



The Pileated Post

Quarterly Newsletter Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR

Spring 2020

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

Number 72

From the President

New Board member, volunteering, Fun and Special Place

First off the Board and I would like to welcome our newest board member Karen Nooney. Karen recently retired from the Forest Service and we look forward to working with her more in the future. Welcome Karen!

The rest of our Board: Dan Price (President), Pam Vail (Treasurer), Laurie Kulp (Clerk), Joanie Christian, and Greg Mohr.

If you are interested in Joining the Board please contact and Board member.

We are always in need of volunteers and our largest need is during our 2nd and 5th grade education days. No expertise needed just a good attitude and a desire to help our youth get out in nature. Fifth grade education days are set for June 2nd and 3rd. The second graders will be coming out the following week for 1 day. If you can volunteer for all or just one day it would be a great help.

We also have a few other springtime projects that need some volunteers. Refuge ecology day (formerly trash pick up) is Saturday April 18th and our annual McDowell trail maintenance day is scheduled for Saturday May 2nd. More details as the event approach will be posted on our website and Facebook page.

Fun: The Beaver Believer film and presentation by the Film maker Sarah Koenigberg from Walla Walla. Sarah is an award-winning filmmaker, photographer, and educator whose work focuses on

stories of art, environment, and community in the American West. Her films and teaching cross disciplines, illuminating the power of storytelling as a medium through which to explore complex science and policy issues. Sarah's film has won many awards and has been a favorite at many film festivals. It will be great to see her film and we are also very fortunate to have her follow up with a short presentation and a question and answer session. Mark your calendar for Friday April 24th at the Community College. Doors open at 6pm and the 65-minute film starts at 6:30 follow by Sarah. The evening should be very entertaining and educational. I can't wait!

One final note. As many of you know I enjoy traveling to other refuges across the country (some 50 plus in the last few years) and every time I return home I am reminded how fortunate we are to have this special little gem and how important it is to protect this special place for **all** wildlife and our future generations.

Thank you all for your continued support and come out enjoy and show new people why you love this refuge.

As always if you have any question my email is: bigdan65@yahoo.com

Dan Price . President

Refuge Manager's Meanderings

Little things excite us here on the 'fuge! A couple of weeks ago I saw the first red-winged blackbirds of the spring at the headquarters' bird feeders. They mob the feeder like its Taco Tuesday at Moe's Tavern, flinging sunflower seeds in all directions like toddlers eating Cheerios. They take up a lot of real estate on the feeder, forcing the chickadees to pick up the "crumbs" on the ground. It's a welcome distraction for a refuge manager interned in his office writing a newsletter article. Lengthening days and the appearance of red-winged blackbirds cue me to watch for newly arriving bluebirds on my evening drive home. The first ones are usually parked on the fence posts separating road from field near the "Four corners" intersection. About "bluebird time" chipmunks start scampering along the landscape block wall near the office door. Yellow-pine chipmunks, fresh from hibernation, skittering around in the warming sun are a sure sign on spring.

I watched a briefing today by our regional fish folks describing a pilot project to develop a long-term aquatic monitoring program addressing climate change. Five national wildlife refuges in the Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region were selected, including the LPO NWR. The 3-year (2015-17) pilot established sentinel sites across the ecoregion to evaluate evidence of changing physical and biological attributes in representative streams. They measured air and water temperature, stream flow, streamside and stream bottom habitat, and fish species. The stretch of the LPO River between the old stone chimney and the gaging station was sampled. The most common fish species found were brook trout and sculpin. Brown trout and rainbow trout were common, with a few pumpkinseed, reidside shiner and speckled dace turning up. Three of those, brown trout, brook trout and pumpkinseed, are all non-native and, in the case of pumpkinseed, unwanted! Now that a baseline has been established they will revisit those sites every few years to measure any changes related to our shifting climate.



