

# Turnbull Wildlife Refuge Friends Newsletter

## Friends of Turnbull President's Report Winter 2023

by Lorna Kropp

### Completion of new 5 yr. Partnership Agreement with the Refuge

USF&W completed a revision of the Partnership process in 2021/22, so this is our first Partnership Agreement update using the new templates. Molly Zammit and Nancy Curry have been our committee representatives working with Cassie Roeder, Turnbull NWR Manager and Josh Contois, Supervisory Park Ranger (Visitor's Services Manager).

One of the new features of the revised Agreement template is Quarterly Meetings and Reports/updates to further the discussion of ways that the Friends of Turnbull can help and be involved in Refuge programs. At our Annual Meeting in October, Cassie proposed that she organize 4 meetings a year to feature one of the major aspects of work on the Refuge, meet the staff and hear about the scope of work and needs for collaboration or assistance. The first meeting is scheduled for 25 January 2024. At the meeting, the Refuge Biologist, Molly Dixon, will present her developing plans for mitigating invasive weeds on the Refuge and beginning an Invasives Strike team which can service the 3 Refuges in the Complex. The Friends Board has pledged the matching funds for a grant to create a new seasonal Bio-Tech position that will fund the initial year of the program.

The second quarterly meeting in April, will feature the Private Lands Biology program with Brian Walker. These meetings will be very helpful to the Board Members and to the general membership of the Friends in our role as advocates within our larger community for sharing the place and importance of the Refuge for our region.

### Environmental Education at the Refuge

A revision of the Environmental Education program at the Refuge is underway. Following a consultation led by Ranger Josh last June, the goal is to establish resources and training so that teachers

can be empowered to bring and lead their classes on explorations and studies at the Refuge. The Friends of TNWR Board has also pledged support for the curriculum writing. Environmental Education opportunities for young and old alike continue to be one of the main goals of our organization.

### Tree potting and planting in 2024 on Refuge

The third support request is for matching volunteer help with a grant to improve wetlands by planting trees along the "Finger Ponds" planned by Brian Walker, Private Lands Biologist. The work will start in Fall 2024. The Friends have pledged to organize 400 hours of volunteer work to plant trees in the Finger Ponds area on the Refuge.

### Nature Store 2023 report

The Nature Store had its best year ever in the season April -October 2023, thanks to the efforts of our Nature Store Management Team and store volunteers, "Refuge Ambassadors". Increasing the days of operation from 2 days to 4 days was a success. The Nature Store Committee is looking forward to making more improvements for volunteers this year by using barcodes on items to simplify the lookup of sales items.

All Friends of Turnbull NWR are encouraged to get involved in visiting, volunteering and sharing time and talent in support of the Refuge and wildlife and building climate resiliency in 2024. In addition to the projects we shepherd, all the committees (Activities, Fundraising, Advocacy, Nature Store, Pollinator Garden) and the Board welcome new membership and ideas. We hope to see you in 2024.

# Cassie Roeder, Deputy Project Leader Inland Northwest National Refuge Complex



Greetings to all the Friends of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. My name is Cassie Roeder; I am the new Deputy Project Leader for the Inland Northwest National Wildlife Refuge Complex and the Refuge Manag-

er for Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge. The complex also includes Little Pend Oreille and Kootenai National Wildlife Refuges.

I joined the team here in June 2023. My career has spanned 21 years at four refuges and one private land office in three regions. I have had the pleasure of working in the prairie potholes of Minnesota, the big rivers of Iowa, and the high desert sage steppe of NE California. Now I look forward to exploring all the channel scablands has to offer.

I spent my childhood in Mississippi on a small hobby farm with long summer days exploring the woods and creeks, chasing frogs, and catching fireflies. I formed an early connection to nature and a respect for the diver-

sity of the world around us. I graduated from St. Cloud State University with a degree in ecology and another in Wildlife and Habitat Management. During college, I began working at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge as an intern for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program. During this time, I started my path as a restoration ecologist. Over the next 21 years with the Partners Program, I have helped the service to expand its mission and conservation goals outside the Refuge boundary, and my time with the Partners Program enabled me to build a strong base in restoration, partnering, and leadership. I have cherished every opportunity to get involved in refuge management activities, biological research, and environmental education.

