



Willapa Tidings

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Legislators Murray and Baird visit the Refuge

by Kelly Rupp

Supporters of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge hosted Senator Patty Murray and Representative Brian Baird in inspections of the equipment and plan for spartina control on the Refuge. Joined by Refuge staff and local volunteers, the legislative leaders inspected the various amphibious tractors, airboats, and precision targeting equipment that will be deployed in the complex choreography of control methods for spartina on the Refuge.

Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader for the Willapa Refuge Complex, noted that Senator Murray's support was instrumental in "helping to fund the acquisition of equipment and hiring of additional personnel who will team up in this summer to implement the next phase of our multi-year control plan." Kim Patten, of the Washington State University Extension Service, and Dick Sheldon, of the Willapa-Grays Harbor Oyster Growers Association, echoed Stenvall's comments about the comprehensive preparation

that has gone into the spartina control plan and the appreciation for our legislators' continued support. "The cooperation from the federal and state agencies involved in working with us on this plan has been exceptional," commented Patten.

Bev Arnoldy, Friends President, awarded Senator Murray an Honorary Membership in the Friends organization in recognition for her and her staff's advocacy of Refuge programs. Len Barson, Director of Government Relations for The Nature Conservancy of Washington, noted the cooperation between the Willapa Refuge and the Conservancy's adjoining Ellsworth Slough property. "We fully support the Refuge's mission to be good stewards of the Bay and its surrounding lands. We are proud to be here with you in support of spartina eradication."

Senator Murray was distinctly impressed with the enthusiasm and commitment of the volunteers, business people, and gov-



Friends President Bev Arnoldy presents Senator Murray with a photo of shorebirds on Willapa Bay taken by Friends member Rudy Schuver (Photo by Deanna Wilson)

ernment agency staff present at the event. "Your efforts to protect and enhance this special place for future generations from the threat of this invasive species are enormously appreciated. My staff and I are proud to have contributed to this program at Willapa and to the Refuge system everywhere. These are national treasures that deserve our broad support."

The Brant of Willapa Bay

by Kirsten Brennan, Wildlife biologist at Willapa NWR

The brant (*Branta bernicla*) is a small, dark sea goose that feeds on aquatic vegetation in shallow bays and estuaries. Two subspecies winter and migrate along the U.S. coasts: the Black Brant (*B.b. nigricans*) on the west coast and the American Brant (*B.b. hrota*) on the east coast. Black Brant found within our bay have a black belly, while the American Brant are grey bellied.



Brant Goose by Tony Freixas

Black Brant breed in Alaska, the low Arctic of western Canada and northeastern Russia. They winter on estuaries along the west coast of North America from Mexico north to British Columbia.

An area in the southern end of Willapa

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- WA Legislators Visit Refuge..... 1
- The Brant of Willapa Bay 1
- 4th Graders See Refuge Up Close.. 2
- E-mail List Up and Running 2
- President's Letter..... 3
- Calendar of Events..... 3
- New Outdoor Recreation Planner... 4

Bay (known as the proclamation boundary) was established by F. D. Roosevelt in 1937 and was closed to all waterfowl hunting in an early effort to protect brant. This area contains about 52 km² at the south end of the bay surrounding Long Island and has extensive eelgrass beds. This area marked the beginning of the establishment of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge with the mission of protecting species and habitats of migrating and wintering populations of brant, waterfowl, shorebirds, and other migratory birds.

Brant numbers on the U.S. Pacific Coast declined dramatically in the late 1950's when wintering populations shifted south to Mexico. Since the late 1950s, the majority of brant wintering on the west coast of the U.S. have occurred in Washington, because Willapa Bay and the Puget Sound are sites that support vast beds of eelgrass. The decline of brant in the U.S. has been attributed to reductions in quantity and quality of the habitat in coastal areas because of expanding human development.

In Willapa Bay, brant begin their winter stay in late October or early November. A typical average winter count is 2,200 birds (based on data from 1981–2000). Peak numbers of brant occur during spring-staging and by mid-April 12,000 birds may be observed. Brant viewing opportunities are excellent during this time from the towns of Nahcotta and Oysterville on the Long Beach Peninsula.

