The Flyway

Winter 2014

Quarterly newsletter for Nisqually and Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuges

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Save the Date!
The Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival will be held May 1-3 in Hoquiam.

Winter is the best time to witness Great Horned Owls at Nisqually!

By Michael Schramm

The riparian forest in winter is generally a quiet place. There is the occasional mixed flock of kinglets and chickadees, but it's possible to walk all the way through without seeing or hearing much of anything. Every now and then, though, there is a rare gem, the type of wildlife sighting opportunity that makes the forest a place never to be missed. The sound of deliberate pecking on wood might indicated a sapsucker or pileated woodpecker. And a cacophonous eruption of crows calling and cawing might indicate a real prize: the presence of owls and owlets. The crows may continue their harassment of owls for hours on end, and it can be a bit alarming to watch—visitors often worry the owlets are in danger.

Great Horned Owlets. Photo by i'ina van Lawick.

The crows have good reason to be upset. The owls are their primary predator. In fact, the owls are likely to hunt almost anything that moves, with the exception of large mammals. At Nisqually, most common prey likely include voles, mice, squirrels, rabbits, and the nestlings and juveniles of all the local bird species; in wetland ecosystems including Nisqually, owls have a special appetite for Coot. Mostly, though, they tend to stick to the forests and meadows where short, broad wings are ideal for maneuverability. The owl kills primarily through the crushingly powerful grip of its talons, which are so strong they can sever the spine of larger prey animals. Any animal too large to be swallowed whole can be torn apart by the sharp beak. Owls are, in other words, a formidable predator.

All the macabre violence of their predatory daily life is easy to overlook when the adorable owlets appear. Few things on the Refuge inspire as much excitement during the winter and early spring. Through January, local birders are on the edge of their seat with anticipation, checking everyplace of potential interest. Just the same, they often will have missed the nest's actual location; such is the stealth and secrecy of the owls. Sometime around the beginning of February, the fuzzy gray heads of owlets will appear in the opening of a tree. Word spreads fast, and the trails of the forest become noticeably busier as nature enthusiasts flock to the Refuge to watch the show.

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New Volunteers Join the Refuge

In late October, eighteen people completed a 10 hour training course for new volunteers and became the newest members of the Refuge's Volunteer Program. They join the already 100 volunteers who contribute an average of 15,000 hours of volunteer time annually to Refuge projects. They will be working at the Visitor Center, Education Program, Administrative Office and at special events such as our annual Watershed Festival. Next time you're at the Refuge, please welcome the Class of 2014: Kim Adelson, Jean Black, Richard Cormier, Craig Doherty, Alexandra Doty, Susie Hayes, Rebecca Kowalski, Elena Lieber, Wendy Lippman, Eiko McDonald, Mark McDonald, Dyane McGlashan, Barb Mondau, Ruth Pagel, Dorothy Ruff, Sarah Simpson, Evelyn Smith, Bert Stevens, and Dave Zink.

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Save trees, think green.

To receive *The Flyway* electronically, email **nisqually@fws.gov**

On the Wing

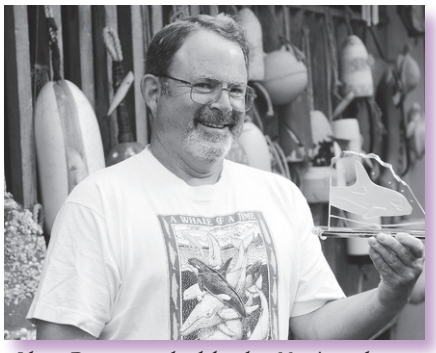
By Glynnis Nakai

As we say goodbye to 2014 and open our arms to welcome 2015, I reflect back on my first full year as Manager for the Nisqually NWR Complex. Our faithful volunteers are to be thanked to no end for all the energy, time, and knowledge they contribute to the Refuge and staff. I continue to be impressed with the high caliber professionalism that is extended to our visitors and the heartfelt attention given everyone.

Nisqually NWR is a gem in itself but made even more special with our volunteers. On behalf of the Refuge staff, thank you all for a wonderful year!

Alan Rammer will be Keynote Speaker at 2015 The Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival

The Refuge is excited to announce that Alan Rammer will be our keynote speaker at this year's The Grays Harbor Shorebird and Nature Festival in Hoquiam. Alan is one of those extraordinary individuals who found a way to parlay his passions into a professional career. In this case, it all began with beachcombing and a love for all things marine back at his childhood home in Monterey Bay, California. He came to Washington for college in the early '70's and accepted his first job in Westport in 1974. After his initial taste of the local weather, he expected to be there no more than six months, but ended up falling in love with the place and staying indefinitely.



Alan Rammer holds the National Marine Educator of the Year award. Photo by The Daily World.

