

Volunteers

FAREWELL ISSUE

Please see page 2

FAST FACTS

Nationwide during 2004:

- 37,958 people volunteered to assist the Service on projects.
- Volunteers donated 1.5 million hours.
- The hourly value of volunteer work is \$17.55.
- The dollar value of volunteer labor was \$26.7 million, which is equivalent to 760 full-time positions.

Totals for the CNO and Region 1:

- 5,029 volunteers assisted the CNO and 5,708 volunteers assisted Region 1. These volunteers donated a total of 300,594 hours. The value of volunteer donations was \$5.3 million.
- In the CNO, 4,924 volunteers assisted 36 Refuges, donating 109,092 hours. In Region 1, 4,657 volunteers assisted 52 Refuges, donating 145,315 hours.
- In the CNO, 42 volunteers assisted 2 Hatcheries, donating 669 hours. In Region 1, 1,002 volunteers assisted 16 Hatcheries and the Regional Office, donating 23,071 hours.
- In the CNO, 63 volunteers assisted 6 Fish and Wildlife Offices, donating 18,928 hours. In Region 1, 47 volunteers assisted 4 Fish and Wildlife Offices, donating 1,674 hours.
- In Region 1, 1 volunteer assisted Law Enforcement, donating 450 hours, and 1 volunteer assisted External Affairs, donating 1,395 hours.

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Out & About



Refuges Receive a Helping Hand

Volunteers make vital contributions

BY BILL HARTWIG



Refuge Chief Bill Hartwig applauds the growing Friends and volunteer network.

The Refuge System also recognizes that citizen involvement is critical to the well being of America's public lands and wildlife species. That is why we appreciate the approximately 38,000 volunteers who last year accomplished about 20 percent of all the work done on wildlife refuges. That is also why we appreciate the irreplaceable work of the 240-plus nonprofit Refuge Friends organizations that are vital to both the Refuge System and the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

We look forward to a growing Friends and volunteer network. Only when our citizens understand the Refuge System's conservation work—and often see it firsthand—can we hope to galvanize an informed constituency on behalf of conservation. ●

Bill Hartwig is chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System. This article reprinted with permission from Wildlife Refuge magazine, a publication of the National Wildlife Refuge Association and Faircount Int'l LLC. For more information, visit www.refugenet.org.

as the nation's first "bird reservation" in 1903, he is reported to have asked the Justice Department about presidential power to establish the reservation. A few days later, a sallow government lawyer told the president, "I cannot find a law that will allow you to do this, sir." "But," Roosevelt challenged, "is there a law that will prevent it?" President Roosevelt went on to create 53 national wildlife refuges—all by executive order.

While the Refuge System did not spring forth fully conceived, it continues to embody the finest conservation precepts that drove both Paul Kroegel and Teddy Roosevelt. National wildlife refuges are a visible promise by the United States to her citizens that species wild and free will always have a place—on the land and waters and in the national consciousness as well.

Yet, the Refuge System may be a far different place than Roosevelt and Kroegel envisioned. Today, we welcome and orient about 40 million visitors each year on the nearly 100 million acres, up from just 3.1 million visits in 1951, the first year we began to tally visitation.

The National Wildlife Refuge System began like so many other American pursuits—with one man obsessed with the need to change his corner of the world. Today, hundreds of fish, plant and wildlife species—including about 260 species that are endangered or



Volunteers lend a hand with numerous activities at Nisqually NWR.

threatened with extinction—thrive on 545 national wildlife refuges because Paul Kroegel, an immigrant boat builder, sounded an alarm heard by scientists, policy makers and concerned citizens across the country.

As President Theodore Roosevelt prepared to establish Pelican Island

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Final Issue of *Out and About*

Funds Needed for Other Outreach Projects

BY DAVE ALLEN AND STEVE THOMPSON



U.S.F.W.S.

This issue of *Out & About* marks the end of an 11-year effort to extend the practice of outreach in the Pacific Region and California and Nevada by providing timely, effective and comprehensive information about outreach resources, sharing outreach strategies, and showcasing employee outreach accomplishments. We hope that along the way we succeeded in engaging and motivating you, and helped foster better outreach practices.

and education specialists or outdoor recreation planners and most field stations have collateral duty web site managers. Outreach planning, media relations, Congressional relations, Native American relations, special events planning, and the development of interpretive material have become routine practices and our web sites get thousands of hits from the public.

Communicating natural resource issues to a sophisticated public will

continue to be a challenge. The Service's ability to successfully respond to this challenge hinges largely on our ability to

Over its 10-year history, *Out & About* provided outreach tips for a huge range of activities, from how to develop an environmental education program to how to devise strategies to encourage partnerships.

The decision to end the newsletter was due in part to rising costs and declining budgets, but also to refocus funds towards the production of other outreach materials.

The decision to end the newsletter was due in part to rising costs and declining budgets, but also to refocus funds towards the production of other outreach materials, especially the electronic media and our internet web sites.

The first issue of *Out & About* was published in Spring 1995 and it has been in continuous publication since then. It was created in response to a Regional Conference in 1992 where participants identified the need for improved public outreach as a high priority. One of their recommendations was to produce an outreach newsletter.

Much has changed in our world since 1992. We as an agency have recognized the importance of outreach efforts and acknowledge effective measures for outreach must continue to evolve if our vital conservation work is to succeed.

