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The Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

The latest updates | June, 2020

From the Friends

First, we hope that you are safe, well, and able to enjoy the nature around you, wherever you happen to be. We also want to thank everyone who contributed to #GivingTuesdayNow. Your support means so much.

During this stay-at-home spring, we've been learning a lot about the benefits of technology. Our board has been meeting on Zoom for the past two months* and I'm sure many of you have your own examples of connecting in ways that may have seemed strange even a few months ago. But there is no true substitute for nature, and we were so happy when the Refuge auto tour opened on May 5.

A few reminders about using the Auto Tour route:

- Hours are 6:30AM-8:30PM, but be sure to check the Refuge website for updates to those hours <https://www.fws.gov/refuge/ridgefield/>
- Please stay in your vehicle at all times
- Restrooms are closed, as well as information kiosks, trails, parking lots, and the viewing blind
- The Refuge is currently fee-free

Like you, we are anxiously waiting for the time when we can get back into the Refuge - on foot! In the meantime, our staff are working hard at getting folks connected to nature in creative ways, and planning for activities and programs to start up again. As we've seen elsewhere, re-opening isn't as simple as turning on a light switch, and Friends staff will be following the guidance of State, Federal, and Refuge leadership to minimize risk to volunteers and visitors.

*Guests are always welcome at our board meetings! Please see our website for details or reach out [here](#) for call-in information.

Sincerely,
Anna Wilde, Board President, & the Board of Directors

From the Refuge

A rare wildlife event is occurring at Ridgefield NWR this spring!



On May 20, staff working on the River 'S' Unit observed a Sandhill Crane nesting in a wetland adjacent to the Kiwa Trail. This is a remarkable observation for the region!

Sandhill Cranes are not known to nest locally. Only three historical records of nesting/breeding attempts along the lower Columbia River have been documented. Historical Refuge documents from 1985 noted that several years prior a crane was observed with a fledgling (known as a colt) on Bachelor Island. Again in 2002, an employee of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, conducting summer field work, observed cranes with a colt on Sauvie Island, OR. This week's observation of a crane on a nest is the only other known record of nesting/breeding cranes in the area.

Research suggests that the migrant cranes in our area return to coastal British Columbia and southeastern Alaska to nest. There have been occasional observations of cranes during the spring/summer breeding season along the lower Columbia River. These observations have been assumed to be subadult birds that are too young to breed (it takes cranes several years to reach breeding age). Perhaps some of these assumptions have been in error.

Crane nests are a bulky mound of sticks, moss, and vegetation typically constructed in shallow water. Both crane parents help construct the nest and participate in incubation. Eggs are incubated for ~28 days. Cranes generally lay 1 or 2 eggs, infrequently 3 eggs, per nest. If a nest is successfully hatched the colts are 'precocious', meaning that they do not stay in their nest like you may have seen with songbirds. Almost immediately, the colts start to walk (and swim) within their territory, while being fed and protected by their parents. Should the colt survive, it takes nearly 10 weeks before the colt is capable of flight.

Nesting cranes are very reclusive and easily disturbed from the nest. Frequent disturbance can result in total nest abandonment. Parental disturbance additionally exposes eggs and/or colts to increased avian and mammalian predation.

In the interest of offering the cranes the best opportunity for nest success, the Kiwa Trail will remain closed. Staff will safely monitor the nesting activity and share updates about the cranes and trail status. This is an extremely rare wildlife event in our area. Sandhill cranes are State endangered species and this nesting attempt is of great significance to both the Refuge and our partners in wildlife management. Please respect the trail closure in the interest of protecting the cranes.

Consistent with the Washington State Recovery Plan for the Sandhill Crane, the Refuge will be implementing strategy: 5.2.1. Minimize disturbance to cranes at breeding areas. Minimize or eliminate recreational road, horse, ATV, and foot travel within 0.4 km (0.25 mi) of crane nesting, loafing, feeding, and roosting sites. Breeding areas should be protected from disturbance from recreational activities (e.g. camping, angling, hiking).

This nesting attempt will be among the highlights of my career working with sandhills.

Eric Anderson - Refuge Acting Project Leader

If you want to learn more about cranes in North America, this resource to be very interesting:



Ridgefield Refuge Complex News & Events Refuge Access Update During Pandemic

REFUGE STATUS

Auto Tour Route on River 'S' Unit: VEHICLE ACCESS ONLY

Visitors must remain in their vehicle at all times along the Auto Tour Route to uphold necessary social distancing guidelines during the pandemic.

