

February 2020

MAKING TRACKS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE TUALATIN RIVER NWR

JOYFULLY CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE WONDER OF THE REFUGE



PRESIDENT'S PERCH

By Alan Christensen, President of the Board



I think a lot about the topics for the Presidents Perch. Members can find information about what is happening on the refuge and among Friends from the web site so it seems like the Perch is a good place to evoke thought and discussion about topics important to the Tualatin River NWR, our Pacific NW ecology, and national issues that affect us. As I listen to the rain drumming on my roof I get a feeling of smugness knowing that we in the Pacific NW are lucky in regard to the abundance and quality of the water that supports us. Consider the reality that all the water ever formed on earth is still with us, around us, under us. Of all the water on earth only about 2.5% is fresh water, the rest being saline. Only about 1% of the worlds fresh water is available to us for our use, the rest being locked up in glaciers and snowfields.

We draw our water from surface and underground sources. Surface water in the form of lakes, rivers and streams represents only about one tenth of one percent (.0171) of all fresh water. When you think about the Columbia River it seems like fresh water is abundant and unending. The Columbia River has an average discharge of about 250,000 cubic feet per second (one cfs contains about 7.5 gallons of water) and a recorded maximum discharge of about 1.25 million cfs, yet it does not rank anywhere near the top 10 rivers in the world. Half of the world's fresh water is located in just six of the worlds countries which means many places on earth suffer with a shortage of water and all the benefits it brings. The World Health Organization estimates that over 2.1 Billion people suffer from a

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UPCOMING EVENTS

[Puddle Stompers- Ducks](#)

February 12, 2020
1:00 PM

[Waterfowl Watch 101](#)

February 15, 2020
10:00 AM
Tualatin River
National Wildlife
Refuge

[Plant Your Roots - February 15th Planting](#)

February 15, 2020
10:00 AM
Wapato Lake
National Wildlife
Refuge

[Puddle Stompers- Ducks](#)

February 18, 2020
10:00 AM

[Plant Your Roots - February 22nd Planting](#)

February 22, 2020
9:00 AM
Tualatin River
National Wildlife
Refuge

shortage of drinkable water.

So what does all this mean to the Tualatin River NWR and Friends. I think we need to recognize the responsibility we have to steward and protect the resources present on the refuge and within our communities. Surrounded as we are by an abundance of water its easy to ignore polluting activities and behavior that wastes or reduces the quality of our water. We all have ways we can use water more responsibly and practices that reduce wasting this precious resource. The ongoing Chicken Creek project on the refuge is a good example of long term water conservation. Altering the water features on the refuge from open water seasonal ponds to a meandering riparian stream will sustain cleaner water and more flow to the Tualatin River in the long term. Riparian habitat is the interface between the land and water. It is typically the location of plants that depend on the water and in turn filter runoff and stabilize stream banks with their roots.

The Chicken Creek channel is designed to “snake” across the open flat, thereby substantially increasing the length and area of riparian habitat. The flow in Chicken Creek will benefit from shade created by the riparian plant community and the filtration of runoff will ensure higher water quality. Many studies have identified riparian habitat as among the most important habitats in the West. Birds, mammals, insects, reptiles and amphibians all benefit from riparian habitat and the diversity of plants that grow there. Water loving stream side plants become replaced by bigger and deeper rooted shrubs and trees as the distance away from the stream increases. Trees and shrubs provide food, nesting habitat and perches for many species of birds and insects and their leaf litter fall provides nutrients to the stream and aquatic species that dwell there. Movement of aquatic mammals across the landscape is also enhanced by riparian habitat and it is hoped that beavers quickly inhabit the riparian habitat and enhance its value with their activities.

I have been fortunate to participate in Native American traditional ceremonies set around a meal. Each time water is the first and most important food resource recognized. Water is the beginning of all life and is held in high esteem and meant to be cherished and protected. Next time you pour yourself a glass of water stop to think about how irreplaceable it is in our lives and what it means to all the resources we depend on and love.

