

WILD GOOSE TALES

4TH QUARTER, 2013



President's Column



Doug Spencer

At the close of 2013 and welcoming in the New Year, we have so much to be thankful for. The Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex were very successful in living up to their mission, by assisting our national wildlife refuges in hosting an "Open House" last May, a photo workshop for the novice photographer in June, and providing a very informative habitat restoration speaker for our annual meeting in October. The Friends also provided volunteer support to the refuge staff by greet-

ing and providing information to the public at the W.L. Finley NWR office, conducting guided tours to the public and providing off-site talks/presentations (Corvallis and Oregon Gardens). Our membership also contributed many volunteer hours in successfully operating the Wild Goose Nature Store on most weekends. As President of our organization, I want to thank each Board member for their hard work and time they provided in making this organization so successful. I also want to thank the entire staff of the Willamette Valley NWRC for all of their support for our organization and their dedication to the natural resources.

The Friends were also very involved in the planning for a nature center at Ankeny NWR, in partnership with Salem Audubon Society and



Jim Leonard captured this photo of a Lewis's woodpecker on Ankeny NWR, where several have been seen throughout the fall.

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.*

the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. At present, Salem Audubon Society is in the process of contracting with a local firm to develop a Schematic Design Plan for the site and building. This plan will assist the partnership in raising additional funds through potential donors and will be the next step in having this building constructed.

As we enter the New Year, we will need your help even more. Most of you know and realize that the refuge budgets have been reduced considerably. With the loss of the Visitor Services position and not expecting this

position to be filled anytime soon, more volunteer help is needed to maintain trails, providing environmental education for our children, greeting the public, and wildlife presentations/talks. The list goes on. Many of you in our membership have skills that can help our organization and the refuges. Please take the time, volunteer and apply these skills to our national wildlife refuges.

Wishing all of you a safe, healthy and successful New Year! Again thank you for all the help that you have provided our organization and to our refuges. ←



Project Leader's Column



Damien Miller

Wow! 2014 already?! Where did the year go? At the beginning of each new year, I like to spend some quiet time reflecting on the events of the past year and planning ahead for the new year. The Willamette Valley Refuge Complex had a really great year in 2013! Although we had a few set backs due to decreasing budgets, loss of our visitor services position, a hiring freeze, and a furlough during our peak field season, we were still successful in achieving or key conservation priorities. We met our Refuge goals for wintering goose habitat on all

three Refuges and exceeded our wetland and upland habitat conservation goals on private lands. We also completed several habitat restoration projects on and off Refuges with specific focus on work to support recovery and downlisting of Fender's Blue Butterfly, Bradshaw's Desert Parsley, and the Oregon Chub. We completed prairie restoration projects using prescribe fire and key oak restoration projects on Baskett Slough NWR and Finley NWR, all of which were done with a perfect safety record.

We have put together an aggressive conservation work plan for 2014 and have already begun the planning, preparation, and field work. We'll continue to focus on wintering goose habitat of course, and also control of the invasive species on the Refuges but have

already initiated plans to restore prairie around Pigeon Butte and to reintroduce Fender's Blue

(Continued on page 6)

BOARD MEMBERS

PRESIDENT:

DOUG SPENCER

VICE-PRESIDENT:

TOM NELSON

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STORE MANAGER:

NANCY ZANOTTI

DIRECTORS:

LIZ AKIN

CARLA BERREY

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CARROLL DEKOCK

MELANIE GARRETT

ANTHONY STUMBO

BRIAN WACHELKA

USFWS LIAISON:

KATRINA MAGGIULLI

Board Update

- ◆ The Board pledged financial support from the FWVNWRC to establish W.L. Finley NWR as a Community Wildlife Habitat as recognized by the National Wildlife Federation. To certify your backyard as a Wildlife Habitat, visit www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife
- ◆ The Board is still looking to fill the positions of Treasurer and Secretary. For full position descriptions please contact the Friends Intern at Katrina_Maggiulli@fws.gov.

