

The Grebe

SPRING 2020

*Corona Virus Shuts
Down Refuge
Visitor Center &
Volunteer
Activities -
Page 2*

Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge

Our mission is to promote, protect
and provide resources to preserve
and enhance

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

for the enjoyment of present
and future generations.



Friends of Deer Flat Board of Directors

Rex Hanson, President
May Jo Schumacher, Vice-President
Becky Hanson, Treasurer
Bob Christensen, Secretary
Cathy Eells, Member
Gisel Holdcroft, Latino Advisor

Contact Information

13751 Upper Embankment Rd
Nampa ID 83686
Email: friendsofdfwr@gmail.com
[www.facebook.com/
FriendsofDeerFlat](http://www.facebook.com/FriendsofDeerFlat)

Announcing Changes in the Friends Board

During the past few months, we have lost several members of our board, who have gone on to other responsibilities and pursuits. We wish to give them a hearty applause and a "job well done" for all they contributed to making the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge a viable and energetic organization during 2019.

A big THANK YOU to:

- Tricia Matthews – past president
- Cathy Eells – past vice President
- Chris Matthews – past board member
- Jolene Edwards – past board member
- Kathleen McCarter – past board member (on sabbatical)

We wish our current 2020 board members good health and good luck! Those with an "interim" designation have been unanimously appointed by the board and will serve the remainder of the year until the next general election of officers.

- Rex Hanson – Interim President
- Mary Jo Schumacher – Interim Vice-President
- Becky Hanson - Treasurer
- Bob Christensen – Interim Secretary
- Gisel Holdcroft, Board Member
- Cathy Eells –Board Member



Bob, Cathy, Mary Jo, Chris, Tricia, Kathleen, Becky, Rex, Gisel

Refuge Announces Restrictions During COVID-19 Virus Pandemic

Following guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and recommendations from state and local public health authorities about COVID-19, Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge has announced that it has temporarily suspended volunteer activities at the Refuge and has closed the Visitor Center.

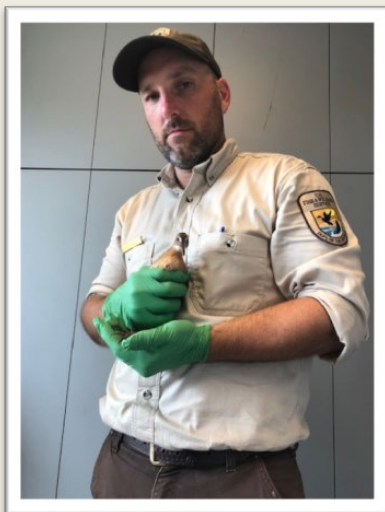
However, the public is still welcome to enjoy recreational opportunities on the Refuge such as hiking, wildlife watching, and fishing in season. Trails, vault toilets, and parking areas remain open to the public.

Earth Day (April 22nd) activities at Deer Flat have been cancelled, but here are some fun activities you can do while social distancing:

- Spend time at **Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge**, take a walk and pick up trash, this will be good for the environment and good for you!
- Go on a nature scavenger hunt and identify native plants at **Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge**. Bring your nature journals and draw the plants and flowers you see in the pollinator garden.
- Grow a garden, which will be good for you and the environment!
- Learn how to compost and build a compost bin in your backyard.
- Build a terrarium on Earth Day.
- Live streaming on your devices causes more greenhouse gases than you may realize, so read a book.
- Plant a bush or tree that is bee and butterfly friendly.
- Do an eco-friendly activity such as building a bee condo, bug hotel or birdhouse.
- Plant a wildflower garden.
- Go through your house and recycle what you do not use anymore.
- Sewing Project: Make a cloth bag for shopping and limit use of plastic bags.



We Have a New Refuge Manager



Eddie Owens has been on board at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge for the last four months. He transferred to here from San Diego Bay and Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuges.

Eddie's background is in biology. He has been involved in a wide variety of wildlife-related work across much of the country. Eddie emphasizes that he is very tenacious in getting things done for the benefit of wildlife.

Next time you're here volunteering or visiting the Refuge, take some time to introduce yourself to Eddie.

