



The Pileated Post

Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Fall 2010

[http:// www.refugefriends.com](http://www.refugefriends.com)

Number 34

From the President

Late Summer Greetings to all of you!

You notice I did not say Autumn...I will have a hard time letting go of my summer this year. But the nights have already cooled off considerably and thoughts of firewood dance in our heads. I will be forced to adjust.

With the season's change, we also arrive at the end of our Fiscal year as an organization and our yearly Annual Meeting. Hopefully all of you received our emailed invitation to join us for our report of the year's activities and birthday celebration. We will be meeting September 25th at 9:30 at the Fire Cache Building out on the Refuge. The schedule includes coffee and muffins, annual reports of business and activities, farewell to outgoing board members, election of new members and a guest speaker. This year we are privileged to have District 1 Fish & Wildlife Biologist, Bill Baker to give a presentation to the group. Bill is very busy at his fairly new position, but he has agreed to fill us in on his latest project in our area.

Following his presentation, we will enjoy a BBQ / Potluck lunch, with burgers, brats, all the fixings and beverages provided by our Friends group. A couple of years ago, following an equipment failure, we microwaved hotdogs at one of our events-- embarrassing to say the least. We decided in short order, that the Friends needed our own grill. Ever since we have been enjoying and sharing with you the joys of outdoor cooking.

And then to work off those calories, we are planning a family hike to a special spot on the Little Pend Oreille River that some call The Gorge—approximately an hour in duration. It is

such a pleasure to see new corners of our great Wildlife Refuge.

A part of starting a new Fiscal year for our organization is the annual membership renewal process. Very shortly you will receive in the mail, a form to help you complete this task easily. You can also go online and renew via PayPal. We have approximately 90 members in our group. From my experiences of going to regional and national conferences, I would say we are on the small size for Friends groups around the nation. More members mean so much more than a few more dollars in the coffers—which we always welcome. Members mean we can do more fun things, such as bring in interesting speakers for our winter program, reach more kids through our environmental education programs and build more trails. All of these things do take dollars, but they also take humans—volunteers for organization and execution. Wouldn't it be great if we could double our membership power!

So I encourage you, when you see that renewal form come in the mail, send it back in for you and your family, but also, talk to someone else about being a member. You know the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge is an awesome place. Be a witness for wildlife and protection of the habitat they need—ask someone new to consider membership.

See you at the Annual Meeting,

Elaine Clough, President



New member visiting from Boise, Idaho, Janice Clough enjoys a summer walk on the newly completed McDowell Marsh Educational Trail

Refuge Manager’s Meanderings

By now most people know that I’ve had the good fortune to be promoted to the refuge manager position. Thanks to everyone for their support will I was the acting manager. I am very excited to assume this new position and look forward to the challenges it will provide.

I’ve been asked what my plans are for managing the Little Pend Oreille NWR, i.e. what “direction” I plan to take it. Frankly, I don’t foresee any significant changes from how it was managed by my predecessors. I think Lisa and Steve did a great job getting things tracking in the right direction. My job is to build on their work. Obviously I have my own interests and those may begin to tint the management direction we follow in the future. But for the most part things we emphasized in the past like riparian restoration, forest habitat management, and increased visitor opportunities will continue to be our goals.

We will be hiring a new refuge biologist soon. I don’t know the details, but such a great job in such a great place on such a great refuge should attract a large number of highly qualified applicants.

Now let me tell you what I can about the Slide Creek fire, the biggest fire we’ve had on the refuge since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service resumed management in 1994.

This incident encompassed a total of 989 acres, with about 257 acres occurring on the refuge. Fortunately it burned through a portion of the refuge our fire crew was prepping for a future prescribed fire, so this fire did some of our work for us. Looking at most of the fire, it did just what we would have done had we ignited a prescribed fire this fall or next spring. However, there’s about 40 acres that burned much hotter than the rest and consumed all the woody debris and litter on the forest floor. It didn't get into the crown of the trees thanks to the commercial thinning we did a few years ago for fire prevention and habitat management, but it did scorch them well up their trunks. However those 40 acres have nothing left on the ground but ash. Several of the remaining large trees will surly die due to fire stress and will become first snags then large



New manager and former refuge biologist, Jerry Cline

down woody debris. That's the normal progression after events like this, and it will replace the snags and down logs lost to the fire. So that's really a good thing.

