

Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge  
Press Release

## Successful Educational program in its 5th year

Long Beach, WA—February 4th, 2005—Together, the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and Willapa National Wildlife Refuge has started their fifth successful annual 4th grade educational program. Four classroom visits throughout the year from Refuge staff and Friends volunteers begin in October ending with a field trip in May.

The first session is an Introduction to the Wildlife Refuge System where students learn about the national wildlife refuge system, what you can and can't do a wildlife refuge, and how human activities affect wildlife.

In November, students learn about bird basics and habitat, identifying common species of birds, how to use a field guide, and even that a bird's beak can tell you about what it eats. They are trained on how to identify popular local birds such as the great blue heron, turkey vulture, downy woodpecker, dark-eyed junco, red-winged blackbird, and American goldfinch.

In January, students learn about different types of habitats, invasive species, and what components of a habitat animals need to survive. The last classroom session in March covers local amphibians where students get hands-on experience with our monitors of the health of our local environment.

Come May, over a three-day period, the Friends Group and Wildlife National Wildlife Refuge host nearly 200 fourth grade students from Ilwaco, Naselle, South Bend and Astoria. Students excitedly visit several educational science stations to learn more about the environment and how to be good future stewards. Last year volunteers from the Friends group as well as Ilwaco High School students led the seven field stations at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge's Tarlett Slough Unit. There was something for everyone, from life in the pond to identifying skulls, to identifying items from the forest by touch, to exploring life in the bay, as well as learning what one might hear if they are quiet in the outdoors, for a moment or two. They experienced first-hand, developing skills in wildlife viewing, wetlands' animal and plant identification, aquatic shellfish and invertebrates identification, the amphibians' lifecycle, an introduction to soil science, and an appreciation for animal behaviors based on interpretation of bone structure. President of the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, Bev Arnoldy, commented that by the time the students finish their in-classroom studies, they are anxious to get out into the field and see wildlife up close and personal. Bev continued, "We've successfully honed this learning experience into a rich curricula that's packed with much fun and rich information they can see and touch." The field trip to the Willapa NWR is the highlight of the curricula, which introduces local youth to wildlife management and conservation.

The Mission of the Friends of Willapa NWR is to provide assistance to Refuge programs and to enhance awareness and appreciation of the Willapa NWR and these educational programs is a large part of the Friends efforts in accomplishing that. For more information contact Bev Arnoldy at 665-0115 or visit [www.willapabay.org/~fwnwr](http://www.willapabay.org/~fwnwr) .

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