



# The Pileated Post

## Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Summer 2018

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

Number 65

### Rare Gems: Volunteers Help Make Little Pend Oreille NWR Sparkle

*Our dedicated U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 9,242 volunteers in the Pacific Region gave an incredible 197,917 hours of their time to conservation in 2017. That is the equivalent of 24,739 eight-hour work days and 95 full-time staff members! These incredible folks deserve a huge thank you and during National Volunteer Week (April 15-21) we are aiming to do just that. This is part of a series of articles about U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service volunteers and projects. Share your story of service or honor an outstanding volunteer by telling us about it with #iServeBecause and #volunteer on Facebook or Twitter.*

**By Brent Lawrence**, public affairs officer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region based in Portland, Oregon

Tucked into the far northeast corner of Washington State, the 40,198-acre [Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge](#) is a gem hidden between the foothills of the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains.

It's a tranquil spot with many more moose, white-tailed deer, elk and black bears roaming the forest than people.

That remote location, however, also has its challenges for a staff of six people, with three of them dedicated to fighting wildfires for half the year. Once the snow melts, trails constantly need repair, buildings require maintenance, and wildlife habitat needs improvement. There's always something to be done.

But Refuge Manager Jerry Cline has, luckily, found his version of a gold mine – some top-notch volunteers. Among them are Dan Price and

the husband-and-wife team of Bob and Krysti Stengle.

"We couldn't get by without our volunteers," Jerry said. "If we didn't have some hands picking up the slack, there's so much that would not get done. What makes them priceless is that they don't require direct supervision. They know their way around here so well. They know what needs to be done and how to do it. Getting volunteers like that ... it's like finding gold."

For nine months a year, Dan serves as president of [Friends of Little Pend Oreille NWR](#). Then he steps away from the Friends group to work as the [Youth Conservation Corps](#) leader, where he helps direct four students who work at the refuge.

"He's our year-round go-to guy. He's our super volunteer," Jerry said of Dan, who has been volunteering at the refuge for 11 years. "Anything and everything we need done, he's out there covering for us almost year around."

Dan keeps coming back because he's a big believer in the Refuge's mission. "I like getting out and promoting the Refuge by talking with people," Dan said. "I'm a walking and talking advertisement for the refuge system by letting people know what's going on. I show people what the staff has done in habitat restoration. We do a lot of thinning and prescribed burning at the Refuge. People are always interested in why we're doing it. I explain they see more animals due to the work. One hunter says he sees more of everything now."

Bob and Krysti, who stay at a refuge campsite in their motorhome, bring a different facet to this jewel of a refuge. Krysti works in the refuge's of-

office, doing everything from paperwork to answering the phone and greeting visitors.

Bob spends his time – up to 50 hours a week – working from heavy equipment with the refuge’s maintenance staff. Bob is a retired truck driver, and he has been certified by the Service to operate heavy equipment such as backhoes, tractors and excavators. Bob was able to get a temporary 6-month job at the Refuge this year, helping with maintenance.

The prospect of a job, however, isn’t what brought them back from their regular home in the Spokane, Washington, area.

“This is the best life. We don’t always have phone and internet, but we don’t care. We aren’t there for what we can get out of it; we’re there to give the experience to others,” Krysti said.

“We’re so thankful for the refuges and Teddy Roosevelt creating them. He was ahead of his time.”

When the warblers start to migrate south from Little Pend Oreille NWR, the Stengles follow suite. They pack up their motorhome and head south. Not to a sun-soaked beach, but instead to volunteer at more National Wildlife Refuges. Last year they volunteered at [Wheeler NWR](#) in Alabama and [Cibola NWR](#) in Arizona.

“That’s how we started our retirement three years ago by volunteering,” Bob said. “We’re not ready to sit down and play bingo. We were fortunate enough to have friends who had volunteered with some refuges, and that opened some doors for us. We found out it was a great fit for us.”

There’s one common thing the Stengles have found throughout their travels to volunteer: the dedication of refuge staff and volunteers.

“These people are there because it means something to them,” Krysti said. “They’re not there because it’s a job. I have to commend the staff and each refuge. We appreciate them for what they do and why they do it.”

### **Refuge Manager’s Meandering**

It seems every newsletter over the last 2 years has some update about how the work at McDowell Lake

and Potter’s Pond is going. This issue is no exception; here’s the latest. They are both full of water and full of fish! The last item on the Potter’s Pond punch list is the enlargement of the emergency spillway, necessary if there’s ever a biblical-sized rain event so the water has an escape valve and doesn’t flow over the dam and damages it. Most of the emergency spillway work at McDowell Lake is completed, but muddy conditions are stifling our attempts to button that item up. They should both be finished by mid-June. Both lakes are open for business and the fish are jumping if not always biting.

