



The Pileated Post

Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Spring 2014

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

Number

48

From the President

The breeze, trees, bees and you! What better way to help celebrate the refuge's 75th anniversary by volunteering for one of our activities. We have volunteer opportunities to help educate children, have fun at a festival, clean up the refuge or help with the maintenance and construction of our trails.

First, we have our annual education days with the 2nd and 5th graders from the Colville School district. The 2nd graders will be at the refuge May 21 and 22 and the 5th graders June 6 and 9. We are looking for volunteers to help lead hikes on the McDowell Lake Environmental Education Trail. No experience needed. We will get you situated and provide all the information and help you need. I have helped out for the past few years and it is a lot of fun and the kids really enjoy their time at the refuge.

Next is the Floods, Flowers and Feathers Festival at the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge south of Cheney on Saturday May 31. This will be the third year of the Festival and our third year attending. We have two booths (or tables) at the Festival. One provides information about our refuge and our friends group. The other is our activity booth where children and adults can learn what owls hunt and eat by dissecting owl pellets. Both young and old find this a fun and educational activity. We need volunteers to help keep this event a success. It is a great chance for us to do outreach in the Spokane area and support the Turnbull NWR, which is a part of the same complex as our refuge. Volunteers will also have time to partake in the other activities at the festival, including scavenger hunts, birding hikes and geological tours where you can learn about the great floods that formed the landscape of eastern Washington's scablands. This is a great event for the whole family.

We will also have an Earth Day clean up at the refuge. Earth Day is Tuesday April 22. We meet at Headquarters at 8:00 AM. We spend about 4 hours walking the refuge roads picking up trash followed by lunch with the staff and friends. It's a great way to meet the staff and get to know the refuge areas.

Lastly there will be plenty of opportunities to help with Trail maintenance and construction. Our first work day will be at the Lake McDowell trail on Saturday April 19th. We will meet at the McDowell trailhead. Bring, boots, gloves, water and lunch. Tools are provided. We have some yearly clean up to do, along with some final trail construction near the observation blind. We will not work you too hard--we like to have fun. Afterward I will be happy to help you find a part of the refuge you may not have yet explored.

If you want to volunteer for any of these events or activities please send me an email. As always feel free to email me with any question about the Friends or the Refuge. If I cannot answer your questions I will make sure to get it to someone who can. Cheers and enjoy the rest of the winter!

Dan Price, President

email: bigdan65@yahoo.com

Film Festival

LPO Friends are co-sponsoring a Wild and Scenic Film Festival at the Alpine Theater in Colville on March 6, at 6:30 PM. Admission fee \$8 or \$6 for youths. Come early to sign up for the great raffles and get a good seat. Beer, wine and regular theater refreshments will be available. This should be fun.

Spring Mushroom Foray

Once again, Jim Groth will lead a mushroom foray on the refuge on Saturday, May 10. While most enjoy finding edibles, emphasis is on enjoying and learning about all kinds of fungi. To reserve a spot and get more details, please e-mail us at joann_groth@yahoo.com or call 684-1379. Space is limited and we always fill up.

Refuge Manager's Meandering

Your Friends Group needs YOU!

Did you know the Friends group has about 100 dues paying members that support its many programs? Thank you all for your support! But like most similar organizations, about 10-15% of the membership actively participates in group activities and programs, while the majority are passive members that support the goals of the group, but watch the game from the bleachers. That's just human nature I guess. And your Friends group gives you plenty to watch, from the annual environmental education days for 2nd and 5th graders, the trail building work, manning the information booth at outreach events, the scholarship program for graduating high school seniors, and the list goes on. All these activities are planned and coordinated by the Friends Board of officers and directors. And that's where they need help! Currently there are three board positions vacant. Board members attend monthly board meetings and participate in decisions affecting the organization. Qualifications? Only a willingness to attend a board meeting one evening a month, and the desire to support the interests of the organization and by extension those of the Refuge. That's it! They don't require you ride a spotted Billy goat backwards while blindfolded or any other silly initiation. Seriously, groups like this become less effective as the active participants begin to burnout. Leadership needs to be rotated and new blood brought into the organization if it's to remain vibrant and effective. If you haven't recently, please visit the Friends' website and see what they're working on. If you have the time and desire to contribute to the group, please contact Dan Price, the Friends Group President. It's not hard, we have fun, and you can help support the activities you like to see happening on the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge.

