

# WILLAPA TIDINGS

Newsletter of the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge • Vol. 2, No. 3 • Spring 2002

## Leadbetter Dunes Restoration Begins for Snowy Plovers

By Deborah Jaques and Art Shine

A project to restore the native coastal dune ecosystem at the Refuge's Leadbetter Point Unit began this January. By improving breeding habitat, the restoration should help recovery of the threatened Western snowy plover.

A local contractor, Pierson and Son, has mechanically removed non-native beach grass in a one-acre contiguous patch just behind the foredune at the south end of the traditional plover nesting area. In addition, the contractor has made three fifteen-foot-wide cuts in the foredune. These cuts allow sand to move into the restored area and give newly hatched chicks a passageway between the beach and the restored area. Over the next several years Refuge staff will maintain and expand the size of the improved habitat area.

A local oyster production company, Taylor Resources United, has donated five yards of oyster shells to the Refuge. The Refuge staff will place the oyster shells in patches within the restored area to help conceal nests and chicks and reduce problems of blowing sand.



*Dunlin sandpipers return to the mudflats recently cleared of spartina by the Refuge's rototiller.*

## Residents Say Spartina a "Severe Threat"

A recent survey of communities around Willapa Bay conducted by the Pacific Northwest Coastal Ecosystems Regional Study (PNCERS) has found that nearly seventy percent of responding local residents perceive the spread of non-native spartina cordgrass as an "extremely severe threat" to the Willapa Bay environment. Another fifteen percent perceived the spread of spartina as a "somewhat severe threat."

Residents perceive the other top threats to Willapa Bay to be the spread of European green crab, decline in fish habitat, shoreline development and erosion, and logging in upland areas.

Dan Huppert, one of the PNCERS research team and an associate professor at the University of Washington's School of Marine Affairs, pointed out that the residents' view "contrasts with the views of scientists, based on a recent survey of coastal scientists and managers." The scientists and managers, he said, "ranked the threat of dredging much higher than the threats of spartina or green crab."

The Refuge has devoted a great deal of time and resources to combating the spread of spartina on Refuge lands and waters. The Refuge has also removed tidegates, restored

streamside habitat, and constructed fish ladders to aid in restoring salmon runs.

The top three reasons residents cited for the decline in salmon were degraded river habitats in forest lands, water pollution in rivers and the bay, and overfishing by commercial fishers. Residents did not see sport fishing as a significant cause of salmon decline.

The survey results were tabulated from the results of a February 2000 mailing of 5,000 surveys to households within 30 miles of selected study sites on the Oregon and Washington coasts. More than half the surveys were completed and returned.

The results of the Willapa Bay survey have been published in a four-page summary entitled *Willapa Bay Living: Profile of a Community in Transition*. Additional information is available from PNCERS by phone at 206-543-6600 or on the web at <http://www.wsg.washington.edu/pncers/home.htm>.

The summary contains other results of the survey, including what residents like about the Willapa Bay area, what activities they prefer, and how in their view the community is changing.

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## F&WS Director to Visit Refuge

Steve Williams, the Director of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, will visit the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge on April 24. Ducks Unlimited will provide an Earth Day luncheon at the Lewis Unit. As keynote speaker at the luncheon, Williams will recognize the partners who have assisted Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, including Friends of Willapa NWR, Willapa Bay Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group, the Nature Conservancy, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, Ducks Unlimited, and the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife.

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## Friends at Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge will have a display booth with information about the Refuge and the Friends group at the Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival in April. This annual event sponsored by the Grays Harbor Audubon Society, the City of Hoquiam, and

the US Fish and Wildlife Service (through the Nisqually NWR), will be held at Hoquiam High School in Hoquiam April 26-28. Speakers, displays, and tours of Bowerman Basin will be offered at the high school. More information will be available in April; call Rudy Schuver at 360-665-6859.



Winona Schuver prepares to insert a passive integrative transponder (PIT) tag into a juvenile salmon. The PIT tag bears a unique identifier for each fish. If a fish is subsequently recaptured, growth data can be determined. Cindy Baker (right), fisheries biologist with Ducks Unlimited, conducted the training. Deborah Jaques (left), Refuge biologist, observes.

