Willapa Tidings

Vol. 14 No. 1 Fall 2013

Newsletter of the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

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Spartina Adventures

By Bob Duke

For years attracted to the natural beauty of the Willapa Bay region, I recently signed on as a volunteer for the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. Soon came the phone call from Nancy Holman that would allow me to truly immerse myself deeply into the nature of the region, quite literally. “Would you like to go out on the bay in our airboat and help identify and tag spartina?” All I heard was “airboat.” I had seen those propeller driven craft skimming over the shallows and mud-flats of the bay like a water skipper and always thought, “I want to do that someday.” The offer dangled in front of me like a carrot. I had also heard of spartina. That beautiful green grass that covered the shores of the bay when Spartina we moved here had a dark side. As much as the land developers from Seattle loved its beauty, the indigenous nature of the bay couldn't live with it. It had to go. Here was my chance to learn more about it. And there was the airboat ride. “Yes, Nancy, I would love to, and thank you for asking. What should I bring?”

I arrived at Refuge headquarters at (yawn) 6:15 a.m. with a packed lunch, layers of clothing and a new pair of knee-high rubber boots. My wife packed the lunch so it was a mystery yet to be explored. The layers of clothing, along with the rain slickers provided by the Refuge, slipped on and off to match the changing conditions. I was reminded of the saying “There is never bad weather, just inappropriate clothing.” The boots would prove to be the most valuable asset on this trip.

My guides on this gray morning were two young gals, working possibly the best summer vacation jobs a student can find anywhere in the country, outside of maybe being a lifeguard in Malibu. Jodi Christie and Shelby Leeland held the keys to the airboats, and they couldn't be in better hands. Shelby would be the operator today. I looked around for other volunteers, but was told that I was it. “We used to have five or six staff, but now it's just us,” offered Jodi. I hoped I could keep up with them.

The refuge provided life jackets, slickers and the kind of ear muffs you see on flight attendants who park the airliners. We boarded the boat and slipped away into the bay. The ear muff deadened the roar of the huge prop behind us, propelling us over the water at remarkable speed. Shelby skimmed close to the mudflats, gently weaving back and forth over water not deep enough to float my canoe. Shelby explained later that the weaving prevents the craft from porpoising in the choppy water. We headed north, our destination the Lewis slough on the northern end of Long Island.

We left the water and scooted over bare mud, the airboat just as happy with wet mud and grass as anything. This morning was hosted by a new moon low tide, and deep water became scarce. We pushed deep into Long Island, to the interior, finally anchoring against a mud bank. Now came the fun part, and the reason for the boots. We departed the airboat in the middle of a beautiful green meadow stretching a

couple hundred yards from the slough in all directions, and surrounded by lush forest. The forest line marked the edge of the brackish waterline. Spartina can be found anywhere the water is brackish. That's a lot of area. The girls had been here before, and had marked the invasive plants with tall sticks, painted orange at the tip for easy identification. We headed across the meadow. I was ready to learn what spartina looked like. I wasn't ready for the mud. Deep mud. Deep, icky, oozing, sticky, slimy – help me with the superlatives here, I need more - mud. I got stuck up to the top of my boots, pulled myself free and sloshed to the next sinkhole. "You learn to read the mud," said Jodi. I looked for large clumps of grass, the roots providing a base to walk on. Stubble from once thriving, now dead spartina also give support. Often I would miss the hard ground and have to extricate myself from the insidious ooze.

We departed this beautiful, and still compelling, land and skimmed south along the shore to hunt more spartina. We scooted past oyster men working the beds, beds once chocked by invasive grass, unfit for oysters. Jodi and Shelby told me how once it was everywhere. But there wasn't much to be found that day. Eventually legs well conditioned to resting for hours under a computer desk grew weary after hours of slogging through tall grass and mud, and I welcomed the return ride to Refuge headquarters that afternoon.