Within the Pacific Region and California and Nevada, most large field stations now have employed information

reach out and work cooperatively with others—from private landowners and Tribes to other agencies.

To tackle these issues, we must remain committed to undertaking diverse and frequent communications with all of our audiences in an efficient and effective manner.

For more than a decade, *Out & About* has showcased some of our best outreach successes. We are grateful to the hundreds of authors since 1995 who have volunteered to share their experiences through this newsletter and we look forward to continued excellence through the electronic media. Keep up the good outreach work on behalf of fish and wildlife conservation. ●

Dave Allen is the regional director, Pacific Region, and Steve Thompson is the manager, California and Nevada Operations.



National Perspective on Volunteers

Cost versus value of volunteer contributions

BY DEBORAH MOORE

I have been the National Volunteer Coordinator just shy of one year. During this time, I have continually heard about the value of volunteers and I have also read about and listened to comments about their cost. While volunteers contribute time and support for Fish and Wildlife Service projects for free, this important contribution does not come without a cost to the Service.

There are tangible costs associated with the “care and feeding” of volunteers; however, surveys and research resoundingly show that volunteer contributions far outweigh any costs associated with their maintenance.

Dollar Value of Volunteerism

In FY 2004, almost 38,000 volunteers performed a wide variety of tasks that included conducting fish and wildlife population surveys; leading tours and providing information to school groups and other visitors; assisting with laboratory research; improving habitat, such as reestablishing native plants and removing invasive species; helping with special projects, such as banding ducks; performing clerical and administrative work; and helping with and/or running special events.

In 2004, these same 38,000 volunteers contributed over 1.5 million hours of service. Using the Independent Sector’s hourly rate of \$17.55, the value of their work came to over \$26.8 million. (NOTE: The Independent Sector is a coalition of corporations, foundations, and private voluntary organizations. The dollar value is based on the average hourly earnings of all production and non-supervisory workers, as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Independent

Sector takes this figure and increases it by 12 percent to estimate for fringe benefits.) This is the equivalent of over 760 people working full-time for a year. Even more impressive, this number represents a little over one-tenth of the Service’s workforce.

Federal Funding for Volunteers

Each fiscal year, the Service receives \$1 million as a line item appropriation from Congress to run our volunteer program. In 2004, with rescissions, we received only about \$768,000. Dollars are allocated to the Regional Offices based on the number of their volunteers and the number of hours. Each region, in turn, allocates dollars to their field stations. In 2004, Region 1 received 18 percent of the funding; Regions 2 and 5, 15 percent; Regions 3 and 4, 16 percent; Region 6, 10 percent; Region 7, 2 percent; and Region 9, 8 percent.

During a time of budget cuts and staff shortages, it can be hard to justify dollars being spent on volunteers versus dollars spent on the resources. So how do we justify this expense? It’s easy. If the dollar for dollar return on the investment isn’t enough in terms of saved labor costs, just look at what some of our volunteers do.

Volunteer of the Year, Ervin Davis, contributes 30–70 hours a week to the National Bison Range. His work monitoring bluebird nesting habits produced data documenting the first known case of breeding western bluebirds at the Bison Range.

Harold Burgess, our most senior volunteer, has donated over 11,500 hours to Laguna Atascosa, Lower Rio Grande Valley, and Santa Ana National Wildlife

Refuges. He is currently concentrating on wetlands management and waterfowl surveys, and while performing these duties, he also acts as an interpreter for and ambassador to thousands of refuge visitors.

For 12 years, Marian and Russell Frobe have contributed significantly to the biological program at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge by participating in a variety of bird surveys. They have also overseen the refuge Friend’s bookstore, led refuge tours, staffed booths at fairs, and participated in other community activities.

More than 70 New England Field Office volunteers from all age groups helped in every aspect of the Vermont Eagle Restoration Project. They constructed hack boxes, donated veterinary services, provided fish for eagle food, helped care for the eaglets and monitored eagle movements after dispersal.

Over the last three years, George Stewart has donated over 1,000 hours maintaining the Corn Creek Field Station on the Desert National Wildlife Refuge.

There are probably hundreds, even thousands, of other examples that provide ample evidence of volunteer contributions. So if you’re thinking of starting a volunteer program or expanding your current efforts, don’t think of the time and effort it will take: Think of the known benefits you will receive from this unpaid workforce, the important ties you’ll cement with the community, and the wealth of incredible people you will meet in the process. ●

Deborah Moore is the national volunteer and Take Pride in America coordinator in the Washington D.C. Office.



USFWS

Volunteers remove bark from a log destined to become a rafter of the Cathlapotle plankhouse at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge.

NORM GARON



Being surrounded by the ocean on an isolated island was no problem for this retired U.S. Navy man who combated unwanted pests, removed debris, and perform other volunteer duties on Midway Atoll National Wildlife Refuge.

Hatcheries Spawn Volunteers

Fish-related activities spur strong community involvement

BY CORKY BROADDUS



CORKY BROADDUS, USFWS

CORKY BROADDUS, USFWS



Volunteers provide information and interpretation at a Salmon Fest booth.

The Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery Complex, made up of Leavenworth, Entiat, and Winthrop National Fish Hatcheries, is located on the eastside of the beautiful Cascade Mountains in Washington. These facilities manage one of the largest volunteer and outreach programs in the Fish and Wildlife Service. The many projects, programs, and activities the Hatchery Complex plans and implements would never come to fruition without the steadfast support of the volunteers involved throughout the entire year.

