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# Cascade Chronicle

Feb/March 2025

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## From the Desk of the Executive Director

*by Chip Coker*



What a difference a day makes. Or in this case, a month.

Just a short handful of weeks ago, Cascade Volunteers (CV) was entering its 7th year since incorporating. We were basking a bit in the afterglow of our very successful Santiam Wagon Road Festival event and feeling excitement around all of our new programs and plans, including our invasive weeds program, our community science program, our disability/accessibility mapping project, our Love Your Lakes program, the crew leader development framework, and so

much more.

But then the winds of change arrived in Washington DC, resulting in mass firings and massive budget cuts throughout the federal government. The Willamette National Forest was not spared and was forced to lay off dozens of employees and to freeze expenditures on non-essential budget items. Unfortunately, the forest leadership is no longer able to protect our budget and thus our federal funding (our single largest source of revenue from year to year) dropped to almost zero overnight. We do have other sources of revenue, such as grants, donations, fundraising activities, and the like. But not enough to continue firing on all eight cylinders. CV will have to make quick and significant changes to our operation in order to survive long enough to rebuild. We may be temporarily reducing our staff and will have to scale back the scope of our operations in order to focus on the basics, including maintaining the almost 2,000 miles of trails that all forest visitors use.

And we need your help more than ever, right now.

If you are a current recurring donor (meaning that your donations are monthly and happen automatically), please consider increasing your monthly amount.

If you are an occasional or annual donor, please consider becoming a recurring monthly donor. You will barely notice the \$10 or \$15 or \$25 that comes out of your checking account each month, but the \$120, or \$180, or \$300 total per year donation will make a huge difference right now.

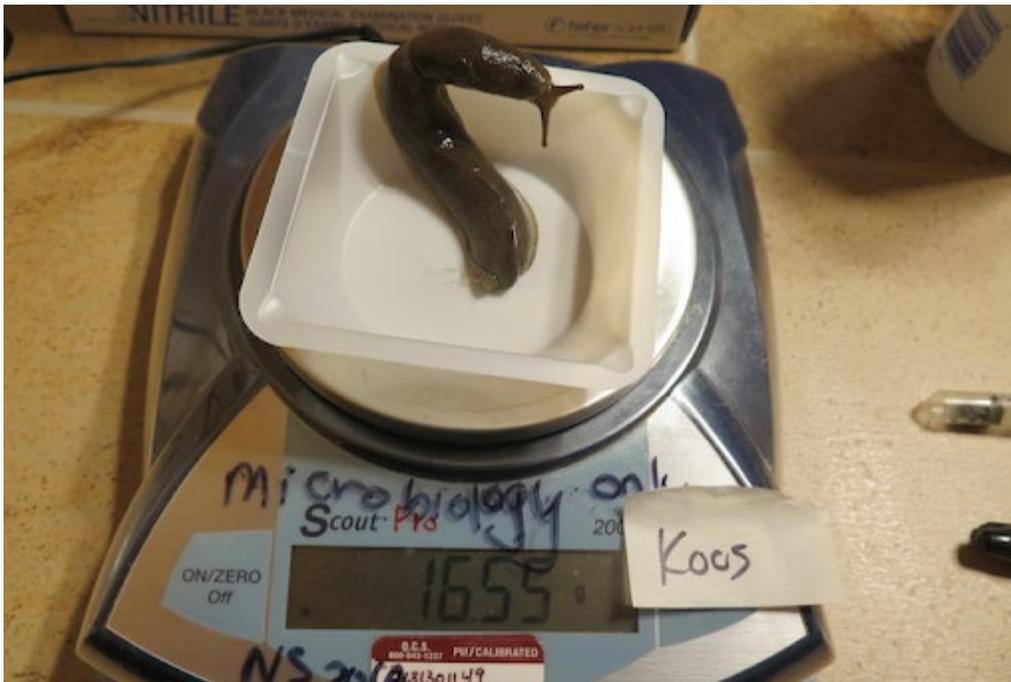
If you are a volunteer or supporter of the forest and the work that we do, and have not yet ever made a donation, please consider making your first donation now.

