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Image credit: Karen Stuwe, 2023, 1st Place, Landscape Category, Pro Photo Supply Refuge Photo Contest

The Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

The latest updates & news | April 2026

The Ridgefield NWR Admin Office is open weekdays, as staff availability allows:
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Office phone number: 360-887-4106

Learn More: [Official Refuge Website](#)

RIDGEFIELD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

RIVER 'S' UNIT & CARTY UNIT

1071 S Hillhurst AVE
Auto Tour Route
Kiwa Trail

28908 NW Main AVE
Admin Office
Walking Trails
Cathlapotle Plankhouse



Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Community Nature Center at the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

To all of our refuge supporters, we are thrilled to invite you to join us in celebrating a significant milestone—the completion of the Community Nature Center and the start of an exciting new chapter in connecting people to nature and outdoor recreation. Thanks to our dedicated community and partners, this vision is becoming reality, and we are eager to commemorate this achievement together.

Date: Sunday, May 3rd

Time: 12:00 PM - 4:00

PM. Ribbon Cutting ceremony 1:00 -

2:00

Location: 28908 NW Main Avenue, Ridgefield WA

Purpose:

This event is designed to bring together our community and partners, marking the successful completion of the Community Nature Center. We aim to showcase the center as a vibrant asset for nature connection and accessible outdoor learning, while educating attendees on current offerings and how they can contribute to future programs and facilities. The ribbon cutting will highlight a fully functional classroom and community room, and the Friends of the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge will have launched a portion of the outdoor classroom components.

What to Expect:

- Ribbon-cutting ceremony
- Partner showcases and engagement stations
- Self-led exploration of temporary displays in the exhibit area
- Information about upcoming additions to the outdoor classroom and interpretive displays

Your involvement is vital to our ongoing journey. We invite you to share your ideas and enthusiasm for the future of the Community Nature Center, helping us shape programs and ensure continued growth. Attendees will learn about planned summer enhancements and phased installations of indoor exhibits, with partners ready to share their vision and demonstrate their contributions to our mission.

Thank you for being an important part of our community's growth. We hope to see you there as we embark on this exciting new chapter together, celebrating what we have accomplished and looking ahead to all that is possible.

Friends Annual Membership & Volunteer Appreciation Celebration

Join the Friends for their Annual Meeting.

Date: Saturday, May 30

Time: 1 PM

Location: At the new Community Nature Center at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge!

Join us for time in the new building, some snacks, the Friends Annual Report, the 2026 Spirit of the Wild Award, and a special treat.

Members who attend will get a chance to vote on the 2026 Birdfest & Bluegrass Bird of the Year!

(click the image to download your invite!)



Please RSVP "Yes" by April 22, 2026

All are welcome, but since we are celebrating members, it would be great if you could join us! Become a member, or renew your membership today!

Speaking of BirdFest & Bluegrass...Partner with Us!



Our annual celebration is back, and supporting it is now easier than ever with our new online sponsorship form. We can't thank our very first 2026 sponsors enough, **GS-JJ**, and **Wild Birds Unlimited**! Thank you for leading the way! Join our award-winning festival to help us connect the community with conservation through the power of music and nature!

BirdFest & Bluegrass Sponsorship Form

From the Friends & the Refuge Dive Back into Learning with a Free Workshop Series!

Join us for a FREE Community Workshop Series at the Carty Unit!

Writer's Workshop | April 4, 10-11:30 AM
FULL!

Adapting to Change | May 6, 6:30-7:30 PM
Learn how SW WA wildlife navigates climate and land-use changes with David Zonana, PhD.

Space is limited! Register today on [the Refuge website](#), scan the QR codes on the flyer, or click the links below!

FREE! COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SERIES
at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Carty Unit

For All People in the Community! Enjoy free snacks, dive back into learning, and celebrate this beautiful corner of the earth we live on.

4/4
10-11:30am
 Writer's Workshop
Join Abby Braithwaite of the PN Farm Arts Initiative as she leads you through the Refuge in a fun and reflective writing workshop. Come with a favorite nature poem to share (one of your own, or one by a favorite poet). We'll provide notebooks and pens, but feel free to bring a favorite journal! All ages and all level of writers welcome!

5/6
6:30-7:30pm
 Adapting to Change:
How wildlife is responding to a rapidly-changing SW WA
When faced with environmental changes, organisms can either adapt, move, or perish. In this workshop with Clark College's David Zonana, PhD, participants will learn about how land use changes, introduced species, and climate change are presenting new challenges to local wildlife populations, how these animals are adapting to survive, and the Refuge's role in their success. All ages, please join!

This event is provided by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in collaboration with our partners, the Friends of Ridgefield NWR and is committed to providing access to all. Please direct all requests for accommodations to: Sarah_Demsky@fws.gov 360-973-7639 TTY: 800-877-8339

These events are provided by the **U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service** in collaboration with the **Friends of Ridgefield NWR**. Space is limited, so be sure to scan the QR codes on our flyer, [visit the website](#), or click the links below, to sign up today!

