

FLYWAYS – September - 2003

**FLYWAYS –
News Update from
Friends of Mid-Columbia River Wildlife National Wildlife Refuges
311 Lake Road, Burbank, WA 99323**

September 2003

FROM FRIENDS PRESIDENT

The rabbitbrush glow golden in the Shrub Steppe Garden, and Sagebrush blooms top several of the shrubs planted just last November. How could it be fall so soon? Plans are underway to work on the next section. We are creating a unique demonstration of shrub-steppe habitat for this region. Would you like to join in the fun? Contact Shannon Hays-Truex at spirit@3-cities.com or 946-4813.

Already, we hosted school classes from Walla Walla! Other schools are scheduled for fall and we're asking teachers to register well ahead of their visit to avoid a shortfall of volunteers. This season is a great chance to observe our school education program in action. Wannabe volunteers can "shadow" the various science stations in action – and see how easy it is, and how rewarding! Orientation to the objectives is available one on one, or in a group. The contact is Shannon Hays-Truex or the McNary Environmental Education Center, 543-8322. Our volunteer educators were busy all summer with children from camps and special school programs.

GRANTS

We are thrilled to receive a "Nature of Learning" grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a great accomplishment in a very competitive environment! Congratulations, Shannon Hays-Truex! Read more about this in her article.

Speaking of grants, we were nominated by the local REI store for another REI Conservation Grant! Our application has been submitted. Last year's grant enabled students to visit when bus funds were not available.

Our Startup Grant from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation gave us the boost we needed to get brochures, newsletters and our booth materials ready to go! We attracted new members for the Friends group and volunteers for McNary Refuge - and 100s of visitors! We've been able to publish and mail this newsletter free to all – and we urge you to respond by joining our Friends group! Volunteers are the wonderful spark that keeps our education, Second Saturday, and Education Center lively!

OUTREACH

We gave presentations to summer school groups, Richland Seniors and local civic clubs. Please help us get the word out about the value of our local refuges and the National

Wildlife Refuge System! Contact your favorite group and suggest a talk from one of our speakers.

Nine McNary volunteers participated in the Leavenworth Salmon Festival, staffing our own booth and helping out with the other activities there – and thoroughly enjoying the lively programs. Thanks to the Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuge Complex for supporting us in this fun trip – and for the delightful barbecue dinner and Volunteer Recognition evening June 11!

Thanks to your memberships and donations, and our blanket sales, the Friends group was able to provide McNary NWR Education Center with better equipment for school and visitor programs. Scopes and other materials were provided for Toppenish and Umatilla education outreach. Yakima Valley Audubon Society became another Friends partner, and visited us to study our education program. We donated several Pendleton Commemorative Centennial blankets to the Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society for their fundraising. LCBAS has been critical to the success of the McNary Refuge Environmental Education Center.

Second Saturdays keep McNary Refuge in the public eye. Thanks to Naomi Sherer for her diligence in planning and getting volunteers. This is a great chance for you folk that work during the week to participate. Help with crafts and activities for the children! Refuge Day is the biggest Second Saturday – October 11! Come and enjoy!

Department of Energy's Day of Caring volunteers worked on trail and facilities in May. McNary volunteers placed log rafts so that they are visible from the deck of the Education Center. New picnic tables were constructed to entice visitors to sit and enjoy our surroundings.

During the past three years, I was privileged to be President for the Friends group. It is clear that we have done an incredible job of outreach to the community, especially considering that we are still young and relatively small. For example, we hosted over 3000 visitors in the last year! Please think about joining the Friends, and adding your ideas and talents! Meetings are on the second Thursday of the month from 9-11am at the Education Center. Thanks for all your help!

Paula Clark

BIOLOGIST ACTION - Molly Jacky

Biologists Howard Browers and Molly Jacky worked in the field throughout the summer banding ducks in early July wrapping up the project on September 12th. A total of 242 ducks and 11 Canada geese were banded at McNary NWR, 47 ducks were banded at Toppenish NWR and 25 ducks at Umatilla nwr.

Howard and Molly, along with Brian Allen, Umatilla refuge manager, Gary Hagedorn,

FLYWAYS – September - 2003

Project Leader, and David Gonzales, Toppenish refuge manager, took part in a concerted effort in the Pacific flyway to determine White-fronted Goose populations of two subspecies, Tules and Pacifics. There are only small numbers of Tules compared to Pacifics so a major portion of the survey was aimed at getting Tule numbers. Approximately 3950 White-fronted Geese were recorded in our neck of the woods, only 70 of which were Tules.

Migratory songbird banding is also wrapping up for the season. Some species captured at Wallula field station are: Song Sparrows, White-crowned Sparrows, Lark Sparrow, Bullock's Oriole, Black-headed Grosbeak, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Bewick's Wren, House Wren, and Yellow Warbler. Volunteers assist in the banding process and it can be a unique experience for someone interested in birds.

Howard and Molly are looking forward to possibly conducting a radio-telemetry study on steelhead on Toppenish NWR if funding permits. The telemetry work will add to three years of data already collected on Steelhead at Toppenish.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

Our thanks go to Three Rivers Children's Museum for mounted specimens donated to McNary NWR Education Center including wall mounts of Pair of Wood Ducks, Chukar, and Gray Partridge. Table based mounts included an Arctic Ptarmagon, Blue Grouse, Pair California Quail, and a Pintail Duck.

More thanks to Tony Greager, Kennewick, for mounted Barn Owls, and a Red-tailed Hawk with an Ani in its talons. What great additions to the Audubon and Refuge mounts we have to illustrate our fabulous flying vertebrates to the community.