Cascade Volunteers relies on the generosity of those who share our mission and vision for a safe, welcoming, inclusive and sustainable forest. We must act together to protect the Willamette Valley's backyard playground for the generations of families that will follow in our footsteps. Every person who has camped, hiked, backpacked, biked, fished, hunted, scavenged for mushrooms, cut your own Christmas tree, bird-watched, rock-hounded, soaked in a hot spring, skied, snow-boarded, or just plain enjoyed the beauty of the Willamette National Forest while driving through needs to act now. Hit that donation button up at the top and show your support. Thank you!!

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## Oregon's Mascot

*by Cheryl Friesen*



This slug was affectionately named "Koosah," because she was found near that waterfall.

### **“Don’t step on me! I’m important!”**

I’m greenish to yellow, sometimes brown, sometimes spotted. At about 7” long, eye-like structures sit on pedestals that wave above my furrowed forehead. You could say I “ooze,” but that’s not completely accurate. I prefer to think I “surf” across the forest on my magic carpet of slime. In 2023, Sarah Boomer from Western Oregon University, decided she just had to know more about my digestion, so she set out to study me and my fellow Pacific banana slugs. We were scooped up in early spring, right after the winter freeze lost its grip on the forest floor. We had been overwintering below the frost line, tucked in old vole burrows and other places of respite.

We were surprised to find ourselves whisked into mason jars, and our first instinct was to poop, which was exactly what Sarah wanted to happen. She collected our droppings and returned with them to her lab. I know what I like to eat -- I know what to avoid and what keeps me alive, but not being able to just point things out (no fingers) and not being able to tell her (no vocal cords), extracting the DNA from cells in my excrement was her only option (unless she wanted to follow me around and watch me munch, which actually was how early elk researchers figured out what the big mammals ate in the Coast Range)!

So what did she find? She already knew that we eat detritus (dead organic matter), including fallen leaves and plants, animal feces, moss, and mushroom spores, which we recycle into nutrient-dense waste that fertilizes the soil. Critical to her study, she explored our rich gut biome that helps our digestion. Much like humans, we have helpers—bacteria and fungi—in our digestive system to help extract nutrients. She found thousands of them!

As a human, you may eat a daily serving of yogurt to get probiotics for healthy digestion. We slugs pick them up in the forest – easy breezy. We are part of an army of invertebrates that recycle everything that falls to the forest floor.

Next time you see one of us, say “thank you!” for helping keep our forests healthy. And thanks to Sarah for her inquisitiveness – we knew we were important, but now humans know too!