Over the last nine months, I have been learning my way around Turnbull and the complex. Building relationships with the staff, partners, and friends of the refuge and complex are top priorities for me. We have been working to refill the wage-grade heavy equipment operator position and hire seasonal staff. We are working to focus the work of each program to meet the vision and prepare for a busy field season.

I look forward to all the events and activities we have coming up with the Friends this year.



The 26th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) runs Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19 (Presidents Holiday weekend). Any time during that period you can spend a minimum of 15 minutes counting the birds you see in your own backyard or your favorite local park or natural area, and then report your results on-line.

Volunteers participating in GBBC help track changes in bird populations at a scale that scientists can't achieve alone. Launched in 1998 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, the GBBC was the first online participatory-science project

to collect data on wild birds and to display results in near real time. Birds Canada joined the project in 2009 to provide an expanded capacity to support participation in Canada. In 2013, the GBBC became a global project when data entry began using eBird, the world's largest biodiversity-related participatory science project.

You can find details on the GBBC at <https://www.birdcount.org/>, including an on-line bird identification guide, birding apps, and instructions on reporting your counts on-line.

If you choose to count on public land, keep in mind that the Bureau of Land Management, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and US Forest Service lands are offering fee-free days over Presidents' Day Weekend.



# Dead of Winter Spy

by Lisa Langelier

Winter's bite keeps many inside. It rattles the bones of dormant plants and freezes the footsteps of four-legged rodents in snow. Wicked wind sucks the ease out of life. The kitchen window offers feathered and furred drama and heart-warming pleasure provided by visitors to my bird feeders. They endured subzero temperatures recently.

The menu includes hulled sunflowers, peanut pieces, thistle, a compressed quail block, and suet. Birds wash these down with water from a heated bath.

From the forty-odd House Finch flock to the Sharp-shinned assassin, there is never a dull moment. This year, for the first time, a red squirrel found the lunch counter. Typically solitary, these half-pound rodents stay active during winter. Somehow, the word is out about my buffet because suddenly, I have three squirrels, to the dismay of the California Quail. This is my fault because abundant food means there is enough for everyone.

Three or four times per day, the quail march from the back forty in a wide flank to check out the fare. Two dozen of them scour the ground for seeds. A few "evolved" to jump up on the feeding platform, eschewing their ground-bound friends. Red, the squirrel, darts over, rushing quail from its seed cache, scolding theatrically.

Unrelated to the weather, sometimes my quail freeze. Their brown and gray feathering blends with the basalt rock where they disappear. The assassin must be close. I've ticked off thirty minutes waiting for them to thaw. A juvenile Cooper's Hawk crowned a pine tree. Two of the five flickers that live here clung to an adjacent tree, motionless. On a branch below the hawk, a red squirrel chattered nonstop, clearly an informant.

Three pairs of Black-billed Magpies haunt the feeding platform throughout the day. These handsome cousins of jays impress with their long tail and black and white plumage. In the right light, their wings and tail have a blue-green sheen. Both Black-capped and Mountain chickadees are regulars too. They dart in and grab a seed. They often hang around while I fill the feeders, hoping to be first to lunch.

The Pygmy Nuthatch family and friends forage together, unlike the White-breasted Nuthatch, who is a loner. A pair of Downy Woodpeckers gobble suet. Until



**Black-billed Magpie**  
© Alan Wilson

recently Hairy Woodpeckers went undercover but one appeared this week. So did some Red-winged Blackbirds and European Starlings.

I love to watch the Northern Flickers cruise in, displaying a flash of coral from their underwing and tail feather shafts. I wish they would stop pecking on my roof, however.

So, I sit by the window peeping at the action, thinking we should call it the life (vs. dead) of winter. From the heckling squirrel to the flicker's rattling call, to the frantic scurrying quail, I watch and revel. This kind of spy craft is joyous.



**Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers**  
© Pat Schiller

Friends of Turnbull NWR  
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*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