Jerry Cline, Manager, LPO

Refuge Biologist's Report

Here we go changing from winter to spring one more time. As I write this in mid-February light snow is falling. As is often the case winter is a slow time of year for field projects. We spend much of the winter writing reports or planning for the next field season. The lack of snow has delayed many of the projects that were to be performed this winter. Projects like track surveys and even snow machine training were delayed until well into January or even February this winter. This is certainly shaping up to be one of the lightest snow years I have ever seen. I have been able to keep out the remote cameras which have continued to record a variety of medium to large mammals. As one might expect white-tailed deer were the most common animal recorded. We also had elk, moose, coyotes, cougar, red squir-

rels and even a few hikers show up as well. Another interesting project we have going on this winter is the long-term bat monitoring project. The plan is to keep the detector going all year to see when the various species go to hibernation then emerge in the spring. It will also tell us if any wake up and fly around during winter. We once again did the winter bird count on the refuge this year. It happened to fall on the biggest snow day we had this winter. Eight inches fell the night before and morning of the count. Even though several of the regular participants were out of town, we had five folks come out in addition to the refuge staff. We managed to tally 28 species for the day. This compares to 28 in 2013 and 32 in 2012 when we had better weather and more than twice as many participants. This is a fun day for everyone and I would encourage anyone who can to participate next year. By the time you are seeing this it should be March and winter snows should be turning to spring rains soon.

Members of the Spokane Chapter of the National Audubon Society helped put up nest platforms for Great Gray Owls in 2012. Although none were used last year, owls were seen in the vicinity of some of the platforms last year. Hopefully the owls will be getting ready to nest soon. I look forward to getting out and checking the platforms later this spring. Speaking of nesting birds the Bald Eagles are starting to repair their nesting again. We have two eagle nests on the refuge as of last year. The new nest on the Little Pend Oreille River was built last year and fledged one young bird in July. The birds from this nest are often seen behind the refuge headquarters fishing, and they are defending their territory from other eagles and hawk passing by now. So I expect they will be nesting soon. Some other birds to look for this spring are Osprey and Common Loons. Neither of these has nested on the refuge in recent years but both have been seen around McDowell Lake during nesting season the last couple of years. We are optimistic we may have one of these nest this year. So if you see either of these on the refuge especially come June, please stop by the office and let us know.

Before you know it the roads will be open and migratory birds will be showing up. One of my favorite things about spring is the return of wildflowers. Washington State has some of the best wildflower blooms you will find anywhere. While the refuge may not be as well known as some other wildflower locations, the blooms here can be quite nice and are certainly something to look forward to. Unlike some of the better known areas like Mount Rainier, the bloom at the LPO is spread out over several months with something in bloom from March all the way into October, and with some late bloomers sometimes found even into early November. For some insight into one of my favorite flowers on the refuge take a look at the profile that follows. I hope you all get a chance to come and enjoy the refuge and its wildlife or

wildflowers this spring.

Critter of the Season



The Western trillium (*Trillium ovatum*) is a common lily that grows in the understory of many western forest types. It can be found from Colorado to the Pacific and from Alaska to California. Here on the LPO they can be found blooming right after snow melt and can occasionally be seen growing right through the last inch or so of snow. Depending on elevation, that can be anywhere from March in the valleys to late June in higher settings. Leaves are oval to somewhat triangular and, like the flower petals and sepals, in obvious threes, hence the genus name. The single large white flower is found at the top of a single 6 to 10 inch stem. Trillium flowers do not produce nectar but their showiness fools various insects into landing on them. As a result they are pollinated by bumblebees in addition to several species of pollen-feeding beetles and moths. They are one of the few plants to have both diurnal and nocturnal pollinators, so once the flowers open they stay open day and night until the petals drop. Once pollination is complete for a particular flower the petals gradually turn pink to maroon color before falling off. This change in color sometimes fools people into thinking the older flowers are a different species. When the large seeds are ready to drop they drop right below the parent plant. The seeds are covered with a protein coating called elaiosome which is a favorite food of several species of ants and some species of ground beetles. The insects carry off the seeds and store them for later consumption. They consume the elaiosome coating without harming the actual seed which is then discarded minus its protective coating and ready to germinate. Trillium plants are extremely long lived perennials, taking 15 years to produce the first flowers. Studies in Oregon showed plants routinely lived well past 70 years. When you visit the refuge this spring turn your eyes to the ground and look for this fascinating flower of the forest understory.