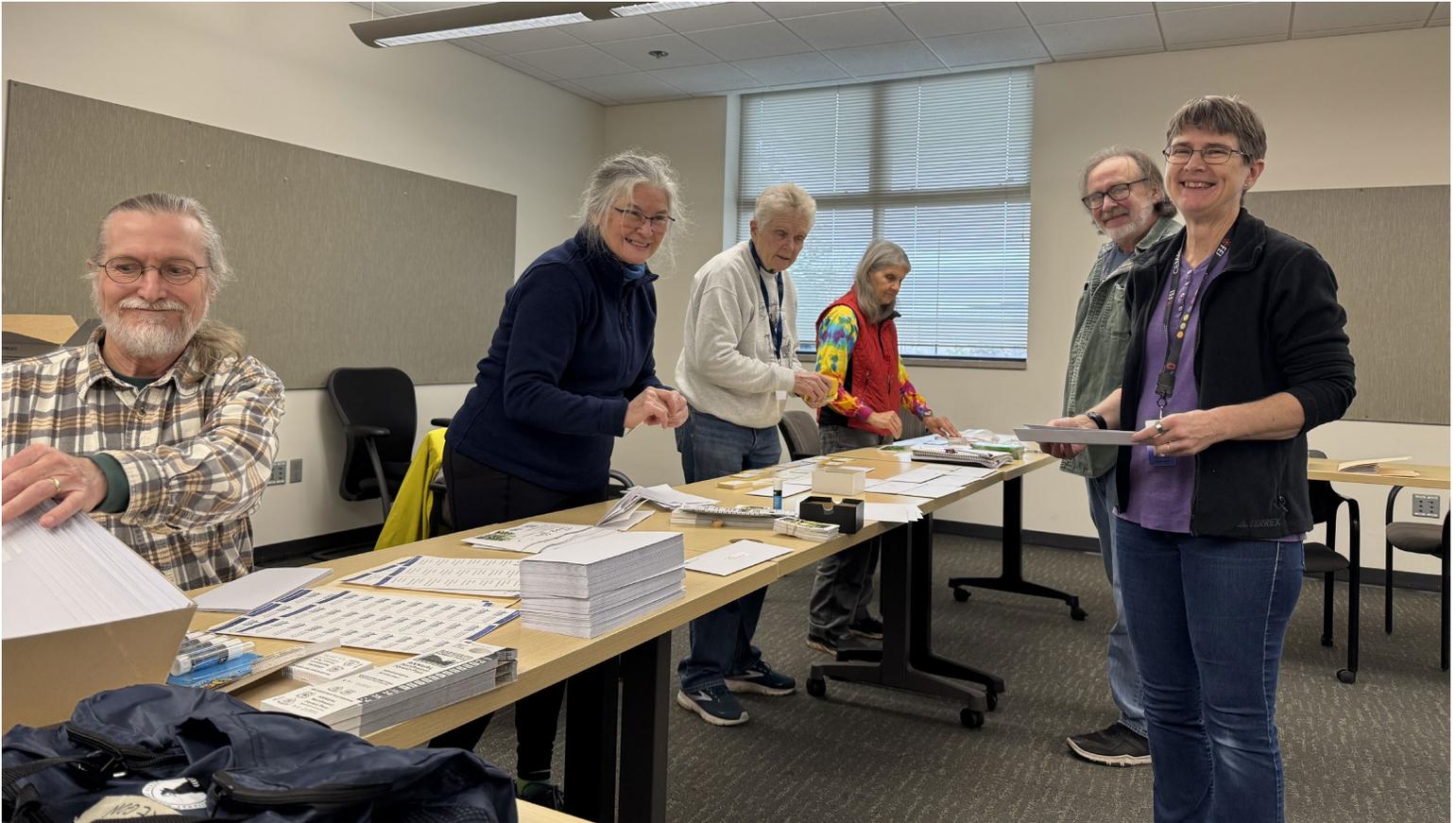
***The Willamette NF’s rich landscape has provided opportunities for hundreds of researchers over the past century. Ecosystems are complex, and the depth of our ignorance is profound. But intrepid souls, armed with calipers and cameras and a variety of other recording devices have scrambled through the Forest seeking***

answers to often simple questions that, in aggregate, can lead to profound insights. This column will be a regular feature to highlight the often surprising findings from these endeavors. For more information on the rich Science-Management partnership on the Willamette, check out the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest webpage: <https://andrewsforest.oregonstate.edu/>

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# Assembling Awards for Volunteers

By Rhonda Levine and Norma Massier



On December 28th several folks gathered at the Supervisor's Office in Springfield for the annual envelope stuffing. This is an event where folks who have donated time and energy are officially thanked by CV and the Forest Service (FS) and are rewarded with various WNF passes for the upcoming year. Passes are awarded as follows:

1. NW Forest Pass - Good at trailheads and day use areas in national forests throughout Oregon and Washington. Requires 16 hours of volunteering during the FS year which is October 1- September 30.
2. Volunteer Wilderness Permit - Good at trailheads in several congressionally designated wilderness areas in the Willamette and Deschutes National Forests. Requires 40 hours of volunteering *in the wilderness areas specifically*, during the FS year.
3. America the Beautiful Pass - Good for admission into any National Park and covers parking at many National Forests and BLM lands. Requires 250 cumulative hours of volunteering (meaning that the volunteer hours do not have to be earned within one FS year and can be accumulated over time until reaching 250 hours).