NO PUBLIC ACCESS to bathrooms, informational kiosks, parking lots, trails or the viewing blind. The Refuge is fee free at this time.



Updates will be posted to the refuge website, www.fws.gov/refuge/Ridgefield

AUTO TOUR ROUTE

In response to the recent adjustments to state recreation access in Washington during the pandemic, the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Auto Tour Route on the River S Unit will re-open May 5th, 2020 to vehicle traffic ONLY. No bikes or pedestrian access at this time.

There will be no public access to bathrooms, informational kiosks, parking lots, trails and the viewing blind due to the inability to uphold necessary social distancing guidelines during the pandemic. The Refuge is fee free at this time.

Current gates times for the Auto Tour Route on the River 'S' Unit are: 6:00 AM - 8:30 PM. Note that gates close automatically. Vehicles must exit before gate closes and there is no entry before or after hours. Please expect increased traffic and long waiting times to navigate around the tour and plan accordingly.

CARTY UNIT (from both Main Ave and the Port entrance)

All Carty Unit public use facilities and access to those facilities (including all trails, parking lots, the Plankhouse, restrooms, and the Refuge Office) are **NOT** available to the public.

By following these temporary adjustments to access you ensure the safety and health of yourself, other visitors, the Ridgefield community and our staff. We look forward to continuing to serve you by providing safe and healthy wildlife dependent recreation into the future.

To feel more connected to nature and the Refuge while staying home, stay tuned to the Friends Social Media streams on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram - we are working to share activities, videos of nature on and off the Refuge, and more. Social links can be found at the bottom of this newsletter. Find out more about one segment, [#TakeaWalkTuesday, from The Columbian here.](#)

From the Contact Station: Four and Twenty Blackbirds All Over the Place

Well, our contact station is still shuttered. We miss everyone, but we are thankful for the thoughtful consideration the staff at Ridgefield is giving to provide a safe place for all. Meanwhile, like you, we are visiting the refuge now that the auto tour is open. Things are jumping, literally and figuratively. I took a morning and an evening tour one day recently. There was a lot more singing in the morning but, with far less traffic...

Keep Reading...

-Susan Setterberg, Contact Station Volunteer



Cathlapotle Plankhouse Updates & Events

I hope that everyone is maintaining their health and happiness in a good way during this challenging time. As we at the Friends continue to adjust our operations and meet best practices for



public safety we are also exploring innovative ways to bring the Refuge to you!

This year's theme for the Second Sunday Series is Indigenous Scholarship and Leadership. We had a truly stellar lineup of speakers and presenters for the season. On that we are endeavoring to still connect with the public. I have been in contact with some of our previously arranged speakers and they are interested and available to experiment with new outreach formats.

What does that look like to you? Are you completely over online options? Do you have ideas on how to use technology and help us connect? If you have ideas or suggestions on how to bring the Second Sunday Series to you, please [email me here](#) .

In the meantime, please know that the House misses visitors as much as you miss the Plankhouse!

hayu masi,
Juliet McGraw, Community & Cultural Education Director



Preserve America is a national initiative in cooperation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation; the U.S. Departments of Defense, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, and Education; the National Endowment for the Humanities; the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities; and the President's Council on

Environmental Quality. [RNWR Page here](#) .

Habitat Restoration Updates & Events

The Friends are working as hard as they can behind the scenes to keep up as much as possible with the habitat restoration needed on the Refuge. As of right now, volunteer programs are on hold until further notice - but we are working on ways for our current volunteers to help out on the Refuge safely. Keep an eye out for updates as we learn more and as things change. Stay safe out there!



Meet our New Volunteer Coordinator!

Hello, my name is Elena Tinoco and I am the new Volunteer Coordinator with the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. I have been with the refuge for four years. My journey started when I was a Junior in high school with the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC). I then came back a couple summers later as the YCC crew leader. Not long after, I was hired as the Habitat technician/Bulrush Coordinator with the Friends. I was able to gain a wealth of experience working with our habitat volunteers and learn about the native and invasive plant species on the refuge. I am most excited for when we can start bringing volunteers and the community back to the refuge. Working with volunteers is such an inspiring and rewarding part of my life. I love their enthusiasm to learn and passion for nature. I hope to start working with and seeing all your smiling faces soon!

-Elena Tinoco, Volunteer Coordinator



Birding Enthusiasts

Check out what species are being seen on the Refuge [here](#) .



Ridgefield First Saturdays: Ridgefield Trails Day May 6th, 2020



Celebrate National Trails Day and the kick-off of the 100 Miles in 100 Days challenge!