Would I do this again? Spend a day among eagles, elk, bear and amazing quiet solitude? I wouldn't miss it for anything, especially since I have been assured that future missions would not include fields of mud. I will get my chance again on September 21, and the refuge is looking for 11 more volunteers to join me in a hunt for the last invasive fugitives, and become deputized as "Saltmarsh Marshalls." Interested? Contact Nancy at nancy_holman@fws.gov to reserve your spot. See you there!

President's Message

By Clay Nichols

Why should I want to be a "Friend" of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge? A flood of "Friends of Willapa" –related messages, had just interrupted my early morning, work-related, email review. My first answer to this self-questioning was immediately triggered by the view as I watched the north end of Long Island emerge across the Bay as it was illuminated by the sunrise. My Membership in the Friends allows a closer walk, both literally and figuratively, with this World-class piece of nature and the dedicated Refuge staffers who are its stewards. This led to pleasant musings on my "Friends" that share this love and interest. The Friends are both these public servants and the membership of the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. Finally, there was an overdue sense of duty: service as a Friends Member and volunteer is a small price to pay for the value the Refuge brings to our community, society in general, and our personal quality of life. If you share these views, and are not presently an active FWNWR Member, please take advantage of the membership information form on the last page.

Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless!

Annual Barbeque for the Friends of Willapa Refuge

By Suzanne Staples

On Saturday, August 10, the Friends of Willapa gathered at the Refuge for a delicious barbeque hosted by Refuge staff. They were ably assisted by the Peninsula Rotary Club, who provided great food, and helped set up this fun afternoon.

The barbeque is an annual event, a thank-you, for a work done by the Friends volunteers. A lot of it doesn't seem like work: watching swallows fledge from boxes along the Refuge roads, planting native plants to attract butterflies. But make no mistake, there is heavier work for those who are interested: trail clearing, gorse pulling, spartina spotting. All done in the beautiful setting of Willapa Bay and the surrounding forests.

The skilled chefs offered barbequed tuna and salmon, hotdogs, beef and veggie burgers, chowder, salads and so many cookies even the hungriest were happy. Niall Carroll sang and played guitar as Friends roamed the grounds, admiring the wildlife art on display and for sale by members of our Peninsula Arts Association, and the many silent auction items. The winner of the poker walk took away a brand new pair of binoculars. And a beautiful brant print was the prize for the free raffle.

Wonderful Music by Niall Carroll

Over fifty folks attended, not counting Refuge staff. This may seem like a lot, but there is room for so many more.

If you are interested in volunteering and being a Friend of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, contact the Refuge at 360-484-3482.

Play a part helping to keep our Refuge the beautiful and productive place it is.

Educational & Fun!

Scrumptious Food!

Socialize & Laugh!

Porter Point Bear River Estuary Restoration

By Ron Craig

Friends assisted WNWR personnel in the completion of phase two of the Bear River Estuary Restoration with in-kind services valued at $12,000. In addition, the Pacific Marine & Estuarine Fish Habitat Partnership (PMEP) named this restoration project one of its "Ten Waters To Watch" and provided $25,000 towards restoring 140 acres of Porter Point Unit. Over 1.65 miles of dikes and roads, nine culverts, a fish ladder, and a foot bridge will be removed and seven historic channels, including Porter Point stream, will be reconnected. The process involved removing over 44,632 cubic yards (CY) of soil and filling ditches with over 47,643 CY of soil.

The Porter Point Unit is the 2nd phase of the Bear River Estuary restoration that will restore 500 acres of the Bear River estuary, one of the largest estuary restorations in the State of Washington. This phase was started in May 2103 and will be completed in September 2013. Phase 1 of the restoration; 160 acres in the Lewis Unit, was completed in 2012. The final phases, which have not been scheduled, will restore 200 acres of the Riekkola Unit .

This restoration is an important project for aquatic and avian wildlife within the refuge, including shorebirds, waterfowl, and fish, by providing uplands nutrients to the estuary after being blocked since the 1950's when the dikes were constructed. These nutrients will enrich the estuary for wildlife and are a necessary element for the life cycle for salmon in making their transition from freshwater spawning to saltwater rearing. Bear River estuary habitat has been listed as critical habitat for eulachon and green sturgeon by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Interested in Birding?

