



The Pileated Post

Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Summer 2014

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

Number 49

From the President

The Refuge is 75! Officially the Refuge was created by executive order on May 2, 1939. The Refuge was established "*as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife....*" Editors note: The other wildlife were white-tailed deer. Hard to believe that they were just coming into the territory from the East and were considered in need of some protection.

This summer the Refuge and the Friends are celebrating with a number of activities and events. There will be a birding hike, the annual hike with Dan Price of the Friends, the annual butterfly count and finally the 75th Anniversary celebration and Blue Goose Chase family bike ride.

First, on June 7, Refuge Biologist Mike Munts will lead a birding hike to explore the many bird species of the refuge. This is a fun event for both novice and expert birders. If you do not have binoculars the Refuge has a few to loan out. Meet at refuge Headquarter around 7:30 AM so we can get organized and out birding by 8:00. Bring water, sunscreen, bug repellent and a snack.

Next we have the Annual Summer Hike on June 21. My goal has always been to try and get people out to parts of the refuge that they might not have explored. This year we will be hiking the Blacktail Mt. Loop and a short spur that leads back to an old cabin. I will be focusing on the history and fauna of the Refuge along with some aspects of forest management as we will be in an area that was thinned a few years back. This hike is in the higher regions of the Refuge and has some fantastic views. This is an area visited by many of the large critters. I will also point out other areas to ex-

plore off of the Blacktail Mt. road. For this hike we will meet at Refuge Headquarters at 9:30 am so we can get organized, get some carpooling together and be on the road by 10. The start of the hike is about 8 miles from HQ along moderately rough roads. The hike itself is moderately difficult with only a couple of hundred feet of elevation gain and descent. Bring water, bug repellent, sunscreen, lunch and sturdy boots. A camera is also a great idea.

July starts with the annual Butterfly count on July 12. This is a fun event and we encourage families to come on out and enjoy learning to identify butterflies. There will be experts to help identify what you catch (and release). This event also starts at refuge HQ. Show up around 9:30 am so we can be out counting by 10:00. You can participate all day or just until lunch. Bring water, sunscreen, bug repellent, and a lunch.

Lastly we have the 75th Anniversary celebration. The celebration features the Blue Goose Chase and Family fun bike ride on July 26. The ride will feature the new auto tour and its many new interpretive signs that inform visitors of the wildlife, history and management of the Refuge.. The loop is about 12.5 miles long on gravel roads and is moderately difficult. At the half way point there will be a water and snack station. There will also be a bike mechanic on hand from Clark's All Sports. A vehicle will also be available to pick up broken down bikes or tired riders. Medical personnel will also be at the event. Along with the bike ride there will be live music provided by the Brown's Mountain Boys Bluegrass band. There will also be food, a raffle and an Anniversary cake.

You do not have to be a bike rider to enjoy the day. You can come out and just enjoy the scenery, take a hike, or just listen to the music and have some food.

We want everyone to enjoy this special day. Riders are asked to show up between 8:00 – 8:30 am so you can be on your way by 9:00. Music is from 11:00 – 1:00 and food will be served starting at 11:00. The raffle will be at 12:00.

For further details on all these activities and events check out the events section of our website. You can also call the Refuge at 509-684-8384. And as always if you have any question about the Friends or the Refuge you can contact me at bigdan65@yahoo.com

In a effort to save paper and reduce our costs we are asking those who get the printed version of the Pileated Post to take a look at the online version available at our website and consider switching to that version, if feasible. The online version has much better picture quality. The printed version will continue to be available. If you wish to not get the printed version send a note to lpofriends@gmail.com.

Dan Price, President

Refuge Manager's Meandering

I just spent the best part of the last two days helping the Refuge Friends Group host all five classes of Colville's finest 2nd graders. It's always hoot; the term "herding cats" comes to mind. But what a wonderful age to be, no worries except "Who brought the chocolate milk for lunch?" The awesomeness of the day was brought home to me as I sat in the boulder "amphitheater" eating lunch with my group and discussing why *Lunchables* are the greatest invention since peanut butter. I looked across the marsh at a group of kids hanging over the boardwalk rail trying to spot frogs. Another group near the boat launch was poking through Tupperware containers of marsh water while patient adults tried to point out the difference between water fleas and mosquito larvae. What a wonderful sight, kids enjoying a day away from the classroom, tramping through the outdoors, learning things without even knowing it. Here's a sample of some of the things I overheard: "I thought this was going to be boring, but I'm having fun!"; "This is the best field trip I've been on in my whole life!"; "I want to come back with my Mom and Dad."; and from a parent "I never knew this place was here." Thanks to the teachers who are willing to do extra work to "herd the cats", and to the volunteers that guide the kids on their voyages of discovery.