Diverse Volunteer Opportunities

The success achieved with volunteers throughout the Leavenworth NFHC is directly linked to the uniqueness and diversity of the active communities in which they reside. Leavenworth, Washington, for example, had its own town make-over in the 1970s, becoming what is now a popular Bavarian recreation theme town. The Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery serves more than 100,000 visitors per year and is one of this community's major destination points. Community volunteers are proud to play a part in keeping it that way.

All departments of the Hatchery Complex, supported by the Friends of Northwest Hatcheries, provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for those interested in working with salmon and hatchery operations, special event productions, and special uses, such as Leavenworth Summer Theater, Salmon Fest, Kids in the Creek, snowshoe tours, horseback riding, teacher and youth programs, and more.

Creative Recruitment

Recruitment takes place in many forms. We:

- Make personal visits and phone calls to classrooms, senior centers, service clubs, and other organizations;
- Announce volunteer needs in newspaper and newsletters, at volunteer organizations, and on the internet and radio;
- Offer incentives, such as school and community service credit for time donated by students;
- Provide meaningful experiences for our volunteers. If done so properly,

A hatchery volunteer feeds fish as an enthusiastic crowd watches.

engaged and excited by enhancing their sense of personal effectiveness.

We use simple but important expressions of gratitude to recognize our volunteers. We believe these are critical to the continued success of our program:

- Annual volunteer dinner and awards recognition night;
- Free tickets for Special Use activities that are held on hatchery grounds (theater, sleigh rides, ski passes);

Instill pride in volunteers by showing pride in your own work.

recruitment occurs by "word of mouth" and happy volunteers will return;

- Rely on our Friends group to arrange and offer non-monetary awards from event sponsors and partners;
- Realize that there are many personal reasons for people to volunteer. Nurture those by matching volunteers with complementary activities; and
- Instill pride in volunteers by showing pride in your own work.

Volunteer Recognition

The ownership and community spirit that takes place among volunteers and staff is contagious. It is our goal to ensure that volunteers feel valued, recognized, and connected with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mission through the people and wildlife they serve. With a warm smile and welcoming spirit, we strive to keep volunteers

- Public recognition through the media (newspapers, radio promotions);
- Public recognition at community events and other gatherings;
- Plaques and other signage signifying the value of volunteer services displayed publicly;
- School credit given to student volunteers, community service credit for inmate worker crews; and
- Neighborhood newsletters highlighting volunteer efforts.

Gentle and consistent nurturing of volunteers is critical. So is treating them as part of the family. Routinely ask for their ideas and advice on projects. Let your program expand by tapping into their special talents and interests. ●

Corky Broaddus is a supervisory education and information specialist at Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery.

Huge Volunteer Presence at Turnbull

Volunteer management combines good training and care

BY SANDY RANCOURT

Having a successful volunteer program is a great asset for any refuge, particularly those with diminishing budgets. In order to achieve high goals set by a creative refuge staff, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge's volunteer program blossomed out of necessity. This year, over 750 volunteers helped refuge staff make a difference with some very remarkable results. Wildlife and habitat monitoring, environmental education, habitat restoration, facilities maintenance, carpentry and construction, and visitor contact were just some of the areas where volunteers assisted staff.

SANDY RANCOURT



Inland Northwest Associated General Contractors of America erect an environmental education shelter.

How then does a refuge achieve and sustain a quality volunteer program? A program's success is not necessarily based on numbers. Whether you have 750 volunteers or just two, even a few can make a difference.

When it comes to establishing and maintaining a volunteer program, there are manuals and classes that can help, but there is no magic cookbook

to follow. You must decide what works best in your setting. Good instincts, motivation, and genuinely caring for the volunteers may be enough to get you on your way.

Build Good Communication

Good communication and networking are important for forming contacts and establishing partnerships. The internet and phone book are great sources for locating organizations in your area. Set up meetings with representatives at their convenience. Once a sound relationship is established, maintain it through emails and occasional calls; remember, a simple thank you goes a long way.

At the beginning, advertising through the internet or newspaper to recruit individuals for specific tasks may be necessary. However, with a good program, word quickly gets around and before long, volunteers actively seek you.

Screen Potential Volunteers

Carefully interview volunteers and check references. Not all volunteers will make a good match for a site, but the majority will quickly become important members of the team. Taking time to learn about volunteers and their interests will help determine how to tap their interests and skills and will also increase their retention rate.

Orientation and training are important steps at Turnbull. The majority must be trained well in the areas in which they will be working; even "professional" level volunteers will require some direction. This takes time, and it is important to have staff or other volunteers who

are willing and able to do the training—and follow up with feedback and continued learning opportunities.

Treat Them Like Gold

By far the most important aspect of a successful volunteer program is in their treatment. It's imperative that those who deal with volunteers have good people skills. Volunteer supervisors must be honest, straightforward, and really get to know their volunteers as individuals. Above all, they should value a volunteer's work as much as their own, regardless of their position. They should also keep things fresh and exciting and thank them often. Providing them with snacks and other forms of recognition are vital to nurture these relationships. Acknowledging volunteers should be a daily event.

