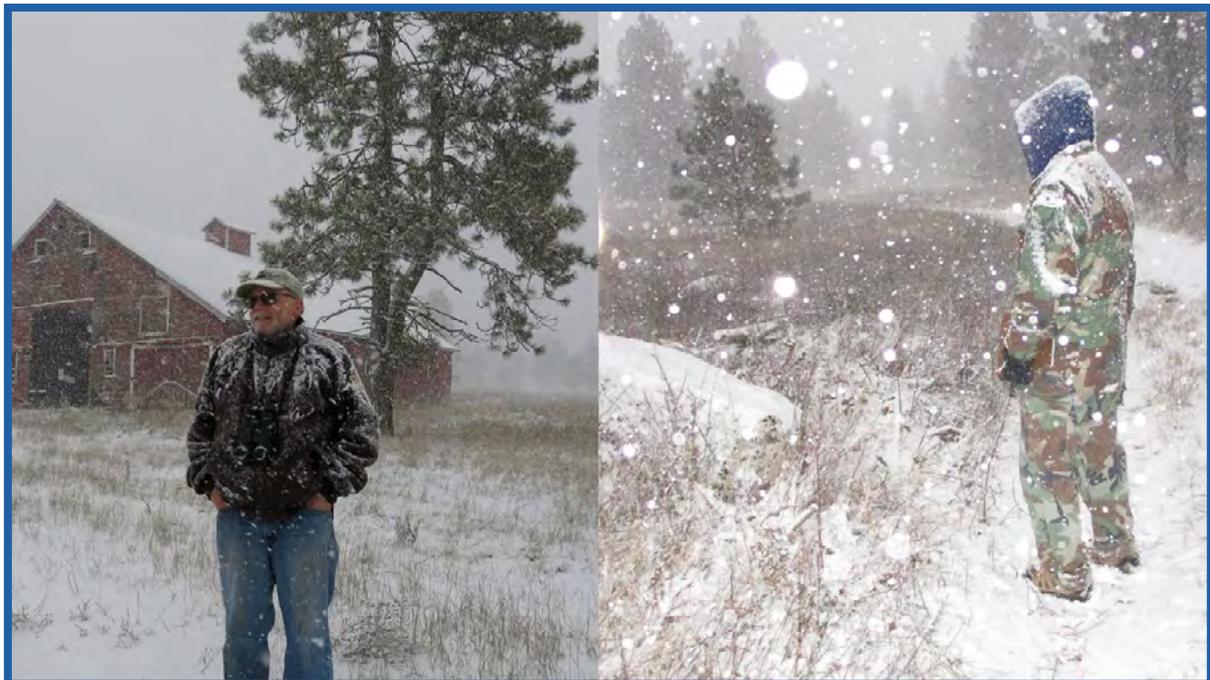
The Nature Store had a productive day of sales with help from the AASHE tour (S. Rancourt)

FOT WinterFest

Friends of Turnbull hosted their annual WinterFest at the Refuge and retired WDFW biologist Woody Meyer provided an informative talk about moose. The Friends provided chili, cornbread and snacks for the event. Refuge Biologist Mike Rule provided two tours for the packed 29-passenger bus. He talked about Refuge wildlife and habitats and our management programs. Although elk were elusive, the tours did see a moose, some mule deer, northern harriers, red-tailed hawks, an American kestrel and a very cooperative young porcupine.

Christmas Bird Count at Turnbull

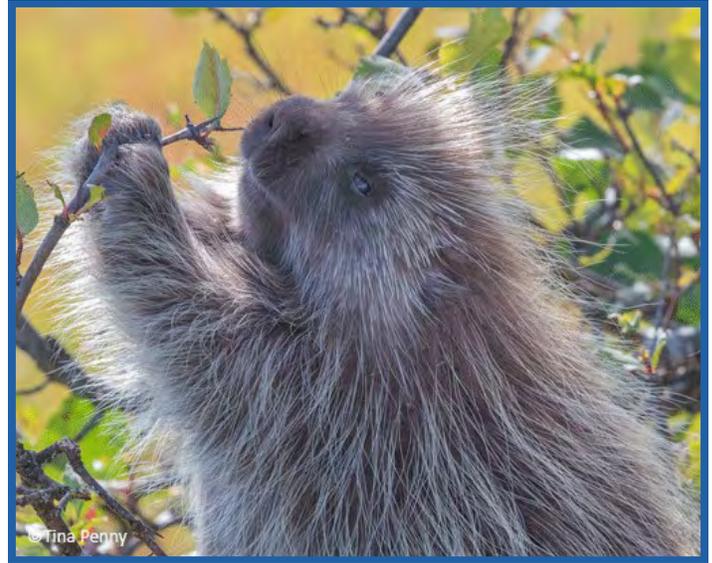
We had a blustery but beautiful day for the Christmas Bird Count at Turnbull. Volunteers Marian and Russell Frobe, Jon Isacoff, Ann Brinly, Steven Warren and Refuge staff Mike Rule and myself covered the Refuge portion of the count, which includes a 7.5 mile radius circle centered on Cheney. A total of 31 species were counted on the Refuge, represented by 285 individual birds. If you didn't hike around, you probably didn't see many birds. Most wildlife, like people, take shelter during winter storms.