A career with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife led to a curious opportunity: In the mid-90's, he recognized a need to work with a growing, local community of immigrant fishermen unfamiliar with local policies and objectives. He reached out to the Filipino, Laotian, Cambodian, Korean, Samoan, and Vietnamese communities, delivering programs to elders and church leaders, and also by mentoring their bilingual youth, who were then able to deliver critical agency messages to their communities. While many might have found this sort of work an intimidating struggle, he managed to gain trust and develop a genuine relationship that has continued even after Alan's retirement from the state agency.

In the meantime, Alan found time to write two books on glass fishing floats (which sometimes wash up on American beaches from their origins in Asia), and to become immortalized in "The Highest Tide," a book by Jim Lynch which was turned into a Hollywood film. He has won numerous awards including National Marine Educator's Association's "Marine Educator of the Year" in 2012. After retiring from the Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2009, he found a way to continue environmental education in schools and community groups through his enterprise, Tidepool Discoveries.

Alan will speak Friday night at Hoquiam High School. This year's festival will also feature a dinner and a second speaker on Saturday night in lieu of the auction. There will also be a new field trip on plants of the salt marsh. So this is shaping up to be a great festival. Be sure and save the dates: May 1-3 at Gray's Harbor National Wildlife Refuge!

Great Horned Owls

From page 1

It may come as a surprise that the owlets appear so early in the winter, when snow and icy storms are still so common. The owls fledge about six weeks after hatching, and hatch after about thirty-three days of incubation, so at Nisqually the owls are sitting on their eggs around Thanksgiving, when the last autumn leaves are still falling from the trees. Their young have hatched by around New Year's Day. No other bird lays eggs so early. What advantage is there to laying eggs and raising young so early in the winter? The answer is simply that raising young early means less competition for food from the many other species of raptor who share the same preferences for prey. It is a competitive adaptation.

Another adaptation that may seem a bit counterintuitive involves incubation. Most birds delay incubating their eggs until after laying the entire clutch so that all the eggs will hatch simultaneously. In contrast, Great Horned Owls incubate their eggs as they lay them, causing them to hatch in a staggered way: rather than hatching all at once, they each hatch several days apart. This ensures that at least one owl, the oldest, will have enough food to eat and will survive to adulthood. The next owlet will have to compete with its older sibling for food, and will only survive if abundance of food permits. This is even truer for the third owlet in a clutch, typically a full week younger than the first born. If three owlets all hatched at the same time in a year when food is less abundant, all three might starve or succumb to disease. Staggering the births nearly guarantees successful reproduction. Owl broods at Nisqually typically include two chicks, but last winter there were three and all survived to adulthood, indicating a healthy environment with abundant food.

Great Horned Owls are fairly sedentary creatures, living their entire lives in a small area. The nesting pair mostly visible around the Twin Barns Loop trail at the Refuge are likely the same pair, year after year. Though they are not as visible during the summer months, they are still here, lurking in the shadows. They continue to feed and raise their young through the spring and summer until the juveniles can hunt on their own, perhaps as late as July or August. And then, somehow, no longer dependent, the juveniles fly away to find their own territories, never to be seen at Nisqually again.

Enter the Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest!

Do you know any students who enjoy drawing or painting wildlife? The statewide Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest is available to ***all*** students K-12! The annual contest encourages students to observe wildlife and create their vision of the colorful, winged waterfowl that grace wetlands across North America. The objective is to create an original depiction of waterfowl and submit it to the contest; great as a class project or for individual students!

The actual art competition begins all over the nation each spring when students submit their artwork to their state or territory contest. At the state level, students are judged in four groups according to grade level: K-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12. Three first, three second, and three third place entries, along with 16 honorable mentions, are selected from each age group, so there are lots of winners who will each receive certificates, prizes, and recognition. Contest judges select one "Best of Show" from the 12 first place winners. Each state or territory "Best of Show" is entered in the National Junior Duck Stamp Contest which occurs in April.

In Washington State, entries are due by **March 15, 2015.**

For information, entry and reference forms, visit: **http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck/**

Washington State coordinator information: Michael Schramm, Nisqually NWR, 360-753-9467, **michael_schramm@fws.gov**

Please help ensure that ***all*** wildlife artist students hear about this opportunity!

2015 Shorebird and Nature Festival Poster Contest!

This exciting art contest opportunity is open to residents of Grays Harbor County! Students grades 1-6 may participate in the 2015 poster contest by drawing or painting one of our local shorebirds! Artwork will be judged based on accuracy, originality and artistic skill. Prizes will be awarded to first, second, third, fourth, and fifth place winners in each grade. Entries can be created using any medium with an unmatted/framed size of 12" x 18".