Good volunteers, like good employees, can't be replaced. It's true you may get another volunteer who can perform the same tasks, but the mark they leave behind will never be the same. At Turnbull, Virgil saw that our vault toilets needed servicing and he cleaned them. Joyce routinely braves the summer heat to pull invasive weeds and meticulously cares for native saplings we have planted. We don't just value their actual contributions. We value each for his or her unique spirit and the distinctive ways every volunteer supports our conservation efforts. ●

Sandy Rancourt is the volunteer and environmental education coordinator at Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge.



SANDY RANCOURT

Native saplings are tended by a volunteer working at Turnbull's Pine Creek Riparian Restoration Unit.

SANDY RANCOURT



Department of Ecology Youth Corps water saplings in Turnbull's Pine Creek Riparian Restoration Unit during the drought.

Field Notable

Meet Steve Clay*Community involvement has brought volunteers to Modoc NWR*

BY JEANNE CLARK



Sandhill cranes capture the interest of volunteers and visitors alike.



A child learns about songs and other lore from a member of the Pit River Tribe.

One of the best ways to encourage volunteerism is to be one. Steve Clay, refuge manager at Modoc National Wildlife Refuge located in Alturas, California, has been able to draw volunteers to the refuge, he believes, because of his own volunteer work in the community. When he came to Modoc in October 2001, there was a limited volunteer presence. “I knew I had to get involved in the community and get to know people before I could inspire similar interest in the refuge,” says Clay. In a few short years, Clay and his staff of four have parlayed these personal relationships into a Friends Group and an environmental education program, all run by volunteers.

The value of volunteers is especially meaningful to Clay, who began his Fish and Wildlife Service career as a Student Conservation Association volunteer biologist at Salton Sea National Wildlife Refuge. “My stint at both the Salton Sea and Tijuana Slough refuges really grounded me,” recalls Clay. “My supervisors had more work than staff, so they let me help with everything from waterfowl surveys, banding projects, and tours to heavy equipment work and facility maintenance. Later I ran the YCC crew, which allowed me to see how much work a volunteer force could accomplish.”

The experience led to a job as a bio tech at the Kern NWR Complex, which included the Kern, Pixley, Hopper Mountain, and Seal Beach refuges. Volunteers monitored the nesting endangered least tern colony at Seal Beach and cleared salt cedar at Pixley. “These dedicated volunteers dealt with some of the trials of working on a naval weapons station,” recalls Clay, “and labored in the blazing sun to clear salt cedar by hand. They did a lot of the jobs that might have fallen through the cracks because there was simply not enough staff to do them.”

Clay’s high regard for volunteers matured at the Sheldon-Hart Complex, where volunteers helped in variety of significant ways. Volunteers penetrated remote reaches of the Sheldon refuge to remove old barbed wire fencing, what Clay terms a miserable job. “They were happy to do it, just like they were glad to provide the hard labor to clear mountain mahogany and bitterbrush,” says Clay. “Sometimes the hardest part was keeping up with their enthusiasm. They always seemed to work themselves out of job faster than you expected. Volunteers want to feel useful, so you have to have worthwhile things to do for them to do. This takes planning, especially at remote locations.”

It was here that Clay developed his image of a model volunteer organization. Nevada Bighorns Unlimited consistently funded guzzler projects every year at the Sheldon refuge. “Over time we developed a relationship of trust. I could go into meeting and tell them what I needed,” says Clay. “They not only provided the money, but also

rounded up labor and brought food for the entire work crew. These were not local volunteers. They’d drive at least five hours from Reno to help for one and a half days. From them I learned that if people are willing to help, I’m going to match their interest by giving my time. I’m never going to turn them down.”

Since coming to Alturas, Clay has built ties with the community by serving on the board of directors for the local River Center, participating in an annual migratory bird festival, volunteering to staff the “weed booth” at local fairs, and more. Getting to know him enabled locals to better know the refuge. As a result, the refuge now has a Friends Group with several projects in the works. Clay worked with the Central Modoc Resource Conservation District and supported their environmental education facility, called the River Center. The Center became so interested in the refuge they asked to provide environmental education programs there. The Center and refuge then cooperated in developing the Pit River Adoption Project, which uses a portion of the refuge to provide environmental education to all elementary students in Alturas.

“There is no way this program would be occurring without the River Center volunteers,” reflects Clay. “The key for us has been giving time to our community and then nurturing support for the refuge. If you can develop volunteer partnerships in Alturas, located in a county with only 9,000 people, you can do it anywhere.” ●

Jeanne Clark is the editor of Out & About. Photos by Laura Vanacker.

Small Community Is Big on Volunteers

Volunteers help expand programs at Modoc NWR

BY STEVE CLAY

Modoc National Wildlife Refuge encompasses 7,021 acres of wetland and riparian habitat located in the Pit River Valley, in northeastern California. The closest town, Alturas, has a population of 3,000. The population of the entire county, which encompasses 3,944 square miles, is only 9,000. The closest “large” towns are more than two hours away.

Not exactly a rich environment for recruiting volunteers, right? Well, yes and no. It seems that in these small rural towns, volunteers are the driving force behind most everything that happens. One simply needs to find ways to tap into this pool of volunteers. In my case, it hinged on becoming involved with the community and building relationships with individuals I had met.

When I arrived in Alturas in 2001, I immediately became involved with the Modoc Migratory Bird Festival Committee. This largely volunteer group is responsible for planning and conducting the annual Modoc Migratory Bird Festival, now called “The Wings of the Warners.” I learned that several of the festival organizers were involved in other community activities. As I built relationships with them, I was able to involve the refuge in more of these local efforts.