Pretty much sums it up. (S. Rancourt/Marian Frobe)

Turnbull's Photo Contest

Tina Penny's great shot of a porcupine earned her 1st place in the 2019 Refuge Photo Contest. Tina reported that she was hiking on the Pine Lake Loop Trail when she noticed a juvenile porcupine in a hawthorn bush just off the trail. When a field trip class came by, Tina shared her experience with the students. Children loved seeing the porcupine up close, so this was a winning day for all. Her photo will be featured on the 2020 Refuge Annual Pass. If you would like to learn more and enter this year's contest, please check out our website at <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Turnbull/>.



North American Porcupine ©Tina Penny

Kevin Rabe's Gift

Mr. Rabe is the very generous donor who left one of his homes to our group, Friends of Turnbull, in his will. You might be wondering why Mr. Rabe would make this donation to Turnbull. Shortly after his passing, Libby Beck, his sister-in-law, called us to explain the connection. According to Libby, Kevin Rabe wanted to honor her husband, Gary Beck, through his estate by contributing to Turnbull, a place that Gary held in high esteem. Gary was an exceptional pilot who passed away in 1998 due to a mechanical failure in his helicopter. Libby and Gary have been longtime supporters of Turnbull NWR. Gary was in high demand for his low-level flying expertise in both fixed winged aircraft and helicopters. He flew numerous wildlife surveys for Washington and Idaho state wildlife departments, local tribes and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Gary helped the Refuge complete several surveys including aerial elk surveys, waterfowl breeding pair surveys, mid-winter waterfowl surveys, tracking radio-tagged bats, and taking aerial photographs of the Refuge. Flying with Gary was always a great experience for Mike and myself. We always felt safe and his piloting skills made any aerial survey mission successful. His loss was deeply felt by family and the many wildlife biologists who worked with him. He was not only an excellent pilot; he was an outstanding person. It is wonderful to know that Mr. Rabe's memorial bequest will provide valuable funding to benefit Turnbull, a place that Gary and Libby enjoyed, valued and supported.

In Memory of Brad Haywood

We were deeply saddened to learn of the passing of another refuge friend and volunteer, Brad Haywood. For nearly 2 decades, Brad and his lovely wife, Fran, assisted the refuge with songbird point counts. This survey requires a very early wakeup call (especially when you live in Spokane) and a good deal of walking on uneven terrain. The couple were always ready to start their point counts with the sunrise and chorus of birds. Since 1999, Brad also helped with riparian restoration, the refuge's Floods, Flowers and Feathers Festival and environmental education. He often drove Fran to Turnbull when she needed a ride to lead a field trip. He would read while patiently waiting and just enjoy Turnbull during the time Fran was helping us with EE. I can't tell you how much that was appreciated. Fran is an exceptional facilitator, and when we need additional help for our larger classes, she is one of the first we call. Although I did not know Brad as well as Fran, I do know that he was a soft spoken, quiet, and unassuming gentleman with a kind and wise soul. Such a nice man. Our hearts go out to Fran, family and friends.

Wildlife Observations

by Mike Rule
Wildlife Biologist

This time of year is quiet, but the scenery is beautiful and an observant visitor can often be surprised by an exciting sighting.

Moose have been seen fairly regularly in the Visitor Use Area. Sightings have included one or possibly two large bulls, a couple of younger bulls observed sparring, and a few cows with calves. River otters have been seen regularly in the lakes of the Pine Creek chain. During the annual elk survey conducted by the State there were 26 moose observed, the highest counted during this survey.

