



# WILD GOOSE TALES

NOVEMBER 2019

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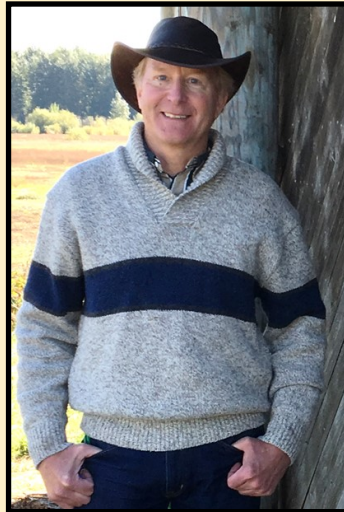
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## President's Column



**Dave Landkamer**

In your summer newsletter, I wrote rather glowingly about some of the leading institutions in the United States that are involved in lands and natural resources conservation, and protecting and preserving wildlands, habitats, and the diversity of plants and animals that live with and alongside of us on this planet. In this issue of your newsletter, I will take a more somber view of how this is working out for our natural world, and specifically, how bird populations in North America are in broad decline.

Many of you probably read the September New York Times article by Carl Zimmer,

"Birds Are Vanishing From North America", in which the author summarizes an analysis published in the Journal of Science about how bird populations on the continent are declining. If you haven't yet seen the article, I recommend that you use this link to find and read it: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/science/bird-populations-america-canada.amp.html>

The study, based on a broad survey of 529 bird species, concludes that "the [total] number of birds has fallen by 29% since 1970". In other words, 2.9 billion fewer birds are living in the US and Canada now than there were 50 years ago. And its not just threatened or endangered species numbers that are shrinking, but even more common birds such as robins, warblers, blackbirds, cardinals, doves, wrens, jays, sparrows and nearly all groups of birds are experiencing long-term population declines.

## FRIENDS' MISSION

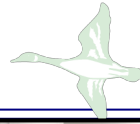
*The Friends of the Willamette Valley Refuge Complex is an independent nonprofit organization whose mission is to:*

- *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 breadth and scale of the losses are a stunning reminder that our biosphere is in decline in spite of our most noble conservation efforts.

The results of the study are not entirely surprising, when we think about all that has happened during the last 50 years. During my lifetime, the human population of the United States has doubled, from 165 million to 330 million. Population growth has been accompanied by the development of bigger cities,

(Continued on page 15)



## DUSKY DAY AT THE ARTS CENTER!



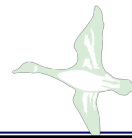
**BY ISABEL JUSTINIANO**

The downtown Corvallis Arts Center hosts their 2nd Saturday programs every month and this October, the William L. Finley Refuge partnered with them to celebrate dusky Canada geese! English and Spanish-speaking families had fun making dusky masks, migration maps and ecosystem dioramas while learning about these unique birds.

Thank you to our Arts Center host Jen Hernandez and Refuge & Friends volunteers Ruth Harbaum and Bob Murray.







***The Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex invite you to their December event:***

## ***Short-Eared Owls on the Prairie***

**Description:** One of the great experiences at Finley NWR is to observe raptors at the North Prairie Overlook on a fine winter's evening. This restored prairie supports a variable but often high population of mice and voles that attract a fantastic number of birds of prey. Around sunset, we should be able to see an emergence of Short-eared Owls (and occasionally a Barn Owl).



- *Bring binoculars, and/or a spotting scope (some will be provided to share).*
- *Make sure you dress warmly and be prepared for rain or wind.*
- *A perfect opportunity to bring a flask of hot chocolate!*

**Presenter:** **Duncan Evered** spent 21 years directing the Malheur Field Station on the Malheur NWR in SE Oregon. Before that, he worked on bird ecology projects for over a decade in the U.S., Canada and the Bahamas. Since moving to Corvallis in August 2018, Duncan has been intensely surveying the bird life of Willamette Park.

