

MAKING TRACKS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF THE TUALATIN RIVER NWR

JOYFULLY CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY WITH THE WONDER OF THE REFUGE



PRESIDENT'S PERCH

By Don Nelson, President of the Board



Summertime

It's been an extremely dry month this past June – less than an inch of rain in a month that normally brings us over 5 inches. The refuge ponds are drying up – you can see the effects on the refuge, especially around the former eagle's nest tree.

There are so many volunteers that make a difference on the refuge. I am saddened by the passing of Berk Moss last month. Berk Moss was one of those volunteers that exceeded expectations for everything he was involved in – whether it was here on the refuge, or helping OHSU improve their student education program, or while he was training teachers in the local school districts. Berk made outstanding contributions to the Friends and the refuge as the former Environmental Education chair on the Board. Berk was here from the beginning, and was the Friends champion for setting up so many of the things we take for granted now – puddle stompers, school outreach, and so many other programs. I will miss Berk with his can-do attitude, and great knowledge of what works and what doesn't.

I have invited Kim Strassburg, who was Berk's volunteer service partner in setting up all these programs since the beginning, to tell us more about Berk.

Remembering Berk Moss By Kim Strassburg, USFWS

Tualatin River NWR is a special place that, from its beginning, has attracted, welcomed, and included special people. From the USFWS staff, to the Friends of TRNWR, to volunteers, to advocates, and to the community at-large...many have made significant contributions to what this place has been, is, and will always be. It's a place that represents visions and dedication to create and sustain a place for people, wildlife, learning for children and adults alike...but especially a place to foster sustainability of our collective future. Perhaps no other individual understood this better than Berk Moss. He often quoted Thoreau saying that "In wildness is the preservation of life."

It started back in 2003 when Berk was driving past the old refuge headquarters off of Roy Rogers Rd and noticed the new sign..."Tualatin River NWR." Always looking for opportunities for students and youth, Berk wondered if somehow the refuge could be a resource for science and nature education. So, he popped in and sought out the first Refuge Manager who recalled: "Berk was a very passionate, caring man who I admired and respected for his ethic and caring for the natural world, one who wanted to share these qualities with our youth. A story that still resonates in my mind is my first acquaintance with Berk before any facilities had been built on the refuge for the public. He was chomping at the bit to bring classes out onto the refuge with few staff, no facilities and/or refuge materials, or any plans for how to manage logistics for such a task. After a long discussion, he took a deep breath and Berk said, "well I guess we have a monumental job ahead of us." That day, Berk left his business card and eagerly awaited the refuge's first Outdoor Recreation Planner. Later that same year, I called that number and it only took a couple of meetings with Berk to get the ball rolling. As a Science Director for Beaverton School District, Berk understood the needs of schools; teachers and the nuances that made them tick. He knew we needed more educators to make a team, to be the vital link that with the community that would lead to success. So Berk helped plan and host a "free pizza night for teachers" which, in turn, attracted the inaugural education committee. Led by Berk, the teacher team created the refuge's environmental education program. One of those educators recalls: "Berk was a man of many talents. At one moment he could be discussing the inner workings of epigenetics, and at the next moment writing a song about the beaver in his back yard. Berks' "we can do anything" attitude influenced everyone around him. He had a gentle way of encouraging me and others to think outside the box to find solutions to what seemed like insurmountable problems. I remember how palpable his excitement was about new discoveries."

Berk certainly was not afraid to get dirty. One rainy, mucky winter he helped plant trees at the site that became the wetland observation deck...laughing at himself for getting stuck up the knees in mud and having to be pulled out by fellow volunteers. Then there was the day I was out in the field, figuring out the path that the new trail would take. I was so excited to show him where the education study sites were going to be located...so I called him. He was on his way to a business meeting in Portland, but stopped by anyhow, dressed in business attire. He was a good sport as I drug him through the poison oak and the blackberries in his dress shoes and slacks to the spot that became the Rock Creek study site. He was dirty and wrinkled after that...but I am pretty sure he forgave me.

Berk gave so much of himself. Early on, we did not have a consistent and suitable place for working together. So in true Berk fashion, he opened his home and that is where most of the real work took place. So much was created in the hundreds of hours together at his kitchen table. As we were planning the Wildlife Center, I recall showing up at his house in Newberg at 5:30am....to pick him up on the way to all



JOIN

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RENEW

JULY EVENTS

[Family Exploration Hike at the Refuge](#)
July 7, 10:00 AM

[Summer Exploration Days](#)
July 11, 10:00 AM

[Puddle Stompers](#)
July 11, 1 PM

[2nd Saturday work party](#)
July 14, 8:45 AM

[Puddle Stompers](#)
July 17, 10 AM

[Summer Exploration Days](#)
July 18, 10:00 AM

[Bio-swals work party](#)
July 20 10 AM

[Family Exploration Hike at the Refuge](#)
July 21, 10:00 AM

[Friends Board Meeting](#)
July 24, 6:30 pm

SOCIAL MEDIA



day architectural design meetings up in Tacoma. He was always cheerful....even in those 16 hour days....and provided the insight that guided what the classroom looks like today.