[Friends Board Meeting \(session 2 of 11\)](#)

February 25, 2020
6:30 PM

19255 SW Pacific Hwy, Sherwood OR 97140

[Nature Ambassadors - Wild Waterfowl](#)

February 27, 2020
2:00 PM

Newberg Public Library

[Plant Your Roots - February 29th Planting](#)

February 29, 2020
8:30 AM

Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge

[Drop In Exploration Day - Pollinators](#)

March 01, 2020
10:00 AM

Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge



SOCIAL MEDIA





HELP THE
FRIENDS WHILE
YOU SHOP



Join us for Plant Your Roots - February and March Planting!

Please register at : <http://friendsoftualatinrefuge.org/event>

Hope to see you there!

Update: due to high water levels and flooding of the planting site, the planting events at Wapato Lake NWR (Feb. 8th and 15th) have been CANCELED. The events have been rescheduled for March 7th, from 10 am - 1pm. We are hosting a single day of planting (not two), so this will be your one opportunity to get involved with the first plantings at Wapato Lake NWR! Register on the Friends website. The planting events at Tualatin River NWR are still happening (Feb. 22nd and 29th), so if you haven't signed up for those events yet, please do on our website.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Plant Roots

at Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge



#FloraFebruary



FloraBery: @Michael Klutz

Two Volunteer Plantings in February

Saturday, Feb. 22nd
9am - 1pm

"Color the Creek"

Help enhance the new Chicken Creek channel by planting riparian habitat trees, shrubs, and flowering plants.

Register Online:
bit.ly/PlantingFeb22

Saturday, Feb. 29th
8:30am - 1pm

"Be a Friend of Trees"

Join our partner, Friends of Trees, as we continue to enhance riparian habitat along Chicken Creek.

Register Online:
bit.ly/PlantingFeb29



Parking available on-site at Refuge Visitor Center.
Planting equipment and refreshments provided.
All ages welcome. Dress for the weather.

NATURE'S OVERLOOK STORE

Featured Vendor from Nature's Overlook

Eileen Sorg – Two Dog Studio Cards



Eileen was born in Seattle. She still lives and works overlooking the bountiful Hood Canal. Eileen has a keen interest and respect for the natural landscape and its wild inhabitants. With her degree in Wildlife Science from the University of Washington and subsequent time spent studying birds and mammals as a biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, she has now returned to art with a bit of the scientist still in tow.

With her current work she is seeking to capture the playful, sometimes mischievous side of her subjects. Catching them in the act of behaving unexpectedly.

Eileen's primary medium is currently colored pencil, with ink, pastel, and watercolor applied for added depth. She considers herself a draftsman rather than a painter. She is most comfortable with a pencil in her hand, languishing over all the tiny changes in tone and hue. The pencil work is essential for breathing life into her subjects and creating softness.

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

Tualatin River Photo Society

Photo Society Meeting
7 PM at the Visitor Center

Photo Society Presentation - Susan Dimock

When

March 05, 2020

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Location

19255 SW Pacific Hwy, Sherwood, OR 97140

March 5th our guest speaker and presenter is Susan Dimock. Susan Dimock is a retired clinical social worker and psychotherapist who quickly channeled her energy into a second career as a fine art nature and travel photographer. Based in Bandon, Oregon, she specializes in wildlife and seascape images of the coast where she and her husband have lived for 16 years. Her travel images of Oregon are seen throughout the world in print and in on-line publications due to her tourism contract work and her affiliation with Circles in the Sand of Bandon.

All Photo Society meetings are free and open to both members of the Friends and non-members. Monthly meetings are held at the Visitor Center at the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, [19255 SW Pacific Hwy, Sherwood, OR 97140](#). on the first Thursday of every month at 7 PM from September through June.

The Friends Photo Society also offers some wonderful volunteering opportunities with the Refuge. Examples of volunteer opportunities include, leading of photo walks at the Refuge, creating photo journals of major restoration projects at the Refuge, and others.

Wear in the World

Are you going anywhere fun this winter? - take your Friends Logo Wear along and snap a Photo.

Send photos to Info@FriendsOfTualatinRefuge.org

Be sure to include the location

A Humble Amphibian with Power

Discussing the rough-skin newt and where to find it on the refuge.

By Joseph Edgerton, Trail Rover Volunteer



A newt can blend in with the trail, making it easy to mistake for a piece of wood or debris.

