

Turnbull Wildlife Refuge

Friends' Newsletter

Friends of Turnbull
Spring 2026

President's Report

by Lorna Kropp

Blackhorse Connector Trail to Be Constructed in April/May

This spring a new trail in the vicinity of the Auto Tour Route will be constructed to offer visitors a chance to hike/walk from the east side of Blackhorse Lake to the west side. At present each side has a short "lollipop" trail back to their respective parking areas. The Washington Trails Association has been contracted and will be paid by the Friends to build the trail between the two sections of the existing trail. Here is a description of the work:

The current East and West Blackhorse Trails are two small, unconnected lollipop-shaped trails on opposite sides of Blackhorse Lake. Each trail ranges between a quarter to half mile in length. Neither trail currently receives much use, largely due to the shortness of the trails, lack of any real endpoint, and no real visual "payoff" compared to the nearby 30 Acre Trail or Kepple Peninsula Trail. The idea of creating a connector trail between the existing routes was first proposed a couple of years ago. Last year, work was completed to replace a water control structure on the lake, which provided for the opportunity to move forward with this project. The route has already been mapped, flagged, and cleared by Cultural Resources. The Friends of Turnbull has agreed to fund this project, thanks in large part to a sizable donation they received at the end of last year.

The trail will be built by a WTA crew on four days in April/May. After the trail construction is completed, the Friends have been asked to provide a work crew to spread wood chips for the length of the new section. We will be organizing workdays for a "wheelbarrow brigade" to spread 450 yards of wood chips. We will need workers to shovel chips into the wheelbarrows, workers to steer the barrows, and workers to spread the chips at the destination. Plan now to come join in this work

near the end of May or the beginning of June. The final dates depend on how quickly the construction progresses.

Update On the Refurbishment of the Pine Lake Overlook

The Pine Lake Overlook near the parking area and bathrooms is being renovated. The telescopes, which no longer work, and the small cement sections with bench will be removed. A new cement platform will be built facing the wetlands, with an ADA Companion bench installed with a 2-foot wall on the edge. The plans are being drawn up now and must go through two permit reviews prior to starting the project. The construction may happen later this summer or next spring. Once again, we will have opportunities for volunteer work crews to help make this happen.

Two Fundraising Events This Spring/Summer

Blue Goose Quilt Auction

Puddles the Blue Goose is the official mascot and symbol of the [National Wildlife Refuge System](#), managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Designed in the 1930s by Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist [J.N. "Ding" Darling](#), the blue goose emblem represents conservation, and marks refuge boundaries. The mascot promotes wildlife protection and environmental education.



The Blue Goose Quilt was designed and sewed by Molly Zammit, as a fundraiser for our organization. Molly is a longtime Friends of Turnbull Board member, former Treasurer, and retired teacher. This is her third Blue Goose quilt, the first was made in honor of Malheur NWR and sent to their Friends group for a fundraiser after the episode of takeover in 2016. This quilt will be offered in an online auction later this Spring.



Local Art for Conservation

LR Montgomery will be presenting his Art of Our Natural Areas from June 12 – July 28 at the MAC. Mark your calendars.



Nature Store News

The new season for the Nature Store inside the Refuge Headquarters building has begun. There are several new items in stock including compact binoculars suitable for use by children and adults, moose mugs, and “socks for conservation.” These are really fun socks for both children and adults decorated with moose, butterflies, birds, bees and more. Each pair of socks sold supports wildlife conservation agencies.

More Liberty Graphics T-shirts have arrived with some stunning new designs. They are printed on

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organic cotton with water-based inks and are great gifts. As usual, we have hats, jewelry, sweatshirts, stickers, magnets, and always a fun and informative collection of books for adults and children.

Spring Activities

EarthFest – April 25, 2026

MayFest – Downtown Cheney – May 9, 2026

Bird Walks with Spokane Audubon’s Joe Cooney – monthly on Friday evening/Saturday morning see calendar at fotnwr.org/activities.html

Wheelbarrow Brigade for new Blackhorse Lake Trail – May/June, 2026

Big Horn Show, March 2026

For a second year, the Inland Northwest Complex: Turnbull NWR, Little Pend Orielle NWR, Kootnai NWR participated in the Big Horn Show for four days. Our booth had family activities, information about the three Refuges, a slide show with photos from the three Refuges, and a framed Duck’s Unlimited print for a raffle drawing. A table with touchable animal pelts and skulls was popular, along with the “Know Your Ducks”

game for matching wings, feet and duck bills from different ducks at Turnbull.