Work continued on the Hartnett-Sampson barn last week. The carpenter worked with our fire crew to select, fall and peel several larch logs we'll use this fall to fill in the opening in the west wall that was cut out a few decades ago.

All three fishing lakes are full of water. The field expedient repairs we did last fall to the water control structures in McDowell Lake and Potter's Pond seem to be holding. We still plan to replace the McDowell structure in late summer, and the Potter's structure in early fall if possible. We're hoping our "band aids" will hold until then.

Work is winding down on the 1000 acre Pierce-Paulke Wildlife Habitat project. This forest thinning project is front and center to public since parts of it occurred near the Potter's Pond Road, and other activity was adjacent to state Highway 20. Like most mechanical forest thinning projects, it looks a bit "rough" right now, but by this time next year the scab will have healed, leaving a verdant flush of shrubs and grasses.

We're working hard to finish installing the Auto Tour interpretive sites before the 75th Anniversary Celebration in July 26. Most of the signs are installed, so come out and take ride along the tour. And don't forget to make that date on your calendars and join the festivities celebrating the diamond anniversary of the Little Pend Oreille NWR.



The new wildlife-viewing deck overlooking McDowell Lake. Photo by Tricia Woods.

Jerry Cline, Manager, LPO

Refuge Biologist's Report

Once again we are moving into the summer field season and seasonal employees are arriving to start work for the summer. This year I have three folks working for the refuge in biology. I will have one six month biological technician and two interns working soon. I am looking forward to another productive summer of assorted wildlife and habitat projects. This year we have several habitat and monitoring projects going on. We are hoping to start mapping our aspen stands soon. We have a fish habitat survey that the Fisheries Office in Leavenworth will be doing for us. We hope to get more of the site prep done for the white pine restoration project near Cedar Creek done in order to be ready for planting next year. We plan to continue the herpetological (amphibians and reptile) inventory this summer. Bird count season is just around the corner and will likely be underway by the time you read this. Several other wildlife projects will be happening as well.

It has been an interesting spring for sure. Both eagle nests were in use in March with the Bayley Lake nest hatching out two young around the end of April. The LPO river nest had an eagle incubating on March but by mid-May the nest had failed and the adults were no longer around. On the other hand much higher than normal eagle activity has been seen at McDowell Lake this spring and there may be another nest in that area. Please let refuge staff know if you are the lucky one to find it. Also at McDowell this spring has been a single Common Loon. This is the third spring in a row we have had a lone loon there and who knows if this will be the year he finds a mate and attempts to nest. There are only a handful of loon nests in Washington and it would be really special to get one here.

It's not just loons and eagles; bird migration is in full swing with more warblers, vireos and other migrants showing up almost every day. If you would like to know what has been seen lately stop by the office and check our daily checklist. You can also pick up a copy of our birding hotspots pamphlet and check some of them out.

Most people who read this are at least somewhat familiar with the main refuge east of Colville. What many of you may not know is that there are also four smaller satellite units of the refuge. These are located

in the Pend Oreille River Valley just north of Cusick, the inlet to Deer Lake, a small parcel near Springdale and another small parcel along the Okanogan River north of Tonasket. The Springdale and Okanogan sites are surrounded by private property and do not have public access. The Cusick and Deer Lake units are a bit out of the way but can reward folks with some nice wildlife watching to those who make the trek. Jerry and I just got back from the Cusick unit and this is always a nice time to visit there. Spring migration is in full swing with many warblers in the woods. The wetland improvement projects that were done there several years ago are starting to make a difference with many frogs, turtles and ducks being seen. Grassland birds including Lark Sparrow and Western Meadowlark were beginning to sing. The Kaniksu Unit on Deer Lake can also have some great spring birding. Most of these 700 plus acres are wetlands associated with the inlet to Deer Lake. Several thousand waterfowl migrate through here each April. Our spring waterfowl count again recorded more than two thousand Northern Pintails alone. Numerous other waterfowl species were seen as well. The next time you might be driving down highways 395 or 20 feel free to stop by and check out these little gems of the refuge. Since we're on the subject of waterfowl, check out the species profile below for one of the most colorful birds on the refuge.

