



# The Pileated Post

## Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Summer 2016

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

Number 57

### From the President

A brief note as we leave for Pittsburgh for my son's graduation today. My mind is on politics, both local and national. On the national front I would say that this presidential race is shaping up to be very interesting. We could say that elections are nasty business but we could also say the younger generations are getting involved and how could this be bad? On the local level I will only say that if you support the idea of public lands remaining public with limited commercial intrusion and accessibility to all, educate yourself about our county commissioners' stand of these issues. Their meeting on the new Colville National Forest plan focused on the need to wrest control of CNF lands and turn them over to the state.

If you missed the recent presentation on the Great Floods, as I did, then we missed a stimulating event. Thank you to Jay Berube and all who helped to put this show on. The theater was at capacity and more. How do we best this one? Education Days bring fifth and second graders from the Colville School District out to the LPO for a field day. While this event will be mostly over when you read this, it is not too late to consider helping next year. It is a rewarding experience. We will lose Stephanie Wilson from our Board as she is moving to join her spouse in Port Townsend. This means we now have three vacancies to complete a nine member cast. Please call me if you have an interest in joining. We have eleven meetings per year and have fun while going about discussing and planning events and outings. My number is: 509/680-0115.

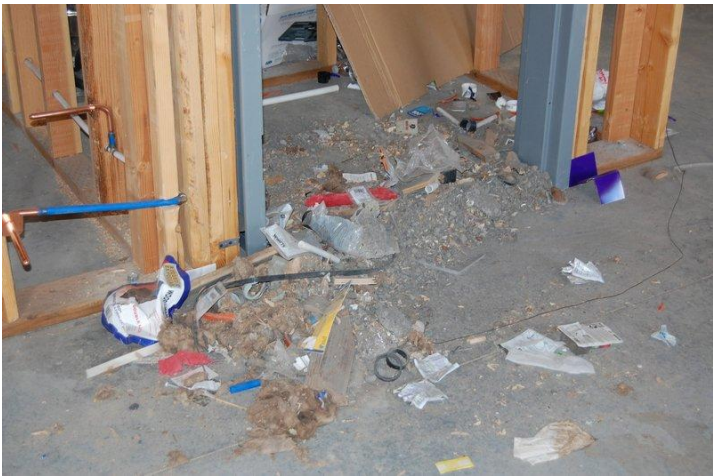
When visiting the LPO look for a new bicycle rack at headquarters. We thank Jim and the Friends of the Kootenai Refuge in Pend Oreille County. Stop in to say hello to refuge staff, obtain the most recent map of roads and trails and thank them for being good stewards of our refuge.

It has been a warm spring and the runoff is quickly dissipating. We have also had some good rains. Let's hope they continue so we do not have another fire season like last summer. Happy trails to you.

**David W. King, President**

### Refuge Manager's Meandering

I recently returned from a three week detail as the acting Deputy Project Leader at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Burns, Oregon. I was privileged to help the Refuge staff reestablish a semblance of normal refuge operations after the 41 day occupation by the Bundy's and their acolytes. I arrived the day after the staff returned to the Refuge compound, albeit using temporary office trailers since the administration buildings won't be available until at least July while they are being cleaned and repaired. The occupiers left a mess of damaged carpets, stained walls and trash. A quick internet search will turn up photos of the refuge buildings and grounds showing their condition immediately after the occupation ended. One product of bored occupiers with access to heavy equipment was a 100 feet long, 6 feet wide and 6 feet deep trench excavated near the Refuge headquarters. Tragically this was also a cultural resource site valued by the Malheur Paiute Tribe and protected by the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. It was so important to the Malheur Paiutes they were slowly refilling the trench using hand shovels while watching for relics and human remains.



Those whose work spaces were usurped by the occupiers felt violated as well as victimized since much of their personal property was stolen or vandalized. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service Dan Ashe visited the refuge on separate occasions to support the staff and see for themselves the result of the occupation on the Refuge and its effect on employees. They passed on some background regarding their efforts at the start of the occupation to convince the FBI and the U.S. Attorney General that it was more just a “local matter”.

The Bundy's assumed the Refuge neighbors and permittees would be as hostile to and disgruntled with federal land managers as they were. Except for minor exceptions, that local support didn't materialize. Instead, most of their support consisted of out-of-town thugs and scofflaws looking for some “cause” to spice up their boring lives. Ten years of effort by the Malheur Refuge Manager developing collaborative relationships with private land owners forestalled an “uprising.” That was clearly evidenced when the Refuge's haying and grazing permittees hosted a BBQ dinner for the Refuge staff to express their support and thank them for their service. I doubt the Bundy's and crew are eating BBQ beef and blueberry cheese cake at their current federally-funded accommodations.

