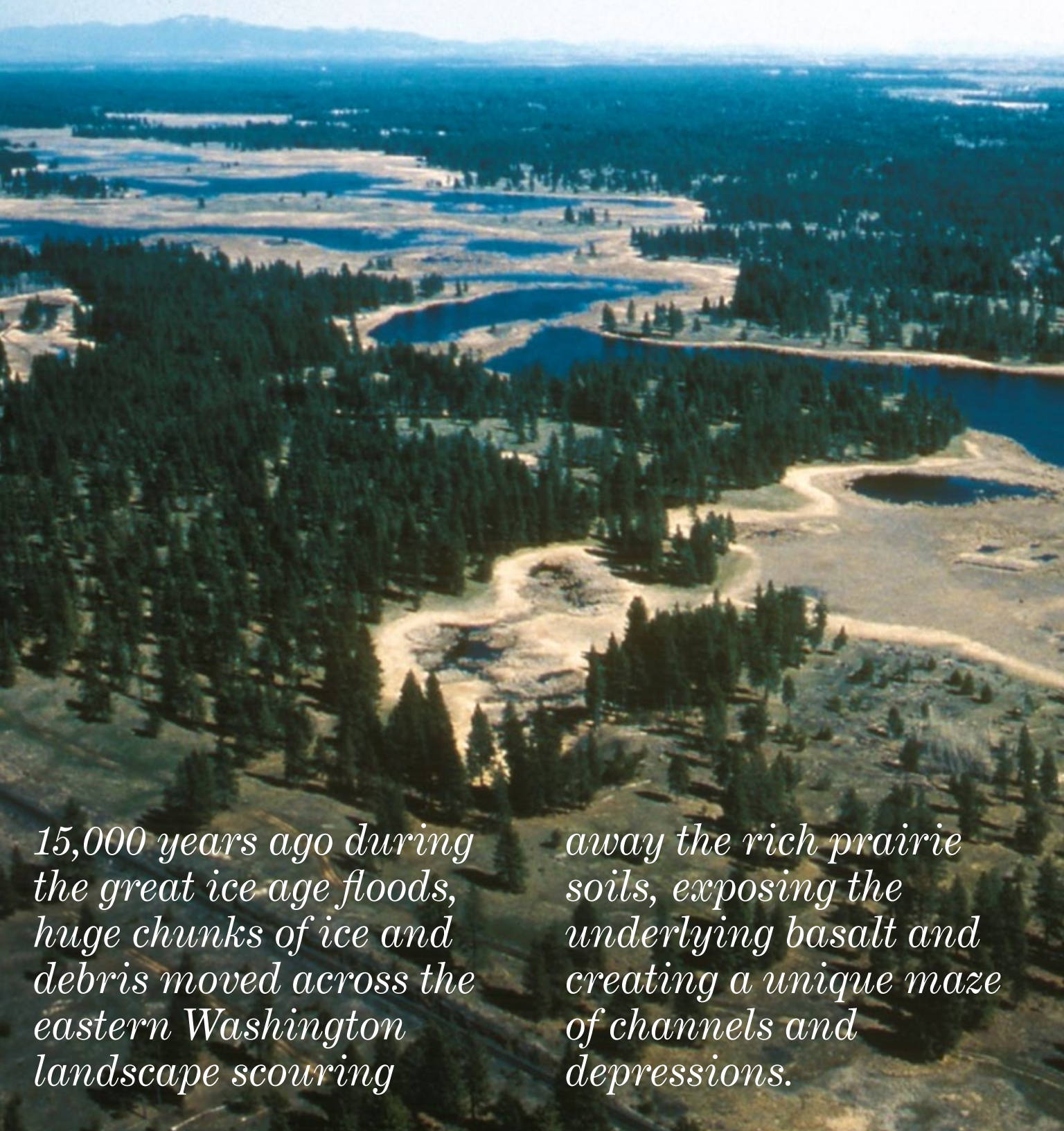
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

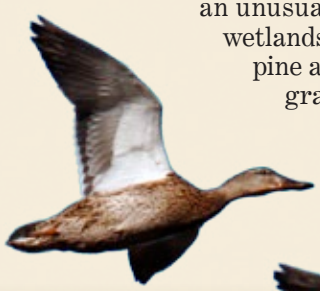
Turnbull
National Wildlife Refuge



15,000 years ago during the great ice age floods, huge chunks of ice and debris moved across the eastern Washington landscape scouring away the rich prairie soils, exposing the underlying basalt and creating a unique maze of channels and depressions.