Wildlife in a Box

by Kalli D. Proffitt

(Kalli is a volunteer for USFWS at Deer Flat NWR. She holds an AmeriCorps position at Boise Urban Garden School as an Environmental Educator)

There are many opportunities to serve in this life. It is our willingness to accept these chances, that help us grow to be better citizens and neighbors. One such opportunity came my way recently in accompaniment with several other outdoor enthusiasts at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. (I was able to document this adventure in my *Nature Journal*, in which I have enjoyed recording my personal adventures and my awe of the wonders of earth's ecosystems.)

It was a chilly day on February 25th, when we as a community of citizens took a stewardship opportunity to join together in cleaning out wood duck nesting boxes along the shoreline of Lake Lowell. Volunteers came from McCall, Boise, Nampa, Kuna, Caldwell and other random spots of Idaho—each with our own stories and love for nature. Our experience began at the refuge maintenance shop where we signed paperwork, reviewed safety regulations, and made sure we all had the appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE). We split into two teams—each packing ladders, tools, first-aid kits, wood shavings, PPEs, and our lunches into separate pickups. We were assigned to clean out numbered duck nest boxes attached to numerous cottonwood trees. This was part of a five-day activity that spanned the circumference of Lake Lowell.

We set our walkie talkies to the same frequencies and then split up. We were assigned to service nest boxes along the east side of the lake. There were five people in our group. All were excited and shared outdoor adventure stories, as we set off into the beauties of Deer Flat NWR. The first wood duck box revealed a nesting squirrel, which darted from the box—now driven to find a new nest before nightfall. The squirrel, very disgruntled, chattered her displeasure at us while perched high up the trunk of the tree. We leaned the ladder against the tree and secured the footings. Carolyn was the first volunteer up the ladder. She was wearing waterproof knee-high boots, all the right PPEs, and was ready for the day. Tugging the nails out from the side of the box lid, she lifted the front panel exposing a squirrel's nest inside. Carolyn called down to Bob and Jimmie, "Alright! Are you ready?" The men held the sides of the ladder and made sure their masks were covering their faces. They turned away from the debris that was sure to shower down on them. A muffled, "Okay. Ready," from one of the gentlemen, then followed the tumble of the squirrel's nest—an entwined leafy masterpiece (in the perspective of a small rodent) along with bits of twine, a can, shoes, hair clips—anything the bushy-tailed critter had managed to get its little paws on. It was their home, with an individual touch. So, the squirrel's nest came crashing down, and, along with it, a tan cloud of bedding materials.



Carolyn scraped out what was left within the box, and Jimmie passed her up the bag of new bedding material (wood shavings). Paige and I begin to examine the debris where the squirrel nest had fallen at the base of the tree trunk. We were looking for any evidence of last year's wood duck eggshells or unhatched eggs. If we could find evidence of old duck eggs, and especially shell membrane, we could qualify this box as successful. No luck on finding eggs in this box, but there would be many more to clean.



Wildlife in a Box (continued):

Our next box held no eggs, nor even a squirrel's nest, but, to our surprise, it did contain a screech owl. When we opened the lid, it began slowly blinking its eyes, and backed into the left back corner of the box—hoping to get back to sleep. We let the wooden panel fall back down and reinserted both nails to hold it shut.

The screech owl's feathers were breathtaking. The pattern is similar to that of bark, a gorgeous palette of camouflage gray. These creatures are critical to the biodiversity of our local ecosystems. If you are lucky enough to encounter one, remember to give it space and respect.



The day went on as we recorded what we found in each nest box. Every member of our team took their turn holding the ladder, cleaning the boxes, and adding fresh bedding material. Along our route we encountered red-wing black birds, California quail, boxelder bugs, juvenile bald eagles, white-crowned sparrows, American robins, coyotes, northern flickers, red-tailed hawks, and a continuous diversity of other wildlife species.

Deer Flat NWR is an incredibly diverse place. We are all lucky to have these natural environments in our community. I am glad I took the opportunity to meet new people and observe a multitude of animal and plant species. As we sat on the beach for lunch, we looked across the shimmering lake toward the snow-covered Owyhee Mountains. As a Missouri farm girl, I realized that I have barely begun my admiration for the mountain area landscapes.

If you are willing to accept an opportunity to serve, I encourage you to reap a character-growing experience by volunteering at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. For all of us who live on earth, may the majesty of nature reach us. The best chance is to just get out there!



Kalli Cooling Off
in Lake Lowell

Reprinted from *The Grebe*, March 2007

Waterfowl, Eagles, Coyotes, oh my!

