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## President's Column



Doug Spencer

Dear Friends, welcome back! This is our first Friends newsletter in over a year and half. When our intern Katrina moved on to further her education, both the refuge staff and our organization were left without someone to coordinate and edit our popular quarterly newsletter. Recently a new Friends member, Debbie Maynard, has volunteered to take on the coordination and edit of our newsletter. We are so grateful to have Debbie taking on this endeavor. Thank you for doing this Debbie.

A lot has happened since the last newsletter! Our Friends board is fully staffed with an eager and ambitious board of directors to lead our organization into a bright future. Our newest board of directors are Azizah Mohd, Dave Landkamer, and Diane Young. We welcome them into our organization. Board of director Mark Fuller, resigned recently to take on other worthwhile conservation activities in eastern Oregon. We welcome his past support of our organization. If you are not aware, we have two Wild Goose Nature Store managers, Jeanne Taylor and Lena Proebsting. With their hard work in training new volunteers and bringing on new store items (and Liz Aikens coordinating the volunteer effort) the store has

been very productive this last year. Thank you all for your dedication. If you haven't been to the store in a while, please make a point to do so. The store is open Friday – Sunday and all of the profits go to projects associated with our Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges.

The Friends have also started up two new committees that any member can assist with. They are the “Environmental Education/ Interpretation/Event

Committee” or for short, the *Outreach Committee* (Board of Director Logan Bennett is the chair) and the “Habitat/Biological/ Maintenance Committee” or just the *Biology Committee* (Board of Director Azizah Mohd is the chair). Please contact them if you would like to assist on these committees.

The Friends will be participating in a couple of events this spring. The first is the Earth Day event being held on April 23rd, at the Oregon Gardens. This event is free, so stop by and say hi. This is a lot of fun for all ages. The Friends will have a table with children's activities. The other event will be held at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge on May 14th, and it is our annual open house, entitled “Prairies in Bloom”. This is also a family event that will provide activities for all ages. The Fiechter house (1855) and the Cabell barn will be open for viewing. Hope to see you at both of these events.

Lastly, thank you for being a loyal and dedicated Friends member. Your support helps our national wildlife refuges in the mid-Willamette Valley. With what recently happened at Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Burns, our refuges need your help and support more than ever.

## FRIENDS' MISSION

*The Friends of the Willamette Valley Refuge Complex is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to:*

- *Promote the conservation of the natural resources of the Refuge Complex*
- *Foster awareness and appreciation of the Complex through educational and recreational opportunities*
- *Participate in activities that help the Complex achieve its goals.*



## *Project Leader's Column By Damien Miller*



It's hard to believe how much has transpired in the many months since the last newsletter. We have a new Administrative Officer on board, Sandra Hahn, and she has already jumped right in and is quickly coming up to speed on all aspects of the WVNWRC's budget, personnel and administrative workload. We also have a new Supervisory Biologist (Brian Root) and Visitor Services Manager (Samantha Bartling), and a new Prescribed Fire Specialist (Jeremiah Maghan) - all of whom started last summer and are already providing immense value and growing the Biology, Visitor Services, and Fire programs for the Refuges. If you haven't met these folks yet, plan to attend the Refuge Open House on May 14th or stop by and say hi during our regular business hours. We also have a new Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program biologist that started a few months ago (Cameron King). He'll be based out of Baskett Slough and focused on the North Willamette Valley

private lands' projects.

With the busy spring/summer field season upon us, we are scrambling to complete as many projects as we can fit into our busy schedules. We received our Refuge FWS base budget recently, which was a reduction of 7% in our operating funds, but at the same time, staff has worked diligently to solicit project funding from internal Fish and Wildlife Service programs to restore habitat, reduce fire fuels, fight invasive weeds, and conduct species inventory and monitoring efforts. With these successful grants, we are well positioned to continue our aggressive conservation efforts on all three Refuges.

Here's a snapshot of some key projects that we'll be working on this summer:

- Oak Restoration on Baskett Slough and Finley Refuge combined with fuels reduction and removal of invasive Douglas fir.
- Fender's Blue Butterfly habitat management and restoration on Baskett Slough and Finley along with augmentation of the FBB population at Finley.
- Continued collaboration with Salem Audubon Society towards

the building of a Nature Center at Ankeny.

