




FRIENDS OF THE RIDGEFIELD  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

---

# ANNUAL REPORT

---

2023



**The Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge is a nonprofit dedicated to promoting and educating the public about our local refuge while helping to support programs that protect and enhance its wildlife habitat. We are only able to achieve these goals with the help of dedicated staff, steadfast volunteers, and the continued support of our members and donors.**

**2023 was a year of full-force action and activity. The community showed up in numbers resembling those pre-covid, for events like BirdFest & Bluegrass, and visits to the Refuge.**

**This report provides a snapshot of the work we accomplished in 2023, in collaboration with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, partners, members, and you; thank you!**

# Program Highlights



AIDEN HARPER, YOUTH HM, 2023

## HABITAT PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Engaged in early Detection Rapid Response invasive species monitoring on approx 750 acres targeting focal species on all 4 Refuges of the Complex.
- Conducted searches, removal, & control with an emphasis on non-native plants like Ricefield Bulrush, Purple Loosestrife, Water Primrose, Knotweeds, Yellow Flag Iris, etc.
- Conducted & oversaw annual plantings & maintenance on native vegetation, & installed micro-basking structures for Western Pond Turtles at Pierce NWR.
- Oversaw the removal of bullfrog egg masses from Pierce & Ridgefield NWR to protect native herpetofauna.
- Supervised in the surveillance & associated aerial herbicide treatment in excess of 150 acres of degraded habitat containing Ricefield Bulrush, & Reed Canary Grass.
- Conducted targeted management of existing (previous) restoration sites to create browse & cover for Columbia White-tailed Deer.
- Coordinator & volunteers conducted targeted management in Oregon White Oak habitat at Ridgefield NWR with an emphasis on maintaining native shrub layer while controlling competing non-natives.
- Habitat Coordinator supervised volunteers in habitat restoration & invasive species control in excess of 500 hrs.

## SOCIAL MEDIA OUTREACH STATS

- 5,446 followers on **Facebook**©
  - Highest single post views: 32.8 K
    - 838 engagements (shares, reactions, & comments)
- 2,290 followers on **Instagram**©
  - Highest single post views: 1.1 K
    - 176 engagements
- BirdFest & Bluegrass **Facebook**© 623 followers
  - Highest single post views: 1.6 K
    - 43 engagements
- Joined **Threads**© and gained 346 followers
- Online **Sales**:
  - 61 Photo Contest Calendars
  - 34 BirdFest & Bluegrass Sweatshirts
  - 25 other items sold include: tote bags, t-shirts, mugs, & jigsaw puzzles



In the wider Portland-Vancouver area, the Friends of Ridgefield collaborate with the **Friends of Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge** and the **Gorge Refuge Stewards** to provide historically excluded communities an opportunity to connect with nature. Events like **BirdFest & Bluegrass's Spanish-Language Tour** and **Dia de los Ninos** are just two examples.

image: BirdFest & Bluegrass Spanish-Language Group



## VISITATION & VOLUNTEERING

We are in the process of re-evaluating the Refuge's education programs to ensure they are in alignment with Indigenous cultural history and the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program's Standards. As this happens, funds for education programs have been used to more fully engage the public so that they value, support, and ultimately steward the region's natural assets, including National Wildlife Refuges. Our overall goal, in conjunction with the Refuge, is to enhance the visitor service operations, engage Refuge visitors, and expand our reach into the urban community.

To give the best service to community members dedicating their valuable time, staff takes care to engage with volunteers in an intentional and quality way. This means that both the Friends and the Refuge were not able to add many additional volunteers between orientations, with the focus on training recent additions.

- **Refuge Visitors: 120,848**
- **Volunteers: 85**
- **Volunteer Hours: 4,568**



image: BFBG Spanish-language group



image: volunteer cutting blackberry

**The Partners that we work with carry our mission forward in the best ways. We cannot list them all, but the Blueprint Foundation, NW Family Daycation, Valadrian Creative, and so many other worthy organizations work with us every day to spread the message of conservation to everyone.**

In 2023, the Refuge hosted a Sandhill crane family that failed to nest once early in the season, but then went on to *secretly* successfully fledge TWO colts!

Learn more: <https://ridgefieldfriends.org/contact-station-september-2023/>



In July, we said goodbye to Keith Rutz, Habitat Restoration Coordinator since 2015.

