

Education Visits: Frequently Asked Questions

Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Complex

Are there bathrooms on the refuge?

Steigerwald Lake: There are bathrooms by the parking areas, but not deeper in the refuge. These bathrooms are two pit toilets.

Ridgefield: There are bathrooms by the parking areas, but not deeper in the refuge. Ridgefield has a porta-potty, as well as an indoor bathroom when the office is open. Once the new Community Nature Center building is complete (it will be during field trips, but it is not currently), Ridgefield will have two indoor bathrooms open from the outside while the refuge gates are open, as well as 6 stalls inside when the building is open. Ridgefield also has an adult-sized changing table.

For both locations, plan for your group to use the bathroom before coming or as they arrive. There are also opportunities to use the bathroom during lunch time or towards the end of your visit.

Is there a spot for us to eat lunch on the refuge?

While there are not clear designated spots for lunch on either refuge, both refuges have spots where there is plenty of room on the ground to sit. This has some flexibility and can be adjusted the day of as need arises. Tarps, pop-up tents, and tables can be provided by the refuge in case of rain or individual needs.

Are there trash cans on the refuge?

All trash you bring in, pack back out!

Where do I, or the buses, go on the day of our visit?

If you are planning to do a **walking tour at Ridgefield NWR**, this is the address for the Carty Unit where the visit will begin:

28908 NW Main Ave. Ridgefield, WA 98642

If you are taking a drive around the **auto tour route at Ridgefield NWR**, this is the address for the River S unit:

1071 S Hillhurst Rd. Ridgefield, WA 98642

If you have a visit at **Steigerwald Lake NWR**, this is the address for the trailhead where the visit will begin:

34301 Lewis and Clark Hwy, Washougal, WA 98671

Is there a limit to how many people can come with my group?

For the sake of staff capacity and training volunteers, we have decided to limit numbers to ensure we can provide a quality experience for your group. Any field trips during April will have a maximum of 2 classes on-site at once. Any field trips after April will have a maximum of 3 classes on-site at once. This number has increased from previous years because we have the new Community Nature Center classroom! If your group is larger than this, it will need to be split into multiple days.

How many chaperones do we need?

Ideally, we require a 1:5 adult to student ratio. We are flexible based on the resources that you have available for your group, but please contact us if you are unable to reach that ratio. If you have a surplus of chaperones that want to come along with the group, the more the merrier!

What is expected of my group during our visit?

We want our educational groups to enjoy their time on the refuge! Students are allowed a bit of freedom to be outdoors and be excited about what they are seeing. We will talk to your group that while quietness encourages more animals to appear, being silent is not a requirement. We are happy to meet the students where they are at. Our hope is to give your group a positive experience in the outdoors, whatever that may look like on that day. Because the animals, plants, and rocks are part of the refuge we are here to protect, our main requirement is that anything in the refuge stays there.

What will we be doing during the educational visit on the refuge?

We are super flexible in the activities we offer on the refuge. If you are a school group, we strive to tie the visit into your curriculum however we can, so activities can be created or adjusted based on topics you want to highlight. Typically, we rotate activities created by the refuge, such as nature journaling and watercolor painting, with a nature hike. These rotations change in length based on the timing of your visit. Rotations help us manage larger groups with limited staff. If you would like to receive a list of our offered refuge activities, please email RidgefieldEducation@fws.gov.

Here is a sample visit schedule:

10:00	Arrive
10:15	Welcome
10:30-11:15	Rotation 1
11:15-12:00	Rotation 2
12:00-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:15	Rotation 3
1:15	Reload
1:30	Depart

Is there parking at the site?

Both sites have parking for buses and individual cars. Ridgefield has plenty of parking for individual cars in two parking lots shared with the public. Steigerwald Lake has a smaller parking lot that is also shared with the public, so carpooling is encouraged. The parking/entrance fee is waived for field trip groups.

Do I need to come to the site before the visit?

It is required that you visit the site beforehand. Whether that is meeting up with refuge staff on site or simply viewing it on your own time. We have found that if you are able to see the site beforehand, the logistics of the visit are able to happen much smoother. If we can coordinate a meet-up on site, it is also great to talk in person about what to expect and what you hope to gain from your visit. We are all about building connections with people and would love for you to visit more than one time! If not, we understand limitations of scheduling, so you can visit on your own time and then talk on the phone with us later. **If the visiting requirement creates a barrier to your school being able to come, please contact us at RidgefieldEducation@fws.gov.**

Are there safety measures we should take before coming to the refuge?

Dress for the occasion! Make sure students are wearing closed-toed shoes and clothes comfortable for the outdoors, taking the weather into account (rain jackets for rainy weather, coats for colder weather, light clothes for the heat).

Make sure students bring water and sunscreen so they can properly enjoy the refuge without concern.

During the warmer months, your group should be aware of ticks and mosquitos and take proper precautions.

Tick/Mosquito Precautions: Wear long sleeves and long pants. Lightweight material will keep them cooler and lighter colors will make ticks more visible. Use an EPA-registered insect repellent

- More from the CDC on preventing tick bites:
https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/prevention/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ticks/avoid/on_people.html
- More from the CDC on mosquitoes:
<https://www.cdc.gov/mosquitoes/about/about-mosquito-bites.html>

Do I need to pay?

Any pre-registered educational group will have their parking fee waived for all participants and vehicles. If you have questions about qualification, contact refuge staff.

Is there running water at the refuge?

Steigerwald Lake: There is no place to wash hands on site or to provide water to large groups. Make sure your group has hand sanitizer and drinking water. On exceptionally hot days, the refuge can provide extra drinking water, so no one gets dehydrated!

Ridgefield: There is one water bottle filling station at Ridgefield in the administrative building if need arises. When the Community Nature Center building is complete (it will be by the time field trips start, but it is not currently), there will be two bathrooms available 24/7 from the outside, and indoor restrooms and water bottle filling stations inside when the building is open.

Does the refuge provide any special accommodations?

Access to main trails on the refuge is wheelchair accessible. Translation services can be provided with a two-week ahead of time notice to give us time to coordinate translators. We are happy to troubleshoot or discuss any accommodations you may need to come to the site. We want everyone to be able enjoy the refuge, so please contact refuge staff so we can help!

If you are local to the Ridgefield area and need transportation to the refuge, visit [here](#) to learn how to use C-Tran's \$1 on-demand rideshare service, The Current.

If any of your questions remain unanswered, please feel free to contact us at RidgefieldEducation@fws.gov or 360-887-4106.