**Date:** Sunday, December 1st, 2019

**Time:** 3:00 pm – 5:30 pm

**Location:** Prairie Overlook, William L. Finley NWR

Find maps of Finley NWR and **RSVP** at [friendswvnwrc.org/events/volunteer](http://friendswvnwrc.org/events/volunteer)







abcbirds.org



## **The Golden and the Bald: Learning about Oregon's Eagles By Carolyn Suckow**

Frank Isaac, co-founder of the Oregon Eagle Foundation, regaled an audience at Baskett Slough NWR with his tales from his 30 years of researching both bald and golden eagles. A crowd of 60 learned about the decline and recovery of Oregon's eagle populations, and current threats to that recovery. With abundant habitat for both bald and golden eagles, the nesting population of bald eagles in Oregon has increased substantially since the 1970's, and the golden eagle nesting population appears to have been relatively stable since 2011. Frank discussed the differences between bald and golden eagles and how to identify them at various stages from juvenile to adult. It was a very interactive session with the audience asking many questions about eagle habitats and behavior.



umiarts.co.uk







**Mark your calendars!**  
**Our events will continue all winter.**

**Elks at Finley**

**Sunday, January 5th, Time: TBA, Refuge Office, William L. Finley NWR**

**Friends President Davis Landkamer, and  
ODFW Wildlife Biologist Nancy Taylor**

**Learn about the Finley Elk herd and the results of the Friends Elk Survey  
Get a broad overview of elk populations, behaviors and movements in the  
Willamette Valley.**

**Where the Willamette Valley's Wild Things Live**

**Monday, January 13th, 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM  
Old World Deli, 341 2nd Street, Corvallis, OR**

**Samantha Bartling, Visitor Services Manager,  
Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex**

**Samantha will give us an overview of the wildlife of the Willamette Valley**



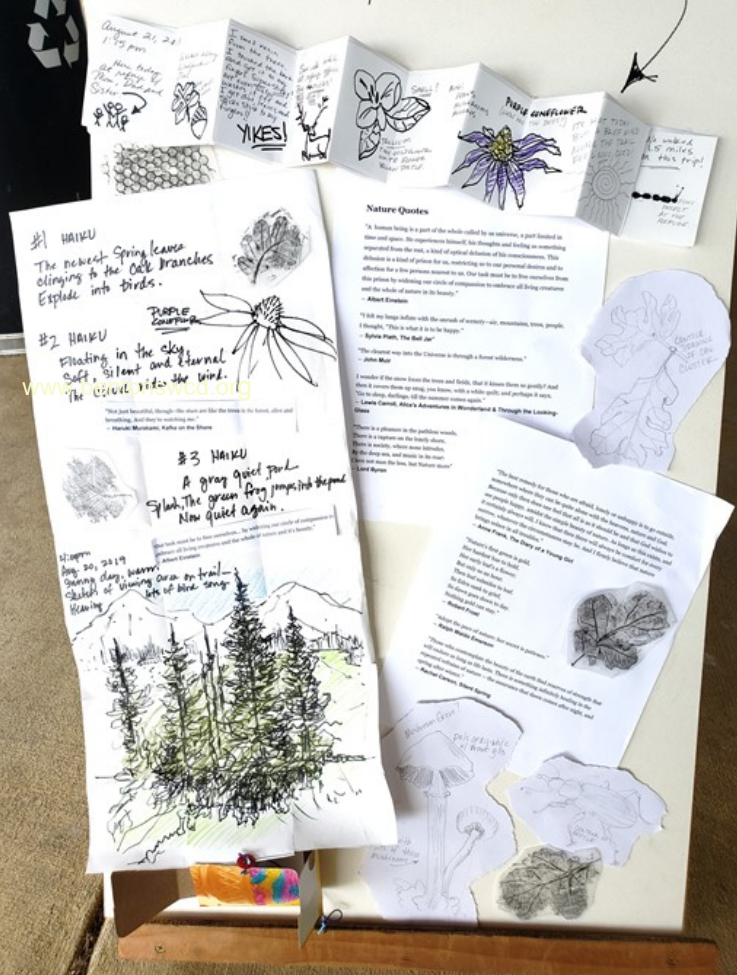


# Making Wildlife Memories

by  
Kris Ebbe



## MEMORY BOX IDEAS



September's program was at Finley headquarters. Suzanne Campbell, who is an artist and illustrator as well as a member of Friends Outreach and Education Committee, showed us how to make Memory Boxes.

