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News Release

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Eight Pacific Region Refuges Loan Binoculars and Field Guides to Visitors

The program is available year-round but special events are planned at some refuges to commemorate International Migratory Bird Day May 9

Ever squint to see whether a duck is a pintail or a mallard? Ever notice a bird way up in the sky and wish you could focus on how it hovers or soars with little or no effort? Now, you can focus those images with new clarity – even if you don't have a pair of binoculars for your next birding trip to one of eight national wildlife refuges in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pacific Region.

Visitors to these refuges can borrow binoculars and bird guides during their visits – part of a nationwide effort to make bird watching on national wildlife refuges easier. National wildlife refuges across the country are home to more than 700 bird species.

Selected national wildlife refuges across the country received optics and field guide starter kits to invite people somewhat new to birding to become familiar with equipment and see firsthand why 46 million Americans find watching birdlife exhilarating. Almost a third of the nation's Important Bird Areas of global significance are on national wildlife refuges.

The following Pacific Region refuges are participating in the binocular loan program. For more information please contact them directly:

- Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, Idaho (208-467-9278)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=14560>
- Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon (541-757-7236 or 503-623-2749)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13587>
- Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon (503-625-5944)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13600>

- Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge, Washington (360-457-8451)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13539>
- McNary National Wildlife Refuge, Washington (509-546-8300)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13520>
- Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge, Washington (360-753-9467)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13529>
- Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, Washington (509-235-4723)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13560>
- Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, Washington (360-484-3482)
<http://www.fws.gov/refuges/profiles/index.cfm?id=13552>

These refuges offer opportunities to see hundreds of species of birds, including shorebirds, seabirds and waterfowl. For example, 275 species of migratory birds can be found at various times of the year at Nisqually NWR, south of Olympia, Washington. In Oregon, 200 species of birds call the Tualatin River NWR home. Each refuge is a treasure trove of birding delights for individuals and families alike.

Bird-watching takes on special significance on International Migratory Bird Day, observed this year on May 9. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is hosting or co-sponsoring five public events that day and another on May 16.

On May 9:

- The William L. Finley NWR is hosting a Barns and Bluegrass event from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Refuge south of Corvallis, Oregon. For more information see <http://www.fws.gov/WillametteValley/finley/index.html>
- The McNary NWR in Burbank, Washington, is offering a guided float trip down four miles of the Walla Walla River for participants with their own kayaks or canoes. Call 509-546-8300 for more information and to register.
- At Toppenish NWR in Toppenish, Washington, visitors can enjoy birding walks and tours and demonstrations of live raptors and bird banding beginning at 9 a.m. Phone 509-546-8320 for more information.
- At Columbia NWR in Othello, Washington, refuge biologist Randy Hill will lead a field trip, starting at 7 a.m., exploring diverse habitats on or near the refuge. Phone 509-488-2668 for more information and to register.
- In Portland, Oregon, the Service is partnering with Portland Parks and Recreation and the Audubon Society of Portland to host a Festival of the Birds at Oaks Bottom Park from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., with an early bird walk starting at 9 a.m. The event will feature nature photographer Dudley Edmondson, who will conduct photo workshops for kids at 9:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. More information is available at <http://www.fws.gov/pacific/news/2009/EdmondsonNR.pdf>

- On May 16, the Tualatin River NWR in Sherwood, Oregon, is hosting a Songbird Festival from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. More information is available at <http://www.fws.gov/tualatinriver/>

Vortex Optics, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt publishers and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provided the optics, field guides and funding for the national binocular loan program. "We were honored and excited to work with the National Wildlife Refuge System in providing Vortex binoculars to refuges around the country. The loaner program will be a great way for visitors to maximize their enjoyment of the refuges." says Joe Hamilton, National Sales Manager of Vortex Optics. Each refuge received four sets of binoculars, lens cleaning kits and several field guides. Visitors must return the binoculars and field guides before they leave the refuge.

Birding is a great way to introduce youngsters to the natural world and create family memories. Visit any of the 548 refuges within the National Wildlife Refuge System, which spans more than 96 million acres. There is at least one national wildlife refuge in every state and one within an hour's drive of most major cities.

For more information about activities on national wildlife refuges, go to http://www.fws.gov/refuges/SpecialEvents/FWS_SpecialEvents_Search.cfm. For general information about the National Wildlife Refuge System, go to <http://www.fws.gov/refuges/>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit **www.fws.gov**.

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