Each day the booth was staffed by both Complex staff and a representative of one of the three Friends' groups. The show had a total of 15,000 visitors over the four days.



The raffle winner, Wayne Estes, was very happy with his print!



US F&W Refuge Review Process

Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond to the request to participate in the winter Director's Order 230 Review of the Refuge. The past year has been very stressful for Refuge staff persons; all new hires throughout the system were fired by DOGE, and many experienced staff members were encouraged to take a buy-out and retire early, leaving the remaining staff to cover more positions. At present the current staff are being shuffled around to cover other Western Regional positions and wearing three to five "full-time" hats each. In addition, you may have read about the re-organization of all Wildland Fire Services into one National agency.

Our Board has quarterly meetings with a presentation from Refuge staff to help keep us informed. Friends' members, especially volunteers for the Nature Store, are invited to attend the quarterly meetings held at the Refuge during working hours. (Other FOT Board meetings are held the third Thursday of the month at Wren Pierson Community Center in Cheney at 4:00 pm.) The next quarterly meeting will be April 16 at 10:00am in the Refuge Headquarters building.

We hope to see you at the Refuge soon.

EWU Archives' Turnbull Collection

by Steven Bingo, EWU Archivist



"The winter weather covered by this report was by far the coldest ever recorded in Spokane County" reads a 1949 report by Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge manager Ralph C. Winslow. Photographs stapled to the report show a bulldozer creating an impressive snow berm near the headquarters building and a subsequent photograph of a car partially submerged in meltwater captioned "Mrs.

Signs of Spring at Turnbull

by Carlene Hardt

Winslow swears the road is here somewhere.” The report and dozens like them may be found on the Eastern Washington University (EWU) Archives digital collections page. The EWU archives would like to thank the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge for sharing reports dating from 1938 – 2007 so that EWU may make them publicly accessible. These reports contain information about bird counts, wildlife, environmental conditions, and refuge operations over roughly 70 years. The reports contain a wealth of information about the history of Turnbull from a human and environmental perspective.



The EWU Archives also plans to build out a collection of digitized photographs of the refuge over this time. Many of the early photographs currently posted to the site illustrate the impact of water structures created in the 1940s to reclaim wetlands from areas cultivated in the late-19th and early 20th century. Future additions will include photographs of wildlife, the aftermath of the Mount Saint Helens eruption, Turnbull staff, and the implementation of controlled burns. The EWU Archives is also planning to add transcripts of oral histories to the collection as a way to flesh out the information provided in the narrative reports. To view the digital collection, go to: <https://dc.ewu.edu/turnbullnwr/>. If you are interested in participating in the oral history project, please contact Steven Bingo, EWU University Archivist, at sbingo@ewu.edu or 509-359-2302.

In March, as I walked down the Pine Lake Loop path I began to see spring activity increasing at Turnbull. On Winslow pool, I saw a painted turtle enjoying the sun as it slowly walked around the reeds.



Nearby, a pair of Trumpeter Swans were dipping their long necks into the water to consume the aquatic plants, roots and tubers. They do not have teeth but they possess hard, plastic-like serrated ridges along the edges of their beaks called *lamellae*, which function like teeth to grip vegetation, filter food and tear aquatic plants. They also have jagged structures on their tongues called "barbs" or *conical papillae* made of cartilage (similar to the rough tongues of cats!).



As I continued my walk, I heard and then saw a Red-winged Blackbird showing off: perched with its feathers fluffed out and tail partly spread, lifting the leading edge of his wing so that the red

shoulder patches were really prominent as it sang in hopes of catching the attention of female mates.