- Building of a new equipment storage facility at Ankeny NWR.
- Conservation efforts along with close monitoring of Streaked Horned Lark on all three Refuges.
- Early, intensive control of false brome, a troublesome invasive grass.
- Along with a team of partners, we recently hosted an event called "Winter Wildlife Day" at Finley that was attended by close to 300 people.
- Sam worked closely with OSU Extension, local schools and Salem Audubon to set up presentations for over 1,000 children in the Mid-Valley. The Bird Trippers are two bilingual interns traveling from S. California to Alaska to promote the centennial of the International Migratory Bird Treaty Act.
- We planted over 84,000 native trees and shrubs this winter along with over 62,000 native bulbs and plants on the Refuges and in cooperation with some private land owners that are enrolled in the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program.
- Finley Refuge Open

House (May 14th) Throughout the challenging times associated with the illegal occupation of our sister Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, it would have been easy to get discouraged or lose motivation for our work. The staff at Malheur has done an exceptional job of taking the higher road, maintaining professionalism, and staying as positive as they could while enduring these events. They are now actively working their way back to overcome the damage, on all levels. They deserve our thanks and recognition! The staff here and across the Region has been affected by these events but as Director Dan Ashe requested, we stayed focused on our mission of conservation. I'm sure you will see by the list above, and by the habitat on the Refuges, that my staff has done just that. I am blessed to have the very best FWS Refuge Team in the nation. If you see any of them while you're visiting next, please join me in thanking them for the great job and noble work that they do! Thanks for your interest and support of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. We hope to see you out on one of the Refuges soon!



~Samantha Bartling, USFWS Visitor Services Manager

## Calendar of Upcoming Refuge Events:

Saturday, May 7th from 9 am – 1 pm: **Finley Refuge Work Party and Clean-up day.** Join staff and fellow volunteers as we do a little Spring clean-up and sprucing up around the Refuge. There are owl pellets to collect, historic floors to sweep, and a few pesky weeds to send along their way. This is always a fun work party!

Monday, May 9th from 9:30 am – 11 am: **Hike it Baby Hike** at the Homer Campbell Boardwalk. Bring your wee one and enjoy your Refuge.

Wednesday, May 11th from 9 am – 11 am: **Words through the Woods.** Meet us at the Woodpecker Loop Trailhead. We'll walk through some of the Willamette Valley's rarest habitat types, stopping along the way to take note of what we see growing, crawling and flying around us. The trail passes by a favorite red-legged frog breeding pond. We'll also stop a few times to share select works of poetry (known and unknown, local and from long ago). Care to share with us? Nature Inspired and Inspired Nature.

Saturday, May 14th from 10 am – 3 pm: **William L. Finley Refuge Open House.** The theme is "Prairies in Bloom," a very apt theme at a time when the rare upland and wet prairies of the Refuge will ablaze with wildflowers! Join us for guided walks and tours and sneak a peek at parts of your local wildlife refuge that you haven't seen yet. If you like history and culture, Benton County's oldest building, the Fiechter House, will be open for tours, along with its red barn full of farm implements and the barn owl occupants. Come explore, experience and connect with your William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge! While you're here don't forget to visit the many tables and booths for crafts, fun take-home projects, hands-on activities, and resources.

We always have a ton going on. **Let us know if you want to get involved and volunteer!** If you don't get emails from me on where/how you can volunteer with us, let me know and I'll add you to our list! (Samantha\_bartling@fws.gov; 541-760-3036).

*Bobcat photo:  
Camden Bruner*



## Odds 'n' Ends and other fun tid-bits:

- We'd love to hear from you! Our Facebook site grows all the time and we post frequently. Look for updates, great photos, events and other Complex details on our page: Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. There are new feedback boxes up at all of the Willamette Valley Refuges. Let us know what you think, what we could improve upon, and let us know what we're getting right. Walt did an amazing job making the boxes.
- We'll have an Environment for America's Intern starting in the Fall, helping us develop a Hispanic Outreach Program for the Complex.
- 2016 Elk and Deer Hunt information is posted on our website. Look there for the regulations, maps and application.
- The bobcats of Finley Refuge are a common site and just the other day (4/5) one of the kittens left a nose smudge mark on the sliding glass door of the HQ break room. Keep an eye out, you never know when or where you'll see one of the bobcats!
- A pair of screech owls took up residence along the Homer Campbell boardwalk. If you visit the boardwalk, walk quietly and use your binoculars to scan the Wood Duck boxes. You might just catch a glimpse of one.

THANKS TO 60  
 OUTSTANDING  
 VOLUNTEERS,  
 WE LEARNED,  
 PLAYED,  
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 EXPLORED  
 NATURE  
 TOGETHER



*Winter Wildlife Field Day at Finley NWR*

~Teri Engbring

Despite typical cold, wet, windy winter weather, over 260 brave folks of all ages came out for the second annual Winter Wildlife Field Day at Finley Refuge on March 12th. Thanks to 60 outstanding volunteers, we learned, played, enjoyed and ex-

plored Nature together!