The 2014 Best of Show, "Birdies on a Beach at Night," depicting a Western Sandpiper, Semi-palmated Plover, Dunlin, and Whimbrel, by 5th grade Central Elementary School student Brianna Reames.

The deadline for this year's contest is Friday, April 10th. You can mail entries to: Shorebird Poster Contest, c/o Port of Gray's Harbor, PO Box 660, Aberdeen, WA 98520 or hand deliver them to Port of Grays Harbor, 111 South Wooding St., Aberdeen, WA 98520. First place winning artwork will be used in publicity for the 2016 Shorebird Festival. For questions or entry forms, please contact Danika Didur-Tate, Education and Outreach Coordinator for Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge at (360)753-9467 or **danika_didur-tate@fws.gov.**

New and Renewing Friends Membership Winter 2014

Senior/Student ($15)

Jolene Ramaker
James Killingbeck
Carol Horner
Helen Engle
Gary Bostwick
Glenis Nielsen
Connie Nuse
Kathy Miller
Gilda Warder
Dana Risch
Lillian Reseck
Thomas & Barbara Malone
Llyn De Danaan
Jamie Clausen
Susie Hayes
Gimi Bashaw
Shirlene Anderson
Irene von Tobel

Individual ($25)

Diane Gallegos
Kate Benkert
Ruth M. Sullivan
Kay Lennartson
Allan M. Warner
Nancy E. Henderson
Lorraine Potter
Walter A. Kuciej
Len Elliott

Family ($50)

Cecile Montgomery
Kristin Knopf & Brian Hanners
Horace & Janice Thuline
Carol & Bill Langford
Ralph Arnold
Karen Petersen
Shelley & William Carr
Isabelle Bohman
Bill & Carole Wieland
Beth Morrison & Geoff Crooks
Dwight & Leta Faust
Dave & Laura Nicol
Alice Nevue
Donna Ewing & Sue Minahan
Miho & Chuck Pell
Timothy & Linda Bates

Supporting ($100)

Mary Goodsell
Beverly B. Sloane
Basil & Verena Grieco
Donald Blanke
William & Julia Mitchell
Carol Else
Ellen Sweetin & Wendy Taylor
Clyde & Jane Shiner
Elizabeth Hansen
John Cusick & Christi McGinley
Karen Pauler
Kristin & Michael Stewart

Patron ($500)

Fred & Margaret Hellberg
Donna & Jack Rice

Join Friends of Nisqually NWRC!

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Email _____

❏ Please send information on making Friends of Nisqually NWRC a beneficiary of my estate.

❏ Check here to receive an electronic version of *The Flyway* newsletter by email.

Individual/Family Memberships

❏ $15 Student/Senior
❏ $25 Individual
❏ $50 Family
❏ $100 Supporting
❏ $250 Partner
❏ $500 Patron
❏ $1000 Benefactor

Corporate/Business Memberships

❏ $250 Business Sponsor
❏ $500 Community Partner
❏ $1000 Sustaining Business
❏ $2500 Corporate Patron
❏ $5000 + Corporate Benefactor

Friends of Nisqually NWR is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1998 to promoteconservation of the natural and cultural resources and fund educational and outreach programs at **Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge Complex.**

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Nisqually NWRC, 100 Brown Farm Rd, Olympia, WA 98516

Your tax deductible contribution will help preserve the unique habitats, fish, and wildlife of the Nisqually Delta and the Grays Harbor Tideflats.

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... conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people...

Are you a teacher planning a field trip to Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge?

Attend one of our free Field Trip Orientation Workshops to get all the tools you need to confidently guide your students on a meaningful outdoor learning experience. You will be introduced to our hands on indoor activities in our education center, hike the Twin Barns Loop Trail, and learn about one of the largest restoration projects in the Puget Sound! Refreshments will be provided.

Workshop Dates:

Saturday January 10th 9am-1pm

Saturday February 21st 9am-1pm

Wednesday March 11th 4pm-8pm

***** Only teachers who have participated in a field trip orientation workshop within the past three years are able to schedule a class for their field trip between May 15 and the end of the school year.** Teachers who have attended a workshop since 2011 and scheduled a field trip within the past two years may continue to schedule field trips between May 15th and the end of the school year without retaking the workshop. ***

Location: Education Center at Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge (From I-5 Take Exit 114 and follow signs)

Clock hours are available for a fee, approved by ESD113.

To Register: Download the registration form from our website fws.gov/Nisqually

Under the Visit tab select "For Educators" and then Teacher Training.

For more information:

Davy Clark
Education Specialist
Nisqually National Wildlife Refuge
davy_clark@fws.gov
Phone: (360) 753-9467
Fax: (360)534-9302