By Bob Christensen

One afternoon in late January, I drove out to the Marsing Bridge and followed the river in an easterly direction as far as Walter's Ferry. I then crossed the bridge and followed the Snake River back to Marsing on the opposite side. I enjoyed the sunny day. I watched two Red-tailed Hawks flying slowly across farm fields and saw several Sparrow Hawks perched quietly on power lines. Several rafts of Canada Geese and ducks (unidentified because of bad backlight and glare off the water) were on the river, along with two waterfowl hunters at the head of one of the refuge islands

Returning by way of the Lower Dam Road, I had a good view of the long cracks in the ice that extended for thousands of feet. A few hundred yards from the dam, I saw several extended lines of geese and ducks huddled in elongated groups along some long, thin leads of open water. I put my spotting scope on these flocks and soon picked out five Bald Eagles (4 adults, 1 juvenile) scattered on the ice near the waterfowl. Two of the eagles were side-by-side and one had a duck-sized carcass in its talons.

I watched as small flocks of ducks and geese winged their way across the ice and settled down among the birds already on the ice or, in the case of most of the ducks, into the narrow channels of water. Near the boat ramp at the north end of the dam, several people were venturing out onto the ice surface.

I paid close attention to the eagles, which were seating motionless on the ice. After several minutes, two coyotes came across the ice toward the ducks, geese, and eagles. For about a half hour I watched these cunning canines try to maneuver closer and closer to the groups of waterfowl—zigzagging back and forth and nonchalantly looking away or beyond their mark. It became apparent that their primary target was the eagle with the carcass, a ready meal if they could get hold of it. Their cool approach did not fool the waterfowl or the eagles—all heads were turned their way.

As the two coyotes closed in on the eagles, the bird with the carcass flew up and then alighted again on the ice 25 yards away. One of the coyotes sniffed the ice where the carcass had been, the other came up nose to beak with the other eagle until it jumped up and slashed at him with its talons. When the second coyote moved in close, the second eagle flew over and joined his buddy.

The coyotes then meandered casually over to another long line of geese and ducks. They made their way to the far side of the open water and slowly moved along it keeping their eye on the reaction of the ducks in the water and the geese on the opposite side. Both coyotes from time to time urinated and then defecated on the ice as they moved along. Having no success with this flock of waterfowl, the coyotes again moved slowly back toward the two Bald Eagles—again approaching closely until the eagle with the carcass flew a short distance away and the other flashed his talons at them.

After another meager attempt at harassing another flock of geese, the two coyotes moved back toward the southern shore. About half way back they met a third coyote walking on the ice towards them. They all met for a few moments as if to take tabs on the situation - "How's the hunting guys?" "Not worth a duck's leg,

Chum." Then the two disappointed canines walked slowly towards the shore, while the new would-be-predator ambled eastward on the ice toward a more promising hunting ground.



Lake Lowell during the January freeze

Friends Earn Awards

Friends Member Awarded Refuge Volunteer of the Year

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge recently announced Mike Ferdinand as the 2019 Refuge Volunteer of the Year. Mike has served over 1,000 hours since 2009 when he began volunteering at the Refuge. He helps with many refuge programs, including maintenance, visitor center hosting, bird feeding, restoration projects, field trips, and events. His many talents and hours of service are greatly appreciated.



Congratulations to Rachel & David Staats Friends Volunteers for 2019



Bob Christensen, Friends board member, presenting volunteer award to Rachel and David Staats, who have been faithfully leading the winter bird feeding program for the last five years.

Your 2020 Membership Supports the Friends and the Refuge

The Friends of Deer Flat would like to thank all those who have renewed their membership! If you have not renewed your membership yet, please take the time to do so now. Your membership is very important to us. Without your support it would be impossible to accomplish the many projects we support.

This year we are planning the first phase of updating the KIDS SPACE at the Visitors Center. Another project will involve improving the viewing of the osprey nest at the Visitors Center by installing a NEW WEBCAM. These are just two of our many activities. We want you all to take care during this difficult time, and please come out to Deer Flat and enjoy one of our many walking trails! Thank you all for your support!

Annual Marmot Day a Success



On February 1st, the Friends joined with the Deer Flat Chapter of Idaho Master Naturalists to host the annual **Yellow-Bellied Marmot Day** potluck and awards ceremony. The marmot (a western species) is the Refuge version of the groundhog (an eastern species).