The primary food source for brant is eelgrass. A study conducted on Brant in Washington by Wilson and Atkinson (a former biologist at Willapa NWR), found that brant use is limited by eelgrass abundance. Eelgrass beds not only provide food directly to brant and other waterfowl, but also provide refuge and feeding for juvenile salmon and other fish. Additionally, healthy eelgrass beds contribute to improved water quality and help stabilize sediment and reduce erosion. Brant and other fish and wildlife rely on the continued health of Willapa Bay habitat and our commitment in maintaining healthy eelgrass beds within the bay.

Pacific County 4th Graders Experience Refuge Up Close

by Kelly Rupp

Culminating the year-long environmental education curricula for Pacific County 4th graders, Refuge staff and volunteers hosted nearly 150 students and teachers from throughout Pacific County in a coordinated outdoor visit to the Refuge's Tarlett Slough unit (95th and Sandridge Road). Students interacted with volunteers at six field stations to experience aquatic specimens, amphibians, birdlife, and mammals in separate education stations.



Willapa National Wildlife Refuge has supported a very successful and comprehensive education program for the past three years to the seven 4th grade classrooms in Pacific County, Washington (three different school districts). The four in-class sessions and field trip exercise provided each year are recognized by educators as especially effective in instilling a sense of conservation stewardship and Refuge appreciation.

Friends member Ann Chiller enthralled a group of 4th graders with her description of "A Touch of a Wetland" during a field trip to Tarlett Slough. (Photo by Bev Arnoldy)

Friends of Willapa NWR E-mail List Is Up and Running

Thanks to Michael McDowell, our E-Mail Administrator, our member e-mail list is up and running! The purpose of this e-mail distribution list is to inform you of upcoming member events and volunteer opportunities. If you currently are not on

our e-mail list, and would like to be, contact Michael at mjmcowell@qwest.net.

We also post activities and events from other similar organizations (for example, the Native Plant Society and the Coastal

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To request an address change, to contribute items of interest (including photos), or to submit articles for publication, please contact Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

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Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

A nonprofit 501(c)(3) corporation, Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge was established in July 2000 to provide support and assistance to Refuge programs and to enhance awareness and appreciation of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge.

Board of Directors

Bev Arnoldy, *President*
Ocean Park, WA
Rudy Schuver, *Vice President*
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Bette Arne, *Treasurer*
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Winona Schuver
Membership Committee
Ocean Park, WA

Resource Alliance). If you have an event or volunteer opportunity that you would like to extend to Friends members, contact Bev Arnoldy (beva@pacifier.com) with the information that you would like to share.

President's Letter

It has been a very busy spring for the Friends group and Refuge staff. In mid-March, we celebrated the Centennial Anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge system by burying a time capsule, sponsoring a potluck lunch, and selecting interpretive art for the salmon trail design presented by the students of the Public Arts Program at the University of Washington.

We were honored with visits from both Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Brian Baird. The Friends of Willapa NWR welcomed Senator Murray with an honorary Friends membership and presented her with a stunning photo of shore birds on the Refuge taken by Friends member Rudy Schuver.

We also completed our third year facilitating and teaching an environmental education program to local area 4th graders. This year, we touched approximately 150 students in seven classes spanning all three school districts of Pacific County. In collaboration with the Refuge staff, we teach four modules during the school year; topics include an introduction to the Refuge System, bird identification, wildlife habitat, and amphibians. The culmination of the school year is a spring field trip to the Refuge. The students have an opportunity to participate in "hand-on" activities at the several science stations. During this year's field trip to Tarlett Slough, they learned about and viewed birds from a blind set next to a marshland, viewed live shellfish "borrowed" from Willapa Bay, looked for amphibians in the ponds on the Refuge, and gawked at actual skeletal remains of resident animal and fowl.

We have also instituted a new Friends e-mail distribution list from which we announce future activities, event, and volunteer opportunities. If you are not on our e-mail list, and would like to be, please send your contact information to Michael McDowell, our E-Mail Administrator at mjmcowell@qwest.net.