As I hike along the year-long trail in late-January, raindrops pierce through the forest canopy and strike the occasional leaf. The croaking of concealed tree frogs perforates the soundscape. The damp trail floor is a blend of dead leaves and soaked

soil.

Even though the trail is dark and wet, I am actively scanning the ground because a small, camouflaged, crushable amphibian's life depends on it.

The amphibian at risk of death-by-trail-shoe is *Taricha granulosa*, the rough-skin newt.

The semi-aquatic resident

At first glance, newts appear to be some sort of wet, slimy lizard. This is not a terrible description given that newts are amphibians placed within the salamander family Salamandridae. The salamander-like adult rough-skinned newt spends most of its time in terrestrial habitats, only returning to the aquatic habitats (e.g. ponds) to reproduce. On the trail, an observer will probably not see any newts in the water, but they do have a good chance of finding a newt roaming around on land.

A typical rough-skin newt will have a brown or black bumpy back with a contrasting yellow to orange underbelly. Looking straight down at the ground, the newt is difficult to spot due to the similar colors of the underlying refuge trails. If a trail-goer glances slightly ahead of their feet as they walk on the trail, they may be able to spot the bright belly of the newt against the dark ground.

The adult rough-skinned newt is active in the day and at night, eating small insects and invertebrates in forested areas during the winter months. A hopeful newt-spotter will have the best chance of running into one on the trail during or after some rain.

Rough-skin newts found on the refuge are native to the Pacific coast region, occupying areas west of the Cascades. Luckily, this endemic species is not in immediate danger of disappearing. The amphibian is listed on the IUCN Red list as having a stable population.

These newts, while difficult to spot, provide clear benefits for the ecosystems within the refuge. First, *T. granulosa* eats small insects, controlling populations that include pesky mosquitos. Second, newts themselves are eaten by *Thamnophis sirtalis*, the common garter snake. Garter snakes are an integral part of the food web within local ecosystems, providing a source of food for predators like hawks and herons. However, eating a newt is not as straightforward as it sounds. Eating newts is only possible because the common garter snake has a tolerance for the newt's deadly toxin.

You are not a snake

A rough-skinned newt may appear harmless and small, but the animal secretes a

potent toxin that could kill a misfortunate person. The toxin in question is tetrodotoxin (TTX), the same toxin secreted by blowfish. The amount of toxin within one newt has the potential to kill several human adults. The toxin is even more deadly than the one produced by South American dart frogs used to make poison darts! Thankfully, newts only become deadly if ingested since the toxin cannot be absorbed via skin. Though, some garter snakes have a genetic resistance to the toxin's effects and can then eat the newt without negative consequences.

Unfortunately, while some garter snakes can eat newts worry-free, humans cannot accomplish the same feat. An old folk-tale that takes place circa early 1960's describes three Oregon hunters found dead in their campsite with nothing out-of-place. The key to their supposed deaths was a boiled rough-skinned newt within their coffee pot. This story may not be entirely accurate, yet the message of the newt's effective toxin rings true. A more present-day scenario of newt poisoning is one that involves hazing, betting or other shenanigans with ingesting newts. Rough-skinned newts are not a joke, and this is a good opportunity to give a quick PSA: "You should not touch any wildlife on the refuge."

Since touching newts is out of the question, the refuge offers plenty of trail spots to observe and photograph them.



At an angle, a rough-skinned newt's bright underbelly can be seen.

The locale for spotting

After I roamed around on the year-long trail for several weeks I discovered the best locations on the refuge for observing newts. One spot (1) that yields a newt every so often is the top of the Ridgetop Overlook trail (a trail inside the forested area with a steep incline). Towards the last 20 yards of the trail, before the railed-outlook, I frequently encounter a single newt basking in the middle of the trail. The other location (2) I have had success in capturing close-up photos of newts is deeper within the forested area. I also find newts along the trail near the point where the year-long trail within the forested area runs adjacent to the muddy creeks.



A map of the refuge trail system with numbered black boxes (1,2) indicating areas I have seen newt

The sky may be raining, the air a little cold, and I might be a worried about my foot placement on the trail, but the effort is worth the wait to find an inconspicuous newt slowly wandering across my path.



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.**

CONTACT US

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