Adapting to Change Registration Link



Bringing Mason Bees to the Classroom

This March, Sara Marshall, a first-grade teacher at South Ridge Elementary in Ridgefield, Washington, reached out after seeing publicity for Anne Bulger's mason bee presentation featured in the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Workshop and Lecture Series in February.

As a board member of the Friends of the RNWR and an Oregon State University Extension Service Master Melittologist, she brought...[keep reading...](#)

Birding Enthusiasts



Check out what bird species are being seen on the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge - both past and current archives - on our website, [here](#).

A Bee Story: Nature's Quiet Strategists in a World Beneath Our Feet



In February, we met one of our native bees, the hardworking mining bees—quiet architects of the underground, carefully digging tunnels and provisioning their nests with pollen for the next generation.

But not all bees build their own homes...[keep reading...](#)

-Anne Bulger, Friends of Ridgefield NWR Board Member, & OSU Master Melittology Lead Instructor for the RNWR

Image of Cuckoo Bee. Photo Credit: [sentraevant / iNaturalist](#)



Ridgefield First Saturday Discover Downtown Dash April 4, 2026

Are you ready for an adventure packed with excitement, challenges, and unforgettable fun?

Gather your friends, family, or go solo for an EPIC scavenger hunt contest in Downtown Ridgefield! This isn't just a search - it's a race against time as you navigate indoor and outdoor locations, complete thrilling challenges, collect exclusive tokens, and make lasting memories.

Stop by and find the Friends in Overlook Park!

[Learn More](#)

[Stay Involved:](#)

Join the Friends - Become a Member

Our new membership program means that all members will receive a digital member card, a free optional tote bag, a sticker, and more!

Members over \$60 also gain access to the Soar into Wellness Program, & Members giving over \$1000 are also included in a special website highlight!



[Learn More, Join, or Renew Your Membership Today](#)

Support While You Shop



Friends Online Merch The Flock Just Got Cuter!

Ready to match your favorite little duckling? By popular demand, our "Dancing Queen" and "Bird Butt" collections have expanded into Youth and Toddler sizes!

To top it off, we've added fresh beanies and trucker caps to keep those heads warm during winter birding. Get the whole family geared up and support Refuge conservation with every purchase.

[Shop Our Merch Store](#)

Jigsaw Puzzles

If you're looking for gorgeous nature and wildlife photography on jigsaw puzzles, we have you covered!

[Puzzle Shopping](#)



[Friends Amazon Wishlist](#)- You can directly support our work and the Refuge's initiatives! Whether it's habitat restoration or BirdFest & Bluegrass, we'll feature items essential to our many efforts toward achieving conservation and community outreach goals. Purchase from our list, and Amazon takes care of the rest! Get started, [HERE](#).



When you link your Fred Meyer Rewards Card to the Friends, you help us earn donations from Fred Meyer Community Rewards. It's easy to sign up. [Just click here](#). Or search, Friends of Ridgefield NWR #PK822

Friends Board Meetings

Join the Friends of Ridgefield NWR Board for their monthly meeting. Meetings start at 5:00 PM every second Monday of the month and will be *either* virtual or in-person with a virtual option. Please [contact us](#) to find out how to join in!

Board Meeting Dates 2026:

April 13

May 11

June 8

July 13

August 10

September 14

*October 19

November 9

December 14

*moved due to a federal holiday or Board decision



Become a Business Alliance Member

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

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Image credit: Karen Stuwe, 2023, 1st Place, Landscape Category, Pro Photo Supply Refuge Photo Contest

The Friends of Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge

The latest updates & news | April 2026 - BONUS!

From the Contact Station Bonus! Otterly Delightful

It makes me smile when visitors come to the Contact Station and ask where they can see the otters reported yesterday. There is always a feeling of excitement and anticipation in them. But pointing out where they can be found on any day is not easy. They move; a lot. So it is hard to promise they will be found the day after. But they are always worth looking for.

Image of River Otter along slough bank by Charlie Rutkowski



A year or so ago, while gazing north out of the Contact Station, I had a strange sight. The grass was long, and there was a string of dark rounds of fur moving in a line from the Lake River dike toward the ponds across the road to the hunt gate. They would appear and disappear, looking like a long serpent moving across the landscape. When they popped out at the edge of the first pond, I was pleasantly surprised to see there was a large group of otters making their way into the Refuge. They were **bounding** across the landscape. Turns out this is their fastest mode of locomotion. They bring their front and hind feet toward each other, causing

their back to arch, and the tail is lifted off the ground. In the tall grasses that day, it looked like one very long animal moving through the high grass.

