

# Turnbull Wildlife Refuge Friends Newsletter

## Friends of Turnbull President/Board Report Winter 2020

by Lorna Kropp

### Nature Store

The COVID-19 pandemic prevented the opening of the Nature Store at the Refuge during all of 2020. The Store management team attempted (+ learned a bunch) to operate an on-line store during the Holiday Season (November 27-December 23). The online store featured 9 items available in the Nature Store inventory. After thoroughly researching shipping costs, it was decided by the Store Management team and Board that delivery by a volunteer board member or pick-up at a central location would be our best option for product delivery. We also established a consignment arrangement with long-time supporter, Roger, at Copy Junction. Copy Junction will continue to have items from our Nature Store for sale. Thanks to Kassie Fauth and Heather Bosch, who retrieved and organized the items from the Nature Store. Kassie was the go-between with Copy Junction and packaged items up. Thanks to Olesia Letts, who volunteered to make deliveries in the Cheney area. Lorna and Molly volunteered to deliver in the Spokane area. Thanks to John Barber, who manages the mail and bank deposits. Good job, team!!

At present FOT masks are available for order directly from the supplier, Zome Design. You can use the link from our website to order masks. They are gray, with the name and Blue Heron logo. (<https://www.fotnwr.org/naturestore.html>)

Our holiday online store sold T-shirts, hats and sweatshirts and took in two donations for the EE program. Thanks for your support. The Store team is considering a second month-long, online store sale before summer, depending on pandemic progress. Watch for the announcements.

### Board planning for Board member recruitment

Our Friends of Turnbull Board members have terms, 3-year terms and two consecutive terms served. The Board will be recruiting several new members during 2021 to take on specific roles or projects. Our organization is an all-volunteer effort, and more hands make work lighter. We especially could use help with fund-raising events, outreach activities for the community, and book-keeping skills. We also do hope that, at some time this coming year, we will be able to have our Nature Store open again and will need Store workers, too.

### Refuge system and Friends OIG audit

US F&W and US OIG (Office of Inspector General) reviewed and audited the information and data collection between Refuges and Friends' groups and issued proposals for needed changes. The process has resulted in increased discussion among the advocacy organizations related to Friends groups – the National Wildlife Refuge Association and CORFA (Coalition of Refuge Friends and Advocates) and the many refuge Friends' groups.

Friends of Turnbull is currently in compliance with initial requirements by having a "Cooperation Agreement" and maintaining the 501c3 IRS status. The national discussion centers around how to document that all Friends' funds benefit the Refuge. All refuge Friends' groups are watching, discussing and commenting on proposals regarding additional data requirements to satisfy the OIG audit recommendations to prove all expenditures that benefit Refuges, while stressing that Friends' groups are independent, non-profit organizations.

**Visit our great website!**  
**www.fotnwr.org**

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The Great Backyard  
**Bird Count**



**The count is on the horizon –**

**February 12-15, 2021.**

Participating is easy, fun to do alone, or with others, and can be done anywhere that you find birds.

**Choose the easiest way for you to share your birds:**

- Identify birds with Merlin Bird ID app and add sightings to your list
- Use the eBird Mobile app
- Enter your bird list on the eBird website (Desktop/ laptop)

**All you need is a free Cornell Lab account to participate.** This account is shared with Merlin, eBird, Project FeederWatch and other projects at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. If you already have an account, please use the same username and password for submitting your bird list for the Great Backyard Bird Count.

**It’s That Easy!**

Submit one or more lists over the four days of counting and you become a contributing citizen scientist (community scientist). All eBird entries and saved Merlin Bird IDs over the four days contribute to the Great Backyard Bird Count.



**Science and Nature Activities**

Whether your kids need to brush up on Bird ID skills for the Great Backyard Bird Count, or you want to keep them active and engaged during the winter months, we’ve got you covered! Our suite of 12 [Cooped Up Kids](#) activities provide hands-on, minds-on content around nature, science, and birds. Explore life cycles, learn the secrets of bird behavior, or take an expedition around the world with these self-guided lessons for grades K-8.



# Refuge Happenings

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

It is hard to believe that it is already January. During more normal times, we would reflect on how fast the year went by. This one, however, seems painfully slow. We are looking forward to a viable vaccine and some normalcy in our future. I wish you all a healthy and wonderful new year.

## **Biological Program**

Wildlife surveys and monitoring continued during the fall months and new volunteers were recruited for the spring. Some additional weed surveys were completed before the weather turned and remote camera traps and water level monitoring continued.

### **Wood Duck & Bluebird Nest Box Monitoring**

Ramon Guel, President of the Washington Waterfowl Association, was recruited to monitor our wood duck nest boxes this spring. Ramon will clean the boxes before the nesting season and visit the boxes 2-3 times to monitor their success. Pat Buntrock and Tim Holman are two new volunteers recruited for monitoring bluebird nest box trails this spring. Tim also has volunteered to build bluebird boxes when we need them. Both individuals are frequent visitors at Turnbull, and we are looking forward to having them on board.