Critter of the Season



Did you know that one of the most colorful birds in all of North America nests right here at Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge? Not only that but this bird

nests in old woodpecker holes. You may have guessed I am thinking of the spectacular Wood Duck. They are actually several species of ducks in the USA that nest in trees. The wood duck is not just the most colorful but the most wide spread. Previously cavity nesting ducks were dependent on large woodpeckers like our pileated to make nest hole for them. However, like bluebirds and swallows woodies readily take to nest boxes and thousands of wood duck boxes have been put up all over the country. For these ducks of the forest, trees are not just for nesting. They can frequently be seen perching in and resting in trees as well. Nests can have from six to sixteen eggs and can be as much a mile from the water, although most are much closer. Nests can be as low as 2 feet and as high as sixty feet, depending on availability. They can squeeze through entrance holes under 4 inches in size. The nest is lined with down plucked from the hen's own breast. After about 30 days the chicks hatch and jump from the nest. For those nests that are not over water the hatchlings drop as much as 60 feet to solid ground. Amazingly chicks are rarely if ever injured in this process. Wood Duck chicks have been recorded jumping more than 250 feet without injury. They are able to easily withstand this impact and quickly walk their way toward the nearest water. Woodies are often quite vocal but they do not quack like Mallards but make a variety of squeaks, whistles, and almost chirping like sounds. So the next time you visit the refuge check out places like the beaver ponds, Potter's Pond, Kidney pond, or the Kaniksu unit on Deer lake for the spectacular resident of wooded ponds and lakes.

Mike Munts, Refuge Staff

Spring Wildlife 2014

Lots of rain and unseasonably high temperatures don't lend themselves to good wildlife observations. I have only heard of one black bear sighting this spring although many staff have seen fresh scat.

Activity at the Headquarters' bird feeders never did pick up although Evening grosbeaks have visited sporadically. Their loud calls, especially when a flock is present, are easy to hear and recognize.

White-tailed deer were seen in large numbers (70+) in Chester Field which is the field next to the Fire Cache/Maintenance Shop area. This was mid-February through March. One staff member counted 113 in that field!

Elk have been seen sporadically in Durlan Springs and Chester Field – but only in low numbers. Moose were seen in the Beaver Ponds, McDowell Marsh and McDowell Lake. Soon we will be seeing newborn fawns and calves.

There have been beaver sightings and lots of fresh activity on Bear Creek. Beaver have been seen from the new boardwalk at the Beaver Ponds – have you checked it out yet?

Bird sightings of note- Dan Brauner saw and heard a common loon at McDowell Lake on May 4. He looked around trying to find another bird in hopes we had a mated pair that would nest here but did not see a second bird. The sound of loons and wolves and two of those special sounds of nature that resonates with most folks. I hope I get to hear both on the Refuge.

Warblers are here; along with Western tanagers, vireos and all three of our hummingbird species. The hummingbird feeder at Headquarters has been buzzing with hummers. Mike got to witness male black-chinned, calliope and rufous hummingbirds all at the feeder at the same time feeding together- a rare sight indeed the way rufous males normally guard the feeder. Someone asked me if it was okay to feed sugar water to hummingbirds. I replied that it is (it is best to leave the red food coloring out of the mixture) and I doubted this was their sole food source. Hummingbirds rely on nectar from flowers but also eat insects, spiders and tree sap. Hummingbirds have the highest metabolism of any warm-blooded animal and an animal any smaller than a hummer could not live because it could not feed itself fast enough to maintain its body temperature.

On May 22 I arrived at Headquarters and saw a large moth on the window screen by our hummingbird feeder; it stayed there for hours and the hummers did not seem to mind it. It was a Columbia silkmoth (*Hyalophora columbia*). The wing span is almost four inches and the wings are reddish brown in color with whitish crescent spots in each section. The adult moth does not feed. The larva is green with yellow, orange or blue

protuberances and feeds on bitterbush, buffalo berry, *Ceanothus*, choke cherry, wild rose and willows.