The event was organized by Board member Karol Schrems. Several volunteers, including some Board members, were on hand to help with folding, stuffing and sealing envelopes. 414 of them to be exact! As the CV newsletter editors, we were there to help oversee the operation and to partake of any snacks offered. :)

Here are some pieces of info we gathered at the event...

- Total number of hours volunteered during the most recent FS year: 26, 511
- Total number of active volunteers: 634
- Total dollar value of the volunteered hours: almost \$900K!
- Total number of passes awarded:
  - NW Forest Passes: 414
  - Volunteer Wilderness Permits: 195
  - America the Beautiful Passes: 72

Those present for the envelope stuffing party included:

Chip Coker...ED

Judy Mitchell...Board Member

Karol Schrems...Board Member

Robin Brandt...Board Member

Allegra Helfenstein...Board Member

Jeff Southwick...Board Member

Alan Leiman...Office Volunteer

Eileen Kitayama...FS liaison to CV

Rhonda Levine...Newsletter Editor

Norma Massier...Newsletter Editor

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# Get to Know an Ecologist

*By Rhonda Levine*



Audrey MacLennan, Forest Service Ecologist

### **What is your role and what kind of work do you do?**

I am one of three ecologists covering northwest Oregon, which includes the Willamette National Forest, the Siuslaw National Forest, the Mount Hood National Forest, and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. As ecologists, our work focuses on landscape-scale biophysical processes and how those processes connect to land management. Some examples of the work we do include:

- Climate change support - helping integrate climate adaptation into land management.
- Landscape assessment - evaluating landscape conditions using mapping and analytical tools to understand ecosystem condition and support planning efforts like the Wildfire Crisis Strategy.
- Monitoring - tracking the effects of management actions or disturbance over time.
- Partnerships - working with universities and other organizations on research that is relevant for land management.
- Fire ecology - implementing fire risk reduction tools and understanding fire ecology at landscape scales.

### **What led you to this work?**

I first started with the Forest Service when I was an undergrad, and I was just looking for something fun and natural resources-related to do over the summer. I ended up on a seasonal crew working on timber sales on a the Grand Mesa National Forest in Colorado where there had been a severe spruce beetle outbreak.

I thought it was fascinating to see how we manage landscapes and how disturbance processes interact with human management objectives. It felt like a puzzle, balancing different concerns within a given area, whether it was wildlife,

timber, recreation, or other resource priorities. Seeing all these disciplines come together to meet multiple management objectives really sparked my interest, and from there, I knew I wanted to make a career with the Forest Service.

### **What is your educational background?**

I studied environmental science in undergrad but knew I needed an advanced degree to qualify for the more specialized jobs within the Forest Service, so I went on to pursue an MS from Oregon State University in Fire, Silviculture, and Forest Health. My thesis researched focused on post-fire vegetation in the B&B Complex Fire on the Deschutes National Forest.

### **How does your work contribute to forest health?**

Ecologists are always thinking across multiple spatial and time scales. We consider how today's management actions and forest conditions will shape future landscapes.

One of the unique roles of ecology is the ability to zoom out to see how different land management actions fit into the bigger picture of forest resiliency. By taking this broader perspective, we can help inform management decisions that support long-term ecosystem sustainability.

### **What's an example of a project you are working on right now?**

I'm just starting work on a post-fire restoration strategy for Northwest Oregon. The goal is to help identify areas where recent fires had desirable versus undesirable effects on the landscape. Once we understand that, we can determine what management actions are needed, or possible, in a given area. This project is exciting because it brings together a lot of different data sources and scales of management. It also incorporates both current vegetation conditions and future stressors like climate change, making it a forward-looking approach to post-fire management.