By Ben Welton

Hi my name is Ben, and I'd like to encourage more of you to take advantage of a wonderful opportunity that being a Friend of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge provides. I'm a member of the Friends Board and I have volunteered to serve as a Friends' contact point for birding activities. In short, I will be the BURD NURD. The goal is to serve as a focal point for Friends' activities and interests related to birding. These will include instruction and observational opportunities related to bird recognition, migration patterns, local habitat, and, above all, having fun. There will be no officers, no dues, no political affiliations; only more support and awareness of the ongoing organizations that already support birding and avian work on the Refuge. There will be meetings for planning, sharing and to help raise awareness of this wonderful resource we see daily. We will be on Facebook, our web page is: http://www.friendsofwillaparefuge.org/ and the Willapa Tidings Newsletter. If you have any questions? Contact Ben Welton at 1-360-466-4749. Ask for now be a Burd Nurd.

"HE" Hope & Endurance

By Suzy Whittey

I for one have looked at species that are not immediately identifiable by sex such as Canada Geese, American Robins and Chickadees and instinctively called it a she or a he. I am not sure at the moment what logic I use to determine its sex but once I give it a gender, I tend to stick with it.

So, when in July of 2012 a feisty black-capped chickadee with a white spot on the top of its head appeared for the first time at my feeder, I decided it was a girl. And from that moment on when it appeared at the feeder, I would remark to my husband "here she is again". No one can resist the spunk and joy that these tiny birds bring to our lives.

She came every day four or five times with others of her kind to feed and bring a smile to my heart. So, in early October when she appeared with a dangling broken left leg my soul hurt. Not only for her but also, for me. I didn't think she would survive more than a day or two.

I knew that chickadees would plucked a sunflower heart from my platform feeder and zip to a branch, place it between their feet and peck it into bite size edible pieces. So, how was a chickadee with one leg going to feed itself? I figured I had seen the last of her.

But that is just the beginning of the story. I have placed many small perch branches around my feeders for the birds to use as they approach the feeders. She would fly in, grab a branch with her one good leg, hang upside down then let go and flop down onto the platform feeder, grab a kernel and off she would go to the cover of the trees.

She came to the feeder over the next few days dragging her leg and trying to balance and perch and eat. I named her Hope.

Six days after she was injured, I was stunned to see that her leg was no longer there. It had been broken where it met her body and had fallen off and was now completely gone. I did not hold out much hope for Hope.

As the days and weeks passed and I waited anxiously to see if this teaspoon sized bird could survive another day, I found that each day she returned she was giving me strength and endurance. And that was when her name changed from Hope to Hope - Endurance "HE" for short, is that a funny name for a girl? It is a girl, right?

Each day as she came to the feeder she would perch on her belly, wobbling back and forth among the seeds and when she decided on one that suited her she would pluck it into her beak and off she would go to the trees to consume it. Then she would return again a few minutes later for another.

In January she surprised me again. She started using her left wing to balance herself. She would open her wing just a little and set the elbow down to hold herself upright. I was amazed at this new behavior she had learned.

She has been sharing her life with me now for over a year. She has gone through a breeding season and appears with another black-capped each day. I look for her and her companion and marvel at the lessons this bird has reminded me of. Don't give up, adapt, be persistent, don't complain. Enjoy life and above all, do it with zest just like "HE".

For over thirty years I have been a strong, content, independent nature observer and birder. So, a few years ago, and way before I thought old age would catch up to me, when I was diagnosed with a chronic lung condition I found myself struggling not only physically but also mentally with my new limitations.

Hope, endurance, along with encouragement are sometimes found in the most unlikely places. You just need to pay attention to the lesson life is trying to teach you. Thank you, my little black and white ball of feathers for sharing your life with me and being such a good teacher.

Oh, and by the way, I have a few more chickadees this summer with white spots on their heads.

New Website is in the Works!!

