



The Pileated Post

Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Winter 2014

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

Number 51

From the President

First off I would like to make note of our many changes on the Board of Directors. I have stepped aside from the presidency and plan to narrow my focus on the aspects that I really care about such as outreach, the fun of maintenance projects and my work with the National Friends organizations, the National Friends Coordinator (Joanna Webb) and the National Wildlife Refuge Association. My main focus will be working on the new Friends Policy. I hope to have an outline at our winter retreat in January.

Our new and very capable President is David King. David has a passion for our refuge and can always be counted on for coming up with new creative ideas. Good luck Mr. President! The new Vice President is me, Dan Price. Pam Vail remains as our Treasurer. Pam will be stepping down next October and we are in desperate need of a replacement. Pam has been an indispensable member of the board who has also brought many good treats to our meetings – she will be missed. If you have experience with QuickBooks that would be great, but we are willing to send anyone interested to a class or two to learn about QuickBooks. Lastly our new Secretary is also a new board member, Laurie Kulp. Laurie has been involved in many volunteer projects through the years and has now jumped in head first to become a new vital member of our board. Thanks to everyone on the board for many great years in the past and many more to come!

This November we had to say goodbye to board member Dave Gordon. Dave is moving to the west side for winter and will not be able to serve as a board member. Thanks Dave to you many years of service to the Refuge and the board. You will be missed. Good luck in your future endeavors.

Lastly I would like to make note that our Winter Retreat is Saturday January 31st beginning at 9:00 at the Refuge house by headquarters. Schedule: 9:00 – 9:300

Coffee/ treat meet and greet, the meeting is usually about 2 hours with a short break, potluck lunch followed by the fun stuff, skiing, snowshoeing, birding etc... The winter retreat is open to all member and you are all encourage to come. It is your chance to see what we have been up to, what our plans for the future and it is your chance to help shape the future of the Friends and help us plan for next year and beyond. The meeting is informative and fun. As with all meetings someone from the Refuge will be there to help us out and to see what we and the Refuge staff can do together to continue to make the Refuge a great place for the critters and our visitors.

As always you can still send questions or comments to me at: bigdan65@yahoo.com and if you are on Facebook you can leave a message on the Friends Facebook page.

Dan Price, Former President

Refuge Manager's Meandering

The late modern rifle deer season just ended after the flurry of hunting activity typical of the last days of that popular season. Total deer hunter numbers on the refuge are noticeably lower in recent years since the minimum four point antler restriction required to harvest a white-tailed deer was instituted by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife three years ago. Many hunters who had been hunting on the refuge were discouraged by this rule and moved their hunting activity to nearby game management units without a minimum point requirement. Many refuge hunters approve of the rule change since they believe it will result in bucks surviving an extra hunting season and mature into larger antlered deer.

A couple of projects we'd hoped to have completed this fall were delayed for at least several months. The planned water control structure replacement at McDowell Lake is delayed while plans are reviewed by engineers at the regional office.

It's always a serious undertaking cutting a slot through an earthen dam to replace the galvanized drainage pipe. The key is replacing the material so it beds the new pipe securely with plenty of supporting compaction all around. If the replaced material is not compacted correctly water will begin "piping" along the outside walls of the culvert, compromising the strength of the dam.

We're also working with our engineers and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to design and install a replacement water diversion structure feeding McDowell Lake and the beaver dams along Rookery Road. The existing diversion shunts some water from North Fork Bear Creek into a man-made channel using a rock-filled wire gabion. Installed the same time as the McDowell Lake dam, it's also deteriorated and barely functional. As with the dam, care in designing and installing the replacement will prevent future headaches. Moving water is a force to be respected.

Our other big fall project, working with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to apply rotenone (as piscicide or fish poison) to McDowell Lake to eliminate invasive tench and other unwanted fish, was successful. While we lost some trout in the process, the emaciated condition of those trout testified to the impact the invasive species were having on desirable fish. The lake will be refilled with spring runoff and more trout planted soon.



We've just received a list from John Baumann, an amateur lepidopterist from Spokane, noting 62 species of butterflies observed on the refuge. His list compliments the work Rick Moore has been doing on the refuge the last few years identifying and recording butterflies, as well as also leading the annual 4th of July butterfly counts. Their efforts are filling the gaps in knowledge about some of the less obvious but still important species the refuge supports. This is citizen science at its best!

There will be some commercial thinning this winter in the area directly south of refuge headquarters, meaning Bear

Creek Road behind the headquarters gate will be plowed for trucks hauling logs. There won't be any truck traffic on weekends, so skiers, snowshoers and hikers will have a snow packed but quiet road as far as the Christenson house beginning January 1st. If you prefer unplowed snow, park at the Blacktail Road/Narcisse Creek Road gate and traverse Starvation Flat. We made the auto tour pull-off there a little bigger just for you!