The event was a team effort of volunteers from the Friends of Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex, the Audubon Society of Corvallis, Refuge staff, Chintimini Wildlife Center (with 3 live birds), Institute for Applied Ecology, Starker Forest, and more than a dozen OSU students.

An amazing group of volunteers helped through six months of planning and prep that resulted in 13 different activity stations from owl pellet dissection to guided birding hikes and pond critter exploration. Friends group volunteers included Logan Bennett, Azizha Mohd, Doug and Janine Spencer. Finley

NWR Visitor Services Manager Samantha Bartling was part of the event steering committee, along with Friends (and Corvallis Audubon Ed Team) member Teri Engbring, and event chair, Jeremy Felty, an OSU Forestry undergrad. ASC volunteer Jessica Brothers designed the impressive event flyer. Lena Proebsting and Jeanne Taylor report that they did a booming business in the Wild Goose Nature store that day, as well.

Many of the same volunteers will be returning to Finley to help with fun interactive activities planned for our Open House on May 14th.



Bird Photos : Teri Engbring



Acom Woodpecker

Event Photos: Jeremy Felty



## Thanks

~Samantha Bartling, USFWS Visitor Services Manager

Huge thanks to the many volunteers that braved wet weather to help us add needed diversity and native plants to the prairies of Ankeny, Baskett Slough and Finley this winter!

To the students and families we met during BirdTripper events and Winter Wildlife Field Day, thanks for sharing with us!

Many of you met Camden S. Bruner, our winter resident volunteer. He did an outstanding job and is greatly missed! He's back with BLM surveying owls but his work is evident and lives on at the Complex.

**Tuesday, April 12: Friends Board meeting**, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 PM in the meeting room at Natural Grocer's on 9th Street in Corvallis

**Thursday, April 21: Willamette Valley Habitat Symposium**, 7:00 – 9:00 PM, Capitol Subaru 3235 Cherry Avenue NW, Salem, Oregon. Learn how you can enhance your own or your community's wildlife habitats



## Volunteer Opportunities

**Earth Day at Oregon Gardens, 4/23.** Contact Doug Spencer: [doug\\_spencer@q.com](mailto:doug_spencer@q.com)

**Finley Refuge Work Party, 5/7:**  
Contact Sam Bartling:  
([Samantha\\_bartling@fws.gov](mailto:Samantha_bartling@fws.gov), 541-760-3036)

**Finley Refuge Open House - "Prairies in Bloom," 5/14:**  
Contact Sam Bartling  
([Samantha\\_bartling@fws.gov](mailto:Samantha_bartling@fws.gov), 541-760-3036)

### WILD GOOSE NATURE STORE

~Jeanne and Lena, Store Managers

Welcome to the Wild Goose Nature Store!

The Wild Goose Nature Store is a tiny gift shop located on the William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge. Despite its small size, it offers a good assortment of books, T-shirts, caps, pins, stuffed animals, mugs, earrings, photo cards, table runners, canvas bags, bookmarks and other items with a nature theme, stressing local plants and animals. Lena Proebsting and Jeanne Taylor have been managing the Wild Goose Nature Store since March 2015 and have tried to pack a lot of good quality merchandise into the small space.

The Wild Goose Nature Store is run entirely by volunteers and is open Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 10 AM to 4PM all year. In addition to sales, store volunteers also act as representatives for the Refuge on weekends when the staff is usually not present, answering questions and welcoming visitors. All profits from the store go to the Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex organization and help support Refuge projects. As always, Friends members get a 10% discount at the store.

The store has had a busy and successful year, and Lena and Jeanne wish to thank all the hardworking volunteers who have contributed to that big success.



# Membership Form

New Membership     Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please check this box if you **DO NOT** wish to share your information directly with the Refuge Volunteer Coordinator for additional volunteer opportunities.

**I am interested in these volunteer opportunities:**

- Work Parties     Special Events     Wild Goose Nature Store  
 Education Programs     Board Member  
 Habitat Restoration     Grounds Maintenance  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Annual Membership Categories

- \$10 Senior / Student  
 \$15 Individual  
 \$25 Family  
 Volunteer\*

**All contributions in excess of membership fees are tax deductible under corporation guidelines.**

\$\_\_\_\_\_ Tax deductible donation

**Please make checks payable to FWVNWRC.**

\* Please contact the Friends Volunteer Coordinator to see if you qualify.



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National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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