VOLUNTEERS WENT ABROAD

Well, volunteers did go far and wide to take the Friends message into the community on several fronts - Battelle Volunteer Fair, teachers in PALS program, West Richland Harvest Festival, Battelle Marketplace, and Leavenworth Salmon Festival.

Paula Clark took tule weaving to Wiley elementary school in Richland. Naomi Sherer took tule weaving to Monumental school in Quincy. Greg Greger, featured in Richland Community Center's fall brochure, continues to spread good will by knapping projectile points at RCC and Hanford school. He will also knapp at Lewis and Clark's Heritage Day on October 18 at Sacajawea Park

AUDUBON IN THICK OF THINGS

Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society (LCBAS) is a founding partner with USFWS of McNary NWR Environmental Education Center. Blue Mountain Audubon Society joined our Friends and attend meetings carrying news to and from our communities. Yakima

Valley Audubon Society enhances Toppenish NWR's outreach to schools and public in general. Members worked with Dave Gonzales, refuge manager, to make a successful grand opening of the refuge contact center. Refuge staff and Friends are grateful for their dedication.

BLANKETS GO COMMERCIAL

Pendleton Commemorative blanket is now advertised in two national magazines – one for its appeal for funding school kids outdoor education in LAKE COUNTRY JOURNAL and one for appeal to collectors of Pendleton blankets in COWBOYS & INDIANS. Both magazines are in press for release in late October. Consider helping on the blanket committee to get the new orders out as quickly as they come in. Contact Jim Mock at 588-4712 or 543-8322 to expedite someone's wonderful gift.

BOOTH IN A BOX

The new display unit is self contained and easily set up for presentations. Naomi used it at West Richland's Harvest Festival and at the summer programs at Tapteal and Jason Lee elementary schools in Richland. Rosa Lee used it in lieu of a table at the nest station at McNary NWR Education Center. See it at the Second Saturday event on October 11.

DEMONSTRATION EXPANDS

YOU CAN HELP!

Shrub-steppe demonstration site will expand toward the teepee from the present plot after herbicide application this week. Weed cloth will be installed probably as soon as October 11 to prevent the dormant weed seeds from germinating. Over 200 grasses and forbes will be planted and you can be a part of history! Plants will be labeled with a meandering path. This plot will demonstrate a sample of sagebrush grassland for botany education on many levels. Contact Shannon Hays-Truex, 509-946-4813 or e-mail: spirit@3-cities.com

PERKS FOR VOLUNTEERS

USFWS supports volunteers in many ways. We were treated to a trip to Malheur, a river trip of the refuge, a fabulous dinner, and a trip to Leavenworth Salmon Festival.

McNary NWR

The final phases of the North Shore Wallula riparian restoration project are expected to be finished by the end of the month. The project goal is to restore a willow/cottonwood riparian component along a section of the Walla Walla River flood plain. A similar project was completed last year on the south side of the river. We expect to have both

FLYWAYS – September - 2003

projects flooded by the end of October.

This project has demanded the bulk of our staff time, but we are mowing trails and planting fields preparing for the upcoming waterfowl season.

- John Gahr, Refuge manager

NATURE OF LEARNING GRANT

Friends of Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges was awarded a \$5,000 grant for a one-year pilot education program called the Habitat Conservation Program. The Nature of Learning grant is sponsored by National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wildlife Refuge System, and National conservation Training Center, Keystone Center, and National Wildlife Refuge Association. Of 153 applicants, 30 were chosen to receive this grant.

The Habitat Conservation Program will be administered by Friends in partnership with Mesa Elementary School and Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuge Complex. We will also be involving members of Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society and Columbia Basin Chapter of Washington Native Plant Society.

The goal of the program is to promote scientific literacy and conservation awareness through a project-oriented integrated learning experience at McNary National Wildlife Refuge. Beginning in late October, 18 third grade students will participate in the planting of native shrubs, grasses, and forbs at the shrub-steppe demonstration site on the refuge. Students will return to the site periodically to monitor plant growth and to learn about shrub-steppe ecology and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Also starting in October, 34 sixth graders will begin conducting an on-site water quality monitoring project. Students will return periodically throughout the year to monitor water quality and to learn about wetland ecology and the National Wildlife Refuge system.

The Friends group is very excited about receiving support for this wonderful program. To learn more about the Habitat Conservation Program, contact Shannon Hays-Truex., Program coordinator, 509-946-4813 or spirit@3-cities.com

MACKAY ORIENTATION PANELS

McKay NWR, located at McKay reservoir near Pendleton, Oregon, is part of Mid-Columbia River NWR Complex. Three new orientation panels are installed to help visitors fully enjoy the recreational opportunities at McKay.

The first panel is an orientation map of the area trails, roads, and fishing opportunities. The second panel depicts wildlife “by the season”. The third panel describes rules and regulations. The panels were designed by Art Shine, Outdoor Recreation Planner. Most of the wildlife photographs were taken by refuge volunteers, C&G Bartlett.

REFUGE DAY – OCTOBER 11

8am to Noon

SECOND SATURDAY EVENT

ALL AGES WELCOME

ALL ACTIVITIES ARE FREE

8 am Hike for birds - 8 am Hike for plants

ENJOY YOUR REFUGE

311 LAKE ROAD

BURBANK, WA 99323

PHONE 509-543-8322

NECKERCHIEF PRINTING

BLUEGOOSE TATOOS

CIRCLE OF SCIENCE

MUD CRITTERS

NATIVE PLANTS

LIVE BIRDS

FIRE DEMONSTRATION

PROJECTILE POINTS

This newsletter is produced, printed and mailed entirely by Friends of Mid-Columbia River Wildlife Refuges. No USFWS funds are used.

FLYWAYS – September - 2003