

FRIENDS OF MID-COLUMBIA RIVER WILDLIFE REFUGES

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PO BOX 544, 311 Lake Road, Burbank, Washington 99323-0544

FROM THE PRESIDENT:

All through this issue, you can read about our accomplishments as a Friends group! School teachers commend the education program! People come back to Second Saturdays! Students want to volunteer! The shrub steppe site is thriving! Sales of Centennial Blankets continue to roll in! We invite you to help us build on these accomplishments, "Best of What Is", and move on to a future that has even broader vision and community involvement, "What Can Be".

HOT OFF THE PRESS

Our new "hotel cards" invite visitors to the Refuge. Our new logo and stationery will invite new Friends to fly with us! All these were developed by Candace DeVary and David McCue of **DeVary Communications** and **Designer Q Graphics**. Not only are they great folks to work with, but we are grateful for their pro-bono portion! **Esprit Graphic Communications, Inc.** provided fine printing, just as they did for our membership brochures.

MOVING ON

With the heavy education season behind us, our Friends group can turn toward broader community involvement. Please help us get more invitations to speak to community groups! We have several speakers and presentations available. Dick Stone, **Information Matters**, contributed a lot of pro-bono time working with us to develop a powerpoint presentation. One next step in our strategy is a communications workshop facilitated by **Information Matters**. Much if we had staff available at the Center every day of the week.

We thank National Fish and Wildlife Foundation every day for the Startup Grant they provided this year. Many of these products and activities are supported by the grant. It also enabled us to purchase more microscopes for the science stations. One intent of the grant is to help us develop our membership and become self-sufficient. What are your ideas about the next steps? How can we help YOU help the Friends support our Mid-Columbia Refuges. Call us, write us, E-mail us, let us know!!

Paula Clark email pclark@owt.com

WELCOME ART SHINE

Art joined Mid-Columbia River National Wildlife Refuges in April as Outdoor Recreation Planner (ORP). Most of his time will be centered on project work such as the Wallula Overlook, interpretive panels for McKay and McNary NWRs, and the introduction of a fee program for Madam Dorian campground.

McNARY NWR CELEBRATION

This is old news but worthy of a headline. A special program at noon on March 26 brought many dignitaries to celebrate the second day of issue cancellation of the USPS US National Wildlife Refuge System centennial stamp.

Staff from Congressional offices of Senators Cantwell and Murray and Representatives Hastings and Nethercutt, delivered good wishes to the Refuge.

Mayors of three cities proclaimed March 26, 2003, Centennial Celebration Day. Michael Garrison, Pasco, Jerry Cummins, Walla Walla, and Robert Thompson, Richland, expressed their appreciation of the National Wildlife Refuge System at McNary NWR Center. Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau and other local groups were present. A poster of the commemorative stamp, courtesy of Othello Postmaster, James Herrin, was unveiled by Naomi Sherer, Cachet chair and Bonnie Beutler, USPS. Corliss and Lawrence Clay, Tri-City Stamp Club, handled the sale of 100 special cachets.

LOOK IT OVER ...HELP THE KIDS.

If you have a yen to work in an innovative outdoor education program come to McNary NWR at 311 Lake Road, Burbank. Meet the volunteers that presented our outdoor learning experiences to hundreds of children this past school year. Working with children has many rewards but we couldn't meet all the requests. Classes were turned away for lack of volunteers.

Our new air conditioner will keep us comfortable while the present volunteers describe the Refuge's vision of outdoor education. Then we will tour the circle of learning and share light refreshments.

Come on June 24 at 10 am. Call 543-8322 for more information.

COLLECT NWRS CACHETS

Several designs are still available for \$2 with the second day of issue cancellation. A limited number of several designs with the first day of issue from Sebastian (Pelican Island) are available for \$5. Purchase by mail. Send request, check and self addressed stamped envelope to: Stamp Cachets
McNary NWR Education Center, 311 Lake Road, Burbank, WA 99323

Sunrise photo by Greg Greger, Drawing by Naomi Sherer Some with first day of issue from Pelican Island are available for \$5

This generic design was sent to all Refuges for the Centennial and is available for \$2 with the McNary NWR Station cancellation OR for \$5 with the Sebastian first day of issue cancellation

BRIAN ALLEN, refuge manager, reports for Cold Springs, McKay Creek, and Umatilla National Wildlife Refuges:

Primarily, we are controlling invasive and non-native weeds with treatments of herbicides within upland and riparian habitats and along roadsides in coordination with

ongoing biological pest control efforts. Much of our weed control to date has been devoted to perennial pepperweed, yellow starthistle, and broadleaves within native grass stands. Later in the season emphasis will be shifted to the control of Russian olive. We are also doing maintenance on our public use roads at Cold Springs (3.87 miles), McKay Creek (3.03 miles), and Umatilla (15.03 miles).