One notable project was the early planning for an environmental education center called the River Center, sponsored by the local Central Modoc Resource Conservation District office (RCD). Our relationship with the RCD and the River Center has helped us attract and sustain a cadre of committed volunteers.

The refuge and the River Center have hosted numerous environmental education programs and events both on and off of the refuge. Our collaboration has also spawned the Pit River Watershed Adoption Project, which educates local students about watershed health and management and provides an opportunity for hands-on, place-based learning on the refuge. The Adoption Project occurs on a 15-acre riparian area on the refuge. In May of 2004, nearly 400 students visited the



Visitors at the entrance station are greeted by volunteers.

project site. We expanded our effort this year to include all Alturas six graders in spring and seventh graders in fall. We hope to eventually serve all students from kindergarden through twelfth grade.

From its inception, the Adoption Project was more than the refuge staff and River Center education coordinator could handle. Numerous parent and community volunteers have stepped forward each year to assist, generating nearly 300 volunteer hours during a two week time period. The Adoption Project

has been a great success and has sparked interest in starting similar programs in the outlying school districts in Modoc County. None of this would be possible without volunteers.

Another endeavor that would not be possible without volunteers is the Friends of Modoc Refuge. This fledgling Friends group was started by several individuals that I first met through the Modoc Migratory Bird Festival Committee. The Friends recently received their tax exempt status and are ready to embark on a membership drive. They have several projects lined up for this fall including construction of an accessible photo blind, installation of benches along our tour route, and landscaping the refuge entrance. They have also provided assistance with our junior waterfowl hunt, junior pheasant hunt, “Wings of the Warners” migratory bird festival, and the Pit River Adoption Project environmental education program. At the heart of their efforts will be volunteer recruitment and managing our volunteer program.

Throughout my career I have been fortunate to work in a wide variety of habitat types and with numerous different species of wildlife but, as with most anything, it can sometimes become just “work.” Volunteers have always made the difference. Their enthusiasm and wonder help to reinvigorate and inspire us and remind us how truly fortunate we are to have partners that actively understand and support our complex conservation responsibilities. ●

Steve Clay is the refuge manager at Modoc National Wildlife Refuge.

Photos by Laura Vanacker.

The diverse habitats at Modoc NWR provide a range of volunteer opportunities.



Students enjoy hands on activities as part of the Adoption Project.

Battling Invasive Plants

Weed Warriors lead the charge at Nisqually NWRC

BY DANIELLE D'AURIA

USFWS



A refuge Weed Warrior displays purple loosestrife that he dug out of the ground along the Nisqually River.

Non-native invasive species are one of the most daunting contemporary challenges of the National Wildlife Refuge System. These intruders harm ecosystem processes, including water availability, soil chemistry, erosion, and sedimentation. They hinder habitat restoration efforts, and sometimes hybridize with native plants, forever altering the genetic integrity of native species. Their impacts are costly, both economically and ecologically.

In 2003, at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex, we enlarged our invasive control program to include trained volunteers for identifying, mapping, and controlling numerous invasive plant species. These newly trained “Weed Warriors” are the refuge’s first line of defense against non-native invasive plants on refuge lands and waterways.

The main goal of the Refuge Weed Warrior Program is to locate and manage infestations of invasive plants on Nisqually NWR Complex with assistance from trained refuge volunteers. The training is provided at an annual Weed Aware Workshop, which focuses on prevention, control, and eradication, and relies on experts from the refuge staff and the Thurston County and Washington State Weed Boards, as well as partners such as the Nisqually Indian Tribe and Washington State Department of Transportation. Training includes weed definition, plant identification, reasons for concern, methods of transport, eradication, and control, reporting procedures, including use of a GPS unit, and a field trip.

Weed Warriors help with weed management in a variety of ways. They may conduct surveys to find new weed infestations or monitor known infestations. Some have “adopted” their own areas

to monitor and control throughout the year. Weed Warriors follow refuge-specific control guidelines. Control efforts can be done by individual volunteers as the weeds are found, or by a group at a pre-arranged date and time. Many Weed Warriors prefer the group activity because it is a chance to socialize and share their passion with other like-minded folks.

Weed Warriors are required to record specific data about their findings and actions and they record a GPS waypoint indicating where their work was completed. Our warriors also do most of the data entry into GIS. This data helps managers track where specific infestations occur, the size and time of year they are actively growing, the type of control actions that have been taken, and ultimately, how effective that control has been.

To date, over 30 individuals have been trained as Weed Warriors. This year alone, Weed Warriors contributed over 900 hours to battle non-native invasive plants on our refuges. In addition to volunteer time, there is a considerable amount of staff time that is needed to design, coordinate, and maintain such a program. In order to keep weed warriors interested, we communicate regularly with them and also provide opportunities to learn new information and practical skills, see new areas, and apply their skills. Regular communication via email has been the best way to keep this group active. Interesting opportunities usually get a good turnout, such as visiting closed restoration areas or a taking a canoe trip to search for purple loosestrife.

