

## **Spring Greetings from the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards**



The Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards would like to share this first e-newsletter with volunteers and others who have expressed an interest in the Columbia Gorge Refuges - Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, and Pierce.

### **Winter Planting Season a Huge Success**

A couple of years ago, Refuge staff took steps to start restoration of native habitat in two areas on Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge – a riparian area along the northern Gibbons Creek shoreline and a small oak woodland just south of Washington SR 14 before it rises above the railroad tracks ([Map of 2006/2007 Planting Season Projects](#)).

Contractors were hired to mow the 15' tall blackberries under the cottonwoods along Gibbons Creek, and then spray the regrowing blackberries. Last summer, the Vancouver Audubon Society contributed funds to have the non-native reed canarygrass killed in preparation for planting a six acre section of this riparian area. At the same time, the Refuge, Vancouver Audubon, and Georgia Pacific contributed funds to purchase approximately 2,000 native shrubs and trees to plant at this site.

At the oak site, Refuge staff mowed the blackberries under the oak trees during the fall of 2005. During the spring of 2006, volunteers cleared the blackberry cuttings and planted native grass.



During the 2006-07 winter planting season, significant progress was made in planting these sites. Twenty-one species of shrubs and trees, over 2,000 plants in all, were planted. Most of the shrubs were planted in the swale between the Gibbons Creek and the grass field southwest of Steigerwald Lake. Additional native shrubs and wildflowers were planted in the oak woodland.



## Thanks to Volunteers and Team Leaders

The planting efforts described were the result of the remarkable efforts of over 200 volunteers and 10 team leaders, contributing 1000 hours of their time. Volunteers included Scout and school groups, as well as community members. Team leaders were Wilson Cady, Carol Kohler, Sallie Jones, Dave Miller, Randy Fortish, Steve Canter, Rick Jones, George Mayfield, Jennie Boyd, and Cyndi Soliz. Without your assistance, it would not have been accomplished. A hearty thanks goes out to you all from Refuge Manager Jim Clapp.

As summer approaches, however, volunteers will be needed to water the new plants. This is something that can be done after work or on weekends, and is a fantastic way to unwind. Contact Refuge Stewards

Board Member Joan Durgin at (360) 834-5621 or e-mail us at [volunteer@refugestewards.org](mailto:volunteer@refugestewards.org) to volunteer for watering duty.

Planting will resume in late November or early December, when the winter rains return.

## Spring Hikes

*Special Spring Hike at Steigerwald Lake NWR: 6/09/07; 9 a.m. to about noon.* Hike the Columbia River Dike as part of the spring Friends of the Gorge series of hikes. Learn about the refuge and its natural and historical resources from a local volunteer expert. View refuge wetlands, riparian woodlands, and the Columbia River. Bring your binoculars, appropriate footwear/attire, and water. To reach the starting point, turn south from WA SR 14 near Milepost 17 onto 32nd Street at the sign to the Port of Camas/Washougal Industrial Park. Drive 0.4 miles to Index Street, then turn left and drive .25 mile to a small parking area at the base of the dike. This hike will be about 3 miles on flat terrain. For more information, please contact Carol Kohler, (360) 834-4344.

*Spring Birding Hikes at Steigerwald Lake NWR: 6/16/07 at 8 a.m.* Hike along Gibbons Creek and view wildlife in refuge wetlands, fields, and riparian woodlands. Join a volunteer birding expert on this easy hike. Please bring your binoculars, appropriate footwear/attire, and water. Meet south of SR 14 past Washougal, WA on the Refuge. Immediately after Gibbons Creek, use the first turnout lane to the right to pull on to the Refuge. This hike will last approximately 3 hours and will be ~2.5 miles on flat terrain. Space is limited and advance reservations are required! To reserve your spot or for more information, please contact Eric Anderson, at (360) 887-4106.

## Adopt-A-Highway

The Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards have officially adopted a two mile section of State Highway 14 adjacent to Steigerwald Lake NWR. Cleanups will be done 3 or 4 times a year as conditions demand. The first cleanup was done in December. The next cleanup will be on Sunday, June 10, beginning at 8:00 a.m. If you would like to help, please call Carol Kohler, (360) 834-4344, or send her an email at [carol.kohler@camas.wednet](mailto:carol.kohler@camas.wednet)

## Refuge Stewards Receive Nonprofit Recognition

The Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards have been officially recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit organization. The Refuge Stewards were launched by a small group of dedicated volunteers to promote public awareness, appreciation, and active support for the Steigerwald Lake, Franz Lake, and Pierce National Wildlife Refuges. We will need your support and assistance as we help these wonderful places become even better.

Refuge Stewards members can support the Refuges by:

- Volunteering and coordinating volunteer projects;
- Raising funds to support Refuge projects;
- Educating the public about the Refuges and the roles they play.

Stewards' projects on the Gorge Refuges include:

- Restoring habitat by planting and maintaining native shrubs and other vegetation, and by removing blackberries and other invasive species..
- Coordinating public outreach and environmental education programs in local communities to generate awareness and support.
- Monitoring water quality and coordinating with state and local agencies and the public to improve water quality of streams impacting the Refuges.
- Developing, improving or maintaining public use facilities.
- Raising funds to support these projects.



## Become a member of the Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards

We invite you to join us in our efforts to support the Columbia River Gorge Refuges. By joining the Refuge Stewards, you support the fish, wildlife and plants that rely on the Gorge Refuges and assure that they can be enjoyed by our children and grandchildren.

If you have any questions, please visit our website at [www.refugestewards.org](http://www.refugestewards.org), or contact us at [volunteer@refugestewards.org](mailto:volunteer@refugestewards.org).

### Member benefits

Members will receive periodic news about the Refuges, Stewards' activities, and opportunities to visit the Refuges or volunteer for projects. Providing your email address helps us save money in distributing this information. Members also are invited to attend board meetings, participate in committees, and vote at the annual meeting.

### Choose your membership level

- \$15 Individual
- \$25 Family
- Donation (please indicate amount \$\_\_\_\_\_)

All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards** and mail to:

**Columbia Gorge Refuge Stewards**  
**PO Box 827**  
**Washougal, Washington 98671**



Can you spot the goose in this picture?

This photo of a goose on its nest was taken April 15, 2007, about one hundred yards south of the Gibbons Creek planting project.