# Calendar of Activities

April—May—June 2002

### Friends Activities

To participate in any of these activities, call one of the Friends Volunteer Coordinators:

Larry Scott, 503-325-5611  
Suzy Whittey, 360-642-2239

- Conduct spring field trip for 4<sup>th</sup> grade classes
- Maintain trails & campgrounds
- Assist with fish monitoring
- Maintain butterfly habitat
- Monitor bluebird & woodduck boxes
- Monitor shorebird migrations
- Participate in Grays Harbor Migratory Bird Festival
- Write articles for *Willapa Tidings*
- Board of Directors Meeting, May 16, 2002, 7:00 PM, Naselle Library

### Refuge Staff Activities

The Refuge staff will be pursuing these projects:

- Place patches of oyster shells for plover restoration project
- Install seasonal signs around plover nesting habitat
- Conduct brant and goose surveys
- Rototill spartina
- Monitor snowy plovers
- Host refuge field trip for 180 4<sup>th</sup> grade students
- Conduct shorebird surveys

## WILLAPA TIDINGS

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Michael McDowell, *Editor*

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

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PO Box 627, Ocean Park, WA 98640  
Telephone  
360-665-6859  
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fwnwr@willapabay.org  
Web  
<<http://www.willapabay.org/~fwnwr>>

## 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

Rudy Schuver, *President*  
Ocean Park, Washington

Winona Schuver, *Secretary*  
Ocean Park, Washington

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Joanne Jambor  
South Bend, Washington

# President's Letter

It was my privilege recently to attend the First Annual National Friends Conference in Washington, DC. Three hundred attendees representing ninety-five refuges from forty-three states gathered to share their stories of volunteerism, learn new techniques, and acquire new tools and skills to grow stronger and more focused on their common goal of providing support to National Wildlife Refuges across the country.

As your representatives, Winona and I shared with others our experience as volunteers at Willapa NWR and also strived to learn what we could from the vast store

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Sponsors of the First Annual National Refuge Friends Conference: Ducks Unlimited, National Wildlife Federation, National Wildlife Refuge Association, US Fish and Wildlife Service, American Birding Association, Audubon, Defenders of Wildlife, National Rifle Association, Ocean Conservancy, The Wilderness Society, Trust for Public Land, Wildlife Forever, and Wildlife Management Institute.

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of experience of other attendees. Some friends organizations have been in operation for many years. Several have completed a number of ambitious projects, including raising funds to build facilities that accommodate several million visitors each year. Many have dedicated their efforts to improving habitat or educating people. Others are in the formative stage, working through the trials of getting started as we did nearly two years ago.

An impressive array of speakers from eleven wildlife and conservation organizations stressed the need for more funding to improve the image, reduce the maintenance backlog, and shed the

neglected stepchild status of the Refuge System. All agreed that volunteers were essential and would be more valuable in the years ahead.

Friends are a growing force. Forty thousand volunteers contributed one million hours in the past year. Dan Ashe, chief of the National Refuge System, estimates this effort as the equal of 550 full-time employees—twenty percent of the refuge work load. Ashe commented, "The role of friends will continue to expand. Friends lay the foundation of community support."

Marshall Jones, deputy director of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, cited the importance of taking care of what we have. There are never sufficient funds to do all the work or maintain all facilities and equipment. Volunteers are needed to fill the gap. Jones said that refuges have to be made more accessible to the public, but the values and integrity of the system have to be preserved. No other country has a network of refuges where wildlife comes first. Lynn Greenwalt, former director of the

US Fish & Wildlife Service, asserted that "People and wildlife can interact on wildlife's terms."

Next year will mark the one-hundredth anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge System. President Theodore Roosevelt designated Pelican Island, Florida, as the first refuge on March 14, 1903. That was the start—albeit only 3.5 acres—of a Refuge System now encompassing ninety-four million acres. Pelican Island will be featured with an event that will launch a nationwide celebration and activities will follow at other Refuges across the country.

Attendees at the friends conference participated in sessions on media and events training, fund raising, and successful promotion of refuges, as well as the upcoming centennial. All sessions were designed to increase the know-how and productivity of volunteers.