In the near future we start our annual controlled drawdown of water at Memorial Marsh, as well as timed mechanical treatments in these and other wetlands. Timed dewatering and mechanical treatments of these wetland units are used to promote the production of desired native moist soil plants such as smartweeds, goosefoot, swamp timothy, and wild millet. Native annual moist soil plants produce abundant seed, which serve as an important food source for waterfowl. These seeds provide a full complement of the dietary needs of waterfowl, including amino acids, fatty acids, carbohydrate, vitamins, and minerals.

YOUNG WATERFOWL

Broods of Canada Geese are grazing by the McNary pond. The juveniles appear to be of different ages and our biologist plans to band them on June 14 beginning at 9am.

Watch for ducklings of the Ruddy, Redhead, Wood duck, and Green-winged Teal and chicks of the American Coot.

DAVE GONZALES, refuge manager.

Toppenish National Wildlife Refuge celebrated International Bird Migration Day with the dedication of the "Visitor Contact Center". An old home used as staff headquarters since 1964 was modified to improve space allocation. Interior walls were rearranged to provide an office, room to greet visitors, and bathroom facilities. Dave continues minor improvements with the help of volunteers.

The successful celebration on May 10 included a demonstration of bird banding of Neotropicals, auto birding tours, and the Official Opening of the Visitor Contact Center. Visitors were encouraged to search for birds in the delightful old trees near the building and walk the trails to bird watch on their own.

Travel just a few miles south of Toppenish on US 97, and find hawks, owls and songbirds not so easily viewed on our other Refuges.

SECOND SATURDAY MONTHLY

Second Saturdays continue to be popular with families and scouting groups. On April 12, Murrell Dawson led a wildflower walk. Jean Zach showed wildflower slides. Birds are always on view. On May 10, John Cox told bird tales and showed artifacts of Native Americans. Marilyn Hayes guided cub scouts through requirements for their outdoor badge on birds.

Lynn and Bill Tomkins from Blue Mountain Raptor Rehabilitation displayed a live red-tailed hawk and a great horned owl. If you know of an injured raptor call 541-278-0215.

On June 14 mosquitoes are the main subject with emphasis on their predator, the bat. Learn about the West Nile Virus found to be spread by the maligned mosquito.

FRIENDS OF MID-COLUMBIA RIVER WILDLIFE REFUGES

Friends and volunteers were busy in many areas the past months. Several volunteers displayed brochures for the Mid-Columbia Complex at the annual Sandhill Crane Festival at Othello. Two volunteers demonstrated flint knapping and tule mat weaving at Wiley Elementary School in West Richland. Nine Pasco third grade classrooms were shown mounted bird specimens before coming to the McNary outdoor education program.

Friends hosted Seal Beach NWR Pelican Caravan on March 26 with a special program at Columbia High School highlighting the Centennial Celebration of the National Wildlife System.

Pelts, beaks, and talons were displayed at Jefferson Elementary Science Fair on May 9 for examination by 300 parents and children. .

Friends assisted 18 volunteers from the Department of Energy, for the United Way Day of Caring. Painting, weeding, mowing, trail maintenance, and tule mat weaving were handled with care on March 13.

HIGH INTENSITY SCHOOL VISITS

Volunteers treated 496 children with teachers and chaperones to unique interpretive stations at McNary NWR in April. The first three weeks in May, 589 children and adults came for the same high quality environmental experience. The program is free. Advance registration is required. Call 509-543-8322

Thanks to a grant from Recreation Equipment Inc. (REI) in Kennewick we were able to support bus transportation for many.

HEY LOOK WHO'S HERE

Welcome new members from the Blue Mountain Audubon Society and the Yakima Valley Audubon Society! Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society joined as a founder of McNary NWR Education Center.

Help us get invitations to community groups! Help us to spread the best kept secret – that McNary NWR is close by and open to the public every day of the year. Several speakers are available for presentations.

Call 509-543-8322 and leave contact names and phone numbers or e-mails.