### **Christmas Bird Count**

Several volunteers and staff participated in the 2nd Annual Cheney Christmas Bird Count on December 19th. Several teams covered the area that extends from Medical Lake south to include most of Turnbull NWR. It was a cold, cloudy day, which was pretty quiet from a birding standpoint. We don't have all of the numbers yet; but three teams (Mike Rule and Sandy Rancourt, Marian and Russell Frobe, and Erik and Jennifer Lewis), who counted just on the refuge found very few birds compared to last year. Buck and Sandy Domitrovich also assisted with the refuge count in addition to counting in Cheney. Overall there were only 26 species observed by 3 teams compared to

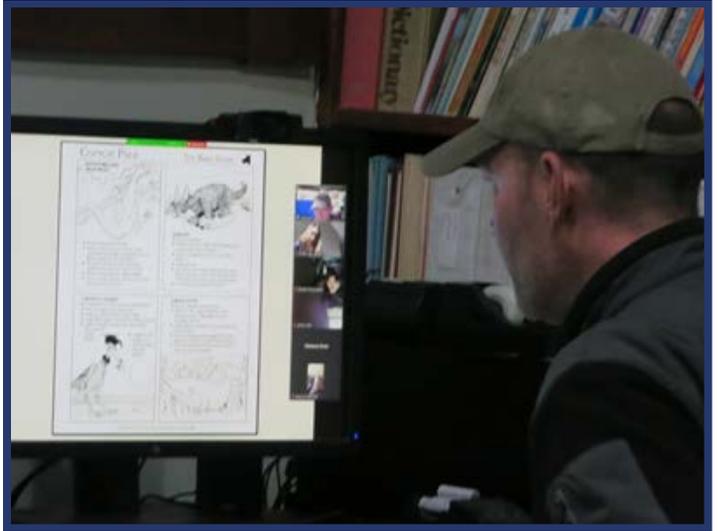
35 in 2019. The number of individual birds observed were very similar; but they were represented mostly by Canada geese, wild turkeys, common ravens, house finches, and American goldfinches. There were no rare bird sightings this year. Most of the wetlands were frozen over except for small patches here and there, with one larger area on Upper Turnbull Slough hosting eight trumpeter swans.

## **Environmental Education & Outreach** **Virtually**

One of our biggest disappointments at Turnbull this year was the cancellation of our Fall Field Trip Program. Normally, it has been a great time of the year for students to enjoy Turnbull's fall colors, cooler weather, bountiful wildlife and fewer biting insects. Adjustments were needed for our upcoming winter outreach programs during which facilitators, in the past, presented EE programs at local schools. I am happy to report that Turnbull is now offering our Winter Outreach Programs virtually. Teachers from Pride Prep and Jennings Elementary were eager to assist with virtual trial runs with their classes to determine how our internet service would hold up at the Refuge, which is intermittent at times. After working out a few bugs, we presented endangered species and owl programs for their students. Due to limitations of the refuge's internet service and a smaller team this year, we will offer virtual outreach programs for schools half-days during the week, starting in January.



*A new experience for us all, but well worth the effort.  
(S. Rancourt)*



*Biological & EE AmeriCorps member Erik Lewis presenting the  
Endangered Species Program to Pride Prep students.  
(S. Rancourt)*

### **EE Classroom Donations**

We received several mounts this fall for our Environmental Education classroom. Inland Northwest Wildlife Council generously donated a Canada goose and a wood duck mount. The Council even had the mounts cleaned for us. Ecological Services also donated a wood duck, red-tailed hawk and a much-needed mallard mount.

### **Volunteer Program**

#### **Riparian Restoration/Invasive Species Control**

Eagle Scout candidate Bradley Golden from Troop 356 was recruited to take on a major restoration/invasive species project in our nursery. Nearly 1,000 potted seedlings were overgrown with invasive species, including the tenacious yellow clover. Bradley's assignment was to transplant the saplings infested with weeds into larger pots and remove all the invasive weeds entangling the saplings' roots. This was a huge undertaking and required some adjustments during the pandemic. Bradley organized a large number of volunteers to assist him with his project. All the volunteers wore masks and social distancing was implemented, with family groups working together. Bradley is a very conscientious young adult, so it was important for him to complete this project in its entirety. Bradley and his crew spent a whole day working on the project and returned for another half day to complete it. The newly potted saplings look great, and will be ready to plant next spring at the Refuge and on private lands. Bradley and his crew also planted several aspen and red-osier dogwood saplings in the Pine Creek Restoration area.



