

# Turnbull Wildlife Refuge Friends Newsletter

## Friends of Turnbull President 2021 Annual Report Winter 2021

by Lorna Kropp

Winter is quiet, the Refuge wetlands re-charging and our Board members are busy getting ready for the next Spring/Summer season of activities, including some new plans as well. There have been some goodbyes to Refuge Staff. We said goodbye to Alice Hanley, Complex Manager, who retired in October. At the very end of December, both Mike Rule, Refuge Biologist, and Sandy Rancourt, Visitor Services Manager, retired from three decades of service to Turnbull Refuge. They will be sorely missed, and we thank them and wish them well in retirement.

**FOTNWR Rabe Research grant** for area college students wanting to do research on Refuge.

The FOTNWR Board has established a new annual grant for area college students interested in research on the Refuge. Our organization mission includes supporting the Refuge's mandate for biological research and monitoring programs to inform improved management, protection and/or restoration of Turnbull's ecosystem, its wildlife and habitats. FOT wishes to encourage active research on issues which can inform the Refuge community for increased knowledge and decision-making tools around the impact of climate change, the impact of invasive species, and how to use Refuge resources to better protect wildlife and habitat. The annual Grant (up to \$1000) will fund research expenses for equipment and consumables for student projects which have been identified through collaboration with the Refuge Biologist and the Special Use Permit (SUP) process. Applications from Students with Professor Mentors will be submitted by the Refuge Biologist to our Selection Committee for decisions. It is hoped that we may be able to offer the first grant during the 2022 Fieldwork season.

**FOT plans Spring programs** about ideas and programs to help you work to enhance your own yard/property for wildlife/birds -

Plans for a program/s over Zoom about native plantings, adding other features to enhance attractiveness and accommodation for wildlife/birds are underway. Watch the website and mailchimp announcements for time and how to get links. There are several certifications which you can apply for: "Habitat at Home" from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (formerly known as the Backyard Wildlife Sanctuary Program), and one from the Audubon Society.

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/backyard>  
<https://www.audubon.org/news/how-make-your-yard-bird-friendly-0>

### Preparing for the new season of the Nature Store: April – October

The Nature Store will open for the season on Saturday/Sunday, April 2/3, 2022. Our Nature Store is located inside the Refuge Administration Building and is open on weekends from 11am-4pm each day. The store is managed and staffed by volunteers. This is a fun and crucial volunteer role for Friends. Please consider applying to be a volunteer. We hope to have a large enough cadre of volunteers so that everyone will volunteer once each month. There are two shifts each weekend day (2.5 hrs. each): Opening Shift from 11:00 am – 1:30 pm and the Closing shift from 1:30 – 4:00 pm. We provide training for making sales, operating the Square/iPad, and opening and closing the building. The Nature Store volunteers have an important role to greet visitors and support one of our major fundraising efforts toward supporting the Environmental Education program on the Refuge. All the proceeds from the store go into the EE support fund. Please send a short email with your interest to the Nature Store Management Team and they will contact you with a Volunteer Application. (<mailto:naturestore@fotnwr.org>)

**Participating in Citizen Science – Great Big Back Yard Bird Count February 18-21**

You can take part in a large bird count and add to the data about birds in the month of February. Check out the website sponsored by the Cornell Lab and Audubon and Birds of Canada:

<https://www.birdcount.org>

It is easy to do alone or with your family. You pick a spot (your yard, a neighborhood park, a trail) and on one day watch for all the birds you see for 15 or more minutes. Count and identify to the best of your ability, write it down, use a bird app. If you have never participated before, or do not have an account for another Cornell Lab project, you will need to set up an account in the app. Either the app or e-bird on your computer will walk you through the process.