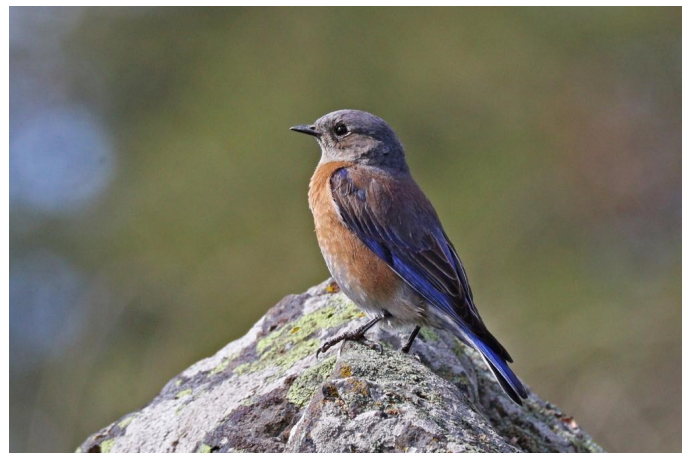
Quite a distance away, I spotted my first American Coot of the season. This time I noticed that at the back of its bill was a strange, fleshy reddish-brown bump. Turns out it's part of the white "frontal shield" of tough material from the back of its beak to its forehead. Situated between the eyes at the top of the bill, this mark is a normal part of their anatomy and often becomes more pronounced or *swells* during the breeding season to assist with mate selection and it is also assumed to be a shield for protection during aggressive encounters with other coots. The two dark marks on the upper and lower tip of a Coot's bill are just natural pigmentation, typically looking like a small black or dark- brown ring near the tip.



High on a branch I spotted a Northern Shrike which surprisingly - for a 9" long bird - eats smaller birds like sparrows, small mammals (like mice), and insects. Its bold black mask and stout, hooked bill heighten the impression of danger in this fierce predator. It was perched high to survey for prey.



Walking back to the car, I saw this beautiful blue-bird just chilling on a rock. It looked like it was posing for me! Bluebirds are typically seen as a symbol for happiness. Well, it put a smile on my face as I took its lovely picture. Did you know that there are actually no blue pigments in bluebird feathers? Their color comes from the design of their feathers that scatter only blue light ("Tyndall scattering"). Supposedly, no "blue" birds have actual blue *pigmentation*! The vibrant blue color is a result of structural coloration, where microscopic air pockets and protein structures in the feathers refract light, reflecting only blue light back to our eyes.



"My favorite weather is bird chirping weather."
—Terri Gullemets

EARTH FEST

PRESENTED BY
The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
The Lands Council



Keynote presentation by local author and naturalist, Jack Nisbet.

TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

SATURDAY, APRIL 25,
9AM – 1PM

Join us for an unforgettable morning of hands-on environmental action! Volunteers will have the chance to pot trees in our nursery, remove old fences, and participate in a forestry project, all to help preserve the beauty of this special place. When the work is done, tour a pop-up vendor fair featuring over 20 of the region's outdoor and environmental organizations, nonprofits, and agencies!

A picnic-style lunch of burgers and hot dogs is generously being provided by the Friends of Turnbull NWR.

For more information or to RSVP:

<https://www.fws.gov/refuge/turnbull>

<https://landscouncil.org/events/earth-fest-2025-2d2rh>



The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is committed to providing access to this event for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services or other accommodation needs to Joshua Contois, 509-559-3034, TTY 800-877-8339, or joshua_contois@fws.gov, with your request by close of business one week before the event.



Washington Bee Atlas

Adapted from

WA State Dept of Agriculture Press Release, 3/17/2026

WASHINGTON BEE ATLAS FINDS 17 NEW STATE BEE RECORDS; REDISCOVERS 12 SPECIES LAST RECORDED IN THE STATE AS LONG AS 144 YEARS AGO

OLYMPIA, WA – After wrapping up its second full year, the Washington State Department of Agriculture’s (WSDA) [Washington Bee Atlas](#) (WABA) has collected and identified records of nearly 30 new or rare bee species in the state. Seventeen species were new state records* — meaning they are the first known records of finding the bee in Washington. WABA also found 12 species which had not been recorded in the state for at least 50 years, one of which was most recently recorded in the state in 1882. WABA volunteers collected the new and rare bee species from 2023–2025. Volunteers submit their bees to WSDA’s Pollinator Program for identification at the end of each season, but the identification process can take months to years, depending on how rare the bee is and how difficult it is to identify.