Most of this year’s seasonal employees are on-board. Both Thomas Cotta and Russ Schneider are back again, providing continuity to the fire crew. Thomas migrates north from California every summer. Russ is from Kettle Falls but has worked on fire crews in the southwest. New on the crew is Leo Gootee, late of Phoenix, Arizona. The biology crew is all new this year. Michelle Gardner has worked on refuges in Oklahoma, where she grew up. Brittany Quinones is working here through a placement with the Student Conservation Association and she’s native to Texas. This is the first time in the northwest for both. Not new to us but returning this season as a paid employee, Bob Stengle is working as an equipment operator helping us keep up on all our projects, both planned and unplanned. If you call the office this summer you’ll likely have the pleasure of talking to his wife Krysti. She volunteers 20 hours a week helping keep things organized and efficient. Bob and Krysti retired from the trucking business in Spokane several years ago and satiated their wanderlust traveling the country in their motor coach volunteering at distant refuges like Cibola NWR in Arizona and Wheeler NWR in Alabama. They seem to have gotten that out of their system and now spend their weekdays working here and their weekends in their new home in Spokane. We will host a Youth Conservation Corps crew of four local youth again this year. Dan Price is back for his third season, taking a hiatus from the Friends Group, as the crew YCC leader. The refuge seems like a different, and better, place in the summer with all the activity!

The annual Earth Day! trash pickup in April drew the largest group of volunteers for that event in recent memory. Nobody found anything exciting like

D.B. Cooper's highjack ransom; in fact the trash yield was relatively small. Yay!! We all would rather walk the roads finding wildlife tracks and getting tail waves from the south end of north bound deer than picking up beer cans, fast wrappers and worn out truck tires. Sometimes less is better.

Mark your calendars, July 21<sup>st</sup> the Refuge will host the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Blue Goose Chase Family Fun Bicycle Ride. Please join us in riding the 11 mile auto tour, hiking the Mill Butte Trail, or just hanging around listening to live music and enjoying the snacks. I hope to see you then!

**Jerry Cline, Manager, LPO**

### **Biologist's Report**

Well another spring is gone and summer is upon us. When you read this we are probably just past the Memorial Day weekend and school is about to end and the time for summer travel is here. I hope your summer plans include a visit to this refuge. Those plans may even include a visit to other refuges around our country. Whether your interests include fishing, wildlife watching, photography, or searching out wildflowers or mushrooms, I hope you will get a chance to come out to your refuge.

Here on the LPO we have a lot going on this summer. I will have a two seasonal staff this year. Michelle the biotech and Brittney the SCA intern will be working on an assortment of projects. One new project I am looking forward to this year involves continued cooperation with the research branch of the US Forest Service. They will be starting a project in late May to look at long-term results of our aspen restoration efforts. They will be setting up permanent monitoring plots in site before we do the restoration work and will be returning in subsequent years to evaluate the aspen recovery following treatment. Forest Service researchers will also be continuing to conduct their research in the site that has been planted with western white pine the last 2 years. Thanks again for those who have helped with this project.

Wildlife have either awakened from hibernation or returned from the winter migration. Most birds are nesting. The ground squirrels have their young out. I expect to hear about the first fawns any day now. Bald eagles are feeding young and the osprey are sitting on eggs. It is not just the birds and mammals that we generally think about when we think about wildlife. Many invertebrates are out and readily seen at this time of year. Caddisflies, bees, ants, butterflies, dragon flies, mussels and many others abound.

One of the projects we will be working on again this year is the North American Bat Monitoring Program or NABAT. It is a continent wide project to assess bat population throughout North America. In addition to the Fish and Wildlife Service, other partners include the National Park Service, the US Forest Service, the US Geological Survey, the Canadian Wildlife Service, as well as several universities and state agencies. Bats are nocturnal and hard to see let alone count. So this program uses automated ultra-sonic recording devices that come on at night. Sound files are then analyzed on a computer to identify unique sounds made by individual bat species. So far we have identified 11 species of bats that use the LPO. Some of these are colonial like Townsend's big eared bat which live in large numbers in caves or mines. Others like hoary bats are solitary and roost in trees. The one thing all are bats have in common is a voracious appetite for various flying insects. Many of the smaller species like little brown bats have a fondness for eating mosquitoes in large numbers. Go bats. This project is important because many bats have died in recent years due to an accidently introduced fungal disease. White-nose Syndrome has killed millions of bats around the country and has been found in Western Washington. That amount to trillions of insect that are not being eaten every year. In addition to mosquitoes many of these insects are serious agricultural pests. Some estimates I read show the contribution of bats is equal to more 20 billion dollars' worth of insecticide application. That's a lot of bugs. So the next time you see a bat flying around don't think of it as a scary creepy creature of the night

but as another fascinating member of our wild-life communities. A living breathing super efficient bug zapper.

If you need an excuse to visit the refuge this summer, we are doing the annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July Butterfly Count again. The date is July 7 which is the Saturday after the holiday. We are meeting at refuge headquarters at 8AM. Hope to see you there.

