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Volunteers support rare species conservation on JBLM

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Volunteers took time out from their busy fall schedules to celebrate the great outdoors and National Public Lands Day Oct 18 to 21— four days to connect people to the public land in their community. At Joint Base Lewis-McChord, it inspired staff and volunteers to contribute a day of service.

Volunteers came from the surrounding communities, JBLM Fish and Wildlife, Center for Natural Lands Management as well as from the JBLM Environmental Warfighters program, a program that engages active-duty service members in habitat restoration, rare species conservation and ecological science. The program provides transitioning service members with knowledge and skills to use once out of the military.

The day was a productive one. Volunteers built more than 70 nest boxes for western bluebird and 15 for purple martin birds, participated in a mulching project for planted oak saplings, helped with an experimental rake seeding project in JBLM prairies and were offered prairie ecology tours with JBLM biologists.

Employees of contractor Colorado State University Environmental Management of Military Lands cut wood for 200 bluebird boxes, 100 purple martin boxes and 100 bat boxes in anticipation of a strong turnout of volunteers to put the boxes together.

“A \$6,500.00 grant for lumber to build the bat boxes came from National Public Lands Day,” said Dennis Aubrey from JBLM Fish and Wildlife. “Additional construction of the boxes will be done by inmates at the (Northwest Joint Regional Correctional Facility) through the Sustainability in Prisons project.”

Staff will place the boxes in the woods on JBLM to facilitate the recovery of the purple martin, currently listed as a Species of Concern in Washington state; the Western bluebird, a state-monitored species, and a variety of bats including Townsend’s big-eared bat, are listed as a species of concern.

These efforts are testimony to the dedication and coordination JBLM devotes to rehabilitation of training lands on one of the rarest ecosystems in the country, South Puget Sound prairies.

These open, grassy plains are composed of gravelly soils that dry out quickly in summer droughts.

A unique landscape, native plants nourish several federally endangered species that JBLM protects:

- the Mazama pocket gopher,
- the Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly.
- the streaked horned lark.

Biologists, foresters and JBLM Fish and Wildlife staff maintain JBLM’s prairies through active management and restoration.

The National Public Lands Day event is just one of many opportunities to volunteer with JBLM Fish and Wildlife. To find out more about volunteering, visit [Facebook.com/SustainableJBLM](https://www.facebook.com/SustainableJBLM).

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