Why it matters

Understanding which native bee species are in Washington and how they are faring over time is important not only for scientific research and conservation, but also for the region’s food security.

Reliance on honey bees alone puts food supplies in a precarious position as honey bees face increasing challenges. Additionally, honey bees will not pollinate certain crops, such as legumes, and crops receive better pollination and show improved fruit set when native pollinators are present. Supporting native bees helps ensure that crops will be pollinated even if honey bee populations decline.

WABA’s effort to document the state’s native bees and their host plants will provide data necessary to conserve and help these essential pollinators thrive. The data collected will also inform plans to develop ecoregion-specific plant lists and seed mix recommendations.

New state records

WABA collected 17 state record bees, which had never been recorded in Washington before. Some species were discovered in multiple counties.

Rare bees

WABA collected 12 rare bees, which had last been recorded in Washington before 1970.

The Washington Bee Atlas is discovering large numbers of new and rare bees because it is the first statewide effort to sample for them since the early 1900s, and most areas of the state are significantly undersampled.

Partnering for success

Still in its infancy after having started in 2023 and only completing its first full field season in 2024, the Washington Bee Atlas has experienced dramatic expansion and success thanks to state funding for the program, close partnerships with Oregon State University (OSU) and Washington State University (WSU), and due to the program’s rapidly growing number of enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers.

“Oregon State University built the framework for what a Bee Atlas can look like. Their training and data systems allowed us to get off the ground running here in Washington,” Karen Wright, WSDA’s pollinator taxonomist, said.

WABA awarded [Washington State University’s M.T. James Entomological Collection](#) its Partner Recognition Award. “WSU’s collection and the entomology staff have been critical for the Washington Bee Atlas. The specimens they maintain for the community provide not only a historic record of bees and other insects, but we couldn’t identify many of the bees we are finding today without the collection and world-class taxonomists at WSU,” Wright said.

The public has also shown extensive support for the project. So far, over 150 volunteers have completed the WABA training, collected, and submitted bees for identification.

Land access crucial for documenting bees

WABA volunteers may only collect on property where the landowner has given the program permission to do so. Numerous public and private landowners have granted volunteers this permission.

“Without access to land, we wouldn’t be able to complete our mission of documenting Washington’s bees. We are grateful to everyone who has granted us the ability to collect on their land,” Wright said.

State, county and city landowners who would like to permit WABA volunteers to survey for native bees on their property can email pollinators@agr.wa.gov for more information.

Bee-lovers wanted

The Washington Bee Atlas is seeking volunteers to continue to grow the program and document Washington’s native bees and their host plants.

“These discoveries are really just the tip of the iceberg,” Wright said. “Washington is a large state, and it is going to take many people and lots of time to really sample the entire state throughout the seasons. This will establish a baseline for how native bees are doing in our state. If you care about pollinators and pollination, this is an exciting time to join the program, as bees are understudied in Washington. There are lots of opportunities to discover or rediscover bees.”



Anthidium formosum. Last recorded: 1882

Volunteers undergo training through [OSU’s Master Melittologist Program](#). The program is similar to the Master Gardener Program, but the focus is on native bees. Because most bees cannot be identified to species from photos, volunteers learn to capture, preserve, and pin museum-quality specimens and document their host plants. They receive all the training and supplies they need to collect and pin the bees. Those who do not want to collect bees but who are interested in learning more about and supporting native bees can visit [WSDA’s native bees webpage](#) and the [Washington Native Bee Society](#).

** The new and rare bee records are determined by reviewing scientifically-verified and databased collection records at the time that WABA identified the specimens.*

(For the full version of this press release including a list of new and rare bees, with photos, please go to <https://agr.wa.gov/about-wsda/news-and-media-relations/news-releases?article=46510>.)



Hylaeus verticalis: Vertical masked bee. Collected in Spokane County. Last recorded: 1934.