### Critter of the season



I have written about a number of animals in this column over the last 7 years but only 3 invertebrates in that time. These include a butterfly, a dragonfly and a mussel. So I thought it was time to revisit the majority of species that lack backbones. So with that in mind let's take a look at the western bumblebee also known as *Bombus occidentalis*. Bumblebees are just as interesting as many of our better known wildlife species. Westerns are also among the easiest to identify bees on the refuge. They look similar to most

other bumbles except the tip of their tails are bright white. Other bumbles in our area have black or yellow tails. Western bumblebees range from Southern California north to the Arctic of Canada and Alaska. This makes them one of if not the most widespread bee in the world. Unlike most bee species bumbles are colonial. In late fall all bees die except for the future queens. She needs to find a warm location to hibernate. When she emerges in the spring she will fly to a suitable nest site. Nests are typically underground in an old burrow of rodent or some other animal. The queen then constructs a wax comb structure to protect the eggs and collects pollen to feed herself and the first group of larvae. Once this first group of larvae matures into female worker bees they take over the caring for subsequent larvae and pollen collection for the colony. The primary purpose of the queen after that is to lay eggs. Most bees that hatch out are sterile female workers. When fall comes some of the larvae produced are fertile males (drones) and females (gynes which will become queens when they start a new colony). With the onset of winter all of the bees die except for the gynes. They will find a place to hibernate and will become queens in the spring when they start a new colony.

Western bumbles are generalist feeders which means they while they feed on many different types of flowers. They feed on both nectar (sugars) and pollen (proteins). Like other bumblebees they use a technique called buzz pollination. To do this the bee will grab the anther of the flower in its jaws and vibrate their wings. This in turn shakes loose the pollen that is trapped inside the flower. A number of common plants require this type of pollination and can only be pollinated by bumblebees. These include tomatoes, peppers, cranberries, blueberries, and huckleberries. So if you like any of these fruits thank your local bumble bee.

Another aspect of bumblebee behavior is their ability to fly and feed in much cooler temperatures than most insects. This makes them even more important to flowers that bloom very early or late in the year. This importance to pollination is why western bumbles are one of the few

bee species to be domesticated and raised in captivity. So the next time you visit the refuge look out for the bumblebee with the white tail. If you do see one be thankful that it will probably be pollinating flowers when you find it.

**Mike Munts, Refuge Staff**

## 2018 Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge Amateur Photo Contest

You are invited to participate in the Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge Amateur Photo Contest. The sole purpose of the contest is to encourage you to visit and enjoy the Refuge this year. Up to five entries (total) per person may be submitted in any of the following categories:

1. Animal Life – the animal is the main subject
2. Plant Life - the plant is the main subject
3. Scenic/Landscapes
4. Public Use/Recreation

The winning photos will be printed in the Statesman-Examiner, will be on display in the Colville Chamber of Commerce Office, will be featured on the *Friends'* Web Page, and in the North Columbia Monthly. Past winners are displayed in the Refuge office.

### Official contest rules are as follows:

1. Photographers must be non-professional; this is an amateur contest for people who have not sold any photos. All entries must be photographs taken at Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge between August 16, 2017 and August 15, 2018
2. **Digital images:** All entries must be digitized. Submit on a CD-ROM. Multiple files must be specifically identified on the entry form. Acceptable file formats are jpg or jpeg.
3. Mail or deliver all entries to Friends of the Little Pend Oreille National Wildlife Refuge Photo Contest, c/o Joel Anderson, 2342 Bodie Mtn. Rd, Colville, WA, 99114, or drop off at the Colville Chamber of Commerce Office in Colville. On the back of the DVD please include your name, address, phone

number, category entered, the name of the photo, and the date. Emailed entries will not be accepted.

4. All entries must be received by August 29, 2018.
5. Entries must be accompanied by the entry form (only one per contestant). Entrant's signature constitutes a release to the *Friends* Association for the right to use, reproduce, publish and display the photographs without further compensation. Entries will not be returned.
6. While extreme care will be taken in handling all entries, the Refuge cannot be responsible for any damage to photographs.
7. Winners will be notified by September 19, 2018.

**Joel Anderson**



Butterfly count by Steve Schubert



Yellow warbler in alder by Patricia Ediger

## Newsletter Necessities

### Number 65 - 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

13th-- -Board Meeting--6:00 p.m.

#### July

7 th --Butterfly Count --8:00 a.m.

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

21nd\_\_ Family Bike Ride--8:30 a.m.

#### August

8th – Board Meeting – 6:00 p.m.

**Our Mission:**The Friends of the Little Pend Oreille  
National Wildlife Refuge is an independent, non-  
profit organization dedicated to promoting the con-  
servation of native fish, wildlife, plants and their  
habitats on the Refuge, providing educational oppor-  
tunities, and fostering understanding and apprecia-  
tion of the Refuge.

Our Website: <http://refugefriends.com/>