<https://support.ebird.org/en/support/solutions>



**In this Issue:**

**President’s Annual Report.....1**  
**Mike Rule & Sandy Rancourt Retirement.... 3**  
**Turnbull Memories.....5**  
**Bumble Project.....6**  
**Bald Eagles Migration.....7**  
**Chocolate & Valentines Day..... 8**

**Welcome new members – how we fit into the association of other Refuges around country**

The Friends of Turnbull NWR is not alone in its support of a refuge for wildlife, for conservation. There are “friends” groups for many of the other 570 National Wildlife Refuges in the country, from Alaska to the Caribbean and to the Pacific Islands. The US Fish & Wildlife Service has, in the past, provided training for Friends groups. One new advantage to the current pandemic has been the development of virtual meetings, and presentations among the collection of Refuge Friends groups through the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) and the Coalition of Refuge Friends and Advocates (CORFA). They present quarterly meetings for representatives of any Friends group to attend. The most recent quarterly meeting identified priorities for the group: 1) education and advocacy efforts about how the lack of staff throughout the system impacts the management of Refuges for wildlife; (currently a major issue for TNWR as the hiring process often takes months); 2) emphasize protections for Alaska Refuges; 3) removal of border walls dividing refuge areas on southern border; 4) promoting efforts to mitigate climate change, including the 30 X 30 climate change challenge “to protect 30% of U.S. lands and waters by 2030 to meet environmental challenges”.

<https://www.fws.gov/refuges/friends/for-friends/>  
<https://www.refugeassociation.org/friends>  
<https://coalitionofrefugefriends.com>

- President: ..... Lorna Kropp [activities@fotnwr.org](mailto:activities@fotnwr.org)  
[president@fotnwr.org](mailto:president@fotnwr.org)
- Vice President: Open
- Treasurer: ..... Molly Zammit [treasurer@fotnwr.org](mailto:treasurer@fotnwr.org)
- Secretary: ..... Nancy Curry [secretary@fotnwr.org](mailto:secretary@fotnwr.org)
- Board Members:
- Joyce Alonso ..... [jbalonso3@msn.com](mailto:jbalonso3@msn.com)
- John Barber ..... [blujayroscoe@gmail.com](mailto:blujayroscoe@gmail.com)
- Kassie Fauth ..... [kassandra.fauth@gmail.com](mailto:kassandra.fauth@gmail.com)
- Olesia Letts ..... [membership@fotnwr.org](mailto:membership@fotnwr.org)

# Saying Goodbye to Sandy Rancourt and Mike Rule

by Nancy Curry  
Turnbull Manager, Retired

Mike Rule was hired as Refuge Biologist back in spring of 1991, that means 30 ½ years ago. That may be a record unless one of the past maintenance men worked there that long. Mike came to Turnbull from a biologist position at Malheur NWR. He arrived with his wife, Sandy Rancourt, and two small children, Cameron and Rachel. Sometime in the next couple of years we brought Sandy on as a seasonal bio-technician. And that started the Mike and Sandy team. Over the years they gave each other's programs needed support.

When Mike Rule came to Turnbull the biological program was fairly small. Often the Refuge had only a biologist or temporary bio-tech for short periods. But Mike had a vision for setting up various botanical, bird, mammal, forest, riparian and wetland surveys. Several surveys collected years-long data such as the waterfowl pair surveys, songbird point count surveys and the songbird banding. He initiated many other habitat and wildlife surveys to complement and assess management practices, and conducted waterfowl banding as well. Mike played a key role in habitat management, planning and consultation, and the implementation of habitat restoration. He conducted invasive species surveys and provided input into invasive species management at the Refuge. Mike played a key role in the planning by conducting public meetings, the writing of the Refuge's Comprehensive Management Plan, and the consequent plan implementation, such as land acquisition and the hunting program.

When Sandy Rancourt first came on as a seasonal Bio Technician, she worked primarily in the biological program conducting waterfowl surveys, waterfowl nest surveys and other biological surveys. I remember her spending days out wading through the marshes looking for redhead nests. Sandy's prior work experience before Turnbull was at Northern Prairie Research Station and Malheur Refuge. Later, she enrolled in the UFWWS Coop Education program and, while working concurrently at Turnbull, she was a graduate student at Eastern Washington University. She conducted a comprehensive Bat Study on Turnbull to complete her Master's Degree. After completion of her Master's, she was offered a Visitor Services Manager position at the Refuge. In that capacity, Sandy oversaw the Environmental Education program, the Volunteer

program, took on the Riparian Restoration work along Pine Creek and other locations on the refuge, and continued to assist with biological surveys. She provided input to various aspects of management planning efforts over the years, writing specific sections of plans and participating in public meetings. She was the Friends of Turnbull NWR board liaison and met monthly with them. When Turnbull was complexed with Little Pend Oreille and Kootenai Refuges, she was given Visitor Services duties for the entire complex.