But it was more than planning...we knew we had to implement. Berk worked side-by-side with the refuge to write grants, plan budgets and evaluation plans and ultimately, in a Friends group and refuge partnership, helped bring in several hundred thousand dollars to deliver the program. It was never easy. But we always stuck together with a shared vision in mind and Berk always brought wisdom and kindness. Berk played a significant role in so much: the 1st teacher workshop, the education curriculum, naturalist training, summer camp, Puddle Stompers, Friends group board member, advocacy when the refuge needed it, being a resource for other refuges and friends groups...and the list goes on. But it only takes a trip to the Discovery Classroom to see and feel Berk's presence and impact. Take a look at the pictures on the wall and you can sense his joy of helping thousands of youth connect with nature in very real and meaningful ways.

I visited with Berk several times in those final weeks. The last time he reached out to hold my hand and to say "we did it." And it wasn't just the two of us that Berk was talking about. It was "we the community"—the staff, friends, teachers, students, volunteers...all of us together.

NATURE'S OVERLOOK STORE



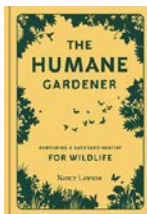
Duck Stamps The 2018-2019 Federal Duck Stamps, featuring a pair of mallards, have arrived and are now available for purchase at Nature's Overlook. Duck Stamps are a great way to help support refuges, because 98% of the purchase price goes directly to help acquire and protect wetland habitat for the National Wildlife Refuge System. For every \$25 Stamp purchased, \$24.50 goes directly to that cause! In addition to being a wonderful way to contribute to conservation of wetland habitat, a current Duck Stamp is good for free admission to any refuge that charges an entry fee. To learn more about Duck Stamps, visit fws.gov/birds/get-involved/duck-stamp.php. The sale of these stamps has been used to protect over 5.7 million acres of wetlands on national wildlife refuges since 1934.

Nature's Overlook Store Volunteer Buyer Wanted

Nature's Overlook is recruiting for a Volunteer Buyer for general merchandise. George Burnett, who has been the Buyer for several years, is "retiring" from that role, but thankfully not from the other volunteer work she does on the Refuge! She will be happy to provide all the details about the job duties, the "perks" and the time commitment. George will also be available to provide training and support to whoever becomes the new Buyer. To learn more about this great opportunity, please contact her at 503-547-4721.

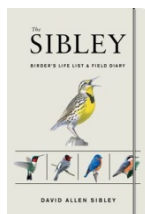
Books

Hello, readers – we have some new books in the shop. We got just one copy of each of these, for now. Don't forget... members of the Friends of the Refuge get a discount in the store and purchases help support our Refuge! Many thanks!



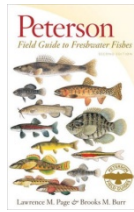
I love the message in this book – and the idea of "Nurturing a Backyard Habitat for Wildlife". I know our household is trying to do that very thing through organic gardening and adding native plants. This book shows how we need to protect all creatures... how they all play a part, even the ones we don't necessarily want (I personally struggle with trying to appreciate aphids!). I think this would be an excellent gift, too. Treat yourself or a friend.

And look at this beautiful "Birding Journal Through the Seasons"... and the Sibley Birder's Life List and Field Diary... and a field guide to fishes...



HELP THE FRIENDS WHILE YOU SHOP





And this sounded very interesting... by naturalist/ecologist Bernd Heinrich. "Life Everlasting: The Animal Way of Death". It deals with what happens when creatures die, decay and the life cycle.



And two for the young ones – "Pitter and Patter" is about the water cycle, with beautiful illustrations. And "Amazing Animals: Bats" (we will get in more from this series). Enjoy!



PHOTO SOCIETY

No meeting until the first Thursday in September.

We need some input from the members of Friends. The Photo Society is looking into whether they should hold a Spring Break nature photography camp (days only though) for students that are in 8th through 12th grades that have an interest in learning nature photography. We would cover camera usage in manual mode; how to make images and what constitutes a good nature photograph and what guidelines there are for good nature photographers; touch on bird photography and macro photography; demonstrate how to get the most out of your camera by leaving JPGs and using/processing RAW camera files; printing; and a few other subjects. Those student having their own (or parents) camera gear are welcome to bring them, or we may have some cameras available for use during the camp. We really need to determine the interest in such a camp. If you have a student with this interest that would potentially be interested, we'd like to hear from you through our email address photosociety@friendsofualatinrefuge.org send a message with the header "Youth Photo Camp" You aren't committed; we are just looking to see the potential interest.

Similarly, we are thinking about a nature photography class for adults that would be held on weeknights next spring. Please send an email with the header "Adult Spring Photo Camp" to photosociety@friendsofualatinrefuge.org

CONTACT US

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