Prospect commercial thinning project – western white pine saplings in the background

We finished two commercial thinning projects this winter. The Dailey-Long project was about 320 acres near the western boundary of the refuge removing small diameter Douglas fir, western larch and ponderosa pine to reduce fuel loading and improve stand health and habitat quality. Almost all these commercial thinning projects target lodge pole pine removal since it is often the main species overstocking the site. This project differed because there were very few lodgepole pine on the site. This spring the remaining slash will be mechanically piled and next year we'll burn those piles after they've dried out. The Prospect project, along our north-central boundary, required two years to complete due to its size (474 acres) and the amount of timber we wanted removed to reduce fuel loads near our refuge neighbors and improve habitat. This area is unique because it supports a naturally occurring western white pine component. We used this project to enhance the site for the resident white pine trees and to prepare the site for planting blister rust resistant white pine seedlings later this year. Like our work on the Blacktail Mountain commercial thinning site, we hope to improve survival and encourage expansion of western white pine on suitable sites over the next several decades. Our next refuge event is the annual Earth Day! trash pickup on Saturday, April 18th. We'll meet at refuge HQ at 9 AM, break up into teams, and walk the most popular refuge roads collecting trash for recycling. We ask trash picker-uppers to bring a

can of chili (any brand, any flavor) that will be added to the communal chili pot for our post pick-up lunch. Bringing bread and other snacks is encouraged. Honest, this is really fun! May 9nd at 9 AM volunteers will be meeting at the McDowell Marsh Environmental Education Trail for spring trail maintenance and general sprucing up. Sorry, no chili pot. Other summer events are the annual 4th of July Butterfly Count (date to be determined--likely late June), and the 7th Annual Blue Goose Family Fun Bike ride on July 25th. More about those in the next newsletter.

Jerry Cline, Refuge Manager

Refuge Biologist's Report

As I write this in mid-February the snow is gone and it is beginning to look like spring around refuge headquarters. Blackbirds are back and other migratory birds should be arriving by the time you read this. One of the things I always look forward to in spring is waterfowl migration. With several thousand ducks passing through the Kanisku Unit in late March and April most years. I am looking forward to seeing how our Beaver Dam Analogues that were installed last year hold up with spring runoff just around the corner. We will be continuing the restoration work down there by planting several hundred trees along the stream channel. Some additional work at Kanisku this year will include removing the collapsed buildings that are next to the new kiosk. I have also submitted a grant proposal to do additional wetland restoration work there in 2021.

It has been another good winter. One day in late January we had 6 bald eagles at headquarters that included 2 adults and 4 immature birds. I think that is a personal one day record here. I anticipate activity at both the McDowell nest and the new nest at Bayley Lake should be picking up any day now. Could this be the year both nest successfully fledge young?

There have definitely been some other highlights in the birding this winter. The golden eagle I mentioned in the last newsletter has showed a couple more times over the winter. Jerry and I were just discussing a couple of weeks ago that we have not seen so many quail in the previous winters as well. The quail have been visiting the feeders at headquarters almost every day all winter. Another nice treat on the bird feeder has been a mountain chickadee feeding with the black-capped chickadees since November. Another treat for me was watching a northern pygmy-owl capture a meadow vole.

We once again did the winter bird count on January 18. We had 13 people come out and we observed 111 birds of 17 species. It was my only chance to really get out on snowshoes this winter and it was a beautiful Saturday to be out on the refuge. In addition to birds we saw a lot of tracks as we had about 10 inches of snow a couple of days before. In addition to the usual deer and squirrels tracks, some of us got to see otter tracks down by the river. The most common bird of the day was 27 red-breasted nuthatches. Next was black-capped chickadee (19 birds) and common raven (17 birds). I hope you will consider joining us next January.

By the time you read this we could be seeing buttercups starting to bloom. I talked to one of the biologists at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge near Cheney and he said he saw his first buttercup down there in mid-February. Wildflowers are one those things that you may not think about going to see on a wildlife refuge but the blooms here can be pretty nice. Some species don't bloom every year and some may only bloom in just the right conditions. Spring wildflower season on the refuge is always nice and some years can be downright spectacular. One of my favorites and most predictable are the arrowleaf balsamroot that bloom along Bear Creek Road in April and May. Another favorite is the trillium that blooms in a lot of shady areas. The lady slipper orchids along the Beaver Ponds Overlook trail are another favorite, but their timing can be pretty finicky as they need some specific moisture conditions to shoot up flowers.