Help Benton County Become the 1st Community Wildlife Habitat in Oregon!

Molly Monroe/USFWS & Jeff Picton/Director, Chintimini Wildlife Center

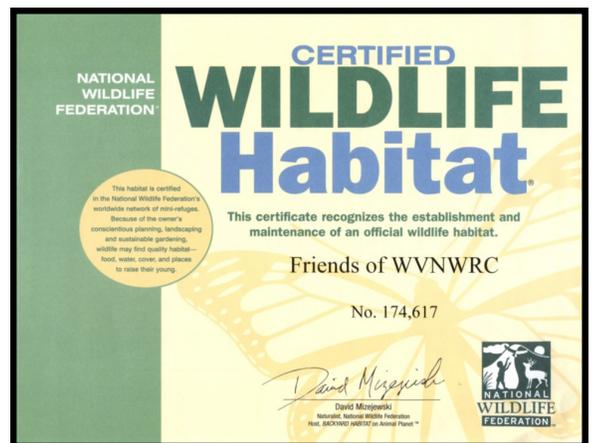
DID YOU KNOW...

The Friends of the Willamette Valley Refuges recently certified the Finley Headquarters courtyard as backyard habitat through the National Wildlife Federation's (NWF) Certified Wildlife Habitat Program? This program is designed to help people create and restore habitat for wildlife in their gardens, backyards, and communities by providing the essential components of a healthy ecosystem. The National Wildlife Federation has been promoting this program for more than 35 years and has certified more

than 150,000 backyard wildlife habitats along the way. They have a special program for communities that want to participate as a group, where, if they can certify a certain number of habitats in their community, the community as a whole receives a certification and is listed on the National Wildlife Federation website. Help Benton County become the FIRST coun-

ty in Oregon to be a NWF Certified Wildlife Habitat Community! Officially registered as the Backyard Wildlife Connections Team with the NWF, this group's goal

(Continued on page 7)



Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex



The Hiker's Trail

Brian Wachelka/Board Director

The Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex is well known as a sanctuary for attracting a diversity of waterfowl and other migratory birds. A little less known is the number and variety of hiking trails available throughout the Complex. From boardwalks to buttes and wetlands to woodpeckers, there is a trail for everyone. This column will spotlight a particular trail each newsletter to inspire our friends to set aside their binoculars for a moment and get hiking! Each trail will be rated for difficulty level (easy/moderate/difficult) based on ease of access, steepness, elevation change, and other trail conditions.



Rich Guadagno Memorial Loop (Baskett Slough NWR)

Distance: 1.7 miles	Accessibility: Open Year Round	Difficulty: Easy/Moderate
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Our next stop along *The Hiker's Trail* takes us north to Baskett Slough NWR near Dallas, OR for a walk along the Rich Guadagno Memorial Loop Trail and Observation Platform.

Before describing the trail, I'd like to take a moment to recognize Rich Guadagno. Rich grew up in New Jersey, and learned to love the outdoors, which led to a career as a Biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He worked for seventeen years in multiple

refuges in many different states, and was the refuge manager at Baskett Slough and Ankeny Refuges from 1992-2000. Rich was aboard United Flight 93 when it was hijacked and tragically crashed in Pennsylvania on September 11, 2001. The loop trail and observation deck were dedicated in 2007 in fitting memory of Rich.

The trailhead is accessed from Coville Road near the middle of the refuge. It is the only trail at Baskett Slough open year-round. A moderate climb through the upland prairie habitat and rare native oak savanna eventually branches to the left toward the observation deck, or to the right for the loop trail.

Staying to the left, the trail leads to an observation deck on the 414 foot summit, known as Mount Baldy. The overlook provides an impressive 360-degree view of the refuge and the surrounding wetlands and open farmlands. Expect to be greeted by the howls of the wind and the screeches of the red-tailed hawks flying overhead!