COME SEE HAPPY PLANTS

One cold November weekend 20 volunteers put 400 native plants in the restoration plot at McNary NWR. Now six months later the plants are healthy and happy. Penstemons, yarrow, fleabane and evening primrose are in bloom. Some grasses have gone to seed. Shrubs, grasses, and forbes have a delightful permanent place in the McNary National Wildlife Refuge learning experience. And more is in store for the grounds at the McNary Refuge Education Center. If you would like to be involved... call Shannon at 946-4813 or send e-mail spirit@3-cities.com

TEEPEE NEEDS NEW CLOTHES

Our authentic Wanapum Teepee is getting new layers of tule mats. Volunteers are weaving mats and others come as scheduled to secure the mats to the teepee skeleton. Greg welcomes help on that project. Come to work or observe. Call Greg 943-3951 to weave mats or work on teepee.

LINDA GUNTER, office receptionist for the Mid-Columbia River NWRs, left on May 8 to join her husband in Georgia. She kept track of blanket sales for Friends along with her multitude of regular office duties. We miss her.

MISTNET NEOTROPICALS

Howard Browsers, Biologist, leads mistnetting and banding of songbirds on McNary NWR starting May 30. Volunteers are needed. Be prepared to start work around 4am among mosquitoes and ticks. If you are interested in learning or observing call Howard at 545-8588 for information.

COME AND PARTICIPATE

View birds from the deck while volunteering for school programs, maintenance, office work, or hosting visitors to the Education Center. With summer and the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, the entire area will benefit economically and we can contribute to the education about the Lewis and Clark Voyage of Discovery and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Join us. Call: 509-543-8322

If you have donated 24 or more hours of time to our projects or office, you can be a Friends member for 2003 free of charge! Of course, we always welcome donations as well.

BLANKETS COMING AND GOING

Jim Mock unloads another shipment of our exclusive Pendleton Centennial Blanket. Orders come in weekly and Jim ships them off to happy customers. Order with credit card by calling 509-545-8588 or 509-543-8322 ...OR copy order form from website nwr.mcary.wa.us and send check or money order to Friends Blankets 311 Lake Road, Burbank, WA 99323

BIRDING AT McNARY NWR

with Chris Simonen

Come and pick a spot to watch the activities this summer at the McNary NWR. This is an exciting time to see the parents tending to their young. May and June are the primary months for songbirds to be nesting. All summer, parent birds will be searching for food for their nestlings and newly fledged young.

You might decide to sit on the bench on the deck of the Education Center and quietly observe which birds are eating the cherries in the tree next to the deck. Who is on the lawn? Any birds perched in the nearby trees? Any flying by? Closest ones don't require binoculars.

The cherry tree will be bearing fruit – watch for American Robins and Brewer's Blackbirds eating these. On the lawn, young Brewer's Blackbirds may be seen being fed by their parents. Other birds to be seen could be swallows like the brilliant blue and rust Barn and Cliff Swallows flying while swooping on insects from the air and bringing their results to their nestlings.... bird parents lead a very demanding life style! American White Pelicans may be seen flying in for a visit on the pond. Their graceful gliding with their prehistoric appearance brings one to another world.

Or meander down the path to the bird blind, tiptoe into the darkened room, study the gorgeous multi-colored male Wood Ducks swimming near the raft. Great Blue Herons standing like a statue quietly waiting for ... pounce!! Floating on the pond may be male Ruddy Ducks with their blue bills and reddish bodies. There will be the more common black American Coots with whitish bills. If you have a lucky day, they may have a youngster or two with bright yellow bills. A Mallard family may be seen taking a swim across the pond. But the human must be quiet and patient to observe these behaviors.

Walking around one may hear in the reeds nearby, the Marsh Wrens' quick paced song as if "stitching with their old fashioned sewing machine". Yellow-headed Blackbirds may be seen and heard with their strangling harsh sound, another prehistoric-like picture comes to mind. Another blackbird, the Red-winged Blackbird is quite numerous on the Refuge with the males having red shoulder patches on their wings.

Oriole nests are like loosely woven pendulum baskets hanging from branches near the wooded area of the path. Bright orange and black birds are Bullock's Orioles (Black-headed Grosbeaks are also orange and black but with a large bill and different face pattern). By the end of June, the parent Orioles may be seen gathering food and going to their pendulum swinging basket nests feeding their young.

Some species which have wintered here have flown north to breed for the summer. For example, fewer numbers of Canada Geese are present here in the summer than in the fall and winter. August into September, the summer resident birds will slowly be migrating south, while many birds from the north will be returning to spend the winter and others will be stopping briefly to continue on their way.

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