Turnbull Wildlife Refuge
Friends Newsletter

Friends of Turnbull
Spring 2025

by Lorna Kropp

Welcome members to a new season at Friends of Turnbull NWR, Spring is always a time of new growth of plant, flowers, trees and arrival of migratory birds and rain and clouds and sun and . . . activities and chances to explore at the Refuge and also to volunteer and get involved! As a non-profit organization created to support the mission of the Refuge, we offer you chances to participate in activities and a chance to get involved helping others enjoy those opportunities, too.

Advocacy for the Refuge:

The Board has continued to follow the staffing and budgetary actions from the current administration in WA DC and DOGE with concern and support for the Refuge Staff who are under pressure during these chaotic times. You can help by

1) advocating for maintaining the Refuge staff and budget which has been at a bare bones level for several years and does not have any waste or excess left in it. Here is a resource to help you get started with your action:

National Wildlife Refuge Association – take action now:
https://www.refugeassociation.org/advocacy-refuge-employees

From the NWRA:

"The truth is, we don't think any land management agency is overstaffed but the Refuge System has the smallest workforce of any:

US Forest Service - approx. 30,000 FTEs *(193M acres)*

National Park Service - approx. 20,000 FTEs *(85M acres)*

Bureau of Land Management - approx. 10,000 FTEs *(245M acres)*

National Wildlife Refuge System - 2353 FTEs *(90M land acres and 760M marine acres)*

Please take a stand with the National Wildlife Refuge Association and tell Congress that they must not allow the culling of the workforce of the Refuge System!"

2) Also preventing or rejecting attempts for the sale of public lands:

We can urge our representatives to prevent the sale or transfer of our public lands to the highest bidder. Congress is considering the Public Lands in Public Hands Act -HR 718, submitted by Ryan Zinke, R-MT-1. This bipartisan bill aims to protect and safeguard these landscapes ensuring that our public lands remain protected from privatization and accessible to all. Ask the representatives to oppose any initiatives that would compromise the future of our public lands.

Friends Board of Directors Work:

The FOT Board is finishing up several months work to develop financial planning and policy for using our financial resources wisely in support of the Refuge. We are setting up a process that will hopefully benefit both the needs of the Refuge, which are increasing, and good stewardship of the funds which the organization has received and continues to earn through gathering donations, proceeds from our Nature Store, and using the Rabe Trust Funds. We are grateful for the cooperation with Refuge Management in developing these policy and procedures.

This Spring the Turnbull Refuge Management staff is organizing Visitor Services Program Review in May,

and a Wetlands Restoration Review in June to begin the new Action Plans. These documents will serve as a step-down management plan aimed at providing guidance for activities and management decisions for the next 5-10 years. Members of the Friends will be participating along with other community and area partners.

The Board is also wanting to build more active committees that involve more members in the projects and work of supporting the Refuge. The Nature Store Management Team is happy to welcome 6 new store volunteers for this season. The Pollinator Garden committee will be doing more planting and weeding and maybe starting some citizen science data collection on pollinators. We would like to re-activate the Activities Committee. We could use more help in advocacy within our community and protecting support from the larger government budget. Not to forget the upcoming fundraising efforts for our participation in the Walk for the Wild event in October. Lots of opportunities to step up. Contact: president@fotnwr.org to volunteer for your interest!

Planning for Earth Day potting and activities and BBQ lunch for participants.

Upcoming activities for your involvement:
Bare-root trees potting days in April and May – The Private Lands Biologist, Brian Walker, has plans to engage volunteers to pot up 6,000 baby trees for planting on the Refuge and other projects in our area next Fall. You are invited to gather a small group or contact Brian or Josh about days when you could help out for several hours or a whole day.
EarthFest celebrating Earth Day on April 26 – a larger group will be coming to the Refuge to work on potting bare-root trees, planting some trees which have over-wintered in the nursery, and remove fences, along with informational activities from several area partner organizations. The Friends group is providing lunch for about 150 volunteer participants and we need help to both cook burgers/hotdogs and set out food and manage the tables and food donations. Please sign up with our team by contacting activities@fotnwr.org if you can help that morning and/or donate toward: 20 bags of potato chips, 10 bags baby carrots, 5 celery, and 150+ cookies to add to the burgers/dogs, buns and condiments which will be purchased and prepared that morning.

Mark your calendars for MayFest in downtown Cheney on May 10! We will once again have a booth to engage the community.

See you at the Refuge!

Turnbull NWR EarthFest
courtesy The Lands Council

Turnbull NWR
photo courtesy Audubon Society

In this Issue:

President's Report 1
Lists of Birds 3
Nature Store Opening 3
Big Horn Show 4
Carlene's Spring at Turnbull 4

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“Do you have a list of birds found at Turnbull?”

by Diane Reid

“What flower was that little blue thing?” “Are there bobcats out here?” So go the questions put to our Nature Store Ambassadors by our inquisitive visitors.