By Nancy Beliveau

Yes Virginia there will be a new Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge website!!! We have chosen Beach Dog. Com in Long Beach to be our web designer/builder. Acting President Clay Nichols, Refuge Manager Jackie Ferrier, and I met as the website committee to discuss the web layout, color, font, and general look of the website. The text and information will be the next part of the new website creation.

The draft website looks great!! It will have an interactive map showing refuge locations that will allow visitors to click on the refuge site and then get an in-depth opportunity to find out more. I think everyone will find this very informative if you haven't visited all the refuge sites; there are eight of them!!

Website visitors will have ample opportunity to join and donate – an important part of every non-profits lifeline; learn about upcoming events and activities Friends members will be taking part in.

We will keep everyone posted as to the launch of the new website – stay tuned.

Like Us & Support Us on FACEBOOK
At: Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

Rebuilding Together Members Rally for the Refuge

By Nancy Holman

Rebuilding Together Pacific County's primary focus is rehabilitating homes for low-income homeowners on the peninsula, but last week they rallied for the refuge and rebuilt a bench at Leadbetter Point – part of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge. “This is a great example of people working together to offer talents and resources for the benefit of all. We really appreciate the members of Rebuilding Together who helped the Refuge during this time of limited funding”, states Jackie Ferrier, Project Leader of Willapa National Wildlife Complex. Joe Whitton, Maintenance Worker, was especially pleased with the effort. “I just gave them a plan and they built a high quality product that people can enjoy.” Refuge staff extends a big thank you to Don Lary, Lynn Lary, Larry Raymer and Frank Hoodenpyle who worked on this project.

The new bench is located on the observation platform at Leadbetter Point, a short walk (~300 feet) from the parking area at the end of Stackpole Road. This is a great time of year to visit this location as migratory shorebirds are just beginning their southbound journey and can be seen feeding on the mudflats. View more photos from this effort at https://www.facebook.com/WillapaNWRComplex.

Don Larry and Frank Hoodenpyle transport materials and tools to the work site.

Frank Hoodenpyle and Larry Raymer at work on the new bench.

Larry Raymer, Don Larry and Lynn Lary attach the back beam.

Larry Raymer, Frank Hoodenpyle and Don Larry show off the finished product.

Thank you for the new bench at Leadbetter!

Thank You For Supporting Our Annual Barbecue!

By Clay Nichols

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge held our annual membership barbecue at the Willapa Wildlife National Wildlife Refuge on Saturday, August 10th. A silent auction, raffle prize, a poker walk, live music and art for sale by Peninsula Arts Association artists as well as a unique photo opportunity made for a great afternoon – and the weather cooperated too.

Members enjoyed a delicious barbecue that was made possible by the generous donations of our local merchants and restaurants; Beach Barons, Charles Nelson Bed & Breakfast, Cottage Bakery, Good Day Café, Jack's Country Store, Okies Thriftway, and Sid's IGA.

Silent auction donations and artists from Peninsula Arts Association helped make this a special event. Individuals included: Bonnie Cozb, Leta Craig, Janean Duke, Bette Lu Krause, Nancy Meyrick, Carol Lynn Ockfen, Nancy Olson, and Shirley Pryor Pyne.

The fielding of this barbecue would not have occurred without the help from the Members of Rotary Club of Southwest Pacific County, as well as the work of other volunteers. The Rotary Club members assisted in all phases of the events' planning, preparation, and serving. Volunteers contributing their time, talents, and pleasant personalities included: Joe & Julie Bacher, Warren Cowell, Bob & Janean Duke, Marc Doust, Gretchen Goodson, Dr. Madeline Kalbach, Rose Power, Matt Tennis, and Myrna Kay Thompson.

We would also like to thank ALL members and volunteers of the Friends of Willapa NWR as well as the staff of Willapa NWR for their continual support. The Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge is an organization established to support Refuge programs and increase awareness and appreciation of the Refuge. Friends members volunteer to help the Refuge, located on and near the Long Beach Peninsula in southwest Washington at the mouth of the Columbia River, in one of the states richest and most diverse wildlife areas. Our local treasure is the natural environment that we enjoy with the Pacific Ocean on the west and Willapa Bay on the east.