We did sustain some other damage. Our western boundary fence was cut by the bull dozer digging fire line around the fire. More importantly some of the fence posts were consumed and we'll need to rebuild about 1.5 miles of boundary fence. The bulldozers also dug about 3 miles of fire line down to mineral soil. We're already rehabbing that by leveling the berms and placing down wood on the fire line. We'll follow that up with broadcast seeding with native grasses and forbs. Our roads also took a beating with all the heavy truck traffic, but the extent of that damage hasn't been determined yet.

Our crew was involved throughout the suppression operation along with the DNR, the fire district and all the resources brought in from around the state. They also acted as resource advisors to the "out-of-town" crews to insure that things like snag falling and mop-up operations did a minimum amount of collateral damage to the refuge habitat.

The latest cost estimate for suppression was about \$1.9 million. The USFWS suppression fund (not refuge money) will pay a significant portion of that. We're also getting money to repair damage caused during suppression like rehabbing the dozer built fire lines. There's also other money available for resource stabilization like fixing the burned fence and other things like that we will be applying for.

All in all, we came out OK. We didn't lose any buildings like those unfortunate people that lost their houses, and no one was hurt. Much of the fire accomplished what we planned to do with prescribed fire anyway. The more badly burned portion of the refuge will recover in time, and until then will provide some specialized habitat for things like black-backed woodpeckers who love those fire-caused snags.

This incident did illustrate a few things. We've been working for several years using precommercial and commercial timber sales along with prescribed fire to reduce the fuels that have accumulated on the refuge over the last several decades. Much of our effort has been focused on the boundary of the re-

fuge where we interface with private lands and homes. This fire demonstrated the value of that effort. When this fire entered the refuge it was burning hot and heavy, as can be seen by the intense fire behavior with complete consumption of the forest floor litter including large down logs, and torching in standing trees. But as it entered the pre-treated areas the fire behavior moderated and the rate of spread was drastically reduced. We can't take total credit for that, after all the winds had also begun to moderate about this time, but the fuels reduction treatment we've done contributed to a quicker containment of the wildfire.

Jerry Cline, Manager, LPO



Staff Appreciation Day

On the evening of Thursday, August 12, 2010, the Friends sponsored the annual Staff Appreciation Day to honor and thank Refuge staff, including seasonal workers. Attendance was excellent, with about 35 present, most of whom were refuge staff. This event is held annually at the Fire Cache on the refuge, and includes a barbeque and pot luck, and a brief (several sentences) thank you speech by the President. We believe that informality is the word of the day for an event like this.

Summer Wildlife 2010

Despite the high temperatures, fall is in the air. The apples are ripening by the HQ pond and I am awaiting the arrival of the bear family that feasts on them.

Speaking of bears, I have not seen one yet on the Refuge but others have. Jerry, our new Refuge Manager, had a four-bear day. He saw a sow and two cubs just off Bear Creek Road before the Fire Cache. They were digging around in a log, stopped to look at him; continued digging then crossed the road and headed up the hill. He later saw a single bear stand up to look at him across from Bear Creek Campground.

Cedar Hincke, our Biotech seasonal worker, has seen a few honey-colored bears. I had three ladies come into the office saying they thought they saw a grizzly bear. Although possible, it would be very rare to see a grizzly on the Refuge. Turns out they saw a blonde black bear. They did not realize black bears can be blonde, cinnamon or black in color. This year's reported bear sightings have mostly been single bears rather than a sow with cubs.

Three cougars were spotted, one early one morning near a campground, another at the edge of a meadow and the third was a young one, perhaps a yearling. Did you know young cougars are spotted until about the age of nine months?

Elk sightings are increasing at LPO. They have been seen on Starvation Flats, by Durlan Springs, on the Mill Butte Trail and at Bayley Lake. Nancy, a volunteer, saw three cows with calves at the intersection of Bear Creek and Narcisse Creek Roads the morning of June 20.

June 21 was the day our Youth Conservation Corps crew started. One crew member drove down the hill into HQ to find a young bull moose in the driveway. Since she had never seen a moose before, she was a bit unnerved to see it towering over her car. It walked across the parking lot to the other side of the road where the Mill Butte trail starts and just stood there looking at the scene. I watched it through my binoculars and saw it had a splotchy colored belly.

