



# Making Tracks

Highlights of Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

April 2007

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## Web Pages of Interest

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[Tualatin River NWR](#)

[U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
Service, Pacific Region](#)

## Contact Us

[Friends of the Refuge](#)  
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503-972-7714

## Picture of the Month



*Spring has sprung! Be on the lookout for the many varieties of blooming flowers on the Refuge such as this trillium.*

*Photo by Janice Jenkins.*

## News from the Knoll

### Construction Update

Every day we see more progress on the Wildlife Center and Headquarters buildings. The plaza is complete, the flagpole is up, and the parking lot lights are being installed. Inside the buildings, the carpet and tile are being laid down, the cabinetry is going in and the fixtures are being installed. Planning for interior exhibits is well under way and installation will happen in mid-summer. Watch for the April installation of four new outdoor interpretive signs at the River Overlook and the Wayside parking area.

For more information, please contact Kim at the Refuge:  
[kim\\_strassburg@fws.gov](mailto:kim_strassburg@fws.gov) or 503-590-5811.

## *Recognition*

Both the Friends of the Refuge and the Refuge itself were given significant recognition this month.

The Refuge was selected by *Sunset Magazine* to receive one of its ten Environmental Awards given to public-private partnerships throughout the West for preserving natural resources. In the Award the Refuge was called a "Paradise Preserved." You can view the article at [www.sunset.com/paradise](http://www.sunset.com/paradise).

The Friends of the Refuge (FOR) was selected by the Tualatin Riverkeepers as the recipient of its 2007 Community Group Award. The Friends will be honored at the Riverkeepers' annual Green Heron Awards Dinner and Auction on Saturday, April 14, at the Tualatin Country Club. Go to [www.tualatinriverkeepers.org](http://www.tualatinriverkeepers.org) for details. FOR members are encouraged to attend and show their support for the Friends of the Refuge. Tickets for this Tualatin Riverkeepers fundraising event (\$50) are available by emailing [info@tualatinriverkeepers.org](mailto:info@tualatinriverkeepers.org) or calling 503-620-7507.

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## **Volunteer Update**

### *Second Saturday Work Party Schedule*

#### **April 14, 2007**

We thought the tree-planting season was over, but a BLM nursery was overstocked so we got 600 little trees for free! And that's where you come in. We need folks to turn out for the second Saturday work party on April 14. Mark your calendar, come if you can, bring your friends, family and neighbors. Kids are very welcome; just bring along enough adults for supervision. The planting will be on the Atfalati Unit off Hwy 99W. Meet at the main parking lot, wear sturdy shoes, and bring gloves if you have them. Please arrive by 8:45am; we'll start at 9:00am and work to noon, possibly later. If you have questions about the planting, contact Chris Lapp: [Christopher\\_Lapp@fws.gov](mailto:Christopher_Lapp@fws.gov) or 503-590-5811.

More volunteer info is listed on the Friends website:  
[www.friendsoftualatinrefuge.org/volunteer.html](http://www.friendsoftualatinrefuge.org/volunteer.html)

### *Wildlife Center Volunteers*

The Refuge and the Friends are working diligently to develop strategies for staffing the Wildlife Center and the Friends' sales outlet, "Nature's Overlook." Now we need your help! It may seem early, but we are already collecting names of individuals who are willing to dedicate one day a week to help out. You do not have to be an expert on the Refuge or its wildlife. We welcome both experienced volunteers and enthusiastic novices! We are developing training programs for our volunteers to make sure everyone who helps out will have the tools they need to have fun and do a great job! Want to welcome and interact with our Refuge visitors? Would you like to help out selling educational items from our store? Curious about what volunteering might entail?

Contact Carolyn Penner: [carolynpenner@comcast.net](mailto:carolynpenner@comcast.net) (503-579-5822) or Kim Strassburg: [kim\\_strassburg@fws.gov](mailto:kim_strassburg@fws.gov) (503-590-5811).

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## Refuge and the Community

### *Wildlife Center Dedication*

Mark your calendars for October 27, 2007, the day we will celebrate the dedication of the new Wildlife Center! Visitors will be able to explore new exhibits and facilities that will take the Refuge's education and interpretation programs to the next level. The Friends are planning on a grand celebration to mark this event — let us know if you'd like to help.

### *Spreading the Word*

FOR volunteers and/or Refuge staff often make presentations at community events to share information about the Refuge. Watch this space in future editions of the eNewsletter to find out where you can learn more if you're new to the Refuge. We're also looking for volunteers to make these presentations at future events, so if you're interested, contact Norman Penner at [normpenner@comcast.net](mailto:normpenner@comcast.net) or 503-579-5822 (cell 503-504-4814).

### *U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service adds Wapato Lake area to Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge*

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has recently given the "go-ahead" to expand the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge by adding the Wapato Lake area, which is located south of Forest Grove near Gaston in Washington County. This expansion will add 4,310 acres to the Refuge, more than doubling its size to 7,370 acres. Learn more by going to [www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/OR/docswapato.htm](http://www.fws.gov/pacific/planning/main/docs/OR/docswapato.htm)

### *Land Acquisition Fund Established*

In early 2007 the Friends Board voted to set up a Land Acquisition Fund. Contributions will be used to buy land for the Refuge or to pay for land-purchase-related costs such as property appraisals. Although the initial 12-acre parcel of land was donated from a local couple, since that time funding has come primarily from either congressional appropriations or from the Bonneville Power Authority (BPA). The rationale for BPA funding is to mitigate for environmental damage caused by the system of dams in the Columbia River drainage.