Jerry Cline, Manager, LPO

Refuge Biologist's Report

Well we may not have any snow yet but it certainly feels like winter today. As I write this in mid-November it is a chilly 25 degrees with a low tonight forecast of 3 degrees. The last of the seasonal staff left a couple of weeks ago but we are already making plans for next summer's work. A number of projects have managed to keep us busy throughout the fall and early winter. The remote cameras have remained out and as always the various hunting seasons have kept us busy throughout the last few months. We still have a month left and already the grouse hunters have had more success (or least have been more cooperative at depositing wing samples) than they have had in a few years. The biggest project we have taken on since I have been here has been to do the rehabilitation of McDowell Lake. It has been overrun with exotic species like tench, sunfish, and perch. As a result, sampling was showing that most of the trout were starving to death. The largest phase of this project was to remove the exotics. It was completed in October with tremendous assistance from staff with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. They will continue to monitor water and plankton levels, then as soon as spring thaw allows, we will return fish to the lake.

The year round bat monitoring is up and running. It has already given a lot of great information on which bats are in the area around the refuge headquarters. The Silver-haired bat is a forest bat and appears to migrate right past the headquarters in some pretty good numbers. Silver-haired like the hoary bat is a tree rooster. They migrate thousands of miles to Mexico and back each winter. So I hope they all have a nice winter and we look forward to welcoming them back in the spring. We will have the detector out all year to try and determine just when that is. There may not be snow here in the valley but the higher elevations got the first dusting earlier this week. Before you know it we will be out doing the winter track surveys. This is a good way to try

to locate some of the more elusive residents of the refuge like lynx or cougar.

In terms of biology winter is an essential time for many plants and animals. Most trees and shrubs need a dormant period whether they drop their leaves or not. Think of this like sleep for animals. Trees need their 4 to 6 months a year just like I like my eight hours every night. Many plants like the milkweed need that cold dark time or the seeds cannot germinate and grow in the spring. In order to restore milkweed for monarch butterflies we actually put the seed in a refrigerator for 3 months before planting. Many species of grasses, forbs, and even trees need this "cold shock" in order to start growing in the spring. Many species of animals need to hibernate while others head south for the winter. One of the things I love about winter that unless you are at the north pole everywhere is south of somewhere else. So even as cold as it is, for some critters this is mild. What birder does not await the arrival of Bohemian Waxwings, Rough-legged Hawks, Common Redpolls, and other denizens of winter in the Inland Northwest. Some of these like Tundra Swans may stay only until the last of the water turns to ice. Others like American Tree Sparrows may only arrive in the harshest winters. Regardless of the species winter is vitally important to most of the plants and animals that call the refuge home. In many ways it is one of the most exciting times to visit the refuge. There is nothing like fresh snow to tell the story of who passed by. Winter is the best time to see the tracks of mountain lion stalking deer, the trail of a weasel following a mouse, or maybe the trail of that mouse disappearing right at the wing marks of an owl or a hawk. Winter is the time for tracks.

For those of you who enjoy winter try coming out for the winter bird count on the refuge. We meet at 8 AM on the Wednesday after New Year's Day. For 2015 that is January 7. I look forward to seeing you there.

Have you seen the new refuge website? The home page has a banner picture of a White-headed Woodpecker taken on the refuge by Tom Munson. Keep reading for more information on this beautiful woodpecker.

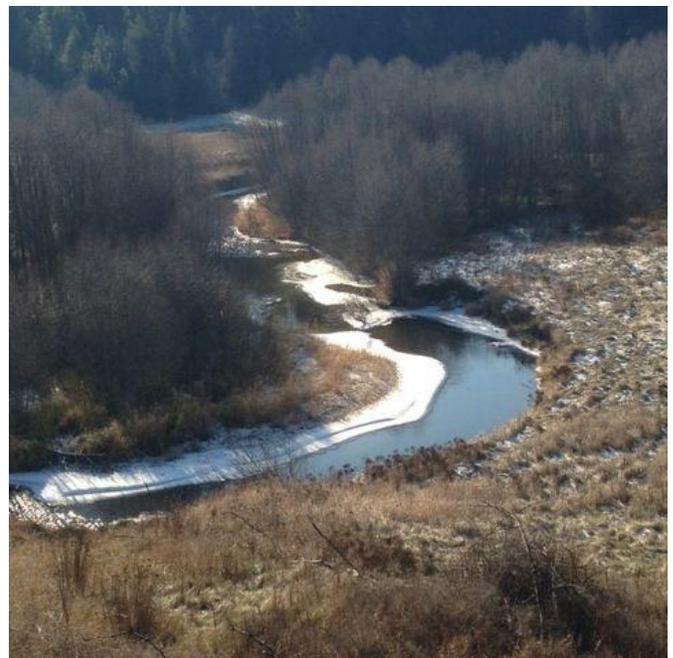
Critter of the Season

White-headed Woodpeckers are a unique inhabitant of ponderosa pines forests in Washington as well as Idaho, Oregon, California and British Columbia. They are the only woodpecker in the US whose body and tail are entirely black. The only non-black feathers are the head and wing patches. Males will also have a small red spot on the back of the head. Unlike Pileated or Hairy