This winter, while our store was closed, Carolyn Wright (one of our Nature Store Management Friends) and I took up the task of answering those questions for our visitors. New to our Nature Store are two new tri-fold brochures, covered with pictures on both sides, and with our familiar logo:

“Birds of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge”

AND

“Animals of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge”

AND

Keep your eye out for the third brochure: “Flowers of Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge”

The FOT Nature Store Opens for the 2025 Season

The FOTNWR Nature Store has opened for the 2025 season. The all-volunteer store is open 4 days each week from the beginning of April to the end of October each year. The hours are 10am – 4pm each day divided into 2 3hr shifts. This year we welcome back many loyal volunteers who have worked in the store in the past seasons, and are happy to welcome 6 new volunteers who will be great assets. Welcome to: Gail Atherley, Diana Hiatt, Kerry Heinemann, Ashlie Hatton, Cristen Long, and Richard Cohen, new Nature Store volunteers.

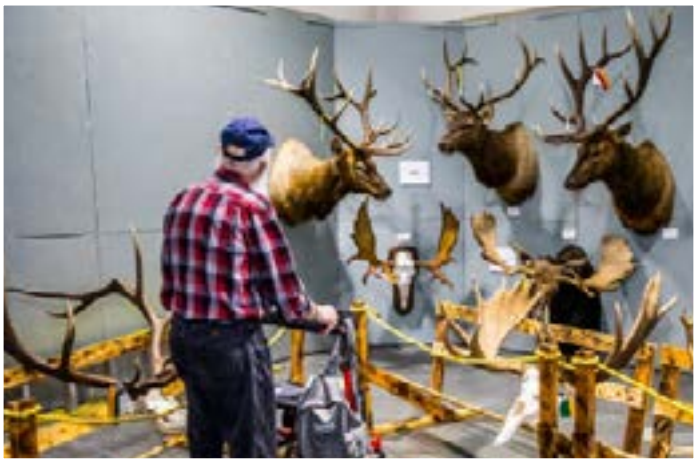
The store is stocked with new merchandise and has had several big days already! Come and see the new, colorful Liberty Graphic T-shirts featuring owls, raptor, goldfinches, butterflies or river otters! We have a new display featuring the three Refuges in our Complex and offering a chance to collect their pins or patches as well as those of Turnbull NWR. Can you name the other two Refuges and where they are located? We have a supply of nature and wildlife books for all ages and also have those cute and accurate Audubon Birds and other plush animals for great gifts for kids and grandkids! Plus, remember, the profits from all your purchases goes toward support of the Refuge Environmental Education, Biology and habitat restoration projects.

The Inland Northwest Refuges are Community Assets at the Spokane Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show

Mar 31, 2025
Written By

Joshua Contois

As the sun peeked over the horizon on a crisp March morning, excitement buzzed in the air at the Spokane Fair & Expo Center. This year marked a significant occasion for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS): their inaugural presence as a vendor at the renowned Spokane Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show, the premier event in the region aimed at hunters, anglers, and other outdoor recreation enthusiasts.



An event participant examines this years entries in the trophy corner of the event. |
by Gabriel Williams, USFWS

Park Rangers Josh Contois and Laurel Smith, along with Biologist Molly Dixon, engage with event participants at the Inland Northwest Refuges booth.
by Gabriel Williams, USFWS

Run by the Inland Northwest Wildlife Council, the event originally was just a way for hunters to show off trophy antlers. From its inception over 60 years ago, the Big Horn Show focused on promoting wildlife conservation, outdoor recreation, and ethical hunting practices. The event, now celebrating its 63rd year, has since become a more family-oriented event with activities for everyone. Staples of the event include an indoor archery range, air rifle range, and an indoor fishing pond.

Over 200 vendors attend the event, including hunting and fishing guides, representatives from local nonprofits, staff from government and military agencies, RV dealers, and more. This annual gathering attracts thousands of outdoor enthusiasts from across the region, eager to learn about wildlife conservation and sustainable practices while celebrating the area's deep-rooted appreciation for nature. The audience is diverse, ranging from avid hunters and anglers to families wishing to deepen their understanding of the great outdoors.

This year, staff from the Inland Northwest National Wildlife Refuge Complex, which includes Turnbull NWR, Little Pend Oreille NWR, and Kootenai NWR, joined staff from the Friends of Turnbull NWR, Friends of Little Pend Oreille NWR, and Friends of Kootenai NWR to jointly host a truly Complex-wide booth aimed at creating an enriching experience for attendees eager to engage with quality wildlife-dependent recreation. Like other government agencies in attendance, this event was an opportunity for Refuge staff to connect with the public and explain not only what the agency does, but also why they do it.