Be sure to visit the Refuge on Saturday July 26th to celebrate our 75th Anniversary. There will be a family bicycle ride on our Auto Tour Route (complete with interpretative signs), a hike up to Mill Butte, live bluegrass music, refreshments, an anniversary cake and a raffle. This event is free so I hope to see you here!



Barbara Harding, Refuge staff

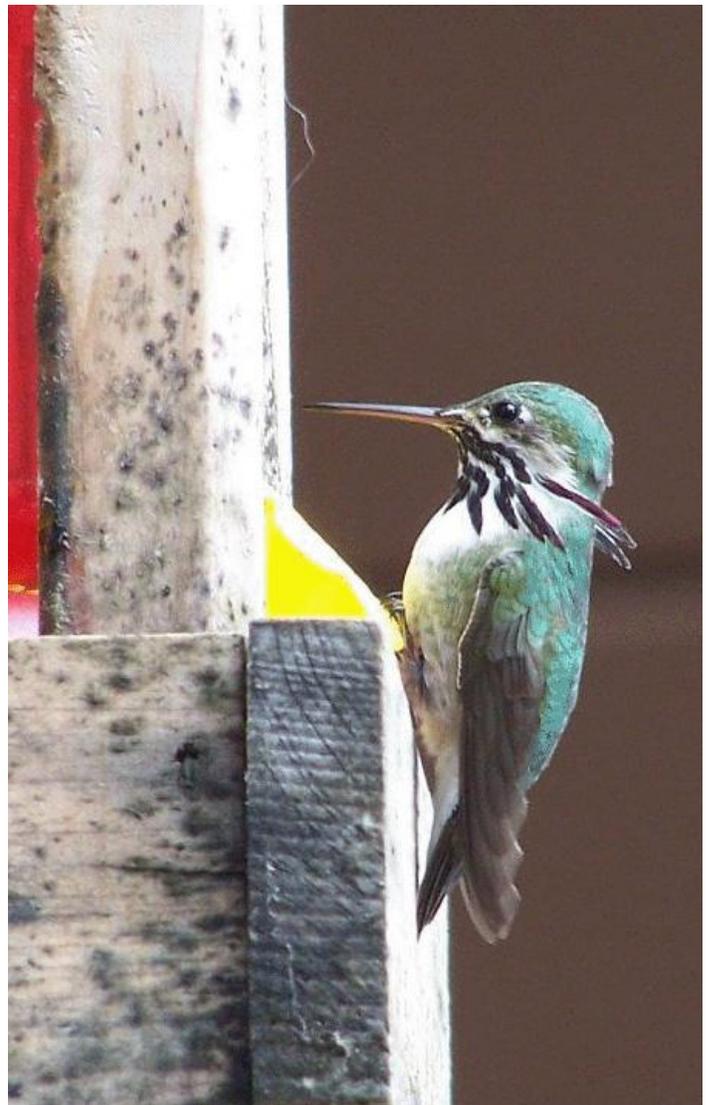
Photographers Wanted!

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 2014 Friend of the LPO Photo Contest began last August 16th and will extend until next (2014) August 15th. We are looking for pictures of the flora and fauna, of panoramas, and of people using the Refuge. We are especially 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, Volunteer



A male calliope hummingbird. Seen at feeders in spring and fall at low elevations. Females or juveniles (probably nonbreeding) without the throat colors can be seen throughout the summer. This is the smallest hummingbird in North America. It is not aggressive like rufous or black-chinned hummingbirds, preferring to "just get along". A good way to confirm is to see that the wings are usually a bit longer than the tail. Photo by Jim Groth.

Newsletter Necessities

Number 49 - Jim Groth - Editor

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

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

Calendar

June

7th—Birding Event—7:30 a.m.

11th-- Board Meeting--6:00 p.m.

21st--Hike the Refuge—9:30 a.m.

July

9th-- Board Meeting --6:00 p.m.

12th--Butterfly Count—9:30 a.m.

26th—Family Bike Ride—8:30 a.m.

August

13th – 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.