Fall Wildlife 2013

Ever wish you had a few seconds longer look at some wildlife as you watch it hurrying away from you? On a lunch walk late last August I had just walked through all the blow downs on Mill Butte Trail and was facing the open hillside that the trail climbs up when I noticed movement to my left. All I saw was a blur of tan. I did see the head and ears and my impression was cat. I did not see a long tail a cougar would have; I did not see spots or stripes that a bobcat would have and I did not see big ears or the white flag tail a white-tail deer would have. All I saw was something moving very quickly away from me. Instead of continuing on the trail as I'd planned, I hurried back. Whatever I saw was headed for the creek bottom where the brush is thick and you can't see down into the creek unless you start down the hillside towards it. I thought if it was a cat it might just hunker down in there undercover. If you recall, last winter I found a deer kill down next to the creek with cougar tracks around it and we have seen bobcat tracks in the area. I have also seen black bear and moose in this area. As I walked back I kept stopping to listen. I was hearing crunching like some animal walking on the dry forest floor. Then I saw 3 deer- that was a surprise. If I had just spooked deer, why did I not hear them thundering away? Why would the deer be there if I had just seen a cat? Had the cat not come down the creek that far? I continued my own crunching and heard a red squirrel scolding something's presence further up the hill but saw nothing. Now I was wondering what I had seen. I'll be sure to pause before rounding that bend in the trail next time and look all around and hopefully be able to see whatever animal is there long enough to identify it before it disappears.

A camper came into the office with a similar story soon after my experience. He was cooking supper at his campfire and saw something black in the darkness. His first thought was that it was a wolf but since it was black he dismissed that thought. So he figured it must have been a bear. He did not see the head, only the backside of the animal. Wolves can be black so his lack of knowledge hindered him in identifying what this was – a common occurrence that happens with birds quite a bit. I have received calls from the public wanting to know what bird they have seen and their description does not fit any bird I have ever seen. After asking some questions I'm able to figure out the purple bird they saw was a European starling with the sunlight hitting it at a certain angle. The whole bird was not purple but they did not expect to see that color on a bird so their perception of the bird was inaccurate. Just a few seconds more or a different angle and we could make that positive identification. I'm sure you have had similar experiences.

The Headquarters' bird feeders continue to be very slow. I have seen Northern flicker and black-capped chickadee and that is about it. They don't show up every day either- I'll go days without seeing any activity at these feeders.

December 16th I saw two adult Bald Eagles perched in the cottonwood tree behind Headquarters. They were probably a mated pair since they were perched less than a foot from each other and stayed there for hours. Mike saw them together again on February 10th. They were engaging in courtship behavior. Later in the day a juvenile eagle was flying downstream over the Little Pend Oreille (LPO) River and quite an uproar ensued with both eagles going after it.

On February 4th I took lunch walk behind Headquarters along the LPO River which was still half ice free-that surprised me with the cold temperatures we were experiencing. I saw bobcat tracks around the cottonwood tree which did not surprise me. Dan, our Prescribed Fire Specialist, saw a bobcat walking on Bear Creek Road, by the office, the day before. It was the middle of the day. Dan said the cat stopped to roll on the road then kept walking down the road. Then I saw otter tracks on the trail around the pond at Headquarters. I saw where it came out of the pond and slid across the trail and down to the creek.

Later that same day I heard an eagle call which surprised me because when bald eagles perch in the cottonwood tree behind Headquarters I don't hear them from my office. I looked out and saw a raptor perched at the top of a ponderosa pine across the road from my office window. I could see it was not an adult bald eagle so got my binoculars on it. The sun was shining and the golden colored head and neck were very visible- a golden eagle. I tried to call Mike and Jerry to have them take a look at the bird, but neither one answered and then the eagle was gone. Jerry said he could see a large raptor flying behind the office so I hurried over to Mike's office and he got a good look at it soaring and agreed it was a golden eagle- a juvenile because of the white under its wings. This bird is continuing to be seen behind Headquarters.

I found a frozen woolly bear caterpillar in the parking area on the west side of Headquarters and wondered where it came from. These caterpillars overwinter under whatever shelter they can find like bark or a building shingle. What could have caused it to venture out with the frigid temperatures we were experiencing?