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## **Upcoming Event**

# **LEAVE NO TRACE PUB TALK**

March 12

7 pm

Calapooia Brewing Co.  
Albany, Ore.

No charge. Come  
early to purchase  
food and drinks.



Learn more about  
Leave No Trace  
principles, skills and  
techniques.



*Short, engaging, and maybe even a little entertaining—because  
keeping the wild wild shouldn't be boring.*

*See you there!*



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## Trailhead Hosting

*By Jen Moss*



Jessica Portillo and I had our inaugural Trailhead Host experience on a very busy Labor Day weekend at Marion Lake Trailhead. We arrived in Detroit late Friday. I retrieved our Forest Service Volunteer gear from the Ranger Station that night.

First thing Saturday morning, we drove to the trailhead. On the forest service road leading to the trailhead, I noticed a large open flame campfire in one of the disbursed camping areas. This meant that our first duty was to report this fire. It involved more than one Ranger having to respond, in part due to the fact that the first Ranger was basically lied to and dismissed by the campers once she figured out which site it was. She could clearly see that it had been a large fire, but because we didn't actually stop to get coordinates (lesson learned), it took her a bit to find it, and it had burned down. Regardless, open flame fires were not permitted due to high fire risk. Once informed that the fire was not permitted, the campers told the Ranger, "Ok, you can go now," and did nothing to comply. She returned with another Ranger, and they doused their fire and gave them a hefty fine.

Both Rangers eventually came up to the trailhead at various times throughout the day on Saturday and chatted with us and visitors. At one point a 4 wheeler and a side by side went zooming up and down the road. These types of off-road vehicles were also on the restricted use guidelines during fire season. This situation was even tougher for them to deal with. They both spent time trying to find the likely culprits and only found the camp with the four wheelers. One of the Rangers also went out and hiked a portion of our assigned trail chatting with folks, writing some citations, and burying some dog poop. Busy, long day for the Rangers.

This weekend was Jessica's and my first and only experience hosting. It was a wild first day. Lots of visitors. Lots of action. We were a bit nervous but thankfully we had our training, our Forest Service contacts, online information (that I

had taken screenshots of) and a box for volunteers that included a binder with a lot of pertinent information we needed to know to do our job.

Jessica and I also learned a lot about our trail from visitors. Hikers showed us their pictures and told us of their experiences on the trail from the waterfalls to bear sightings. We met hunters (it was also opening day, hunters are allowed to hunt from the trails), and folks who went fishing, day hikers, and overnigheters. We even had visits from a butterfly, beetle, and a ground squirrel. Eventually, we hope to get to hike the trail and experience it first hand.

All of us official folk, Rangers and Volunteers, experienced folks who did not know the rules and didn't really want to comply. One father with his son wanted to know what the ticket price was if they just went camping without their permit as planned. He even tried to stare down the Ranger.

The daytime temperature for that Labor Day Saturday was high as well. We spoke to folks about the heat, water needs, and potential weather changes for the weekend. We got regular updates from lookouts over the radio regarding weather, smoke, and visibility.

Did you know that one of the Golden Rules of Leave No Trace is to "Know before you go"? This includes knowing what permits you may need, checking the weather, and checking information about the trail you are going on. I appreciate that a lot of folks know that LNT means "Pack it in/Pack it out" because Jessica and I have seen firsthand while doing clean-ups with Friends of Fall Creek Watershed that this seems to escape a lot of folks. However, the "Know before you go" bit was something that at least half of the visitors we spoke to each day didn't follow. Some folks were frustrated, annoyed, and confused when they realized that they were unprepared to hike the trail. It is a bit of a drive to the trailhead. There is no cell service. We did our best to educate and give options. Some people were really intent on just being very obtuse and argumentative, even when there was a Ranger standing right there!