Support Friends of Deer Flat During Idaho Gives Event

IDAHO HAS GIVEN YOU
A PLACE TO DREAM.
WHAT CAN YOU GIVE IDAHO?



May 7, 2020
IdahoGives.org

Dear Friends, we encourage you to join us by participating in the **Idaho Gives** campaign again this year. It is a great opportunity to show your support, not only for the **Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge**, but for other worthy nonprofit organizations around the great state of Idaho. Go to IdahoGives.org and make a difference. Each of our board members have pledged to contribute a minimum of \$50 this year to our Friends group.

Sincerely,
Board Members, Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge

The Osprey Webcam Needs Your Help



With help from several Refuge volunteers and a borrowed mechanical lift, a final (but unsuccessful) effort to repair the current video camera was made during March of 2019.

Based on their experience with filming raptors in California, our new refuge manager, Edward (Eddie) Owens, and visiting wildlife biologist Molly Astell have provided us with recommendations for a new, high-quality camera and associated equipment for viewing the osprey nest near our Refuge Visitor Center. Eddie and Molly also plan to help with the installation of the new camera once Refuge activities are able to resume.

The recommended equipment “high-resolution,” 20-power zoom camera has already been purchased and is presently being tested offsite. Refuge Maintenance Supervisor, Brian Clifford, is looking into the best way to mount the camera and acquisition of additional equipment, as needed. The new equipment includes a repeater/wifi broadcast system, which does not require internet access to get the video signal to the visitor center. The repeater system also has the potential to be expanded to enable video coverage of other wildlife activities around the Refuge.

The total cost of purchasing and installing the equipment for this exciting project will be approximately \$2,000. Please consider sending in a donation this month to support the cause—either through Idaho Gives or by sending a check to:

Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
Osprey Webcam Fund
13751 Upper Embankment Rd.
Nampa, ID 83686

The Grebe Nest Nature Store

**The Grebe Nest Nature Store is open limited hours (see below).
Friends' members receive a 10 % discount on all store merchandise purchased.**

Mondays: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 Tuesdays: **Closed**
 Wednesdays: 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon
 Thursdays: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
 Fridays: 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
 Saturdays: 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The Nature Store is volunteer-operated and may not always be open during posted times depending on volunteer availability. We recommend calling ahead if you are interested in buying something during operating hours.

Yes!

I want to be a member.

Just copy this page, complete the requested information, cut along dotted line above form, and mail it with your annual dues to:

Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
13751 Upper Embankment Road
Nampa ID 83686

Name(s)

Address

City/State /Zip

Phone

Email

Annual Membership Levels (Please mark one)

_____	Owl (senior or student)	\$ 10.00
_____	Deer (individual)	\$ 15.00
_____	Fox (family)	\$ 25.00
_____	Osprey	\$ 50.00
_____	Eagle	\$ 100.00
_____	Goldeneye	\$ 500.00



Join
the
Friends
of
Deer
Flat
Refuge

Yes!

I want to be involved.

Please mark all areas of interest and ways you'd like to participate.

- Habitat Restoration
- Staffing the Bookstore
- Organizing events
- Litter Lifts
- Weed Eradication
- Project Participation
- Photographic Documentation of Events and Activities
- Garden Enhancement
- Newsletter
- Publicity / Public Relations
- Grant Writing
- Fundraising
- Community Outreach
- Board of Directors
- Advisory on specific policies, protocols and processes.
- Other (please specify)

Engraved Bricks Order Form

Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge are selling engraved bricks to help support the many activities at the Refuge. Your brick will be made a permanent part of the Pollinator Garden located just behind the Refuge Visitor Center.

Whether you are honoring a friend or family member, or celebrating a special occasion, our engraved bricks make a wonderful and lasting gift.



Each brick is 4" x 8," and may contain up to three engraved lines OR one symbol.

Lettering may be a maximum of 19 characters and/or spaces per line.

Inquire at friendsofdfwr@gmail.com about available symbols.

Brick price is \$50 for one; or \$45 each for two or more bricks.

You are also eligible for one FREE brick for each \$100 Friends membership.

Make check or money order payable to and mail to:
 Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge (c/o Bricks)
 13751 Upper Embankment Road, Nampa, ID 83686

Engraving information (please print)

Line 1 _____

Line 2 _____

Line 3 _____

Your information

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-mail Address: _____