These boxes were made out of recycled materials and so simple and elegant. Inside was folded paper for our drawings, notes, and experiences we could record of our time at the refuge. It was a very fun way to record our memories of what we have seen and done while visiting our valley's refuges.

Suzanne's illustrations of the possibilities that folks could put down on their paper and in their boxes was truly incredible. We had children there making boxes but the boxes were such a hit that adults enjoyed making them too. Thank you Suzanne for such a fun activity.





Western terrestrial garter snake



Ringneck Snake

## Snakes and Lizards and Frogs, Oh My! By Kris Ebbe



Western Skink

<https://blogs.uoregon.edu/bi468titus/the-species/western-skink/>

October's program was at Finley headquarters and was presented by Mark Leppin, an OSU graduate student whose passion is herpetology. Mark's program was really interesting; he broke it up into seasons, and described what reptiles and amphibians we would see during a each seasonal period. Mark shared photos of many species and lead us in an interesting program about our native species and when and where to find them. He had a couple of live specimens, a western garter snake, and a ring-necked snake. Both snakes are native to the Oregon refuges and the Willamette Valley. Folks had lots of questions, and the snakes were a big hit with the kids and adults alike.



Western Pond Turtle

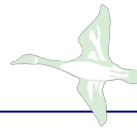


Pacific Chorus Frog



Spotted Rough-skinned Newt



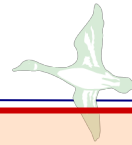


*Paintings of Finley  
by the Vistas & Vineyards Group  
by Isabel Justiniano*

The Refuge office at William L. Finley NWR has some new art work on display featuring the buildings, landscapes and wildlife of Finley provided by the Vistas & Vineyards painting group.

Pictured above are just a few of the beautiful paintings that are on display from November to January in the hallway outside the Wild Goose Nature Store and the public bathrooms.

The pictures are also available for purchase. A portion of the sale for most paintings will go to the Friends of the Willamette Valley NWR Complex. Come take a look at these beautiful displays, support local art and the Friends!



## The Elk Bugle: Elk Spotters Report from the Field by Dave Landkamer

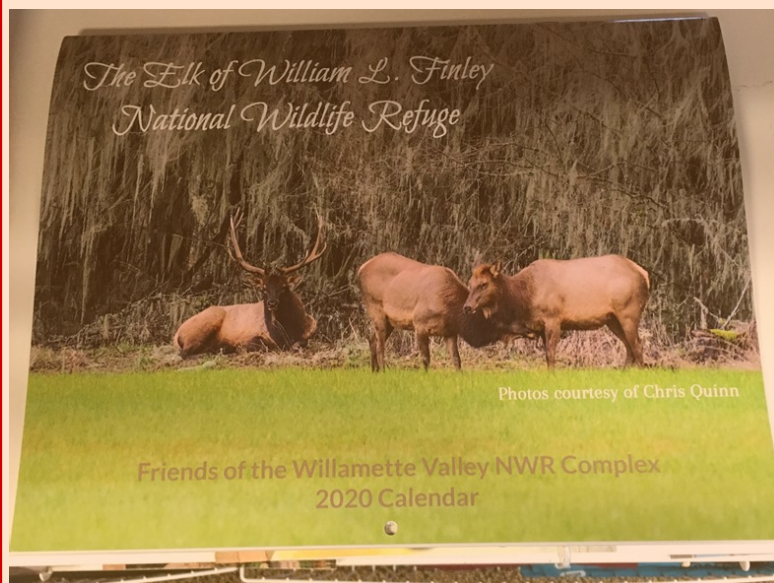


Rutting Elk

[www.myolympicpark.com](http://www.myolympicpark.com)

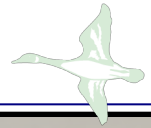
Fall is the time of year when haunting voices of bull elk bugle across the forests and meadows, to announce their presence and claim breeding privileges among the gathered herds. This particular fall, it's also time to proclaim another triumphant accomplishment; the completion of the third full year of our Elk Survey Project, led by our Biology Chair, Azizah Mohd.