Over the past three years we have been lucky to find several highly dedicated

RESOURCES

FWS volunteer intranet web site: At the Service’s intranet site (<http://intranet.fws.gov/region9/refuges>), you can find information about Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Annual Reports, Volunteer Guidebook, Volunteer Logo, Volunteer Fact Sheets, Volunteer Application, Volunteer Service Agreement, Volunteer Monetary Form, Volunteer Parental Form, Volunteer Reimbursement Form, and coming soon, a Volunteer Time Sheet. For more information, contact Deborah Moore at 703-358-2386.

Training opportunities: NCTC offers an excellent course on Volunteer Recruitment and Management, usually in August. Go to <http://training.fws.gov/>.

Volunteer awards: There are numerous ways to recognize volunteer contributions, including the 2,000 Director’s Bureau Award (coming soon), 3,000 Take Pride in America Secretarial Award, and the 4,000 Take Pride in America Presidential Award. For more information, contact Deborah Moore at Deborah_Moore@fws.gov.

Volunteer recruitment: Need help finding volunteers? The government web site can provide resources and guidance at www.volunteer.gov/gov.

Google it! Use Google or other search engines to check online bookstores for references regarding volunteer recruitment and management. A quick look at Amazon produce more than 70 books related to volunteers.

individuals who have made weed prevention and control their main volunteer activity at the refuge complex. From tediously weeding landscaped native beds outside the refuge office every Monday to pulling Scotch broom every other Saturday, it is clear that they share our commitment for restoring native habitats and eradicating the non-native invasive plants that challenge our ecosystems. Many of these same people have enlarged the battle against invasives by applying their newfound knowledge about weeds at home and elsewhere in the community, adding tremendously to broader conservation efforts. ●

Danielle D’Auria is a refuge operations specialist at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex.

Formula for Success

Five tips from Dungeness NWR

BY KOLLEEN IRVINE

ADungeness National Wildlife Refuge volunteer arrives to greet visitors at eight o'clock on a cold, drizzly morning. One hour later a visitor finally approaches. Questions are asked and answered—yes, the tide is high now, the restroom is over there, and by the way, did you see the doe and two fawns eating salal berries. The visitor decides to come back when the weather improves. The Refuge volunteer resumes his solitary duty.

We who manage volunteer programs are familiar with guidelines for building successful volunteer programs. But how you translate those tips into reality can

they enjoy it and have received appreciation for their efforts. If you want to encourage similar dedication, consider these five tips for building and sustaining a dynamic volunteer program and attracting new volunteers.

Make their jobs fun

Nothing says “I care” better than a chocolate bar with almonds or a bag of pretzels and corn nuts. Providing snacks tells our volunteers we are thinking of them and value their contributions. We also take pictures of them working and use the pictures in newsletters and presentations. This builds their feeling

This engenders pride in their work and confidence in knowing that we trust them to handle important responsibilities.

Impart a sense of tangible value

From an increase in nesting birds on the refuge due to reduced disturbance to compliments from our visitors, the volunteers should be able to see tangible evidence of their contributions. Giving them our attention also increases their sense of value. We try to take time to work with them, whether it's the project leader sitting with entrance duty volunteers or the maintenance person working with them to put up new

Nothing says “I care” better than a chocolate bar with almonds or a bag of pretzels and corn nuts.

of ownership in the resource by creating a sense of fun and teamwork.

Spend time with them

We try to spend a few minutes with each volunteer during their shift and chat about family, future vacations, their pets' antics, and other personal interests. While most volunteers serve because they believe in our mission to protect wildlife, the human connection between staff and volunteer is vitally important. This shows a personal interest in volunteers as people, not just tools to accomplish tasks.

Give them freedom

We train our volunteers to do a job and then let them do it. We check in with volunteers to let them know how to reach us and to make sure they understand their duties. We observe them and offer constructive feedback to help fine tune their performance.

signs. In these ways, our volunteers know that they make a difference, which is essential in creating a strong volunteer program.

How to attract new volunteers

Word of mouth and visitor contacts are the main tools we use to attract new volunteers. Happy volunteers tell their friends and neighbors about our program and this generates new volunteers. Visitors who have a positive refuge experience and enjoyable interactions with our volunteers may decide they want to help.

Dungeness NWR's volunteer program is essential to our public use program and allows us to complete biological and maintenance projects that would be left undone due to staff limitations. We can't imagine running the refuge without them. ●

Kolleen Irvine is a park ranger at Dungeness National Wildlife Refuge.



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Top: Volunteers wear the latest fashions during non-native plant eradication. Above: Helping visitors at the entrance fee station.

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Volunteers pick up trash on Graveyard Spit.

make the difference between a vibrant volunteer program and one where volunteer commitment is spotty. How are staff at Dungeness NWR able to create a volunteer experience that inspires people to sit outside in adverse weather early in the morning on the off chance a visitor will need their help? Because

Interns at Hopper Mountain

Condors attract an international crowd

BY DENISE STOCKTON



Interns take a break to discuss the condor trapping experience.

They come to the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex in California from as far away as Australia, France, and Canada and all over the United States. The draw? A chance to work as a wildlife biology intern on the California Condor Recovery Program. Many are fresh from college while others have a variety of experience working on other national and international projects. While these dedicated people are not strictly volunteers, they make a six-month commitment to the program in exchange for a place to live and an allowance of just \$45 a day. Why are they willing to practically volunteer their time? To gain valuable work experience in the field and have an opportunity to track, monitor, and trap perhaps one of the rarest birds in North America.