Please note:

- (1) Big Paddle has been rescheduled to August 1st.
- (2) This is a virtual event. Please view the event details for more information .

[Full Schedule HERE](#)

Species Spotlight

Yellow Warbler

Setophaga petechial



Spring is an exciting time of year anywhere you go really, with so many birds and other wildlife either mating, nesting, brooding, or rearing young all over the place. Some species are just arriving, or making their final stops on their way to their nesting grounds. One of those visitors that show up here to raise their family is the Yellow Warbler ...

Keep Reading...

By Samantha Zeiner, Administrative Coordinator

Become a Business Alliance Member!

As a member of the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Business Alliance, you invest in one of our urban metropolitan area's most unique and diverse natural and cultural



resources. [Click here to find out more](#)

Supporting the Ridgefield NWR
As a member of the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Business Alliance, you invest in one of our urban metropolitan area's most scenic and diverse natural and cultural resources.

Your annual Business Alliance Membership connects you with:

- 200,000+ visitors annually;
- 5,000 students participating in field trips and educational programs;
- 4,000 visitors to BirdFair & Blueways;
- 3,000 attendees at Planthouse events;
- 1,200 monthly newsletter readers;
- 1,000 monthly website visits;
- and 250 community volunteers who provide more than 10,000 hours of work.

The Banking on Nature study released in 2012 reports that an average of \$4.87 is returned to local communities for every dollar Congress provides in funding to run the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Your partnership with the Friends helps ensure the future and success of this breathtaking natural resource. Invest in your community by becoming a part of our Business Alliance today!

Photograph Credit: Douglas Beal, Eagle View, Co. North, Tallahassee.

Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 1022
Ridgefield, WA 99412
www.ridgefieldnwrefuge.org

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Board Seeking New Members Or, Join a Committee

The Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is a non-profit dedicated to promoting educational and cultural programs of the Ridgefield NWR, and protecting and enhancing its wildlife habitat. We are currently seeking candidates to serve on our board of directors. We are recruiting candidates with diverse backgrounds and skills for several open board positions, in addition to candidates interested in serving on a committee (board membership not required).

Find out more, and [contact us here](#)

Support While You Shop



When you link your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to the Friends, you help us earn donations from Fred Meyer Community Rewards. It doesn't change your regular personal shopping and fuel rewards, but it does make a meaningful contribution to our work on the Refuge. It's easy to sign up. [Just click here.](#) You can search for us by our name, Friends of Ridgefield NWR, or by our non-profit number, PK822. Then, every time you shop and use your Rewards Card, you are helping earn a donation to support the Friends and Ridgefield NWR. If you do not have a Rewards Card, ask at the Customer Service desk of any FM store.



Log on to smile.amazon.com and shop as you usually would - .5% of your purchase will be donated directly to the Friends! Use the link with your existing user name and password. When prompted to select a charity, choose the Friends of Ridgefield Wildlife Refuge.



Giving Assistant makes it easy to donate to Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge! Simply shop online, earn cash back, and donate as much as 30% of your purchase price - Giving Assistant facilitates the whole process. Now, you can help change the world for free while saving money at over 3,000 popular online retailers like Home Depot, ULTA, and Macy's! [Start HERE](#) ! Thanks for being an EcoShopper and helping the Refuge!

Would you like to enjoy a cup of coffee from Ridgefield's Seasons Coffee after a morning hike on the Refuge? Lunch at Vinnie's Pizza in-between the River 'S' and Carty Units? Dinner and drinks at the Historic Sportsman's Restaurant and Lounge after a busy day of wildlife viewing (5% off a meal with member card!)? Or maybe you would like to get a discount on some supplies at Shorty's or Backyard Bird Shop? How about a night out at Ilani?

[Find out more, become a Friend, or renew your membership](#) today and receive a member card with great discounts at these wonderful local businesses! Feel free to [contact us](#) for any questions or inquiries.

Benefits of Membership



The Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge promote the enjoyment, understanding, and protection of native and endangered birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. We focus on our local community and the

Sponsors

Business Alliance Members:

In-Kind Support:



BirdFest & Bluegrass:



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Header Photo Credit: Sandra Michaelis, 2nd Place Plants Category 2018 Refuge Photo Contest

**FRIENDS OF RIDGEFIELD
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE** 

[Contact Us](#) | [Website](#)

Want regular updates on Refuge events and happenings? Follow the Friends on your favorite social media by clicking the logos below to stay connected even when you are off the Refuge.