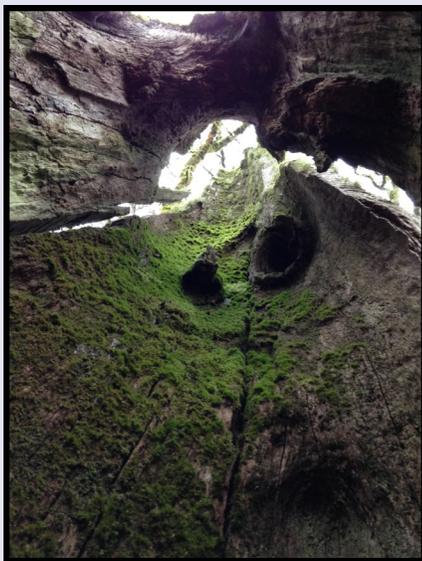
The right branch leads further up Baskett Butte before weaving its way through a mixed coniferous forest that



also includes Oregon white oak. The trail is lined with moss-covered trees and dotted with ferns. Keep your eyes open for an old, hollowed tree right along the path. It's a photo-op that can't be missed!

I'd like to encourage all our Friends to get out and visit the Rich Guadagno Memorial Loop Trail. It is a great reminder of how lucky we all are to have such beauty so close to us. And, as always, don't forget to say hello to fellow hikers you pass on the trail! ←

Top: Panoramic view from the Observation Deck (David Parry) Left: The hollow tree along the loop trail (Brian Wachelka) Right: The trailhead with Baskett Butte in the distance (Brian Wachelka)





Refuge Focus: 50 years ago... Part II: The Early Years of the Willamette Valley NWRC

**Laila Lienesch/
Deputy Project Leader**

In June 1964, when the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge was established, it was comprised of three units; Muddy Creek Division (now W.L. Finley), Ankeny Division, and Baskett Slough Division. According to Narrative Reports discovered during the clean-out of the old office at Cabell Lodge, staffing began with the transfer of three permanent employees from other refuges in the region, including Philip A. Lehenbauer, the first refuge manager who transferred from Columbia NWR. In addition, two temporary maintenance workers and one temporary wildlife biologist were assigned to the Refuge when it opened.

The Narrative Reports (NR's) provide us with a glimpse into the happenings on the Refuge. The 1964 NR for the Muddy Creek Division contains observations of waterfowl, migratory birds, upland game birds, and "big game," as well as an account of public relations and farming

practices. From September to December 1964, the largest number of ducks seen in one day was 14,000. When you compare this with the 2012 Christmas Bird Count where 45,662 ducks were observed at Finley, you can begin to see some of the progress made since the refuge opened. Upland game birds species frequenting the Refuge included Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Blue Grouse, and three species of quail (California, Bobwhite, and Mountain); a number of which were populations established by the Oregon Game Commission for hunting. Big game observations included black-tailed deer and black bear. At this time, the Refuge was open for hunting upland game birds and deer; and from August through December 1964 there were 2,010 hunting visits to the Refuge out of 2,530 total visits. For comparison, the Refuge counted nearly 10,000 visits in the same time span in 2013—a much lower percentage of which were for hunting.

In 1965, Refuge Manager Lehenbauer prepared a more comprehensive NR which included sections on weather, wildlife, refuge maintenance and development, resource management, research, and public relations. Weather patterns in 1965 were no less extreme than they are today. December 1964 – January 1965 saw

"flooding of disastrous proportions" in the Valley with \$25,000 in damage to the Refuge and "tens of millions of dollars" in western Oregon.