*Before - Separating the weeds from the natives was  
not an easy project. (S. Rancourt)*

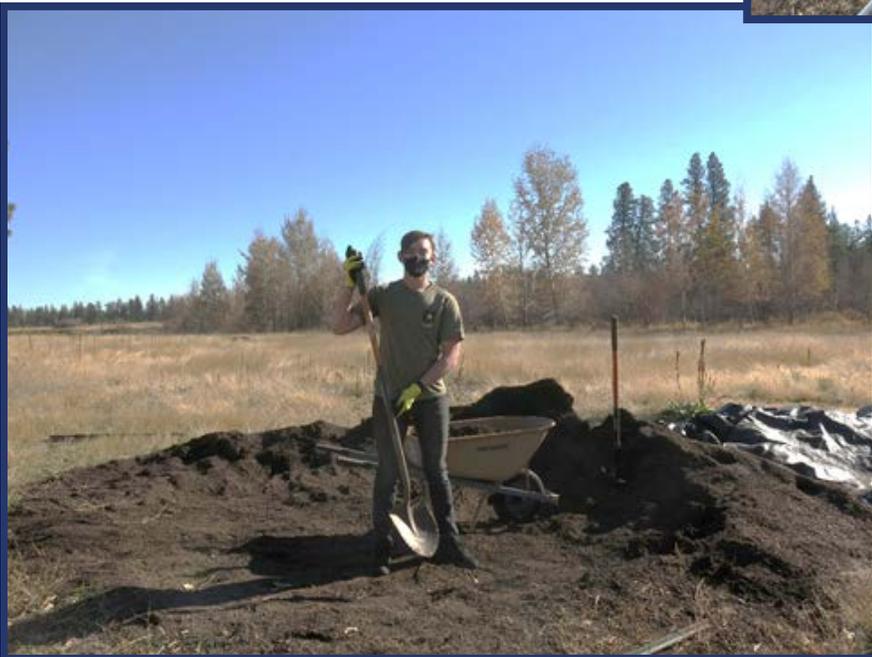


*Everyone from the troop worked as a team and got  
the job done  
(S. Rancourt)*



*After – Looking good! (S. Rancourt)*

*Bradley and his crew worked efficiently, sectioning off quarters to ensure that all aspects of the project were completed. (S. Rancourt)*



*Eagle Scout Bradley Golden. It looks like we need more soil for next spring's potting projects. (S. Rancourt)*

# Keep those winter bird feeders clean

by Madonna Luers

If you're maintaining bird feeding stations this winter to enjoy close-up views of resident birds, remember to keep them clean – not just for the birds' sake, but also for human and domestic pet health.

Disease is a natural part of a bird's world, but feeding stations concentrate birds and can spread diseases at an unnatural rate. Although some bird diseases can afflict dogs or cats, most are not transmissible to humans.

In addition to wearing gloves while filling and cleaning feeders and washing hands afterwards, here are a few basic steps to keep things clean:

- Use tube feeders to reduce accumulations of seed scattered on the ground, which can become wet and moldy and spread disease, at least, if not picked up and discarded regularly. If you use platform feeders, provide only a day's worth of seed at a time.
- Avoid or minimize use of wood feeders because they're difficult to keep clean. Make sure that any feeder allows water to drain easily.
- Spread out feeders over a greater space to reduce crowding, which is a key factor in spreading disease among birds. Use smaller feeders that only allow a few birds at a time.
- Avoid or minimize use of bird seed mixes to reduce scattering of seed as birds select their preferences and discard others. Set up feeders with single seed types – black oil sunflower, nyjer or thistle, millet, safflower, and cracked corn.
- Pick up waste, including seed shells, from the ground at least once a week to reduce mold. Discard feed in feeders that is wet, looks or smells moldy, has fungus on it, or has been contaminated with bird or squirrel/rodent droppings.
- Disinfect feeders at least once a month with a solution of one part bleach to nine parts warm water, and dry thoroughly before refilling.

Winter's cold temperatures usually make keeping things clean easier than year-round feeding stations when warmer conditions are optimal for decay. But periodic warm-ups through winter melt snow and those wet conditions can be problematic, too.



Photos courtesy of  
Backyard Bird Newsletter



# Absolute Failure: Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Sold for \$26 an Acre

courtesy of the National Wildlife Refuge Association

The Bureau of Land Management held a lease sale that sold over a half-million acres of land in the iconic and pristine coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. These acres were contained within 11 tracts, among a total of 22 tracts offered for sale.

This lease sale, which conveys potential property rights on federally owned land, collected a grand total of \$14.4 million. Drilling in the coastal plain would permanently destroy permanently (for \$26 an acre) a landscape that is one of the few remaining untouched and undisturbed vast ecosystems in our country.

The American people were promised that the sale of the Arctic NWR coastal plain would bring in several billion dollars. For years, conservation partners have said that this figure was wildly inflated, and today we were proved correct. **This lease sale has generated less than one percent of the revenue promised by the 2017 Tax Act!** We didn't believe that it was worth billions of dollars to drill on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge -- we definitely don't believe that \$14 million dollars should allow the desecration of this sacred place.

We call on President Biden to reverse these measures to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge as one of his first actions as President of the United States.



Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Caribou  
© Art Wolfe

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