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge: A Unique Area of Wetlands, Grasslands, and Forests

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is located in an area of eastern Washington on the edge of the Columbia River Basin, known as the Channeled Scablands. This rugged terrain today supports an unusual combination of wetlands, rock, ponderosa pine and aspen forests, grassland and steppe habitat.



Mallard pair
©Robert M. Griffith

White-tailed deer
©Robert M. Griffith

Pygmy nuthatch
©Robert M. Griffith

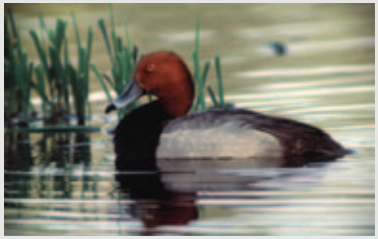
The dramatic coloration of the aspen tree makes fall a vibrant time on the refuge
©James Dietrich

Some of the exposed basalt eroded to depressional land features, which later matured into a diverse complex of ponds, sloughs and lakes. Deciduous trees, including aspen, water birch, alder and hawthorn now grow in narrow moist bands along streams and wetland perimeters. The upland areas of the Channeled Scablands, a blend of mounds, depressions and exposed rock, support a mosaic of steppe (grassland) and ponderosa pine forest communities. Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge protects only a remnant of the original Channeled Scablands.

A remnant of eroded basalt looks upon a pond occupied by beaver.

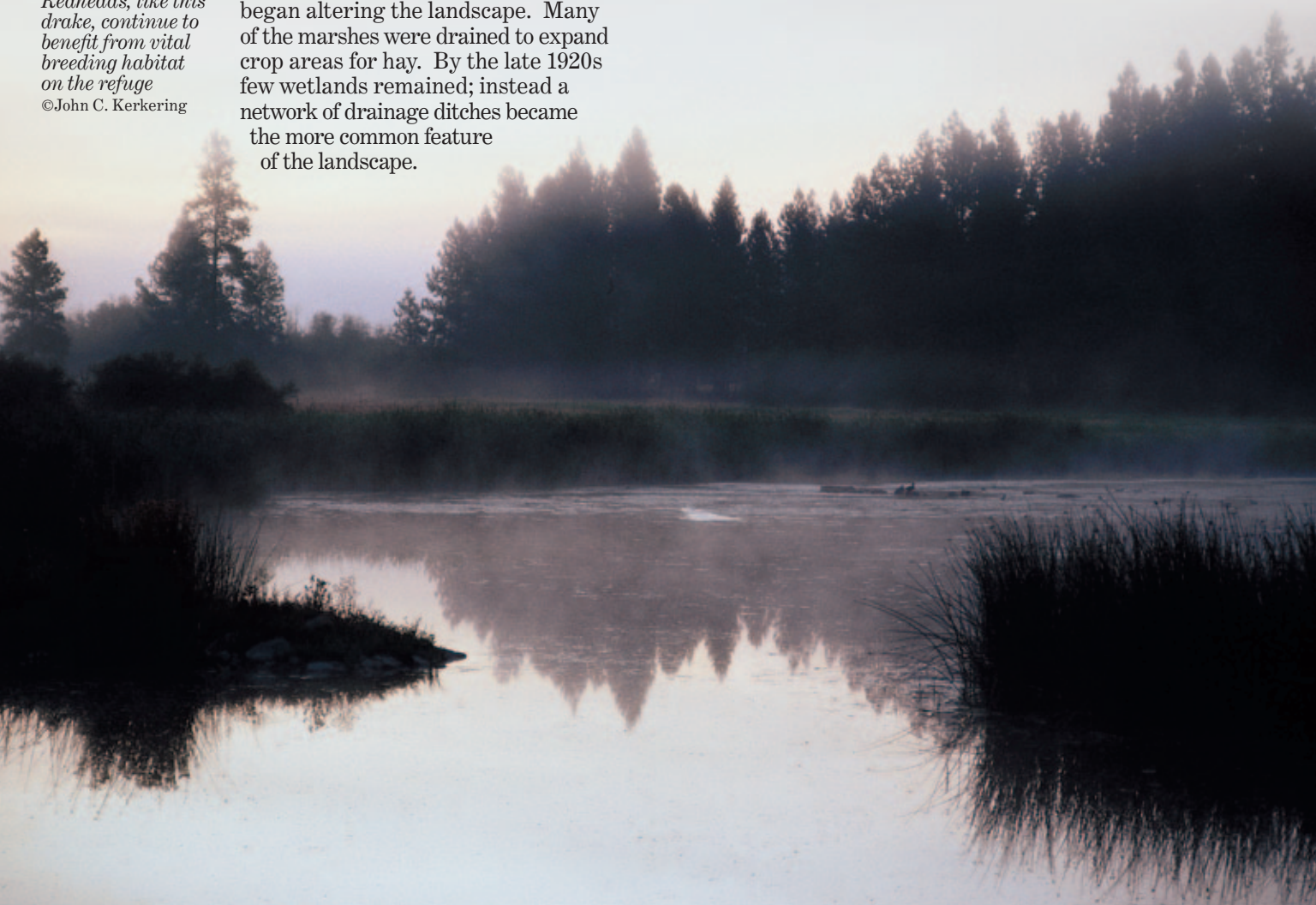
Abundant Natural Resources Provide Food and Habitat for Humans and Wildlife