As the land management arm of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the National Wildlife Refuge System helps fulfill a critical part of the agency's overarching mission to conserve the nature of America by protecting fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. One hundred years ago at Pelican Island, President Theodore Roosevelt said it best: "Wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of the people who are alive today, but the property of unknown generations, whose belongings we have no right to squander."

I am deeply appreciative of the volunteer efforts and financial support of our members. Your continued support will help preserve Willapa NWR for the enjoyment of future generations.

--Rudy Schuver, President



*A kestrel guards its prey at Tarlatt Slough.*

- New Membership
- Renewal

## MEMBERSHIP FORM



**Make checks payable to: Friends of Willapa NWR**

Send to: Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge  
PO Box 627  
Ocean Park, WA 98640

All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

**Amount enclosed:**

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

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

### Volunteer Interests

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Special Projects and Events | <input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising        | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail and Campground Maintenance   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Outreach          | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations    | <input type="checkbox"/> Shorebird and Waterfowl Monitoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Education     | <input type="checkbox"/> Habitat Restoration | <input type="checkbox"/> Fish and Amphibian Monitoring      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Recruitment      |  |   |

# Mitten Crabs, Zebra Mussels & Green Crabs Pose Threats

By Margie Cochran

When volunteers set out traps this season to help state fish and wildlife biologists assess the European green crab population in Willapa Bay, they'll also be looking for two other species that threaten Washington estuaries.

One is the mitten crab, a non-native species that has already been found in the Columbia River. The other is the zebra mussel. Although it apparently hasn't reached Washington, biologists fear that should it become established here, it would be a multi-billion dollar threat to industrial and public drinking water as well as a nuisance to commercial fishermen and anglers.

The mitten crab characteristically has large hairy claws and resides in fresh water. Zebra mussels look like small clams with

dark and light colored stripes and usually grow in clusters in shallow, algae-rich water.

Willapa volunteers have worked with state fish and wildlife personnel for the past four years to monitor the European green crab. Washington state program coordinator Ron Figlar-Barnes has praised volunteers and shellfish harvesters for their help in capturing the invader. The trapping program this spring, he says, "will be critical in determining if green crab can continue to persist in our bays."

An aggressive species, the green crab potentially threatens the bay's Dungeness crab, clam, and oyster populations.

Green crabs were first discovered in Willapa Bay as well as in Grays Harbor in the el niño winter of 1997-1998. Their population is still relatively small, Figlar-

Barnes says, and trapping in 2001 produced a limited number of larger crabs. Although smaller crabs continue to enter the bay, it is uncertain whether the species will adapt and sustain a population here.

Figlar-Barnes emphasized the importance of turning over any green crabs captured in the bay to the state fish and wildlife office in Nahcotta. Destroying them, he says, hurts efforts to track the status of the population.

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## Friends Receive Spartina Grant

The US Fish & Wildlife Foundation and the Pulling Together National Steering Committee on March 25, 2002, awarded a grant of \$60,000 to Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge to support spartina control in Willapa Bay.

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## Membership Notes

Friends were saddened by the death in late December of member Val Campiche. Val was deeply involved in the local community and will be missed. Our sympathy goes to Dr. Campiche and his family.

Thanks to all of you who have renewed your memberships. Renewal notices will continue to be mailed quarterly.

We welcome the following new members of Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge:

### Benefactor Membership

Robert Dennison & Mary Hickman

### Patron Membership

Ken & Erika Karch

### Family Memberships

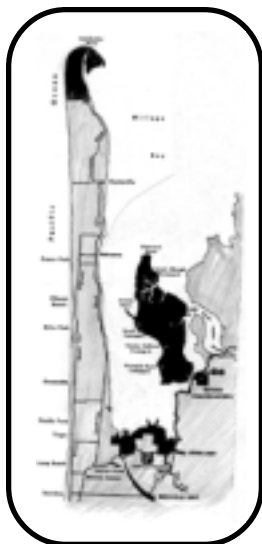
Ed & Cathy Maxwell, Mason & Angie Skinner, Tracy & Ginger Skinner, Russell & Eva Sweet

### Individual Membership

Dolores Carr



*The Refuge's Wilco amphibious tractor/rototiller plows a spartina meadow at the Porter Point Unit to prevent root spread.*



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P.O. Box 627  
Ocean Park, WA 98640