1965 was a busy year for the two maintenance staff posting 16 miles of boundary, erecting 15 miles of fence, and building 6 miles of road. Numerous buildings were rehabilitated or destroyed and Failing Cottage (now known as the Fiechter House) was transformed into a temporary office for Refuge staff. In addition, the first phase of Cabell Marsh development was completed which included building two dikes, and five islands to create a 120 acre seasonal marsh. The Marsh, being fed by Gray Creek, stayed dry through the summer until the first significant rains in November. By late December however, heavy rains caused severe flooding once again and on January 4, 1966 the flood waters of Muddy Creek peaked at 256.60 feet causing water to reverse flow through Cabell Marsh Dike! Similar to the previous year, 66% of the visitor use of the Refuge was on public hunting areas and 28% by visitors "seeking aesthetic type recreation." Two hundred and sixteen official visitors came to the Refuge including farmers, staff



"Heavy snowfall at Muddy Creek in January 1965"
Photo from the 1965 Narrative Report

from the Oregon Game Commission who released pheasants, and OSU students and professors. The popularity of hunting during this time even attracted Jim Conway of the television show *Outdoorsmen* who came with his crew to film the pheasant hunt.

In the Narrative's wildlife section, Lehenbauer recounts that the aerial census of dusky Canada geese indicated 11,200 birds wintered in the mid-Willamette Valley. One thousand to 3,500 dusky geese used the Refuge during January – April. Lehenbauer noted that "the wintering flock departed both Benton and Polk counties, in mass, on April 15. Not a single goose observation was made after this date." That hasn't changed much in 50 years! What has changed dramatically though is the number of dusky Canada geese that are observed. During the fall migration in 1965 (September – November), Refuge Staff noted a peak use of 9,000 dusky geese



"Flooded Muddy Creek bottoms and Tract 23 ryegrass fields, January 1965 flood"
Photo from the 1965 Narrative Report



the Muddy Creek Division during the week of December 20-26. This past year, Refuge Biologists tell me that at best 1,500 dusks were observed during the same time period; a very sobering statistic.

The following year brought a number of changes to the Refuge. In early January, 1966, the Muddy Creek Division was officially renamed W.L. Finley NWR and the Ankeny and Baskett Slough Divisions were established as Ankeny NWR and Baskett Slough NWR, creating the complex of refuges we have today. In addition, Refuge Manager Philip Lehenbauer accepted a promotion to the Regional Office in Portland and was replaced by Richard S. Rogers from Arrowhead NWR. This year also charted real progress in the protection of waterfowl. Overall goose use increased from 2,500 in 1964 to 11,050 in 1965. Duck use also increased 44% over the previous year. Large numbers of dusky Canada geese were reported using the Refuge with a high of 7,500 recorded on a

single day in January. Refuge Manager Rogers noted that the overall waterfowl picture to this new area was most encouraging and “that our main problem from this point on will be the providing of sufficient food to supply the birds...”

Obstacles the refuge faced in these early years included the maintenance of old buildings, an antiquated water system, and a pressing need for road construction. While already busy, maintenance staff constructed the Brown Swamp dike in the summer of 1966 along with the Display Pond just north of the current Headquarters building

Over the next few years, managers were hired for Ankeny and Baskett Slough, a permanent biologist was hired in 1969, goose and duck use continued to increase, and trails and roads continued to be developed. In 1971, the final 992.45 acres of Finley were acquired. Unfortunately, we recovered only a couple NR’s post 1970 and it became obvi-



“A much needed but expensive comfort station was completed during the late fall.” Photo from the 1969 Narrative Report. (Present-day Turtle Flats Restrooms)

ous that less attention was devoted to the reports. Nevertheless, the Narratives are an interesting read and provide me personally with

great pride and resolve to continue the conservation work that was started nearly 50 years ago. ←

Refuge Staff Holiday Party, 2013



On December 18th, WVNWR staff and Friends Board Directors gathered at W.L. Finley NWR to celebrate the holidays with a potluck and to look back on another productive year of conservation. Staff members mentioned successes from hiring new Partners Program biologist Graham Peters during a hiring freeze to categorizing chemical ingredients in herbicide sprays to make use safer and more effective. ←



This Wilson’s snipe wasn’t slowed down a bit by the weather! Jim Leonard captured this photo of it enjoying a slimy snack at Baskett Slough NWR.