woodpeckers White-heads do not usually excavate into trees for foraging. They have one of the shortest tongues of any woodpecker. Because of this they feed in the outer layers of bark and flake off layers of bark similar to what a Black-backed Woodpecker might do. Unlike most other woodpeckers which feed almost exclusively on insects, white heads will also feed on pine seeds. Therefore they do not need the long tongue to penetrate deep into boring insect tunnels. They are highly territorial and have large territories that encompass 200-300 acres. This can make them hard to find when not at a nest. Like all woodpeckers they nest in holes they excavate themselves. Both male and female birds take turns incubating the eggs. The adult not on the eggs at night will roost in a previously excavated hole. They will often use last season's nest hole as a night roost for months or even years to come. While white heads will certainly use burned areas like the Slide Creek Burn they do not pack in like Black-backed Woodpeckers will. The birds that are there are likely on the same territory as before the fire. While they tolerate other species like Hairy or Black-backed Woodpeckers, other white-heads will be driven off. Here on the refuge they can turn up almost anywhere there is healthy ponderosa pine but most sightings are along Bear Creek Road between the refuge entrance and old barn. So next time you visit the refuge keep your eyes peeled for this elusive but spectacular bird.

Mike Munts, Refuge Staff

Fall Wildlife 2014



With all the single digit night time temperatures in mid-November it is hard to believe winter is not officially here yet. The Little Pend Oreille River behind headquarters is partially frozen and starting to get some interesting ice designs. I saw an American dipper in the river with all the ice- first time in months I have seen a dipper in the river.

We have not had enough snow yet for tracking wildlife so I'm waiting for snow. There is a short article on signs wildlife leave in the snow on our new website which is live (finally) at:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Little_Pend_Oreille/.

Please be sure to check it out. If you have any high quality photos send them to me and I'll try to include them on our website and give you the credit. And if there is any information you would like us to add to the website- let us know. There is much more we want to add and now that the field season is over staff should have more time to write articles.

With all the rainy weather we have had this fall my daily lunch time walks were limited. The wet weather has produced a new crop of mushrooms- I have seen many small mushrooms along the Mill Butte Trail.

Occasionally we find signs of predation on our front lawn. The last day of September I saw downy gray feathers on the lawn and larger gray feathers with white tips between the landscaping blocks. There was also blood and feathers on top of one block so some bird was eaten by something.

I have heard quite a lot of wildlife sightings from hunters that have stopped by headquarters. Early October one hunter saw elk, a blond colored black bear, a cow and calf moose and a huge bull moose. Others have seen black bears with cubs, more bull moose and small herds of elk. Now that the early modern firearm season is over, there will be fewer hunters about and less hunting pressure. Remember our hunting seasons continue through the end of December so archery hunters, turkey hunters and those with special permits will be here until then.

In mid-October the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife treated McDowell Lake and the beaver ponds with rotenone to kill tench which are an exotic fish native to Europe. Rotenone limits the oxygen gill breathing fish get thus suffocating them. Also killed were non-native pumpkinseed sunfish, perch and malnourished trout. State biologists saw otters in the lake before the treatment. Refuge staff saw Bald and Golden

eagles feeding on the dead fish. Neither mammals nor birds are directly affected by the rotenone.

In mid-November our Biologist watched a weasel hunting- it caught and ate a small brown colored rodent. Since the weasel was already in its winter coat, pure white with a black tip on its tail, it was very obvious as it crossed the gravel road and went into the dried grasses.

Our gates will close to motorized traffic from January 1 through April 13. This is a great time to explore the Refuge by foot or snowshoes or skis.

Barbara Harding, Refuge Staff

Refuge Photo Winners Announced

The Friends of the Little Pend Oreille Wildlife Refuge are proud to announce the winners of this year's contest. Again it was a tough job for our judge, Scott Price, but pick them he did.

The winners are:

Scenic Category – Jim Peterson for his photo
“Along the Flyway”

Public Use Category – Trudy Koop for her photo
“Hide and Seek”

Animal Category – Bertha Kamstra for her photo
“Fritillary Butterfly”

Plant Category – Bertha Kamstra for her photo
“Purple Bouquet”

We had many outstanding photos submitted and we would like to thank all the people who entered their photos taken at the Refuge these past 12 months. We also want to thank the local merchants: Stephani's Oak Street Grill, Maverick's Restaurant, Dodson's Paint and Glass and Clark's All Sports for donating prizes for our winners.

Remember, the new photo contest began on August 16th and people have until next August 15th to take pictures out at the Refuge. For rules and entry forms, contact Joel Anderson at 732-4350 or send him an email at onionjoel@gmail.com.



Newsletter Necessities

Number 51 - 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

December

10th -- Board Meeting--6:00 p.m.

January

14th -- Board Meeting --6:00 p.m.

31th -- Winter Retreat --9:00 a.m.

February

11th -- 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