

April 2020

MAKING TRACKS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE TUALATIN RIVER NWR

JOYFULLY CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE WONDER OF THE REFUGE



Visitors to the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge,

We are suspending Visitor Center operations due to a lack of volunteer staff availability. The majority of our volunteer staff at this location meet the at-risk profiles in the public health advisories. Should you have questions, concerns, or comments please contact our Deputy Project Leader Eva Kristofik at Eva_Kristofik@fws.gov or our Project Leader Larry Klimek at Larry_Klimek@fws.gov or [\(503\) 625-5944](tel:5036255944).

For Refuge updates, please visit the [FWS.gov](https://www.fws.gov) website.

We encourage you to STAY HOME and STAY SAFE.

If you do visit the Refuge please know that all facilities are closed- the restrooms, the buildings, and the parking lot. You may park below the gate and walk up to access the year round trail. Please do not block the gate or park on the grass. If parking is not available, please come back at another time. Pets are not permitted on the Refuge, and use social distancing when walking the trail.

If you have Urgent Questions about the FRIENDS, please send those to Info@FriendsofTualatinRefuge.org. These would include questions about Board Meetings, Membership, Advocacy and the nature store. All other questions should be directed to USFWS.

As a 501(c)(3) the Friends of Tualatin River NWR will be applying for the Payroll Protection Plan Loan from the Federal Government.

Donations to help us continue our work to support the TRNWRC are more important than ever as our Natures Overlook Store is closed.

PRESIDENT'S PERCH

By Alan Christensen, President of the Board



A couple of weeks ago, on March 7, I was at the initial restoration planting at the new Wapato Refuge near Gaston, Oregon. It was a cold and damp morning and folks shivered as we awaited the shuttling of volunteers to the planting site. As a recognition of the importance of this planting there were several representatives from groups involved or associated with Wapato and each spoke to acknowledge the importance of this first step. I was fortunate to speak for the Friends as we all kept our comments short. I wanted to make one point and that was to say that restoration is really about the future and what we want for the future. On that day, in the damp field with remnants of the old onion field showing, we dug holes in the soil and planted elderberry, salmonberry and nine bark bare-rooted stock. The elderberry in particular was challenging because of the size and length of the rootstock. The soil became really thick and built up on our boots and the shovels. In that moment it was hard to visualize a 10 foot tall elderberry hung heavy with red fruit, but that is exactly what we were all about. We collectively had aspirations for the future of that site and our efforts were the first deposit for that future.

During my career as a biologist I have worked on many restoration efforts and had the good fortune to return to many sites after a number of years and see what those efforts produced. During high school and college I worked in the woods on active timber sales and on planting crews that put new doug fir in the ground in the Oregon cascades. Someone unfamiliar with a recent timber sale activity, especially a clear cut, would be hard pressed to not see destruction as the logical description of a site. But well planned sales with appropriate "site prep" via fire or soil disturbance is soon covered with returning vegetation and within 10 years is often covered with new conifers, grasses and forbs. I worked on fire rehabilitation crews in the Forest Service and we often visited fire sites while they were still burning where we worked with heavy equipment operators to show them how to reduce their impact on soil and, as a result, to reduce soil loss to run off. We made recommendations for revegetation efforts and

JOIN

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UPCOMING EVENTS

[Friends Board Meeting \(session 3 of 11\)](#)

Virtual Meeting Planned

April 28, 2020 6:30 PM

Contact by 4/21/2020

Info@FriendsOfUplandRefuge.org if you would like to receive an invitation to attend our ZOOM meeting.