Top: Project Leader Damien Miller sporting a fetching raffle prize, courtesy of the WGNS. Above: The group. Photos by Laila Lienesch



Friends Feature: Wood Duck Nesting Boxes

Carroll DeKock/ Board Director

About 10 years ago I saw flying squirrels for my first and only time. Chris Seal, a biologist stationed at Ankeny, and I were cleaning out wood duck nest boxes at Snag Boat Bend. As Chris climbed the ladder to reach the nest box the box erupted with 6 flying squirrels coming out, scampering up the tree and then literally flying to the next tree. It was an amazing sight, one I probably will not witness again. Flying squirrels are nocturnal so one will probably see them only when disturbing their daytime sleep. I had lived in the little hamlet of Peoria, just down the road from Snag Boat Bend, for 20 years. During that time we would see wood ducks in our back yard, on the Willamette River, and in the spring would watch them as they searched carefully in the trees for nest cavities. Needless to say there are not many natural cavities in trees today that can support a wood duck nest. The female wood duck needs a hole about 4 inches in diameter and a cavity large enough to fit her body. Holes of this size are made by

pileated woodpeckers in old dead trees. There are not enough of either around to support a wood duck population.

I have been cleaning boxes out and hanging new boxes at both Snag Boat Bend and Finley since that early encounter with the flying squirrels. Another fairly common resident of wood duck nest boxes are western screech owls. It is interesting to open a box and find a screech owl sound asleep. They seem unperturbed, with at most a lazy head raise. One year there was also a colony of bees that took over a box. Needless to say that box did not get cleaned until the colony left.

Wood ducks are our most beautiful duck. As their name implies they like the woods and are often found along creeks running through forested areas. The female will lay up to a dozen eggs in a nest and then incubate them for 30 days. The newly hatched ducklings then climb out of the nest box and fall to the ground, or water, if the box is over water. All the artificial boxes that we make have grooves on the inside or wire mesh to aid the little ones



Refuge wood duck box, photo by Carroll DeKock

in their climb out of the box. The mother duck then leads them to water and they feed on their own.

My naïve assumption was that if we provide the nesting habitat, that is a nest box, all will be well and we will have lots of successful hatches. It doesn't seem to work that way. In cleaning out boxes one finds eggs that have gone rotten, and boxes that have had too many eggs laid, I have found upwards of 20 eggs in one box. This behavior is called dumping, that is more than one hen laying eggs in a box. One also finds partially incubated eggs; either the hen was killed or

too frightened to return to the box. Nonetheless, about one-third of the boxes are successful each year. At Finley, almost all the boxes do get used each year. The next time you are at Finley, think about hiking the Homer Campbell Boardwalk. We have placed 6 nest boxes that can be seen from the boardwalk. If you are walking with children see if they, or for that matter you, can find all six boxes. If you are lucky you might even see a wood duck going into or coming out of a box in the spring. Of course, to see the little ducks come out would be a once in a lifetime experience. ←

Project Leader's Column

(Continued from page 2)
Butterfly to the Finley Refuge by summer 2015! We are planning to celebrate the Refuge Complex's 50th anniversary on May 10th so mark the date on your calendar and plan to come out to Finley to learn more about the Refuges' histo-

ry and conservation accomplishments over the past 50 years.... and to enjoy the beautiful natural vistas and variety of wildlife!

Wishing you a Happy New Year with hopes that you'll be out enjoying your National Wildlife Refuges in 2014! ←

BECOME A WILD GOOSE NATURE STORE VOLUNTEER!

A TRAINING FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS WILL BE HELD SATURDAY, JANUARY 18TH FROM 10 AM TO 12 PM. CONTACT KATRINA AT (541) 757-7236 EXT 209 IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE!