There was a brief lightning storm on Sunday as we were packing up. We went down the road and took a little path into the forest, down to the raging creek, and took some pictures. It was a fun, interesting, exciting, action and people-filled weekend. As we were dropping off the Trailhead Host gear at the Detroit Ranger Station, we got to see the most amazingly epic sunset, and we literally drove off into it on our way home. Oh, and we will be back at it again this year!

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## Needed: Stoves for Winter Shelters

*By Lyndell Wilken*





The winter shelters at Willamette Pass are heated with donated woodstoves. Periodically they rust and crack and need to be replaced. The Cascade Volunteer Winter Trail/Shelter Program along with the Forest Service are looking for used woodstoves that people would be willing to donate. If you have one that meets the specifications and are willing to donate it, the Forest Service will provide transport from your location. Contact Lyndell Wilken at: [lyndellwilken@gmail.com](mailto:lyndellwilken@gmail.com) or call 541-343-3080.

**WOODSTOVE SPECIFICATIONS:**

- Solid, structurally sound base.
- No cracks; shine a light inside to see if light can be seen outside the stove.
- A door that is in good shape.
- A flu exit on the stovetop surface, NOT at the rear.

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# Bridge Building

*By Sig Johnsen*



*BRIDGES FOR HOOFS, WHEELS, AND BOOTS*

If you are a user of forest trails, you have likely encountered numerous bridges and possibly found locations where a bridge would be beneficial. Bridges constructed using site-harvested wood generally have a lifespan of approximately 30-40 years unless they are destroyed earlier by fire or large tree impacts. The Willamette National Forest has an ongoing need for bridge construction, and trail crews like the Scorpions are assisting in this effort.

Our team has been involved in dismantling failed bridges, which includes cutting and moving large stringers, and removing deck planks and rails. Some of the wood and all of the hardware must be carried out and disposed of properly. Additionally, we have assisted the Forest Service in constructing complex handrails on large bridges ranging from 30 to 50 feet in length. These handrails are made from site-harvested western red cedar of various diameters for the top, middle, and bottom rails commonly used on larger USFS-designed bridges. Handrails are often the first feature a trail user will see and touch, thus a visually appealing rail with proper alignment of vertical posts and supports, consistent rail diameter, and tight joints is essential. Constructing curved rails can be particularly challenging but rewarding when executed correctly.



Recently, we have been building bridges from scratch on the Cloverpatch Connector trail, which is still under construction. Last year, we completed a 25-foot-long bridge and are currently working on a 22-foot bridge. Bridge construction requires considerable patience, especially during the initial stages.

Tasks such as determining the location of bridge footings, finding and moving rocks to build the footings, and aligning the footings and bridge sills are critical early steps. We use various winches, blocks, and ropes to position large-diameter stringers on top of the bridge sills. Decking the bridge is relatively straightforward and quick, although the deck planks must be transported to the site, with all planks for these two bridges being hand-carried in.

Finally, constructing on and off ramps is necessary to ensure a smooth transition from the trail tread to the bridge. These ramps require many yards of rock and dirt, along with extensive tamping. At the end of the process, we have a new volunteer constructed bridge that trail users can hopefully enjoy for another 30-40 years.

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## Busy Year for the Salamander Crew

*By Beth Dayton*



2024 was an amazing year for this crew, with so many unique and challenging projects. Along the way we collaborated with multiple other local trail groups including Salem Area Trail Alliance, Camas Crew, Oakridge Trails Alliance, Scorpion Crew and Disciples of Dirt. And of course, a huge thank you to our partners at Silver Falls State Park, Cascade Volunteers and the US Forest Service who really are the unseen force that makes it all possible.

Here are just a few of the highlights from the last twelve months:

- Lake of the Woods trail, Mt Jefferson Wilderness, fully cleared and open for the first time in decades. Teamwork with the SRZ USFS crew over four years made the dream come true.
- Logged out fifteen miles of the Pacific Crest Trail. Thanks to Half-Ass trail crew mule packers for essential support!
- Re-opened Humbug Flats Trail, completely buried and invisible since before the 2020 wildfires.
- Cheat Creek Trail, severely burned in 2020, is fully cleared and open for use for the first time since 2020.
- Wilderness Strike Teams were sent for week-long hitches to the Selway-Bitterroot NF in Idaho, the Wenaha Tuccanon Wilderness in northeast Oregon and the Pasayten Wilderness in Washington.