Prior to settlement, ducks, geese, and other water birds nested here in large numbers. Many waterfowl also used the productive marshes and lakes during the spring and fall migrations. Because of its unique resources, this area was also important to local indigenous cultures. The Northern Plateau peoples frequented this vicinity in the spring to dig the roots of camas, bitterroot, wild onion and numerous species of lomatium, and to gather waterfowl eggs. Pioneers arrived in the late 1800s and rapidly began altering the landscape. Many of the marshes were drained to expand crop areas for hay. By the late 1920s few wetlands remained; instead a network of drainage ditches became the more common feature of the landscape.



Redheads, like this drake, continue to benefit from vital breeding habitat on the refuge
©John C. Kerkering

The developing community met its growing needs by harvesting timber, grazing native plant communities, suppressing fires and introducing exotic plants. This excellent wildlife area may have been lost forever if it had not been for the failure of the drained lakebeds to produce crops. Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, named after early pioneer Cyrus Turnbull, was set aside as a refuge and breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife in 1937. The area was preserved through the long, untiring efforts of countless people, including sportsmen, naturalists, and community activists devoted to wildlife conservation.

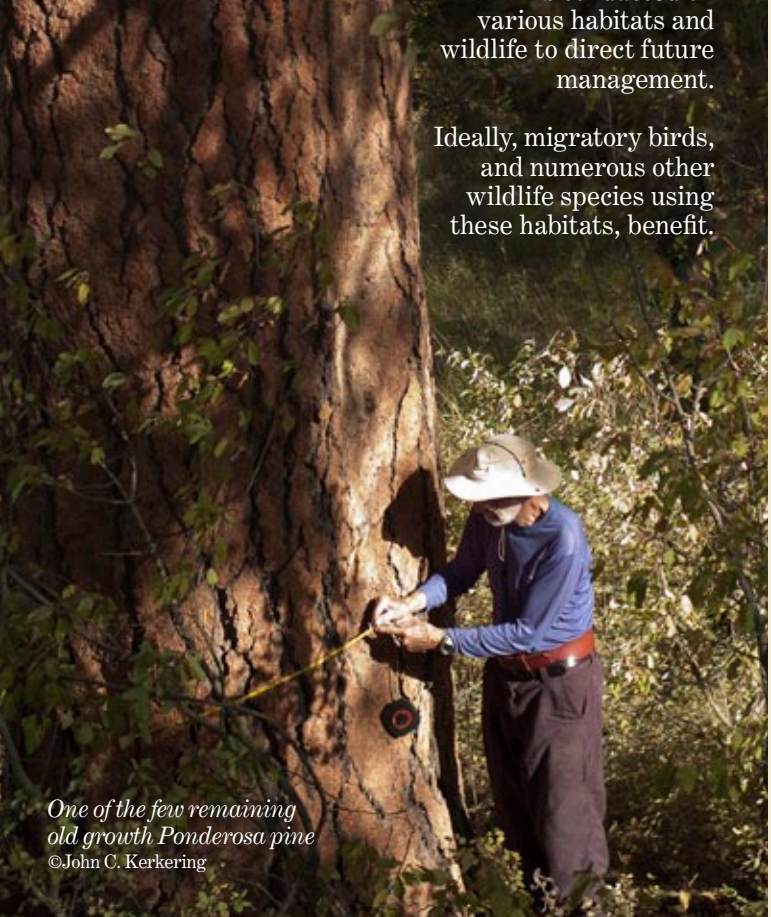


A Living Tribute to Habitat and Wildlife Diversity

Although the main habitat management emphasis has been waterfowl, the refuge's focus expanded to include restoring and maintaining the native ecosystem processes of this unique area. This means that habitat on the refuge will be managed to sustain the diversity of flora and fauna native to the Channeled Scablands.

To achieve habitat diversity, the refuge is reintroducing fire to fire-dependent plant communities, restoring wetlands and planting native vegetation. Research is conducted on various habitats and wildlife to direct future management.

Ideally, migratory birds, and numerous other wildlife species using these habitats, benefit.



One of the few remaining old growth Ponderosa pine
©John C. Kerkering

Turnbull's lone trumpeter swan found a new mate after 33 years in residence
©John C. Kerkering