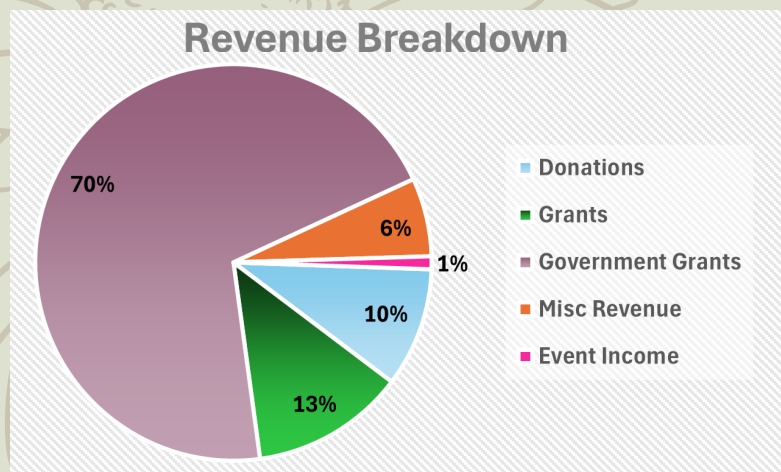
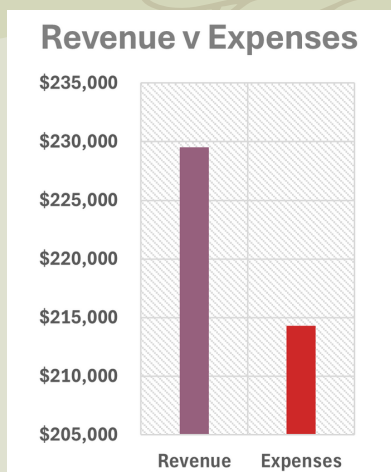


## 2024 PROJECTS

- Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge will break ground on the much anticipated Community Nature Center Project. To ensure the space is optimal for visitors, the Friends will work with the community to fund educational and accessible interpretive materials, displays, and more.
- Continuing invasive species control/eradication, habitat development, and public engagement through our E-Newsletter and social media platforms.
- Celebrating the **25th Anniversary of BirdFest & Bluegrass!** Join us for special anniversary activities, merch, and more, on Saturday, October 5, 2024.



## 2023 FINANCIALS



- We are incredibly grateful for the support of our members and donors this year, especially during our first annual GiveBig fundraiser, and Walk for the Wild 2023. Thank you!
- We want to thank the following organizations and individuals for their support this year: the **City of Ridgefield, Quantum Fiber Internet, Riverview Bank, and William W. Smythe.**



**Thank you to all of our 2023 generous financial supporters! Your donations support the programs that have a measurable and meaningful impact on the Refuge.**

- **108 individual donors**
- Our member card discount businesses; **Shovel & Thumb, ilani, Seasons Coffee, Backyard Bird Shop, and Sportsmen’s Public House**
- **Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife**
- **Tidewater Barge Lines** for supporting our volunteers
- Our 2023 Birdfest & Bluegrass sponsors include; the **City of Ridgefield, Pro Photo Supply, Valadrian Creative, Old Liberty Theater & Seasons Coffee, Quantum Fiber, Riverview Bank, and Hike It Baby & NW Family Daycation**
- Departing board members **Leslie Lopez** and **Jim Nindel-Edwards** for their support and service. We will miss you!
- Our partnership with the **US Fish & Wildlife Service** is what truly makes our work possible, and we want to thank them for their support and collaboration as we work to support wildlife, our communities, and beyond.



## FRIENDS OF RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

PO Box 1022 Ridgefield, WA 98642

360-887-9495

[www.RidgefieldFriends.org](http://www.RidgefieldFriends.org)

[contact@ridgefieldfriends.org](mailto:contact@ridgefieldfriends.org)

[Facebook.com/RidgefieldFriends](https://Facebook.com/RidgefieldFriends)

[Facebook.com/RidgefieldBirdFest](https://Facebook.com/RidgefieldBirdFest)

[Instagram.com/friends\\_of\\_ridgefield\\_nwr](https://Instagram.com/friends_of_ridgefield_nwr)

[threads.net/@friends\\_of\\_ridgefield\\_nwr](https://threads.net/@friends_of_ridgefield_nwr)

---