On February 6th I was very excited to see the ice crystal formations on the LPO River. I had seen them a few years ago but did not have a camera with me so was unable to get photos. The only way I can describe them is to say they look like frozen water lilies. Most of them are two to three inches in diameter and an inch or so in height. You can see the ice crystal formations clearly at the edges of these formations which are quite beautiful. The only time I have seen them is

when it gets very cold. I'd like to learn more about how they form. If you have seen formations like these- let me know.

February 11th I saw my first snow fleas of the winter. They are actually springtails and not really fleas. I usually see them late in the winter on warm days. (The next day was sunny and reached 56 F!) They are so tiny they look like black pepper scattered over the snow.

Red-winged blackbirds should be here any day now- I know they have been seen in town; chipmunks will be awakening from their hibernation and buttercups will be blooming. That means spring is almost here and Refuge gates will open mid-April. See you soon !

Barbara Harding, Refuge Staff

Lisa Langelier Retires



Lisa Langelier, Project Leader for the Inland Northwest National Wildlife Refuge Complex, retired after a 24 year career with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Lisa's federal career started at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in 1990. In 1994 she was posted to the 40,000 acre Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge as the first Refuge Manager on that installation after 29 years of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife management. Lisa's first challenge was building a staff and a refuge management program from scratch, while establishing a trusting relationship with the state agency and the local community after long period of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service absence. A major accomplishment was the adoption of a refuge Comprehensive

Conservation Plan; one of the first such plans implemented in the National Refuge System. A controversial part of that plan was the cessation of the long established livestock grazing program on the refuge, a decision that resulted in the Lisa and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service being named in a lawsuit brought by the Stevens County Cattleman's Association, the Stevens County Conservation District, Stevens County Farm Bureau, Stevens County Commissioners and a number of individual ranches and ranchers. Lisa and her staff worked diligently to assemble almost 10,000 pages of documentation supporting the plan and defending against the lawsuit, supported by the Defenders of Wildlife and the Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR as defendant- interveners. The United States District Court found in favor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, thus upholding the refuge management plan. Some of Lisa's other notable accomplishments on the Little Pend Oreille NWR included a 700 acre land acquisition, establishing a refuge recreation program compatible with the Refuge's purpose, instituting a habitat management program including timber thinning and prescribed fire, and the design and implementation of seven mile long auto tour. In 2007 a reorganization in the Refuge system resulted in Lisa becoming the Project Leader of the Inland Northwest National Wildlife Refuge complex, encompassing the Little Pend Oreille as well as Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge in Cheney, Washington and Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge, in Bonner's Ferry, Idaho. During this time Lisa worked with the Kootenai NWR staff writing and implementing their first Comprehensive Conservation Plan. She also oversaw the addition of 1100 acres to the Turnbull NWR land base. Lisa's career is an example of how a dedicated conservationist, working diligently through both favorable and diverse circumstances, can have a lasting impact on the public's natural resources for decades to come.

Jerry Cline

Congratulations and Best Wishes, Lisa!



A lively group of Friends, Refuge Staff and spouses gathered in Spokane last month to celebrate Lisa Langelier's

recent retirement after many years of dedicated service with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Lisa was appointed Refuge Manager on the LPO when the federal government regained management of the Refuge from Washington State in 1994. Lisa and her staff faced many challenges in those early years as they worked hard to bring the LPO up to USFWS refuge standards. Lisa was instrumental in guiding the LPO into the 21st century and she also helped to establish our Friends organization.

Lisa left the LPO in 2007 and moved to Turnbull NWR in Cheney to become complex manager for Turnbull, LPO and Kootenai Refuges. During her years at Turnbull she continued as a Friend and enthusiastic advocate for the LPO.

We wish Lisa all the best as she enjoys retirement with husband Bruce Kessler (also recently retired). Thank you, Lisa for all you have done for refuges throughout your career and special appreciation from the Friends for bringing your wonderful vision and talents to the LPO!

Pam Vail, Board Member

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 2014 Friend of the LPO Photo Contest began last (2013) August 16th and extends until August 15th this year. Judging will take place soon and winners will be featured in, among other places, the Winter Pileated Post. Thank you for your submissions.

Contact me if you have questions at janderson@ultraplix.com. Next time you visit the Refuge, don't forget your camera!

Joel Anderson

Newsletter Necessities

Number 48 - Jim Groth - Editor

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

Editor, *The Pileated Post*
P.O. Box 215, Colville, WA 99114
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

March

12th - Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

April

9th - Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

19th - McMeet Trail Cleanup

May

14th - Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

21st and 22nd - Second grader Environmental
Education Day at the Refuge

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.