This special project has yielded truly incredible cumulative results. More than 60 volunteers have contributed a total of over 1,500 hours to conduct 347 (and counting) elk surveys. The information from these surveys has provided baseline data over time on the number of elk in our local refuge population, the population structure (bulls, cows, and calves), habitat use, and herd behavior. Our data has contributed to refuge and state wildlife management decisions. The project has increased our membership, and added to the growth and output of our organization. In addition, the Elk Survey Project engages a growing number of volunteers and refuge visitors in the enjoyment and appreciation of our spectacular Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges, and all that they provide for us.



To celebrate these accomplishments, the Friends have released a limited-edition Elk Survey Project calendar, featuring beautiful photos of our refuge elk herd by local photographer and dedicated elk spotter Chris Quinn. Some of the calendars are still available at our Wild Goose Nature Store at William L. Finley NWR, so be sure to drop in to get yours soon before they're all gone!





https://www.hortgro.co.za



## The Ongoing Battle Against Invasive Plants

Invasive species are generally defined as non-native species that harm or have the potential to harm the environment... Nationwide, impacts from invasive species are considered to be the most critical issue facing wildlife refuges. Hundreds of non-native species inhabit the Pacific Northwest, and new potential invasives show up annually.

Invasive plants often pose a serious threat to native plants through competition.<sup>(1)</sup> They often outcompete and crowd out native vegetation and develop into large, single-species stands. In a 2019 scientific article, a group of researchers reviewed over 1200 studies that had tested the impact of invasive species on native ones. When looking at a situation such as plant vs. plant, they reported that it was common for the invasive species to have a negative impact, and that populations of native species would typically decline by 20-25% after invasion.<sup>(2)</sup> Our Willamette Valley refuges contain a number of invasive plants. Here are just a few:

### Yellow-Flag Iris



extension.oregonstate.edu

### Two Toxic Invaders

Every part of the **Yellow-Flag Iris** is toxic. It also degrades fish habitat and bird nesting sites.

**Tansy Ragwort**, another poisonous plant, has killed thousands of cattle and horses since its' unintentional introduction in the 1920's.

### Tansy Ragwort



bentonswcd.org

### Reed Canary Grass



wmswcd.org

### Habitats at Risk

**Reed Canary Grass** is a major wetland threat, forming large, single—species stands that have little value as wildlife habitat.

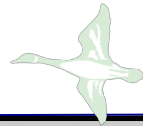
**Meadow Knapweed** outcompetes grasses and other pasture species, reduces forage, and threatens wildlife habitat as well.