When the Tualatin River NWR was approved in 1992 by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, acquisition boundary lines were established. The area within this original acquisition boundary was just over 3,000 acres. The Refuge now manages 1,368 acres. That leaves over 1,500 acres more to fill out the Refuge to its intended original size. (The Wapato Lake Unit adds an additional 4,310 acres near Gaston.) Acquiring the additional land requires (1) property owners who are willing to sell and (2) money for buying the property.

Most of the unacquired land within the acquisition boundary is undeveloped forest, farmland, or wetland. Although the acquisition boundary is established, there is no guarantee that this land will not ultimately be put to some other use. Urban growth boundaries are very close, and development is closing in on the Refuge acquisition

boundary — and in some cases encroaching upon it. Therefore it is urgent that the land be acquired before it is developed and thus made forever unusable as wildlife refuge.

Large amounts of money are required to buy this land, and the Friends of the Refuge will continue to make the case for federal funding to our representatives and senators. However, there has been no federal money for land acquisition here for many years and future funding is uncertain at best. Hence the Friends Board has established the Land Acquisition Fund to encourage the local community to contribute toward the important goal of bringing the Refuge up to its full 7,370 acres (including the new Wapato Lake Unit).

Potential donors are encouraged to contact the Friends treasurer or any board member: [www.friendsoftherefuge.org](http://www.friendsoftherefuge.org) (or call 503-972-7714).

### *Refuge System Funding Crisis*

The \$2.5 billion budget shortfall that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is facing has been in the news this past month. As reported, on February 5, the U.S. President made public his budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2008 appropriations for the Department of the Interior, including the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The FY 2008 budget request proposes \$394.8 million for the operations and maintenance (O&M) account for the Refuge System. This amount is approximately \$13.1 million more than the administration's FY 2007 request, which is a small increase in funding for the Refuge System. However, the Refuge System needs a \$15 million increase each year to fully cover actual increased costs. To simply keep pace with inflation and cost-of-living increases, the System needs a minimum of \$451 million for FY08.

What has not received much attention is what is being done about this shortfall. The Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus was launched on Sept. 14, 2006. This groundbreaking caucus is working inside Capitol Hill to advance issues important to our National Wildlife Refuge System.

The purpose of the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus is to help:

- Raise awareness of our Refuge System;
- Create a voice for refuges in Congress;
- Support adequate Refuge System budgets;
- Support the six priority activities outlined in the Refuge Improvement Act (hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education and interpretation); and
- Support strategic growth of the Refuge System.

Currently there are 129 U.S. representatives from both parties in the Caucus, including four of our five Oregon representatives (Wu, Hooley, DeFazio, and Blumenauer). Caucus members are currently being asked to sign on to a letter urging the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies to increase FY 2008 funding for the National Wildlife Refuge System to \$451.5 million.

All four Oregon Caucus members have reportedly signed on to this letter. If you are a Refuge Friend/supporter, please send your representative an email asking them to sign on to this letter, or thank

them if they have already done so.

Keep informed on the Washington, D.C. scene by periodically going to [www.Refugenet.org/](http://www.Refugenet.org/) and reading the Action Alerts.

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## Upcoming Events

### *Spring Birds of the Refuge - April 11 & 14*

FOR member and Refuge volunteer Doug Robberson will be presenting his "Spring Birds of the Refuge" class at Refuge Headquarters off Roy Rogers Rd on Wednesday, April 11, 7:00pm-9:00pm. The follow-up walk will be at the Atfalati Unit of the Refuge off Hwy 99W on Saturday, April 14, 7:30am-10:00am. Reservations required, open to Refuge volunteers and Friends members, 30 maximum participants, and you must attend Wednesday's presentation to take the Saturday walk. Call Billie Farrell or Janice Jenkins to reserve your spot: 503-590-5811.

### *Migratory Songbird Festival - May 12*

Be sure to come out to our 12th annual Migratory Songbird Festival on Saturday, May 12. Most activities will happen between 10:00am and 2:30pm at Refuge Headquarters. There are some early morning bird walks and canoe paddle trips as well. Check out our website: [www.fws.gov/tualatinriver](http://www.fws.gov/tualatinriver) or call 503-590-5811 for details.

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## Wildlife Highlights

On March 21, a Refuge visitor witnessed a pair of mature bald eagles "talon locking" while in flight, then tumbling into the wetland and tussling for several minutes before disengaging and heading to land and trees to dry out. This behavior in eagles, most often associated with breeding rituals, is a spectacular sight to see. Other recent wildlife observations of note include Eurasian wigeon, cinnamon teal, lesser goldfinch, eared grebe, tree swallow, marsh wren, and a mink. The season has definitely changed.

Curious to learn more about volunteer opportunities with the Refuge's biological program? Monitoring programs starting in April include shorebird, marsh bird, and bluebird surveys. Invasive weed mapping training will take place sometime in April.

For more specific information, please contact Refuge Biologist Pete Schmidt: [Pete\\_Schmidt@fws.gov](mailto:Pete_Schmidt@fws.gov) or 503-590-5811.

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