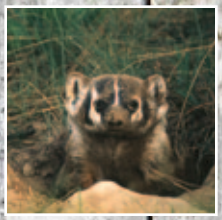
Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is a lasting tribute to wildlife. Of prime importance, the refuge conserves habitat for nesting and migrating birds, including ducks, geese, swans, shorebirds and other water birds. Diving ducks, such as redheads, canvasbacks, and scaup, search the deeper wetland habitats for food.

Gray catbird
©Tom Munson

Downingia adds vibrant color to vernal wetlands
©Robert M. Griffith

The less conspicuous migrant songbirds, including the yellow and Wilson warblers, warbling vireo, black-chinned hummingbird, song sparrow and catbird use deciduous tree and shrub habitat found near wetlands and in the Pine Creek riparian areas. This habitat is increasingly important to both breeding and migratory songbirds with the loss of important habitat throughout North, Central and South America.

The refuge supports a large variety of wildlife. Over 200 different kinds of birds have been recorded. Mammals include moose, elk, white- tailed and mule deer, coyote, badger, river otter, porcupine, muskrat, beaver, bobcat and cougar. There are also numerous small mammals such as chipmunks, red squirrels, Columbian ground squirrels, deer mice, and vole. Eleven species of bats have been recorded on the refuge. Notably, the long -eared and California myotis, and big brown bats breed and rear their young on the refuge.



Badger
©John C. Kerkering

Dead standing trees, known as snags, and ponderosa pines with dead tops provide important habitat for numerous types of wildlife. Cavity nesting birds (bluebirds, nuthatches, chickadees and woodpeckers) and mammals (chipmunks, squirrels and bats) may use this vital habitat for feeding and rearing young.

©John C. Kerkering

Tree snags make an ideal home for many animals and birds, like this family of northern flicker.
©Tom Munson

While found on the refuge, spotting an elusive cougar is a rare opportunity.
©Stan Bousson

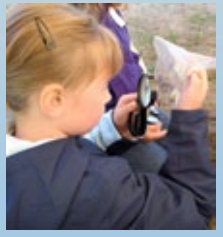
Activities and Visitor Hours

The refuge is open during daylight hours. A daily fee per vehicle is required from March 1 - October 31. Several permits may be used in lieu of the daily fee. Refer to the brochure map for a list of these permits and to locate visitor activity areas. At the interpretive kiosk by Winslow Pool on the refuge entrance road you'll find information on the refuge's history, wildlife and management.