Interns learn first hand about a reintroduitory program that is constantly evolving, where they can be an integral part of that evolution. In addition to Hopper Mountain Refuge, they work at the Bitter Creek and Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes refuges, exposing them to habitats ranging from mountain to coastal ecosystems.

They are as varied as people can be. Annika Hoffman, a southern California resident, has been a wildlife biologist intern for several months. In her short tenure she has already participated in a release and a trapping effort, observed nests, and used radio telemetry to track condors. In between condor duties, veterinary school studies, and planning her wedding, she also initiated an insect collection project at Hopper Mountain and Bitter Creek refuges.

Scott Scherbinksi took time off from his internship duties to volunteer with the Red Cross in Texas to help people displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Lisa Drake was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Africa before coming to Hopper Mountain. When Joseph Brandt leaves his internship duties, he'll be on his way to southern Chile to work on a penguin study.

Like all volunteers, interns perform necessary work that can't be accomplished by the refuge staff alone. They also enrich the Service by their presence. To learn more about the Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex intern program, contact Denise Stockton or Richard Posey at 805/644-5185. ●

Denise Stockton is an outdoor recreation planner at Hopper Mountain National Wildlife Refuge Complex.



Condor trapping, surveys, and other field work provide excellent training opportunities for interns and volunteers.

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY
13-16

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival
WHERE: The Inn at Morro Bay, CA
CONTACT: Chamber of Commerce
800/231-0592
www.morrobaybirdfestival.org

27-29

Snow Goose Festival
WHERE: Butte County, CA
CONTACT: 530/345-1865
www.sacriverttrust.org

27-29

San Francisco Bay Flyway Festival
WHERE: Vallejo, CA
CONTACT: 707/649-WING
www.sfbayflywayfestival.com

FEBRUARY
9-12

San Diego Bird Festival
WHERE: San Diego, CA
CONTACT: Imperial Beach Chamber of Commerce
619/516-0139
www.sandiegoaudubon.org/birdfest.html

16-19

Klamath Winter Wings Festival
WHERE: Klamath Falls, OR
CONTACT: Klamath County Dept. of Tourism
1 800/445-6728
<http://www.winterwingsfest.org>

17-20

Salton Sea International Bird Festival
WHERE: Imperial, CA
CONTACT: 760/344-5FLY
www.newriverwetlands.com/saltonsea.html

24-25

California Duck Days
WHERE: Davis, CA
CONTACT: 530/757-3780
www.yolobasin.org

MARCH
31
THROUGH
APRIL 4

Aleutian Canada Goose Festival
WHERE: Crescent City, CA
CONTACT: 707/343-8300
www.aleutiangoosefestival.org

APRIL
7-9

John Scharf Migratory Bird Festival
WHERE: Burns, OR
CONTACT: 541/573-2636
www.migratorybirdfestival.com

MAY
8

International Migratory Bird Day
WHERE: Nationwide
CONTACT: www.birdday.org/imbd.htm
<http://birds.fws.gov/imbd.html>
www.americanbirding.org/imbd/imbdgen.htm

12

Spring Wings Bird Festival
WHERE: Fallon, NV
CONTACT: 775/423-5158
www.springwings.org

20

Walk on the Wildside
WHERE: Elk Grove, CA
CONTACT: Amy Hopperstad
916/875-WILD
<http://www.fws.gov/stonelakes>

“Other Duties as Assigned”

Fitting volunteer management into your job description

BY VIRGINIA PARKS

For many of us, working with volunteers falls under that catch-all in our job description that reads “other duties as assigned.” Yet whether you manage volunteers on a daily basis or interact with them only occasionally, it may be one of the most important duties Service employees can perform. Working with volunteers allows us to cultivate a corps of citizen-stewards who tend to be vocal and influential in their advocacy for the Service—and they also accomplish amazing feats!

Failing to do so tends to generate resentment and results in high volunteer attrition rates.

- Show them appreciation—through both simple and profound gestures. Let them know, on a regular basis, that they make a difference. Every few months during construction, we hosted volunteer appreciation cookouts where we staged mini-award ceremonies and provided tokens of appreciation. During the opening ceremonies for the plankhouse, vol-

When you work alongside [volunteers] with enthusiasm and commitment, they return those qualities tenfold.

The lens that has focused my experience with volunteers has been the Cathlapotle Plankhouse Project (see *Out & About* Summer 2004). For two years, I’ve had the privilege of working alongside more than 100 enthusiastic volunteers who put in over 3,500 hours to construct a full-scale Chinookan-style cedar plankhouse at Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Washington. During the process, I’ve made the following observations about managing and nurturing this dedicated workforce.

- The best way to appreciate volunteers is to be one. When you give voluntarily of your time and talents to an organization which you believe merits them, you can better identify the elements of a positive volunteer environment and recreate it for your own volunteers. This is “developing empathy.”
- Volunteers really don’t want to do your work *for* you, they want to do it *with* you. When you work alongside them with enthusiasm and commitment, they return those qualities tenfold.

unteers who had contributed more than 50 hours received a framed, inscribed print of the plankhouse (commissioned for the project from a local artist) embedded with a fragment of the cedar used to make the house. Even more important than these tangible tokens, however, is the simple “thank you” that acknowledges their commitment when they take on an extra shift or finish an onerous task.