Other moose and calves were seen on Starvation Flats, McDowell Marsh and Lake, Cottonwood Campground, Potter's Pond, Bayley Lake, and the Beaver Ponds on Rookery Road.

I was out on my lunch walk early in July when I heard some strange bird sound I did not recognize and saw an American Kestrel come up from flying

low, but I didn't see what was harassing it. Then a small accipiter, perhaps a sharp-shinned hawk, flew right over me. I walked on and heard what I thought was the same sound again--an Eastern Kingbird harassing a Kestrel that was perched on a branch. Down by the creek I heard a lot of loud bird commotion but couldn't see anything.

One visitor, who moved here from Vermont to be close to grandchildren, hiked up Mill Butte Trail for a wildlife bonanza. First he saw cow elk with young, then a moose, then a bear cub on the trail. He was not sure what to do next, but kept walking. The sow and another cub were soon spotted and he was between them and the first cub. He yelled and waved his arms to chase the sow away then turned around and hiked back down. Whew!

Two otters were seen frolicking and chasing one another on the bank of the LPO River downstream from the gauging station.

The usual great horned and barred owls have been seen on the Refuge. The exciting news is Tim Durnell located a Flammulated Owl. This is one of only four owls with dark eyes – the others are Barred, Barn and Spotted. Flams primarily feed on insects; they look like mini Screech Owls except for the dark eyes.

Another sighting of note was a nematode- a type of roundworm as thin as the hair of a horse's tail. Roger and the YCC crew found this one that was about a foot long, dark body with lighter ends.

As I write this August 19, visitors told me they saw three coyote pups just before the corral on Bear Creek Road and the Fire Crew reported two Clark's Nutcrackers being very vocal around the Fire Cache.

With the approach of Fall comes hunting season. Please be aware that hunting season starts September 1 on LPO. The wearing of orange should begin on September 25; the start of muzzleloader season for deer.

Barbara Harding, Refuge Staff

Photographers Wanted!

The more time one spends out at our Refuge, the more one becomes aware of the variety of opportunities for taking wonderful photos of this unique place in our corner of northeastern Washington. Ours isn't a single season refuge. It changes from day-to-day, week-to-week, and season-to-season. There are hidden corners of our Refuge to explore with one's camera. There are photo-ops just waiting for visitors on any of their trips to the LPO.

The 2009 Friend of the LPO Photo Contest began last August 16th and will extend until next (2010) August 15th. We are looking for pictures of the flora and fauna, of panoramas, and of people using the Refuge. We are also looking for photos from students.

Information and entry forms are available from me at janderson@ultraplix.com. Next time you visit the Refuge, don't forget your camera!

Joel Anderson, Board Member



Indian Pipe

Indian Pipe (*Monotropa uniflora*) is an odd flowering plant found in deep forests nearly everywhere. It lacks chlorophyll; hence it cannot manufacture its own food. Because of this, it has for years been labeled a saprophyte, akin to mushrooms. Indeed, some flower guides still insist on calling it a saprophyte. The mushroom connection is true, but not in the way people think. This plant is a parasite, living off the trees and shrubs around it. It manages to do this because fungi on the roots of Indian Pipe also are on the roots of some of the trees and shrubs, so a vital connection is maintained in the fungal strands. Such fungi and root associations are called mycorrhizae (fungus-root). Most forest trees and many shrubs depend on these mycorrhizae for survival, and, in turn, the fungi depend on establishing the association for their survival. At some point in the distant past, a few plants, including Indian Pipe, tapped into this association and now obtain their nutrition from their neighbors. Or was it the fungus that orchestrated this event? So what was once considered a case of simple saprophytism is now seen as a much more complex interaction between several neighbors. You can find this plant in the cooler, wetter forests of the Refuge.

Newsletter Necessities

Number 34 - Jim Groth - Editor

To send comments, write articles for the newsletter, or to contribute items of interest, please contact:

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Email: larchsavage@yahoo.com

The Pileated Post is published quarterly and is mailed to all *Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge*.

Calendar

September

25th—Annual Meeting—9:30 a.m.

October

13th— Board Meeting —6:00 p.m.

November

10th — Board Meeting — 6:00 p.m.

Our Mission: The Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the conservation of native fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats on the Refuge, providing educational opportunities, and fostering understanding and appreciation of the Refuge.



Box 215
Colville, WA 99114

Friends of the LPO

Membership Application

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____ I would like my newsletter emailed to me
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