**Jerry Cline, Manager, LPO**

### **Refuge Biologist's Report**

Here we are starting another summer season. I have a lot going on this summer. I was able to secure grant funding from the USFWS Inventory and Monitoring Program to fund a 3 person crew to work on two projects. The first will be a quaking aspen inventory and condition assessment throughout the refuge. The second project will be a milkweed and monarch inventory. As one of the few hardwoods in this part of the country, aspen are important to many bird species on the refuge. As such they are a priority habitat for us. This will be the first attempt to systematically survey aspen over the whole refuge. Another new project will be the North American Bat Inventory. This project is a joint project between the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service to look at bat populations throughout the US. We will be doing some pretty concentrated work for about 3 weeks this summer.

Working with a staff of sixteen permanent employees I encountered a wide range of emotional responses to the occupation. All the employees and their families were relocated from the Burns area during the occupation for their safety. They were understandably angry about the disruption to their lives and that of their families.

By the time this is printed we should have finished planting all of the milkweed. That is the 5000 containerized plants we received last fall. Thanks to all of you that helped plant whether it was last fall or this spring. Milkweed takes about 4 years to mature and produce its first flowers so hopefully monarchs will benefit from all your work and start feeding on nectar in the spring of 2019. I know that seems like a long time but it reminds me of an expression I first heard many years ago. The best time to plant a tree is 30 years ago, the second best time is today.

It has been a great spring and summer so far and Barbara will have some great sightings to discuss in her column. Some of particular note I will bring up. We have a third Bald Eagle nest on the refuge this year as well. The McDowell Lake nest has one young eagle in it. As of this writing the chick is doing well and growing fast. Unfortunately the Osprey nest on Minnie Flats does not appear to be active again this year. When this was found last year it was the first Osprey nest that we have any record of on the refuge. We have seen a lone male bird in the area several times this spring so hopefully he will find a mate and nest again next year.

For those who may be interested in a guided event on the refuge, I will be doing two special events this summer. The first will be the annual birding tour on Saturday June 11. If you are interested in doing some guided birding on the refuge you can join us at refuge headquarters at 8AM. Next will be the annual Fourth of July Butterfly count on July 9. That is the Saturday following Independence Day. We will meet at headquarters at 8:30 AM.

Many of you know that the refuge is primarily forested. Have you thought about the abundance of life that is found in the 1% or so of the refuge which is underwater? There is the Little Pend Oreille River and several smaller creeks. There are also several small lakes and ponds. You may know about the three large ones on the auto tour but have you ever been to any of the smaller or harder to reach sites. These include sites like Long Lake, Pierce Lake, Kidney Pond, Dailey Lake, Winslow Lake, or the old mill ponds at Cusick. There are few unnamed ponds as well. Most people who visit our lakes and ponds will see geese and various ducks but there are a number of other creatures there as well. You may be fortunate to see beavers or even river otters. There is an abundance of aquatic invertebrates

that you might find on a closer look. Things like water striders, may flies, stone flies are just a few examples. You could also find Pacific chorus or spotted frogs. You might encounter a toad or a salamander there as well. Any warm day in spring and summer should yield a few painted turtles. I think some of the more interesting aquatic life you can find here are the many types of dragons. More appropriately, dragonflies can be found hunting over refuge waters on most any warm day from May through September. For a look at one of the most easily identified dragonflies just continue reading as I look into one of my favorite dragons.

### Critter of the Season



One of the most recognizable dragonflies in Northeast Washington is the eight spotted skimmer (*Libellula forensis*). This rather striking dragonfly has two black spots on each of four wings for a total of eight spots. While the base color of the wings is almost clear at a distance the spots give the wings a black and white appearance. Males also have white spots on the wings as well giving them rather striking appearance. They may be confused with the similar looking 12 spotted skimmer. However, 12 spotted have three spots per wing giving them a total of 12. Like other dragonflies they are carnivorous eating an assortment of other insects. The adults actively hunt down other insects from perches charging after potential prey that may wander by. The naiads or larvae are aquatic. They too are carnivorous. Their hunting is much less active compared to adults. The larvae wait among submerged vegetation for other insects to pass by. Unlike adults the mouthparts of naiads have a set of pinchers which they can shoot out at prey, which is then grabbed and pulled back into the mouth. Like adults they will eat almost anything that comes along but in particular eat a lot of mosquito larvae. Go dragonflies! Females will lay their

eggs in lakes and ponds with large amounts of submerged vegetation. She will hover over the water dipping the tip of her abdomen in the water and releasing the eggs. This dragonfly is quite common throughout the western United States. Eight spots can be found from British Columbia to California and east to Nebraska. Here on the refuge they can be found near most of our ponds and lakes. Look for them around Potter's Pond, Pierce Lake, McDowell Lake, Winslow Lake, or Kidney Pond. They are usually active throughout the summer.