### Meadow Knapweed



hoodriverswcd.org

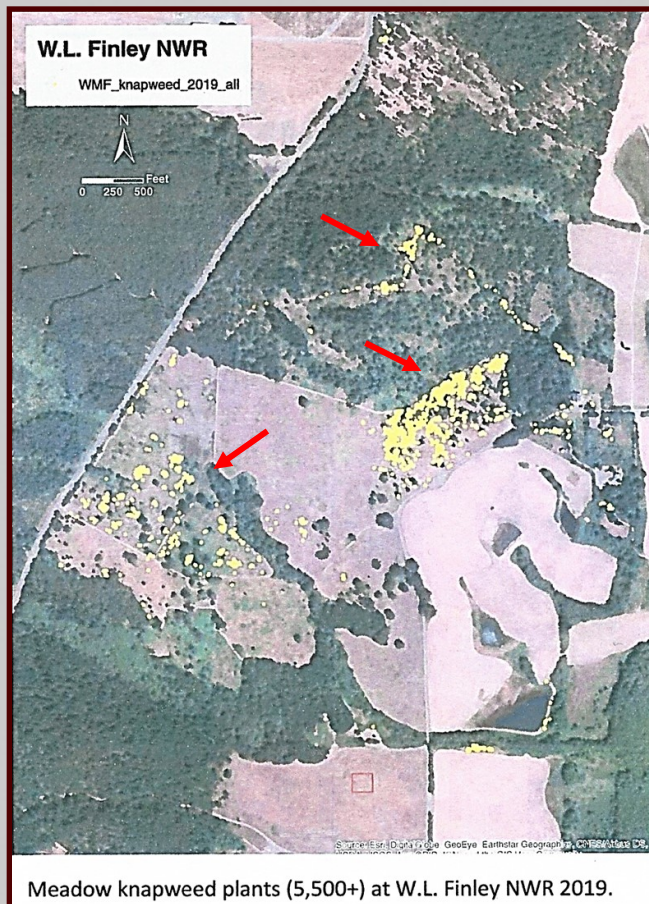




# Controlling Invasive Plants on the Refuges

(Thanks to Eddy Pausch for the map and background information)

The battle against invasive plants on the refuges is a multi—step process. Invasive populations are first monitored and mapped. This allows staff to detect whether new invasive species have entered the refuges, and whether existing populations have expanded or decreased. With mapping, refuge scientists can see if their eradication efforts from previous seasons have been successful, and which areas they should target in the present and future. After the invasive plants have been located, a number of techniques are employed to remove them. In prairies, periodic prescribed burns can clear larger acreages of not only invasives, but of larger, encroaching oak and ash trees. For more focused techniques, maps are combined with herbicide applications using backpack sprayers to target specific groups of plants.



As an example, to the left is a map that was made of the Bald Top area of William L. Finley NWR. Highlighted in yellow are stands of Meadow Knapweed (see previous page) composed of over 5500 plants. With the map as a guide, Range Technicians were able to apply herbicide precisely to the knapweed plants and spare the surrounding vegetation.

## For more information

From Page 10:

- (1) [https://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/OR/Willamette%20Valley/Willamette%20Valley%20NWRC%20DCCP-EA\\_Web.pdf](https://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/OR/Willamette%20Valley/Willamette%20Valley%20NWRC%20DCCP-EA_Web.pdf)
- (2) Bradley, BA, et al. (2019) Disentangling the abundance—impact relationship for invasive species. [Www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1818081116](https://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1818081116)

<https://www.nwcb.wa.gov/weeds/reed-canarygrass>

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/grasses/reedcanarygrass.html>

<https://www.bentonswdc.org/plant/meadow-knapweed/>

[https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/natural%20areas/wr\\_C/Centaurea\\_debeauxii.pdf](https://wric.ucdavis.edu/information/natural%20areas/wr_C/Centaurea_debeauxii.pdf)

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/gorgeous-yellow-iris-ecological-threat-pnw-wetlands>

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/pests-weeds-diseases/weeds/tansy-ragwort>





**Photos by  
Chris Quinn**

## **A Message from Amy Leischman, Membership Coordinator**

As you read through this newsletter, you can see that the Friends of the WVNWRC have had a busy year completing some projects and keeping projects moving forward. We have more to do and we cannot accomplish these goals without the support of our refuge partners, our volunteers and very importantly, our members! Your membership dues and donations and your purchases at the Wild Goose Nature Store all help fund these projects.

If you wish to stay an active member you can use the form included in this newsletter, visit our website at [friendswvnwrc.org](http://friendswvnwrc.org), or pick up a brochure at the refuge trailheads. You can also renew while shopping at the Wild Goose Nature Store at Finley Refuge Headquarters and practice using your 10% discount included in your membership!

New memberships are also important! Please mention us to your friends, family or even strangers you meet who enjoy visiting the refuges; and who attend some of our monthly outreach programs. Maybe they also just want to support an organization that cares about our wildlife refuge complex! All dues and donations are tax deductible. Thanks for your continued support!