SOCIAL MEDIA



determined which sites needed to be seeded or planted. I walked a lot of miles over ankle deep ash and blackened soil. Over time I began to recognize and be very thankful for the resiliency of nature. Going back to fire sites that seemed devoid of anything live I would find thick stands of grasses and forbs springing from rhizomes or seed lying within the soil. I came to realize if we protected soil and native plant seed sources that many sites could rebound quickly after a disturbance. In all these experiences our restoration efforts were about the future of the site and our informed actions to assist natural responses to disturbance. On that March 7 morning, representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde offered a prayer at Wapato and they mentioned the long history of their peoples occupation and use of the resources at Wapato. Since then the area has been farmed, grazed and otherwise generally used for agriculture. Now, however, the area will be returned to a more natural condition and the vegetation we planted will be an important part of that future. I like to think ahead a few years and see the elderberry with fruit attracting many birds and the white, showy nine bark blossoms in the spring. In all our restoration efforts the future will be shaped by our choices and efforts now and by taking advantage of nature's resiliency through protection of soil and water resources. There are plans for a formal dedication and public opening of the Wapato Refuge early this fall. More information will become available as we near that date.

HELP THE
FRIENDS WHILE
YOU SHOP



Chicken Creek Restoration Updates

To see and read about continued updates regarding the restoration project, and the positive impacts it will have on the fish and wildlife at the Refuge, we have created a comprehensive information resource, and blog, to keep you up to date with all the changes happening and pertinent news in the coming years. Please visit: www.Refuge202.info



Would you like to make a donation to this effort?

We are taking donations of \$2.00 per plant on the website www.FriendsofTualatinRefuge.org or in the Nature Store.

You can buy 1 plant or 100 plants- any donation would be appreciated.



Watch for Information about our first ever Virtual Bird Festival.



Friends Receive \$70,000 Grant

The Friends of the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge and Fish and Wildlife Service contracted Ash Creek Forest Management to carry out the planting project funded from Bonneville Environmental Foundation and One Tree Planted. The project was completed in about a week's time, and began with

site prep; a tractor dug evenly spaced planting rows throughout the project area, which allowed for an easier planting down the road.

Crews planted a large variety of shrub and tree species, which varied based on the location, and whether it was an upland or riparian zone. In upland zones, crews planted a mix of serviceberry, oceanspray, Oregon white oak, blue elderberry, snowberry, viburnum, ninebark, swamp rose, and more. In the wetland zones, they planted a mix of willow species, dogwood, twinberry, chokecherry, douglas spirea, twinberry, mock orange, among many others. All plants were bare root, and some have already begun to produce leaves. In total, about 100,000 native plants were placed in the ground, and will be vital in creating dynamic habitat, will foster more suitable conditions for aquatic species, and provide food for waterfowl, deer, beaver and other important wildlife that frequent the Refuge.

All photos of planting courtesy of Ash Creek Forest Management



Map of the planting area





Litterbugs: A Persistent Species

By Trail Rover Joseph Edgerton

What trash at the refuge looks like and how you can help

One day, out on the trail, I was hiking across the Rock Creek bridge when I spotted a beaver that was wearing over-sized rain boots and building a dam. As soon as I got closer to take a picture the beaver vanished, leaving only a single boot behind.

Admittedly, that story is a flat-out lie, but the physical evidence is undeniable.



A lone boot on top of a beaver dam in Rock Creek is one of the many different items found within the refuge.

Anyone frequently roaming the refuge's trails may make a couple interesting observations during a walk. Visitors regularly encounter unique seasonal wildlife; others have the chance to admire beautiful scenery. However, some unique observations may not involve nature. Instead, the focus could be on what is found *intruding* in nature.

The physical items scattered around the trails and land are diverse, interesting and important to understand. Ordinary garbage on the ground serves as a prime reminder of the refuge's rules, while another discarded item can represent a particular social event or land history. After examining trash on

the trails over a couple months I know that not every disposed item on the refuge is the same. This is why connecting trash to real consequences is crucial. People do not always realize how serious even a small discarded tissue can be for animals. In the worse case, littering is one step away from directly hurting an animal, an action that should never occur within a safe-haven for wildlife.

The negative impact of trash on wildlife is a significant issue and the lessons learned from discarded items should be used to improve the outlook for the wetlands.