So whether you come to see wildflowers, birds or other wildlife I hope you have the opportunity to come explore your Refuge this spring.

Critter of the Season



There are birds that define certain types of experiences or places. For me there is a bird I have seen or heard on virtually every National Wildlife Refuge I have ever visited. Their call just says wildlife refuge to me. **red-winged blackbirds** are one of the most widespread birds in the Western Hemisphere. They can be found from Panama north to Central Alaska. With the exception of Hawaii they nest in every state and Province of the US, Canada and Mexico. They are one of the most recognized birds in the country, but what do you know about them. You are probably familiar with the male's totally black color except for the red and yellow bands on the wings that give them their name. But did you know that the females are the same shape and size but are a completely different color. They are brown and white with a streaked pattern and brown and white stripes on the face. Many people confuse females with sparrows. Most people know they are often associated with water and cattails, but they will use a large variety of habitats.

They are often the first migrant bird to arrive in the spring. Males are often seen returning to the refuge in February. I saw the first blackbird of the year on February 12 this year. Females generally arrive 2 to 4 weeks after the males show up. By the time females get here the males are already establishing and defending territories. Unlike most birds they will defend territories during the day then bunch up in flocks at night to sleep. Only to return to defending territories from neighbors in the morning. The nest is built out of grass and is a cup 4 to 5 inches across. They are typically concealed in thick vegetation and may or may not be over or even near water. Typically 2 to 4 eggs are laid and are incubated for about 12 days. Young hatch without feathers and with eyes closed. They are covered with down in a couple days and are able to thermoregulate (control their body temperature) in about 8 days. Nestlings are fed insects (adults eat a lot of insects but also seeds and fruits). They leave the nest in about 2 weeks and are on their own in another 2 to 3 weeks after that.

In a reverse of spring females head south 2 to 4 weeks before the males do. Occasionally a male or two will over winter in our area. Both males and females migrate in large flocks and may be with other species especially other types of blackbirds.

Some of the best places to see red-wings on the refuge include the area around headquarters as well as Potter's Pond and McDowell Marsh. But they can be just about anywhere on the refuge, especially near water. So the next time you visit keep your eyes and ears open for these fascinating birds.

Mike Munts, Refuge Staff

Introducing Karen Nooney

Our newest Board Member

My name is Karen Nooney, and I was recently elected to the Board of Directors for the Friends of the Little Pend Oreille NWR. A Washington native raised on the Westside, I eventually saw the light and graduated from WSU. Last September I retired from 31 years of federal service rubbing elbows with Smokey The Bear.

About two weeks before retiring, I got a call from Jerry Cline, Refuge Manager. Hearing about my pending retirement and concerned I might become bored during my new-found freedom, Jerry asked if I would consider becoming involved with the Friends as a Board member. I considered it for a while (about two minutes) before responding with an enthusiastic YES! Prior to becoming involved on the Board, my association with the refuge was in a professional capacity, and through the recreational pursuits of fly fishing and wildlife viewing.

It is an honor and my pleasure to hold a Board position. My goals are to work with the Board and Friends to promote activities at the Refuge that will enrich the lives of others, especially youth. Being in service to others, and realizing the possibility of passing on an understanding of and respect for our natural habitats, gives me great joy.



Karen



A nebula

Newsletter Necessities

Number 72 - 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

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

April

8th ---Board meeting-- 6:00 p.m.

18th—Earthday Trash Pickup—9:00 a.m.

24th—Community Program—6:00 p.m.

May

9th--McDowell Trail Maintenance—9:00 a.m.

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.



Box 215
Colville, WA 99114

Friends of the LPO

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Date _____

Annual Membership

____ I would like my newsletter emailed to me

____ Basic Member \$10 _____ New

____ Contributing Member \$25 _____ Renew

____ Supporting Member \$50

____ Sustaining Member \$75

____ Corporate Member \$100

____ Other \$ _____

Please mail, along with a check to:

Friends of the LPONWR

Box 215

Colville, WA 99114