Entrance Road and Auto Tour Route

The entrance road, auto tour route, and designated parking areas are available for year-round street vehicle and bicycle use inside the Visitor Use Area. Vehicles must remain on these roadway facilities. Visitors are welcome to drive, walk or bicycle the 5.5-mile auto tour route where most waterfowl and other wildlife can be observed.

Environmental Education and Research



The refuge has an indoor classroom facility and four study sites designated for use by groups wishing to conduct environmental education (EE) activities. A curriculum is available upon request. Contact the refuge to schedule all field trips and any other EE activities. An entrance fee waiver must be completed for all EE activities. Refuge staff also work in coordination with Eastern Washington University faculty and students at the Turnbull Laboratory for Ecological Studies (TLES). All research activities require a special use permit.

An Osprey attends her nest at feeding time
©Tom Munson

Cinnamon teal
©Robert M. Griffith

Walking Trails

Several short hiking and three accessible trails are available in the Visitor Use Area. Blackhorse Lake offers an accessible boardwalk that allows all visitors easy lake viewing. Excellent wildlife viewing opportunities can be found along these trails. A 5.6 mile gravel loop trail allows non-motorized access to Stubblefield Lake. All visitors are required to stay on designated trails and roads March 1st through August 15th. Bicycles and motorized vehicles are not permitted on trails or roads designated for hiking only.

Columbia Plateau Trail

Washington State Park's Columbia Plateau Trail bisects the west side of the refuge. Visitors are reminded that the refuge is closed to the public on both sides of the trail. Public access to this trail is only available off the refuge at Cheney-Spangle Road and Amber Lake Trailheads.

Visitors on the Blackhorse Lake Boardwalk
©John C. Kerkering

Hunting

During special seasons elk hunting and youth waterfowl hunting are available activities at Turnbull. Refuge permits are required to participate in these hunts.

The two-day youth waterfowl hunt provides an opportunity for parties of two youths and a non-hunting adult to experience this activity. The hunt dates run concurrently with the state youth waterfowl hunt in September. Elk hunts vary in accordance with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife hunts. A Washington elk hunting permit is required in addition to the refuge permit.

During all other times, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge is closed to all hunting and discharge of firearms. For more information about these special hunt seasons, please contact the refuge.

Bull elk
©Tom Munson

Camping

Camping is not allowed on the refuge. Camping is available at nearby, privately owned and operated resorts and campgrounds. Ask at Headquarters for information.

Litter

No litter containers are provided on the refuge. All visitors must carry out litter.

Closed Areas

Much of the refuge is closed to public access for safety reasons and to reduce disturbance to wildlife. Visitors are allowed only in the Public Use area, Columbia Plateau Trail and designated sites identified in hunt permits. Visitors are required to stay on trails and designated roadways March 1st through August 15th and are asked to comply with all regulatory signs.

Pets

We suggest that you leave pets at home; however, dogs are permitted if they are kept on a short leash (<5') at all times.

Prohibited Activities

Fishing, boating, camping, horseback riding, fires, swimming, bathing, and on-ice activities are not permitted on the refuge. The collection of any plant or animal or parts thereof is prohibited except licensed hunting in accordance with state and federal law.

Volunteering

Turnbull has a large, active volunteer program. There are opportunities for individuals with special skills and interests to assist with wildlife research, environmental education, administration, maintenance, and habitat and trail restoration. For information on how you can get involved, call or check out our website.

Volunteer assistance is an invaluable part of refuge management
Photo by Sandy Rancourt

Spotted towhee
©Robert M. Griffith

Wildlife Observation Tips

The patient observer will be rewarded with many wildlife viewing opportunities. Use the following tips to observe and enjoy the varied wildlife each season brings.