Sandy took our existing Environmental Education program and greatly expanded it. We were reaching up to 8000+ school children in the Spokane area, with both on-Refuge and outreach programs. I am sure every student that came to the Refuge and experienced the program will remember their experiences forever.

I cannot tell you how many hundreds of volunteers worked at Turnbull over the years nor the thousands of hours they donated, but we can thank Sandy for recruiting, organizing and operating that expansive program. I am sure it was the largest volunteer program in our Region. Refuge volunteers assisted with environmental education and outreach programs, biological surveys and riparian restoration work. We all remember the effort it took to plant all those trees along Pine Creek and keep them alive!

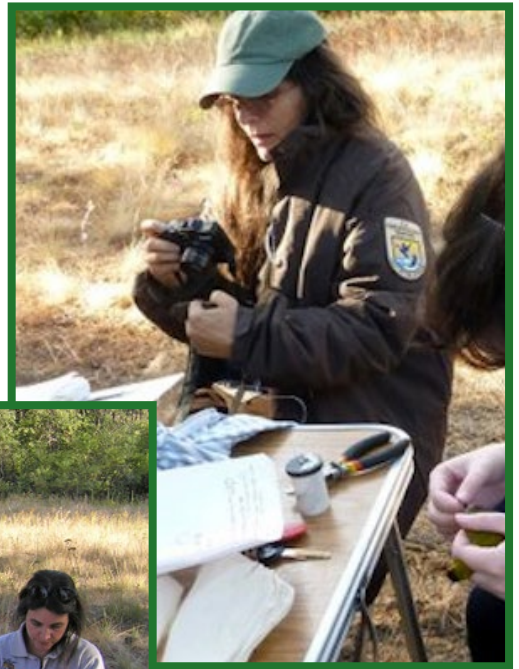
Mike and Sandy's expertise will be sorely missed and we wish them well in future endeavors.



**Mike Rule and Sandy Rancourt - Turnbull Bird Banding**  
by Nancy Curry



Mike with a goldfinch during birdbanding



Sandy and volunteers banding birds



Mike checking out water levels at one of the ponds



Environmental Education program attendees. Program set up and administered by Sandy Rancourt

# Turnbull Memories

by Marian Frobe

Now that our friends from Turnbull NWR have retired, we will also be retiring from the volunteer work we did there, with much mixed feelings. As we are getting on in years, some of the things we did were becoming harder, as far as walking from place to place on rough land involving rocks, downed trees and just general bad footing. Even so, we will definitely miss doing the point counts and helping with the banding that we have done since I retired from my “real” job in 1993. We also did marsh bird surveys and a yearly Breeding Bird Survey there. These are some of the highlights we remember:

Encounters with the animals, like seeing herds of elk, many with babies, including two youngsters, one that came over to our truck to see what we were, even though his mother and the rest of the herd were moving on. Moose were a little scary, especially when one cow was happily feeding in the spot where we were supposed to do our Marsh Bird Survey. We tried to shoo her away, but moose don’t shoo easily. She eventually got tired of us and wandered away slowly. For those who don’t know what point counts are, they are a series of established spots along a route where we stand and record all the birds we see and hear within 10 minutes. As we are standing still and quiet, we have had a group of about 4 probably young coyotes come toward us, not aware of our presence until they were quite close. And 3 mule deer came very close one time, within about 3 yards. They weren’t alarmed when they finally realized we were not part of the scenery, and just wandered off slowly.