Our **River Otters**, *Lontra canadensis*, are relatively common throughout Washington. They can be found in a variety of waters: ponds, lakes, rivers, sloughs, bays, and estuaries. On the Refuge, we mostly get sightings in our sloughs and canals, where there is ample water unless they are crossing fields to move between water bodies.

River Otter with Carp by Charlie Rutkowski



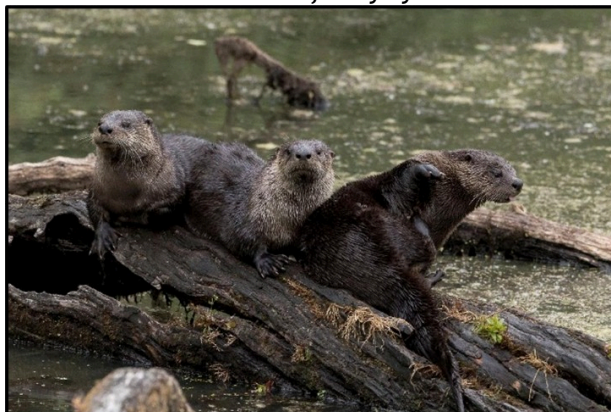
River Otters are ever the opportunists when it comes to lunch. Mostly, they like fish; slow movers of the 4-to-6-inch variety like this carp in the mouth of this lucky otter. We have had reports of otters viciously going after small ducks in the canal along the road to the hunt gate. Not a pretty sight; there was no hope for the duck in the video I saw. They will also consume crabs, mussels, crayfish, amphibians, injured or

molting ducks or geese, eggs from birds and fish, and small mammals. Interestingly, they digest and metabolize food very quickly, and it passes through their intestines within an hour! Otters can smell concentrations of fish and will follow a scent trail to an upstream pond to feed.

Otters have dens for extreme weather shelter and birthing. They line them with small sticks and shredded vegetation. They might be in log jams, hollow logs or abandoned lodges and bank dens made by nutria or beaver. On our refuge, they have used some old beaver tunnels along Campbell Slough in the closed section of the refuge. That is not surprising as they are rather wary critters and would look for a more remote area than the human-busy River S for denning. Entries are well hidden, often far enough below the water surface to prevent them from being seen.

River Otter family by Charlie Rutkowski

River otters are active year-round and are constantly on the move. No wonder we have so much trouble re-finding them. They have a regular circuit which they cover in one to four weeks. Males can travel 150 miles within a particular watershed and its tributaries in a year. A family may range 10 to 25 miles in a season. Females with young in a den will not be so mobile, but a family can still range 10 to 25 miles in a season. They are active day and night but tend to be more nocturnal when closer to areas with people.



River Otter postprandial snooze by Susan Setterberg

Because otters have delayed implantation, their gestation ranges from 285 to 375 days. After breeding, the fertilized egg does not immediately attach to the uterine wall. Two to four pups are born sometime between March and May. The pups begin playing at four weeks old and learn to swim around seven weeks old. By eight to ten



weeks, they are exploring beyond their den and eating solid food. The basic social group for otters is a female and her offspring. Males, other than during breeding times, usually lead solitary lives. An adult male averages 4 feet in length with the tail and weighs 20 to 28 pounds. The females are smaller. Pups leave their family structure in late fall and wander to establish their own territories.

Besides feeding, they spend a lot of time in group play. Along the banks of our sloughs, they will mark their territory by scratching, rubbing, and rolling on the ground. Drying their fur and grooming also consumes some of their time. Then there is the occasional nap.

Time to move on; if the winds be fair: It is that time of year, and we have been seeing the movement of waterfowl and cranes as they turn north toward their summer breeding grounds. In mid-March, while a volunteer group was gathered on Bachelor Island to do our twice-monthly goose count, Biologist Alex was remarking that he had been watching swans, geese, and cranes moving north most of the morning. We were wondering if anything would be left to count. We heard both Trumpeter and Tundra. Alex also remarked that the forecast said there would be a change in wind direction out of the north during the day. I had noted the temperature when I arrived at 50 degrees. During our conversation, we started seeing swans coming south low over our heads. In a short period of time, the temperature had dropped to 45 degrees, and everyone outside was zipping up their jackets. A couple of hours later, while doing the goose count on River S, it was clear the swans had thought better of leaving the area, had circled back, and were resting and eating in very large numbers in Ruddy Lake and Rest Lake. Interesting to experience nature in action firsthand.

Finally: Knowing that we are seeing the migration of Sandhill Cranes moving north, here is an interesting triptych by Charlie Rutkowski of sequential images of a crane preparing to take off and finding air. Question: How many pairs will stay this year to nest? Can we hope for three again?



Sandhill Crane triptych by Charlie Rutkowski

-Susan Setterberg, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Contact Station Volunteer

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NOTE: Unsubscribing will remove you from membership renewal reminder emails as well.

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