Thanks again to everyone who donated goods, services, time, and support of our Friends organization. We look forward to seeing you at the November annual membership meeting.

The small Western snowy plover can fit in the palm of your hand...

Easily camouflaged, plovers' markings helped them blend into their original sandy beach habitat, which was dotted with a minimal amount of plants. The invasion of non-native beach grasses shrinking sandy areas and coastal development the plover increasingly, have nowhere to hide, making them easy targets for predators. With chicks the size of cottonballs and increased opportunities for predators, the future of the species is in great peril. Learn More on the Willapa NWR website:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/willapa/

Please Support the Business that Support the FWNWR

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Welcome New Members!

Virginia & Duane Bish
Janine Busch
Boldenson Family
Ed & Janet Darcher
Kitt Fleming
Lee Knott
Nancy Olson
Jean Stauffer

Paul & Janet Waterstrat

FWNWR'S Fall Photo Contest

By Bob Duke

2012 First Place Winner

Dragonfly on Cattails
By
Darlene
Mc Reynolds
Webster

The Willapa National Wildlife Refuge in Washington, with units in Pacific and Wahkiakum counties, is home to native and migratory wildlife, exotic flora and spectacular scenery. The Friends of Willapa NWR invite everyone to grab their cameras and join them in celebration of the natural beauty of the Refuge land. The second annual Fall Foto Festival begins September 10. Photos will be accepted through November 2, 2013. The FWNWR is offering cash prizes and one-year paid membership in each of three categories.

The contest is open to all photographers, professional or non-professional. Entrants do not need to be a member of Friends of Willapa NWR and may submit up to three photos, one for each category.

For complete rules and entry information visit the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge website at www.fws.gov/refuge. For more information contact Nancy Beliveau at 707-364-6158 or email: beliveau47@peoplepc.com.

Willapa Tidings

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Suzy Whittey, Editor

To request an address change, to contribute items of interest (including photos), or to submit articles for publication, please contact Friends of Willapa NWR

Mailing Address
3888 State Route 101
Ilwaco, WA 98624-9707
Phone: 360-783-2699

E-mail
president@friendsofwillaparefuge.org

Web Site
www.friendsofwillaparefuge.org

Facebook Site
www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=123317069999

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, Friends of Willapa National wildlife Refuge was established in July 2000 to provide support and assistance to Refuge programs and to enhance awareness and appreciation of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

Board of Directors

Acting President – Clay Nichols
Vice President -- Vacant
Acting Secretary –Nancy Beliveau
Treasurer -- David Hoch
Director -- Sandy Nielson
Director -- Ron Craig
Director – Ben Welton

Membership Form

☐ New Member
☐ Renewal

Invite a friend to Become a Member !

Make Checks Payable To:
Friends of Willapa NWR

Mail to: Friends of Willapa NWR
3888 State Route 101
Ilwaco, WA 98624-9707

Office Use Only
DB
CD
NL
YL

Name:_____

Address:_____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

☐ Yes! I want to receive Friends e-mail announcements.

My e-mail address is _____

Contributions to the Friends of Willapa NWR are tax deductible.

Memberships		**Donations**	
Individual	$ 20.00	Scholarship Program	$_____
Family	$ 30.00	Education Program	$_____
Patron	$ 50.00	Other _____	$_____
Benefactor	$100.00		
Business	$ 90.00	**Total Amount Enclosed $**	_____

For more information about the different levels of memberships contact:
membership@friendsofwillaparefuge.org

Thank You for Your Membership and Support!

Volunteer Interests

☐ Community Outreach
☐ Environmental Education
☐ Membership Recruitment
☐ Special Projects and Events
☐ Fund Raising
☐ Public Relations
☐ Habitat Restoration
☐ Trail and campground maintenance
☐ Shorebird and waterfowl monitoring
☐ Fish and amphibian monitoring