To understand more about junk, along with the significance in relation to the refuge, we should first talk about the variety of abandoned items that have already been found.

Taking inventory of refuge refuse



The left photo depicts a metal canister (blue circle), the right photo showcases an inconspicuous used tissue.

You may not see all of these, let's say, "treasures," during a walk on the trail. However, knowing the origins of the disposed items, and their impacts on wildlife, will provide insight to the overarching issue of garbage on the refuge.

One of the most direct, and most salient sources for everyday trash on the trails is unfortunately the welcomed visitors who come to the refuge. At times, the trails are lightly speckled with small pieces of trash; mostly candy wrappers, paper, and tissues. Paper and plastic items are dangerous to wildlife because animals accidentally eat the trash and then become sick or die from the ingested litter.

Additionally, food waste such as an orange peel is occasionally spotted off to the side of a path. In this situation, some people may argue they are simply composting the food or food waste. On the other hand, animals that find the disposed food can again become ill or even worse, become used to disposed food and risk disrupting their normal food sources.



The left photo is a painted rock resting on a log, the right photo shows a constructed stick structure on a bench.

Obvious trash items certainly have an impact on wildlife, but even innocent-looking crafts are still not acceptable for leaving behind. The bottom line is that nothing should be taken or left inside a wildlife refuge, including the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge (Tualatin River NWR). Intermittently, I have found a few crafty items on the trail that appear harmless at first glance (e.g. stick houses possibly made by kids, and a painted rock that apparently is a social trend meant to promote positive messages). These are creative projects but if anything, I think they give the wrongful impression that interacting or collecting within the refuge is fine. Artful crafts involving nature can be a fun way to connect to the environment, but the task of crafting itself should be left at home. However, not every piece of debris found on the refuge is generated by visitors.

The final few minor sources of trash on the refuge are old equipment and refuge restoration material. A half-buried tire here, a couple plastic tree sleeves in a field over there. One person aware of this issue is Sarah Williams Brown, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Biological Science Technician at the Tualatin River NWR. She informed me that the staff are aware of the debris and are working to properly clear all garbage as they continue to discover more.

Talking trash with context

The refuge is never perfectly clean, but after reading about other refuges across the country the Tualatin River NWR and surrounding community should feel proud. Article and news coverage detail serious trash problems that staff and volunteers face at [other refuges](#). The Tualatin River NWR does receive help with trash from youth work-crews. Luckily, the refuge is not dealing with a garbage level that requires volunteer work parties for assistance. This well-kept status of the Tualatin River refuge depends on the continued support of the community members and the dedication of visitors, volunteers and staff to maintain a clean, functioning refuge.

In moving forward, I want to highlight a few ideas that will positively influence the low-trash legacy of the Tualatin River NWR:

- First, everyone reading this should continue to be mindful with anything they bring onto the refuge. You can have snacks out on the trail, but please remember to keep any wrappers or waste secure until you exit the trail and can access a trash or recycle bin. A

wise phrase about picking up after one's self that I would like to echo comes from the Ridgefield NWR website, saying, "Take Only Pictures - Leave Only Footprints."

- A second, physical resolution for dealing with trash is to provide trail rover volunteers with the means to pick up litter. Sarah said providing a trash-picker and bucket to collect trash is an option that has been discussed by staff before. I certainly wouldn't mind taking a more active role in helping the refuge, as I am sure a lot of other volunteers feel the same way.
- Lastly, Sarah mentioned that trash "blows in from other places." Trash is an issue on and off the refuge. No one should litter anyplace, because as Sarah says, "[Trash] ends up somewhere else" and that "somewhere else" could likely be the refuge.

This public land is alive with amazing habitats and magnificent wildlife. Visitors get the incredible chance to glimpse into a working wetland. I enjoy the refuge as much as the next visitor. If the wetland is to continue working, every visitor needs to be aware of the rules, and needs to respect the land that supports such a diversity of life.

CONTACT US

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