Salamander sawyers assisted with multiple Cascade Volunteer chainsaw and crosscut saw trainings.



Thank you all for your hard work and support. It has been an honor to work with you and I can't wait to see where 2025 takes us.

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# Getting to Know Our Feathered Friends

*By Deborah Hill*



*A Black-Capped Chickadee*

On January 4 the Middle Fork Ranger District Education Committee hosted the **4th annual Birds of Winter in the Willamette** event... offering the public a chance to learn about non-migratory birds that stick around the Willamette National Forest throughout the Winter months.

This year about 26 visitors attended and enjoyed a variety of engaging activities. Wildlife Biologist, Deborah Hill, led a guided bird walk along the Wren Loop Trail, providing participants with the opportunity to observe and learn about local bird species in their natural habitats. Meanwhile... other visitors stayed back to play Bird Bingo, a fun and educational game focused on bird identification. Participants also had a chance to create and take home some anti-collision window decals to help prevent bird strikes.

The event was well received with attendees enjoying both the educational and hands-on elements of the program. We are excited to host another bird-themed program this Spring and look forward to welcoming visitors who want to learn even more about our region's incredible bird life.

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## **New CV Etsy Shop**



CV recently opened an Etsy shop so that volunteers and supporters can purchase CV logo items. Proceeds contribute to our operating costs. We currently have a few items such as this high performance long-sleeve t-shirt suitable as PPE when volunteering in the forest. Check back often because we will be expanding our selection of items over the coming year! To visit the CV Etsy shop, click on this link: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/CascadeVolunteers>

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# Photos of the Month

*Submitted by Volunteers & FS Staff*



*Photo taken by Louise Harbick*





# Cascade Forest Skills College Coming Soon!



## Outdoor Recreationalists of Willamette, Deschutes, & Ochoco National Forests

SAVE THE DATE  
May 16th, 17th, & 18th

## Cascade Volunteers Forest Skills College 2025

Location: Blue River, Oregon

Learn the Fundamentals of Trail Maintenance & Stewardship  
Courses led by Experienced Volunteers and Forest Service  
Recreation Staff

Let us know what courses you'd like to see offered.  
[Click here to take the SURVEY](#)

- Saw Training Basics & Maintenance
- Restoring Burned Trails



- Trail Maintenance - all skill levels
- Trail Structures
- Stewardship Programs, Safety & More

For more information & to learn how to register  
click [Cascadevol.org](https://cascadevol.org) or scan the code.



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# About Cascade Volunteers

## Our Mission

*The mission of Cascade Volunteers is to connect individuals and communities to the Willamette National Forest and adjacent public lands through programs, stewardship, and education.*

## Our Board of Directors

Judy Mitchell, President  
Robin Brandt, Vice President  
Karol Schrems, Treasurer  
Jeff Southwick, Secretary  
Allegra Helfenstein  
Melinda Martin  
Becky Hope  
Cheryl Friesen  
Christoph Schauwecker

## Our Staff

Chip Coker, Executive Director  
Stacy Rudisill, Volunteer and Events Coordinator  
Alan Leiman, Administrative Assistant  
Lyndell Wilken, Love Your Lakes Program Coordinator & Winter Trails Program Coordinator  
Beth Dayton, Saw Program Coordinator  
Brad Englebert, Associate Saw Program Coordinator  
Karol Schrems, Community Science Program Coordinator  
Beth Suhr, Invasive Weeds Program Coordinator  
Melinda Martin, Social Media Manager and Etsy Shop Manager  
Rhonda Levine, Newsletter Editor  
Norma Massier, Associate Newsletter Editor  
Allison Morfitt, Website Manager

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