**Mike Munts, Refuge Staff**

### **Spring Wildlife**

We certainly have experienced 80 plus degree weather already. If you are wondering if this has brought earlier arrival dates of songbirds to the Refuge, here are our FOY (first of year) sighting dates. Western bluebird arrived on February 19 not much earlier than last year's date of February 22. This species arrival date has varied quite a bit from mid to late Feb and all through March. Male red-winged blackbirds arrived on February 22 quite a bit later than last year's date of February 6. In 2014 our first male was seen January 8, quite a bit earlier than the usual mid to late February. Say's phoebe arrived February 26 which was earlier than last year's date of March 8 but not our earliest date which was February 19. Early to mid-March is when we usually see them at Headquarters. Yellow warbler was heard April 25, a day later than the earliest arrival date of April 24 and earlier than the early May date of most years. Of course it is possible some of these birds came through earlier on a weekend so were not seen by Refuge staff.

The bald eagle nests at Bayley Lake and along the Little Pend Oreille River by Headquarters have both failed. A new eagle nest was located at McDowell Lake and we have posted signs to keep fishermen out of the south end of the lake to minimize disturbance to this nesting pair. There is one eaglet in the nest. When I was there early May, two fishermen had rafts in the lake and as soon as one raft got 50 yards from the nest the eagles started screaming and left the nest. When I first arrived, the pair had their backs toward me. One eagle has a white feather on its back and last winter we

saw an eagle in the cottonwood tree behind headquarters with a white feather on its back.

On May 10 I took my lunch break by walking toward the LPO River behind Headquarters. I heard swallows making a racket so turned around to see them escorting a sharp-shinned hawk away from their nest boxes. When they gave up the pursuit, an American robin took over to harass the sharpie some more.

Moose have been seen in many places this spring: Starvation Flat, the Beaver Ponds, near Cottonwood Campground, Potter's Pond and Bayley Lake. The moose at Bayley Lake swam from the cliff side of the lake about a third of the way across then bumped against the buoys and turned around and swam back to shore. Our biologist witnessed this and said only its head was above water.

The only bear sighting I have heard of was on Olson Creek Road. This was a two tone bear- dark on the top and blond on the bottom.

I led a tour on the McDowell Environmental Education Trail mid-May for a group of enthusiastic home schooled students and their parents. One 6 year old boy was particularly observant and pointed out to me all the flowers he saw along the way. He also spotted a fledgling perched in a low shrub. The next thing we saw was an adult golden-crowned kinglet land near the young bird and feed it. Quite a treat! The other highlight was a Common loon on McDowell Lake.

I never know who will stop by Headquarters or what question I'll be asked. The Avista meter reader stopped by mid-May and showed me a photo she took on her route. The photo was of a telephone pole that was being gnawed on- it looked like a beaver had been chewing on it. Her co-workers thought the damage was due to a porcupine gnawing on it. I knew porcupines ate bark but could find nothing that even hinted they would gnaw a pole like a beaver gnaws trees. I agree with her that it is beaver damage.

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife wants to know about any badgers you see- alive or dead. More information is needed to understand the status of the population in Washington. If you see a badger please photograph its face/head, if you can, and

email the photo with detailed information on where you saw it, the date, your name and phone number to [badgers@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:badgers@dfw.wa.gov). Badgers have been seen on the Refuge but don't get too close when trying to get a photo.

Visitors have stopped by Headquarters asking about hikes, birds and butterflies. When you are out hiking the trails it would help us if you would let us know about downed trees blocking a trail or any other hazards you see.

Many of our migrant warblers have returned along with Western wood-pewee and Western tanager.

Meet at Headquarters July 9 at 8:30 am for our Annual Butterfly Count. It is a great opportunity to see butterflies up close and learn more about these amazing insects.

**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 2016 and tenth Friend of the LPO Photo Contest began last (2015) August 16<sup>th</sup> and extends until August 15<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:janderson@ultraplix.com). Next time you visit the Refuge, don't forget your camera!

**Joel Anderson**



Jim Groth

**Blister beetles attacking Lupine flowers**

## Newsletter Necessities

### Number 57 - 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](mailto:larchsavage@yahoo.com)

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

## Calendar

### June

8<sup>th</sup> -- Board Meeting--6:00 p.m.  
11<sup>th</sup> -- Birding Event--8:00 a.m.

### July

9<sup>th</sup> -- Butterfly count --8:30 a.m.  
13<sup>th</sup> -- Board Meeting --6:00 p.m.  
23<sup>rd</sup> -- Family Bike Ride--8:30 a.m.

### August

10<sup>th</sup> -- 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