During the summer months, we will be reviewing and improving our 4th grade environmental education program with the help of the Refuge's new Outdoor Recreational Planner, Kristine Massin. We were also recently awarded a \$5000 grant to develop a middle school environmental education program.

We invite all of our members to our monthly board meetings generally held on the 3rd Thursday of each month, starting at 7 pm. Contact me at beva@pacifier.com if you'd like details or are interested in attending. -- Beverly Arnoldy



Calendar of Events

July - September 2003

Refuge Friends Activities

To participate in any of these activities, contact the Friends volunteer coordinator, Suzy Whitley, 360-642-2239.

- Board of Directors meetings July 17, August 21, and September 18, 7:00 pm. Open to the public.
- Revisit and revise the 4th grade environmental education program
- Develop a pilot environmental education program for middle school students
- Nature walks on the Refuge to commemorate the National Wildlife Refuge Centennial
- Periodic shorebird monitoring
- Trail maintenance work parties

Refuge Staff Activities

The Refuge will be working on these projects:

- Spartina control work
- Bog loosestrife control
- Forest management plan
- Snowy Plover and other shorebird monitoring
- Riekkola pasture maintenance
- Porter Point/Lewis: wetland vegetation analysis
- Quarry stream restoration
- Wetland management

- New membership
- Renewal

Membership Form



Make checks payable to: Friends of Willapa NWR

Invite a friend to become a member!

Send to: Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge
PO Box 1130
Ocean Park, WA 98640

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, Zip: _____
Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Volunteer interests

- Special Projects and events
- Community outreach
- Environmental education
- Membership recruitment
- Fund raising
- Public relations
- Habitat restoration

Amount Enclosed:

- \$10 Individual Membership
- \$15 Family Membership
- \$50 Patron Membership
- \$100 Benefactor Membership
- \$500 or over Advocate Membership

All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

- Trail and campground maintenance
- Shorebird and waterfowl monitoring
- Fish and amphibian monitoring

New Outdoor Recreation Planner Joins WNWR Staff

by Kelly Rupp

Kristine Massin joins the staff at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge as Outdoor Recreation Planner, returning to Washington State from her most recent posting at Rocky Mountain Arsenal Refuge near Denver, Colorado.

Her responsibilities will include curricula development for educational outreach programs sponsored by the Refuge



as well as public use plans for the 16,000 acre Willapa Refuge Complex. Her experiences at the Rocky Mountain Refuge during the past three years have prepared her well for Willapa; Massin published a

quarterly newsletter, developed and presented weekend nature programs, designed exhibits for the Visitor Center, created and staffed booths at major community events such as Colorado county and state fairs, sportsmen's shows, and community picnics.

Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader for the Willapa Refuge Complex, announced Massin's appointment with enthusiasm. "Kristine's background includes extensive experience in environmental education and public outreach. We're very fortunate to attract her to Willapa to expand upon our educational programs and our public use plans for the Refuge."

Massin's skills in planning and leadership will be put to the test early this summer. Her first responsibilities include the reconstruction of the boat ramp at Refuge Headquarters and supervision of the construction of the Salmon Interpretative Trail.

NEW MEMBERS (As of 6-15-2003)

Patron Membership

Shawn Stern & Amy Huntley

Family Membership

Len Barson
Ron & Leta Craig
Jerry Davis
Tom & Beth Kollasch
Richard & Marty Lemke
Tim & Deanna Wilson
Barbara J. Laurenzo

Individual Membership

Susan Fugate
Ellen Jenkins

MANY THANKS TO OUR BUSINESS MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT

The Bank of the Pacific—Aberdeen Branch

The Bank of the Pacific—Naselle-Grays River Valley Branch

Bay Center Mariculture, Inc.

Charles Nelson Guest House, Ltd.

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Ekone Oyster Co.

Herrold Oyster & Fish Co.

KeyBank National Association

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Dr. Kenneth D. Nanson, DMD

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Oysterville Sea Farms

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Sandpoint Clam Farms, Inc.

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The Shoalwater Restaurant

Lighthouse Realty

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