Birds are what we were most focused on, of course, and the point counts gave us memorable encounters, such as a nighthawk we flushed off eggs on a bare rock, two different nests of Townsend’s solitaires, one under a rock outcropping and one at the base of a pine on a different route. Some point count routes in the spring have so many birds singing and flying around that it’s hard to tally them all correctly. By far the most numerous and vocal birds at Turnbull in the spring are house wrens and Western wood-pewees. and I often felt I could still hear the wood-pewees echoing in my brain after we got home. Marsh bird surveys are done in a similar manner, but

we drive to different wetlands and use a recording to entice birds, like rails and bitterns, to answer. Soras and Virginia rails would answer and the soras often came out of the reeds near us to see who the inter-loper was, and the rails would come closer but usually not in view. Bitterns didn’t usually answer the recording, but if they were pumping already, they continued to do so. We saw more of these marsh birds doing this survey than we could ever have on our own.

Probably we will miss the banding most. We helped set up the 9 mist nets around the wetland near the entrance road and then checked every 45 minutes to see what we may have caught. We started helping with this, probably in 1993. Mostly, I helped extract the birds from the nets and Russell recorded the information from the biologists who did the banding and aging, though I usually helped weigh them, too. Some of the more memorable birds we caught were quite recent, several Wilson’s snipes, a pygmy owl and several saw-whet owls come to mind. Also ruffed grouse young ones and many house wrens and song sparrows. House wrens were the hardest to extract; they seemed to twirl and become hopelessly tangled. We also caught a few hummingbirds, which we couldn’t band, and larger birds like Bullocks orioles, robins, and northern flickers, which were easier to get out of the net. Our grandsons all got to come with us at times and got to release the birds and see animals like moose, elk and porcupines. They all enjoyed these outings, except for the early hours.

These are the things we’ll miss. Now we’ll just have to go birding in the spring!



# PACIFIC NORTHWEST BUMBLEBEE PROJECT COMPLETED

By Bea Harrison

## **Fuzzy Buzzy Bumblebee Alighting on my apple tree Flower to flower, dawn to dusk Gathering pollen as she must**

BH

A three-year project to gather data on our local bumblebees has concluded. Several Spokane Audubon members participated in the citizen-science project called Pacific Northwest Bumblebee Atlas.

The project, covering Washington, Idaho and Oregon, had 276 volunteers, who adopted areas to survey, resulting in one of the most complete bumblebee studies in the world. Twenty-seven bumblebee species were detected in the three-state area. A total of 21,514 individual bumblebee observations were made. Participants also noted the species of flower the bee was on, leading to valuable information about which flowers bumblebees prefer.

Bumblebees are essential pollinators in both wildlands and agriculture, especially of fruits and vegetables. They are large and strong, giving them the ability to push themselves into tight spaces to pollinate. They have a special skill called buzz-pollination that other bees don't have which allows them to vibrate their bodies, releasing the flower's pollen. This makes them great at pollinating tomatoes and potatoes, as well as the beautiful shooting-star wildflower!

Bumblebee numbers are declining worldwide. The causes are not totally understood, but insecticides, especially the widely used group of neo-nicotinoid pesticides, are deadly to bees and other insects. The baseline data gathered in this study may help scientists understand more about how to save bumblebees.

We can all do our part to help conserve bees by:

- Avoiding the use of pesticides
- Buying organic fruits and vegetables
- Using native plants in landscaping

Follow the links below to read more about Bumblebee Atlas and habitat restoration recommendations, as well as Xerces Society information about bumblebees.

Click to Download

<https://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/pnw-bumble-bees>

[How Neonicotinoids Can Kill](#)

<https://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation>

For additional current scientific information on insect decline, try the book *Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse*, by Dave Gouldson. It is available at Spokane County Libraries.



**Bumblebee on Camas Flower  
from The Bumblebee Atlas**

# Bald Eagles Annual Migration at Lake Coeur d'Alene

By Carlene Hardt

On a brisk 29° morning, I ventured out to see the Bald Eagles at Lake Coeur d'Alene. The Bureau of Land Management noted that on November 26th there were 108 eagles spotted. It's their annual migration to Lake Coeur d'Alene in search of the spawning kokanee salmon.