Swans have been coming and going throughout the winter. The tundra swans rolled through here in November until the wetlands almost completely froze. We have had some thaws since then and trumpeter swans are seen on the open water throughout the Refuge, but particularly on Upper Turnbull Slough and Kepple, Cheever and Middle Pine Lakes. The largest number of Trumpeters seen was 14. The Frobes observed nine during the recent Christmas Bird Count and twelve were observed just last week.

Typical wintering ducks have been observed on the scarce open water, including hooded and common mergansers, common and Barrow's goldeneyes, plenty of mallards, and a few American green-winged teal. Canada geese are frequent visitors.

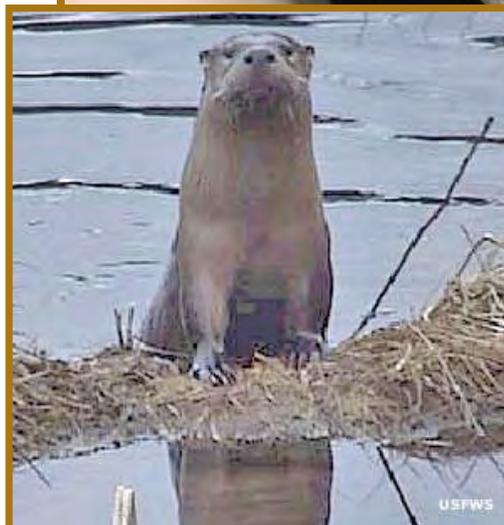
The belted kingfisher that spends its winters along Pine Creek catching sticklebacks has been seen on several occasions.

Northern shrikes have been seen near HQ and the pine woods are full of our resident birds including house finches, American goldfinch, pygmy, white-breasted-and red-breasted nuthatches, downy and hairy woodpeckers, and mountain and black-capped

chickadees. A patient listener may also hear a northern saw-whet owl or a great-horned owl. Owls are involved in pair bonding at this time of year so they are pretty vocal.

A number of winter raptors can be seen, especially around the Stubblefield Lake Loop Trail. Recently observed species have been American kestrels, red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, northern harriers and bald eagles. This time of year one may also be rewarded with a glimpse of a merlin and sharp-shinned or Cooper's hawks as they swoop into a flock of finches or California quail.

Northern Saw-whet Owl ©Gates Dupont



Turnbull River Otter ©USFW

The Butcher Watchman

by Thomas Bancroft

Movement caught my eye, and I glanced up through the windshield. The flight seemed labored, heavy, something a little different, unusual in this robin-sized bird. The individual was 15 feet above the ground and flew across the grass field along Rawlins Road. It came right over the car. Maybe, it was headed for a large bush behind me. I stopped in the middle of this dead-end road on Fir Island, jumping out.

Sitting on a top of the bare bush was the unmistakable silhouette of a Northern Shrike, a plump body, a big head, upward stance. It glared out across the fields, moving its head back and forth. Last week, my birding group had found a juvenile individual along the dikes, not a quarter-mile from this location. I moseyed back along the road, keeping my eyes averted.

Sure enough, dark eye mask, the bill with a stout hook and a large tooth, black wings, scalloped cream breast feather, this was a perfect plumage juvenile. It was alert, hunting, but seemed to be ignoring me. This was my fifth trip to the Skagit in two weeks, and on each trip, we had spotted a Northern Shrike. On one trip, it was at Wiley Slough, on another at Hayton Reserve, once in the Samish Flats, and then here. These were probably four different individuals, and all had been juvenile birds. Possibly, this was turning into an irruptive year for shrikes.

These birds nest across Northern Canada and Alaska, coming south in winter. Most winters a few can be found in Washington, but in some years, vast numbers will come south. Perhaps, this happens when they have had an exceptionally successful nesting year or when northern winters become particularly hard, or food supplies low.

These are voracious predators, capable of taking small birds and mammals. They store prey by sticking it on thorns or barbedwire, coming back later to eat more of it. Often, they sit and wait for a prey item to show itself before darting off the perch. This species occurs in Europe and Asia, too.

The bird bolted from the branch, dropping down to just above the field and flying rapidly away from me. I couldn't tell if it was chasing something or just heading to another hunting spot. It probably makes the rounds of a series of good lookouts. Their scientific name is *Lanius excubitor*, which translates as "Butcher Watchman."



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