Calendar of Events

Saturday, December 28 - Sunday, January 19—Amazing final markdown clearance at the Wild Goose Nature Store! Find deals as much as 60% off! Store hours are Friday-Sunday, 10am-4pm.

Tuesday, January 14, 6 pm—FWVNWRC Board Meeting, Locke Fire Station.

Saturday, January 18, 10 am-12 pm—Wild Goose Nature Store new volunteer training. Contact Katrina at (541) 757-7236 ext 209 to participate.

Sunday, January 19—Naturalist Adventure at Finley NWR with the Neighborhood Naturalist Program. Group will meet at 9 a.m. to carpool to the Refuge. For more information visit their website at http://www.neighborhood-naturalist.com/neighborhood-naturalist_events.htm#finley

Tuesday, March 11, 6 pm—FWVNWRC Board Meeting, location to be determined.

Saturday, April 19, 10 am-4 pm—Earth Day Celebration at the Oregon Gardens. Join us at our organization booth for this annual event! Check out the Oregon Gardens website for more information on vendors and activities: <http://www.oregongarden.org/events/earth-day/>

Tuesday, April 22—Earth Day

Saturday, May 10—WVNWRC 50th Anniversary Celebration at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge.

News from the Wild Goose Nature Store

With Federal shutdowns and unusual weather patterns, the Wild Goose Nature Store was closed for several days this quarter. As a result, the sales for this winter are down compared to last year. The good news is that the geese and other waterfowl are back at the Refuge and we hope to see lots of visitors in the coming weeks.

We currently have a **60% off** table in the lobby and other markdowns in the store through January 19th. Bring in some of your holiday gift dollars and find a bargain while you support the Refuges!

A new staff training will be scheduled for January 18th from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. If you are interested in being a store volunteer please contact Katrina at the Refuge (541-757-7236 ext 209). Returning staff in need of a refresher are welcome as well!

Special thanks to our current volunteers and our customers who continue to support the store and, in turn, the Refuge.

Happy New Year!

~Nancy Zanotti, Store Manager

Help Benton County Become the 1st Community Wildlife Habitat in Oregon!

(Continued from page 2)

is to promote and facilitate the development and preservation of wildlife habitat by helping Benton County meet the criteria to become an officially Certified Wildlife Habitat Community. The number of individual certifications required to meet this criteria is based on population size, and for Benton County the threshold is very doable: 200 certified individual backyards, 6 common areas (Finley will be one of them), and 5 certified schools. There are already over 100 individual properties certified, 2 common

areas, and we are working closely with area schools to get their grounds certified. Corvallis Sustainability Coalition has a web page devoted to this effort, which you can visit at <http://sustainablecorvallis.org/action-teams/natural-areas/backyard-wildlife-connections/>.

It's easy to become certified! Your property must provide four things: food, water, shelter, and a place for wildlife to raise their young. It doesn't take a big yard; in fact, it doesn't take a yard at all. You can create valuable wildlife habitat in a small space like a balcony or

patio, too! GET CERTIFIED by visiting www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife and registering your habitat. Whether you register or not, this site gives plenty of helpful tips for transforming your yard into a wildlife-friendly place. Your reward, beyond knowing you've done something for the wildlife in our area, is your pleasure when wildlife comes to visit (or better yet when they come to raise a family) along with a few perks from the National Wildlife Federation. The National Wildlife Federation charges a \$20 fee for your certification, which entitles

you to a one-year NWF membership and a subscription to National Wildlife magazine, a personalized certificate memorializing your accomplishment, a subscription to their email newsletter, and inclusion in NWF's National Registry of Habitats. When you certify your backyard habitat with the NWF, it automatically counts toward Benton County's certification as Oregon's FIRST Community Wildlife Habitat by NWF. So get started today, and do your part to provide valuable habitat for Oregon's wildlife! ←

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

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

\$ _____ Tax deductible donation

Please make checks payable to FWVNWRC.



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National Wildlife Refuge Complex

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