

January e-NEWS

From Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

Web Site: www.ridgefieldfriends.org.

Email: rfriends@pacifier.com

Message from Friends' President Russ Roseberry

Even with the economic down turn that continued in 2009 it was a successful year for the Friends of the Ridgefield Refuge. The Board continued to work on support for education, habitat and the big event of Birdfest and Bluegrass. Birdfest and Bluegrass 2009 was the most successful and well attended ever with over 5,000 people coming into town and onto the Refuge for the weekend. Our sponsors, new and returning continued to provide funding for the Friends programs that will last throughout the 2010 year. The fundraising event held a week before Birdfest and Bluegrass with an auction provided additional funds. Grants were written with several of them providing funds to continue our environmental education program, Plankhouse program and habitat restoration program. Through the combined efforts of the Friends and Refuge staffs the number of volunteers continued to increase in 2009. Go to the Friend's website to see the great things going on.

Without the support of members and sponsors the Friends would not be able to continue to provide the Refuge with the help needed to keep the Refuge in good order and open to the public with education programs. If you know of potential sponsors that would support Friends programs please email the Friends at rfriends@pacifier.com so that they can be contacted. If you would like to volunteer on the Refuge contact Josie Finley at 360-887-4106.

Birding News from Eric Anderson

For a new birding challenge, I would encourage you to spend some time on the Carty Unit looking and listening for swans west of the Plankhouse. Soon after the New Year, staff started noting the distant sounds of trumpeter swans mixed among the clamor of tundra swan calls. Up to a dozen might be found in Carty and Middle Lake of the Carty Unit. While these species may seem similar, the call of these two species is very different. Tundra swans have a higher pitched barking 'kloooho' while trumpeter swans have a deeper resonating trumpet-like or car-horn sounding call. I had the challenge of describing the call difference to a tour of school principals and science teachers in mid-January, when we were fortunate enough to have a flock of calling trumpeter's fly overhead just over the tree tops. It was a memorable moment for all of the tour members. The next few weeks offer an opportunity for you to grab the field guide and look for a few trumpeters among the flocks of tundra swans of the Carty Unit.

Other natural occurrences to keep an eye out for in the next month....

- Tree frogs emerge from their winter slumber welcome the spring with their creaking call.
- Great horned owls claim nesting territories and start nesting. Owls often nest in the deep cracks of trees. Great horned owls are also known to take-over old stick nests built by hawks in previous nesting seasons. You might scan the stick nests for 'horns' emerging over the rim of the nest.
- Look for nest 'house-keeping' as hawks and eagles ready their nests for a new nesting season.
- In late winter, some ducks start to show 'pairing' activity. Watch for male and female ducks pairing up for a spring breeding season.
- Watch for 'scouts' of early returning birds. It isn't out of the question to see a few swallows in February flying around the Refuge.

SAVE THESE DATES! for Annual Refuge Volunteer Training

As we welcome volunteers to join us everyday of the year and many times give 'on the job' instruction, we also hope that all volunteers, new and returning, will join us for some in depth training in March and April. This is a great chance to meet other volunteers with the same interests, find new and fun ways to get outside, and get some free education in interpretation, natural and cultural resources.

Please bring a friend to our Volunteer Orientation on March 16th to learn about the Refuge and how you can join the hundreds of volunteers that help conserve, restore, and teach here every year. If you have time, join us at 5:30 for a 'behind the gate' tour with staff. Then at 7pm we will have a short presentation with refreshments and a chance to ask questions and meet staff and other volunteers. If you like what you see and hear, we will have special training dates for specific volunteer positions:

Orientation:

Tuesday, March 16th; 5:30 Tour; 7-8 Refuge Presentation
Ridgefield Community Center (both tour and presentation will meet at the community center)

Plankhouse Training

Saturday, March 20th; 9:00am-3:00pm
Ridgefield Community Center (In Plankhouse 12 to 3)

Working with Kids

Tuesday March 30th; 9:00am-12:00pm
Ridgefield Community Center

Environmental Education

Tuesday March 30th; 12:30pm-3:00pm
Carty Unit of the Refuge

Habitat Restoration

Saturday April 10th; 9:00am-12:00pm
River S Unit of the Refuge

Visitor Services (Greeting visitors and giving information)

Tuesday April 13th from 9-12 at the River S Unit.

Full Moon Night Hikes

Starting this spring, the refuge will offer monthly nighttime nature hikes every full moon. This is an unusual opportunity to discover the refuge after hours. See how the Oaks to Wetlands Trail transforms when darkness falls! Hikes will last about an hour and begin at dusk: from 7:30-8:30 on March 30th and April 28th; then from 8:30-9:30 on May 27th, June 26th and July 26th. Registration is required for these hikes. To sign up, contact Julia Davidson, Environmental Educator through AmeriCorps, at 360-887-4106 or Julia_Davidson@fws.gov

Great Backyard Bird Count

On February 12-15, you can learn about birds and support the birds in your community by participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count. This fun, free, family-friendly event is great for both new and experienced birders. At www.birdcount.org, download a checklist for your area and tips for identifying bird species. Observe and count birds from anywhere you like: your backyard, your balcony, your window – or here at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge! Once you've spent at least 15 minutes watching birds (or more time if you prefer) report how many you counted back at www.birdcount.org. Then you can view online maps and lists to see how your counts fit into the bigger picture. Not only does this help wildlife conservation and help you learn more about beautiful local birds, but it's a fun way to encourage kids to get outside and connect with nature.

Kids who participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count are encouraged to make drawings of their observations. Artwork can be submitted by scanning and emailing to Julia_Davidson@fws.gov; mailed to the refuge at Ridgefield NWR Attn Julia Davidson, PO Box 457, Ridgefield, WA 98642; or brought to the refuge office in person from 8-4:30 on the days of the Great Backyard Bird Count (February 12-15). Selected artwork will be added to the upcoming kids' page on the RNWR website!

Giving Thanks to YOU- For your volunteer time! For your financial contributions! 2009 was a great year of accomplishments for nature and cultural education and habitat restoration on the Refuge, and we're hoping we are part of your plans for the coming year! We can't do so many projects so successfully without YOU.

The New River S Audio Discovery Tour is our newest accomplishment and we hope you have been out to the Refuge to try it out. CDs are available at the River S Contact Station, or you can download the audio tour on your iPod or mp3 player from our website. What do you like about the tour and what else are you interested in learning about? Please take a few moments to fill out a short evaluation of the Audio Tour when you are done so we can make sure our seasonal variations keep you coming back

Join us for restoration work days on the Refuge, listed on the Friends' Calendar. Work days are open to all volunteers. To sign up or get on our notice list, contact Lori Summers, lori_summers@fws.gov, (360) 887-3883 x 14. Additional work days may also be arranged for groups.

Refuge GeoAdventure is a free group activity, designed for ages 12 and up, which includes a bag of clues and a GPS unit to solve questions about Biology or Archaeology. *GeoAdventure* is a fun way for your scout troop, community group, club or family to:

- Learn to navigate with a GPS unit
- Practice your detective skills with a bag of clues
- Discover more about Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge
- Learn about local Biology or Archaeology
- Work towards Scout badges

GeoAdventure is available Saturdays from 10am to 4pm, and other times by arrangement. To schedule your *GeoAdventure*, contact Julia Davidson at 360-887-4106 or Julia_Davidson@fws.gov

Don't forget to glance at the Refuge calendar,

your one-stop shop for fun activities coming up, at <http://www.ridgefieldfriends.org>