When

Early morning and evening are the best times to observe wildlife. Spring migration occurs from mid-March through mid-May and fall migration from September through November.

Where

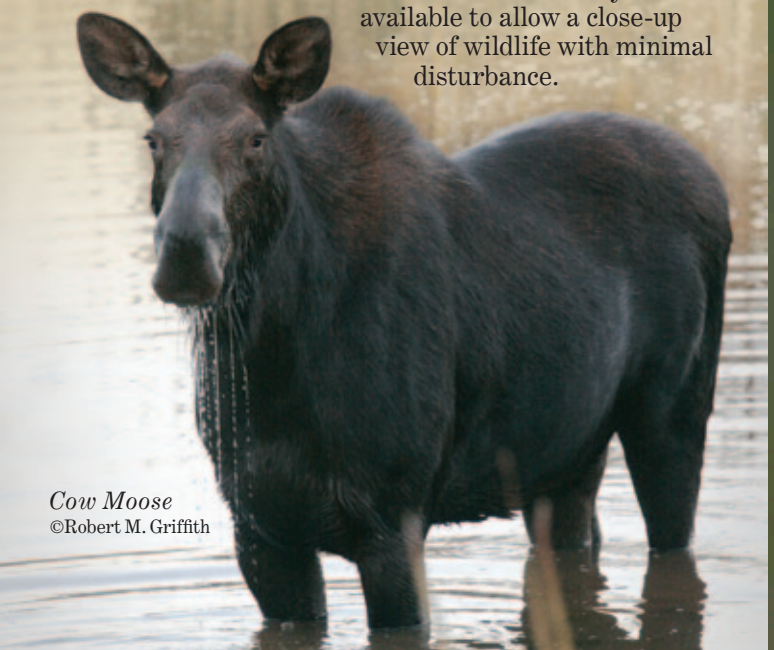
Most waterfowl can be found on wetlands along the auto tour route. A variety of other wildlife may be observed along the trails in the riparian, ponderosa pine forest, or grassland habitats.

What to Bring

Binoculars, camera, field guides, insect repellent, water and a lunch will contribute to a pleasant visit.

How

Quietly listen for calls and songs and wait for wildlife to resume their activities. Use your car as a blind for wildlife viewing and photography. Observation blinds may be available to allow a close-up view of wildlife with minimal disturbance.



Cow Moose
©Robert M. Griffith

Cattails are plentiful throughout the refuge providing important habitat for many marsh birds including the yellow-headed blackbird
©Tom Munson

PUBLIC USE AREA MAP LEGEND

- Refuge Boundary
- Public Use Boundary
- Auto Tour Route
- Hiking Trail
- Fee Station
- Parking Area
- Restrooms
- Disabled Access
- Refuge Headquarters
- View Point
- Photo Blind
- Interpretive Display
- Environmental Education Trail

Entry Permits:

- *Refuge Pass*
- *Federal Duck Stamp*
- *Golden Eagle, Golden Age, and Golden Access Passports*
- *Interagency Access, Senior, Annual, and Volunteer Passes*

Kepple Lake Overlook
Kepple Lake
Kepple Peninsula Trail
Beaver Pond
30 Acre Lake
Blackhorse Lake
Blackhorse Lake Boardwalk
Bluebird Trail
Cheney - Plaza Road
South Smith Road
Wheeler Pool
Swan Pond
Pine Creek Auto Tour Route
Windmill Pond
Winslow Pool
Headquarters Pond
Pine Lakes Loop Trail
Headquarters Trail
Pine Lakes
Stubblefield Trail
Cheever Lake
Stubblefield Lake
Stubblefield Trail

N

0 1/4 mi 1/2 mi
0 1/4 km 1/2 km

Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge
26010 South Smith Road
Cheney, WA 99004
509/235 4723

http://www.fws.gov/turnbull

Washington Relay Service
TTY 1 800/833 6388
Voice 1 800/833 6384
Telebraille 1 800/833 6385

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
http://www.fws.gov

For refuge information
1 800/344 WILD

Cover Photo:
Female Western Bluebird
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