



Friends of **Willapa** National Wildlife Refuge

Photography Blind at Willapa National Wildlife Refuge Available to Area Birders

Long Beach, WA – May 1, 2004 – Supported by a grant from the North American Nature Photography Association, volunteers from Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge installed a photography blind for public use at the Tarlett Slough unit off Sandridge Road near Long Beach.

Wildlife photography enthusiasts can schedule use of this new facility, located off Lone Fir Cemetery Road, through the Willapa Refuge Headquarters. "This photography blind is the first of its kind in Pacific County and we hope the community of wildlife photographers will enjoy the excellent viewing of marsh and forest edge areas," commented Charlie Stenvall, Project Leader of the Willapa NWR. "Access to this blind will not interfere with the birds natural behavior, and the birds need for protected habitat will not be impacted."

Active birders and volunteers from the Friends of Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and Charlie Stenvall selected the site, which will offer a seasonal view of migratory ducks and geese in the winter and in the early spring will attract some shorebirds in from the Bay. Special thanks go to Jeff Collins who generously constructed the wildlife photo blind.

The Willapa NWR is home to many of the 300 bird species found in Pacific County, including scores of migrating shorebirds and waterfowl species that depend upon the mudflats and tidelands here for food and rest during their spring and fall travels. The Tarlett Slough area, where the blind is located, is at the southernmost reaches of Willapa Bay and attracts the most number of migrating species because of its diverse habitat, being near the tidelands with marsh, forest, and open grasslands.

The blind is uniquely designed for wildlife photography with narrow openings for camera equipment, and not recommended for general wildlife viewing. Telephoto/zoom lenses are strongly recommended to ensure long-distance capture of bird activity. There's a short hike to the building.

Use is by reservation only. Users must sign in and pick up a key at the Willapa NWR office. The Willapa NWR office is open from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm weekdays and the phone number is 360-484-3482.

About North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA)

NANPA, the North American Nature Photography Association, is the first and only association in North America committed solely to serving the field of nature photography. Its stated mission is to provide education, foster professional and ethical conduct, gather and disseminate information, and develop standards for all persons interested in the field of nature photography. NANPA further seeks to promote nature photography as an art form and a medium of communication for the sciences, nature appreciation, and environmental protection.

About Willapa National Wildlife Refuge

Willapa Bay is the largest estuary in the northwest United States region outside Puget Sound, covering approximately 88,000 acres at high tide with over 100 miles of shoreline. The Bay is the defining geography for the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge, which comprises nearly 14,000 acres of upland forest, tidelands, beach dunes, freshwater marshes, diked grasslands, and other wetland habitat.

Aquatic habitats and grasslands on the Refuge support migratory populations of literally hundreds of bird species such as black brant, trumpeter swans, Canada geese, scaup, canvasback, bufflehead, scoters, and American wigeon. The Refuge also hosts some of the largest concentrations of shorebirds on the Pacific Coast, including the endangered western snowy plover and marbled murrelet. Black bear, black-tailed deer, Roosevelt elk, bats, bobcats, and grouse can be found in the forests and upland habitats. The cool, wet climate of Willapa Bay makes the area a "hotspot" of amphibian and fish diversity, where Refuge habitats support over half of the 24 native amphibians that occur in the state and provide spawning grounds for chinook, coho, and chum salmon, steelhead, and cutthroat trout.

Willapa is one of over 500 national wildlife refuges in the United States operated by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. The National Wildlife Refuge System is the only national network of public lands in the world set aside specifically for the conservation of fish, wildlife and plants. Encompassing 93 million acres, the Refuge System boasts more units than the National Forest System and more acres than the National Park System. The Refuge system celebrates 100 years of conservation success in 2003, its Centennial Year.

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