<https://huntingfield.com/blog/maryland-fall-foliage/>



**Bear**





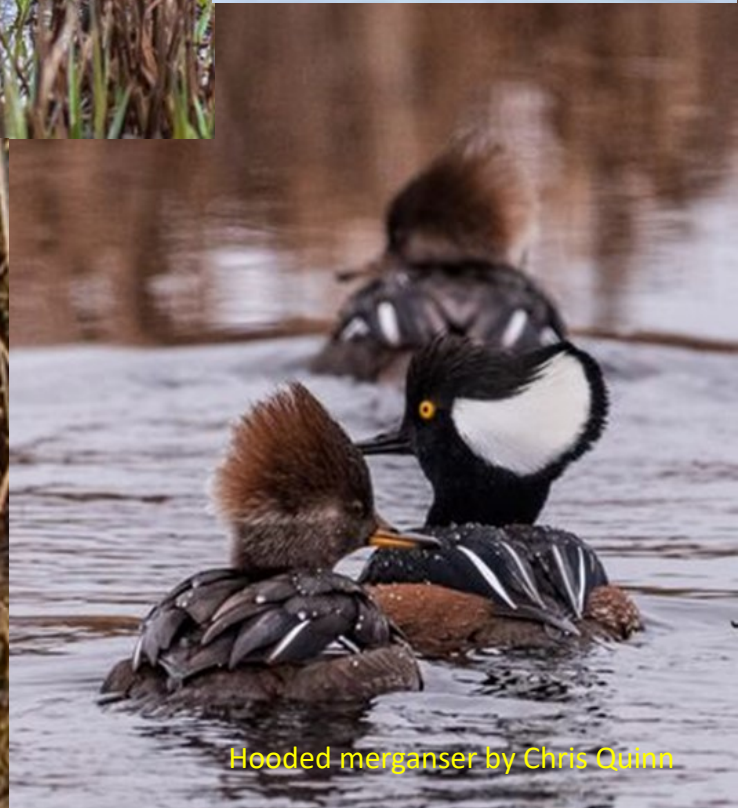
## Some of Our Local Ducks



Northern pintail by Chris Quinn



Mallard by Chris Quinn



Hooded merganser by Chris Quinn



<https://myodfw.com/> Northern Shoveler



Bufflehead  
<https://myodfw.com/>





**(President's Message,  
continued from Page 1)**

sprawling suburbs, greater industrial production, more farms, more resource extraction, more roads, and generally more of everything having to do with human civilization.

During this time, bird populations have been subjected to urban and agricultural expansion, habitat loss, declines in nesting areas, loss of food supplies, assorted pesticides, collisions with cars, wind turbines, and glass win-

dows, domestic cat predation, migration disruption, and invasive species, to list just a few of the multitude of threats. It makes intuitive, common sense to think that human activities would have an overall, negative effect on birds and bird populations. Research studies are confirming what we already suspect from our own observations. Similarly, it is not much of a stretch to think that our population growth and development causes declines in other plant and animal populations as well (even if we don't yet have all of the scientific data to prove it).

Research conclusions and information like the one referenced above are difficult to encounter, accept, and act upon because the causes of problems, like their solutions, are often so big and complicated. It can be down-right discouraging for many of us. While we, as a society, have made steady progress and great gains in understanding and conserving our wildlife and natural resources, the losses to our natural systems and co-inhabitants on the planet, like birds, continue to accumulate. What can we do to make positive and meaningful contributions to big, complicated wildlife and natural resources problems?

One thing that we can surely do, is to act on a small-scale, local level, to add our voices and our actions to wildlife conservation projects. There are many ways to do this; planting native flowers, writing letters to decision-makers, helping children to enjoy and appreciate nature, contributing to small non-profit organizations, etc.. If each one of us in the United States takes just one conservation action today, together we take 330 million small steps toward wildlife and natural resources conservation, which adds up to a big step in the right direction.

This is why your support of and volunteering with the Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex is so vital and important. Over time, as we increase our demands on the natural world, the problems we encounter are likely to multiply as well. Thus, natural resources protection becomes more important every decade, every year, and every day. The birds in North America need our actions, today and into the future.

Now is the time of year when migrating birds from the north flood our valley to overwinter here, benefit from the local resources that are available, and build strength so they can return to their breeding grounds in the spring. It's a great time to visit our local National Wildlife Refuges to see the activity and enjoy the beauty. And it's a great time to take action, and sustain our collective actions, to conserve our wildlife and natural resources, for today, and for the future.



*Photo by Chris Quinn*



## 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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**VISIT US ONLINE AT**  
**WWW.FRIENDSWVNWRC.ORG**