Staff from FWS and Friends of Turnbull collaborated to support environmental education about local species. by Gabriel Williams, USFWS

A waterfowl identification game was a big hit was participants. by Gabriel Williams, USFWS

Across all four days of the event, staff made over 14,000 visitor contacts, many of which were unfamiliar with the agency or had not yet visited one of the local National Wildlife Refuges. This provided opportunity for staff to promote the National Wildlife Refuge System and the many opportunities for outdoor recreation on America's public lands. As the event came to a close, there was a collective reflection on the relationships fostered and the awareness raised. The Spokane Big Horn Outdoor Adventure Show was more than just an event; it served as a platform to galvanize support for conservation and educate the public about the agency's mission of "working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people."

Refuge staff emerged from the show invigorated and optimistic about future collaborative journeys. Their participation at the Big Horn Show showcased their role as a community asset, reaffirming that through direct engagement and education, they could foster a deeper connection to the wildlife that the community cherishes and protects.

Featuring a touch table filled with various wildlife furs, the Refuge booth allowed visitors to interact physically with natural materials that illustrated the region’s biodiversity. Additionally, a waterfowl identification activity was a hit, where guests tested their knowledge and learned about the magnificent duck species that inhabit local wetlands. People of all ages immersed themselves in these educational experiences, fostering a genuine dialogue around wildlife appreciation and conservation. A highlight of the partnership between Friends and the USFWS was the fundraising effort by all of the Friends groups, who raffled off three stunning prints to support environmental education.

Connecting with local hunters, anglers, and wildlife enthusiasts allows the USFWS to forge invaluable opportunities for collaboration and demonstrate the importance of sustainable hunting and fishing practices. Many attendees expressed keen interest in volunteering for future conservation and restoration projects, showcasing a community eager to engage actively in wildlife stewardship.

Friends' Raffle winners at the Big Horn Show 2025

Lorna Kropp

Friends' Raffle winners at the Big Horn Show 2025
The three complex Friends' groups (Friends of Turnbull NWR, Friends of Little Pend Orielle NWR, and Friends of Kootenai NWR) worked together to sponsor a raffle of three prints which had been donated to the Refuge by Ducks Unlimited several years ago. Several of the prints were matted and framed for previous Friends of Turnbull Auctions in years 2014-2018. The raffle was a learning experience for the groups and did break even on costs. We have set up a display of the pins and patches of our Complex Friends that are for sale in the Nature Store at Turnbull. Check it out on your next trip to the Refuge! We look forward to having more opportunities to work together with our complex Friends' groups.

Here are the winners of the first ever Big Horn Raffle. The first print went to Jason Hays of Gig Harbor, WA and the deer print went to Tracy Grundstrom of Medical Lake, WA. Photos by Josh Contois

Jason Hayes
Gig Harbor, WA

Tracy Grundstrom
Medical Lake, WA

Photo courtesy AllTrails

EARTH FEST

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

TURNBULL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

SATURDAY APRIL 26, 9AM –12PM

Join us for an unforgettable morning of hands-on environmental action! Volunteers will have the chance to pot trees in our nursery, plant trees, remove old fences, and help preserve the beauty of this special place.

Special guest presenters: Ice Age Floods Institute

A lunch of burgers and hot dogs is generously being provided by The Friends of Turnbull NWR.

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.

For more information or to RSVP:

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

https://landscouncil.org/events/earth-fest-2025

Carlene's Spring at Turnbull

Don't you just love seeing the signs of spring? Turnbull is beginning to come alive again with the return of birds, including the Trumpeter swans, and colorful wildflowers. Driving into Turnbull one day I saw as many as 10 Trumpeter swans on Wheeler Pool! Some were resting near the water and some were eating.

How many of us see a Robin and declare it must be spring? This Robin was successful in getting its favorite food, a worm. Robins are particularly fond of earthworms, often searching for them on the ground by tilting their heads and using both visual and auditory clues.

I found this information: "Earthworms do make sounds, but they are very subtle. They create rasping and rhythmic scrunching sounds as they move through the soil. And Robins have specialized hearing mechanisms that are sensitive to low-intensity sounds, allowing them to detect these subtle sounds."

While walking on the path at the south end of Middle Pine Lake, I looked up and saw a female moose grazing up on the hillside! Behind the cow moose was the dirt road to Cheever Lake and two people were stopped there taking pictures of her. They said she looked "rough" and a little weak perhaps. Hopefully her health and appearance will improve as the spring rolls on and she gets more nutrition.

All photos by Carlene Hardt

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