- Make their volunteer experience so rewarding that they willingly make time to help you. Remember that volunteers have chosen to give up time that they could be spending in any number of other ways, from doing household chores to taking grandchildren to the zoo. Acknowledging them as partners, listening to their ideas and concerns, and giving them the type of respect you give to professional colleagues will give them a sense of purpose and pride in being part of the mission of the Refuge System.

- Get to know them as people. Learn their interests and talents and create opportunities to express them. Plankhouse volunteers were attracted to the project for a variety of personal reasons. Some volunteers were devoted work party attendees. Some loved working with wood and learning more about traditional house building techniques. Others were interested in sharing information at outreach events. Still others wanted to become docents and share the rich natural and cultural history of the refuge. We worked hard to find ways for all of them to participate in a meaningful way.

- Build and maintain a sense of community among volunteers and staff. Now that the plankhouse is standing and we no longer have weekly work parties, one of the most common sentiments I hear from volunteers is, “I miss everybody!” When the job is done, be sure to find new ways to channel their interest. Give them a reason to keep coming!

Remember—the opportunity you provide could change a life! There was once an archaeologist, fresh out of college, who went to a Nevada refuge as a Student Conservation Association volunteer armed with an incomplete understanding of national wildlife refuges. Her experience there was so positive that “she” has made the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service her life’s work! Today, working with volunteers is one of the high points of my “other duties as assigned.” ●

Virginia Parks was an SCA volunteer at Sillwater NWR in 1987 and is an archaeologist for the Pacific Region’s Branch of Cultural Resources.

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Top left: Several volunteers raise a wall plank into place. Above right: A retired builder and soil scientist, an engineer, a dairy farmer, and a rancher join forces to work on an ADA-accessible entrance to the building.

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Small Refuge, Growing Volunteer Corps

Local community yields enthusiastic helpers

BY AMY HOPPERSTAD



Top right: A refuge volunteer describes the refuge wetlands to visitors at Walk on the Wildside. Above: The Refuge System mascot is guided by a Stone Lakes volunteer at Walk on the Wildside.

Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge lies in the shadow of Sacramento, California but it is a world apart. The refuge protects some of the remaining wetlands and riparian habitat in a region that has seen rapid growth and urban development.

For a refuge with a small staff and many management challenges, however, our urban location has been an asset. We have received strong support from the surrounding community, which has provided dozens of volunteers who lend a hand with refuge programs, such as wildlife monitoring, bird-banding, environmental education, and other activities. However, nowhere is their dedication more evident than our annual nature festival, Walk on the Wildside, where they turn up by the dozens.

Walk on the Wildside requires over a half year of planning and numerous people to chase a myriad of logistical details. For more than 10 years, the event's

continual success can be appropriately credited to our volunteers. Over 40 volunteers come together for this day-long festival celebrating International Migratory Bird Day; they are literally the backbone of the event.

Volunteers begin by serving on the festival committee throughout the planning process. At the event, they lead guided tours, assist visitors as roving interpreters, staff refuge interpretive and event booths, run children's activities, assist with pre-event set-up, control traffic, help exhibitors, photograph the event, and bring to life Puddles, the Refuge System's Blue Goose mascot. In these capacities, our volunteers flawlessly served over 3,000 visitors last spring. A few of our volunteers have worked on this event since it began.

Our volunteer workforce enriches Walk on the Wildside because of who they are. They range in age from 10 to over 80. They come from a variety of sources, including our refuge volunteers,

the Stone Lakes NWR Association board of directors, service learning and community service students, local scouts, local agencies, and college professors. They form a melting pot of talents and knowledge that both represent the diversity of the local community and demonstrate its support for the refuge.

Walk on the Wildside would never make it past the planning state without this pool of dedicated people. And many other refuge projects would languish without this infusion of voluntary support.

Saying "thank you" has been a priority at the refuge. From providing event t-shirts purchased by the refuge association to holding potluck dinners and presenting certificates of appreciation, we do all that we can to acknowledge and encourage their commitment and contributions. ●

Amy Hopperstad is an outdoor recreation planner at Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Photos by Miriam LeGarel.

WHAT'S NEW?

Money for Volunteer Training: The Friends of the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), Inc. has received a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to pay tuition and room and board for refuge Friends group members and/or volunteers who wish to attend NCTC training courses. The grant will not cover transportation costs. For more information contact Laura Jones, at laura_jones@fws.gov, 304/876-7499.

New Email Address for FWS Photo Requests: Starting August 18, 2005, please send your photo requests to images@fws.gov. This is the permanent e-mail address or all image requests. This will allow other staff members to respond to your inquiries. Please do not send your request to LaVonda Walton.

Details Available to Branch of Fire Management: The Branch of Fire Management in National Wildlife Refuge System headquarters in Arlington, VA, is requesting nominations for details to assist the National Fire Plan Coordinator during January – March 2006. The detail period is five working days minimum to three weeks maximum. Travel and per diem costs will be paid by the Branch of Fire Management. Detailers will assist with Congressional outreach and may attend hearings of Congressional committees and brief home state Congressional staff. For more information, contact Art Latterell at 703/358-2340 or Art_Latterell@fws.gov.

State-Fish Art Contest: Children in grades 4 through 12 can learn about fish conservation and submit art and essays in the 8th Annual Wildlife Forever State-Fish Art Contest. Entries must be postmarked by March 31, 2006. See www.statefishart.com for details and a free lesson plan. For information, contact Brett Richardson at brichardson@wildlifeforever.org or 763/253-0222.