I was approaching Higgins Point when I saw a lot of cars and photographers with big cameras pointing upward toward one tree in particular. I pulled over and was delighted to see an eagle nestled in the pine tree. It watched us for quite some time before it flew off for all of us watching to enjoy.



As the eagles were flying overhead, I noticed that they soar with their wings almost flat. They can cruise up to 30 mph and their wingspan can be up to 8 feet.



I finally reached Higgins Point and remained there for about 3 hours, watching eagles watching people (and dogs) from a branch. And every once in a while one

would fly overhead and dive to catch a salmon, but one of the eagles just stayed up in a tree watching the whole time that I was there!

The eagles' dive is fast (up to 100 mph) and they pull up quickly too. The kokanee must be very close to the surface of the water, and the snatch is so quick that you can't tell if they have a fish or not until they go to a tree to eat it, or you see it later in your pictures. Looking at my pictures later, I see that sometimes they lost the fish shortly after they started their climb from the water.



Eagles have 4 talons (and toes) on each foot, a hallux talon at the back of the foot that faces front, and 3 toes on the front of the foot, where the talons face toward the back. These talons help them in catching the fish, and using them to hold it down while the bird tears it into bite-sized pieces.

Those lucky enough to hang onto their meal would then fly to a branch to eat it. The branches must be pretty thick in order to hold their weight - around 14 pounds. Sometimes they were left alone to eat, and other times another eagle would be watching or dropping in for an opportunity to steal it.



all photos by Carlene Hardt



## Valentine's Day

Mary Jokela

Sweet Valentine's Day! Chocolate just might be a hallmark of this and other sweet traditions--irresistible. And it accounts for more than \$20 billion per year in US sales alone.

Cocoa beans, chocolate's key ingredient, grow in tropical regions; roughly two-thirds are concentrated in West Africa's Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana, where tropical forests are being replaced by cocoa crops. Cote d'Ivoire has lost more than 85 percent of its forest cover since 1960, mainly to keep up with high demand for cocoa. This crop is often cultivated through monocropping, which depletes the soil and leaves crops susceptible to disease and insect infestation. And even more pesticides and fungicides are polluting air and water.

This tragic deforestation destroys critical wildlife habitat—displacing species like forest elephants, chimpanzees, and pygmy hippos—and releases greenhouse gases. Worse still, egregious human rights abuses are often linked to cocoa production.

But consumers can choose produce sustainably sourced. By their choices they show global brands that they want products safe for forests, people and wildlife. Within reach is shade-grown cocoa, thriving amongst diverse crops and trees, boosting carbon sequestration, and water regulation, providing habitat for wildlife including birds, butterflies and bats. This shade-grown cocoa agroforestry also can enhance cocoa farmers' livelihoods because growing multiple crops diversifies farmer income and improves food security.

The National Wildlife Federation has worked with other NGOs to rank global chocolate brands based on their social and environmental performance. Consider these three reported organic brands, sustainably sourced:

Endangered Species Chocolate (Oregon based) <http://www.chocolatebar.com>

Equal Exchange <https://shop.equalexchange.coop/collections/chocolate>

Divine Chocolate <http://www.divinechocolate.com>



Friends of Turnbull NWR  
P.O. Box 294  
Cheney, WA 99004

*The Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, a nonprofit organization, supports the mandate of the refuge to protect and enhance wildlife and their habitats through education, research, habitat preservation and restoration.*

Got email? Add it to your membership form for quick activity updates!

### Membership Application

YES! I want to support the Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge and its programs with my membership.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, and Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership: (Circle one)

Individual \$15  
Family \$25  
Business/Group \$35  
Patron \$100  
Benefactor \$500  
Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Endowment Fund Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Amount Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to volunteer \_\_\_\_\_  
Nature Store \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee \_\_\_\_\_  
Environmental Education \_\_\_\_\_  
Where needed \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed payable to  
Friends of Turnbull N.W.R.  
P.O. Box 294  
Cheney WA 99004