

The Grebe

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 22

FALL 2017

**Volunteers Needed:
Sagebrush
Steppe
Restoration**

(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

Bob Christensen, President
Vice-President (open)
Tricia Matthews, Treasurer
Mary Jo Schumacher, Secretary
Kris Horton, Member
Kathleen McCarter, Member
Dianne Barker, Interim Member

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Bob Faller
Newsletter Editor

Friends of Deer Flat Focus on the Refuge's Future

by Bob Christensen, Friends' President

Dear Friends Members:

What would you like the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge to look like in 5, 10 or 15 years? What do you envision the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge to be in those same future years?

The following is a first draft of a "vision statement" for our Friends group which will help guide us into answering the questions above.

Vision Statement for the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge

September 2017

The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge (The Friends) are capitalizing on the opportunity presented by the presence of a national wildlife refuge in our mixed urban and rural setting. Having a highly functional natural area in the midst of this setting improves the quality of life for all residents in the Treasure Valley. The Friends see this as an extraordinary opportunity for not only local residents, but also for students and visitors to observe wildlife in a distinctly functioning wild ecosystem within their own valley. The Friends aspire to advance the causes, functions, and beauty of our unique Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge as an iconic example of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Within this vision, The Friends support the continued conservation and enhancement of refuge environs for the benefit of resident and migratory wildlife that provide improved food, water, shelter and space requirements in all available wildlife habitats. The Friends also support improved and expanded Refuge educational programs that are within the organizational capabilities of the Refuge and The Friends.

The Friends continue to build a large cadre of members, supporters, donors and volunteers who are committed to growing, restoring, protecting and educating the public about both sectors of the Refuge (Lake Lowell and the Snake River Islands). The Friends envision a growing membership as high as 250 members.

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Focus on the Refuge's Future

(Continued from Page 1)



I invite you to send me any ideas, edits, and comments that you feel would improve The Friends' "Vision Statement." Please send them to rcloydchris@gmail.com by October 1st. (Bob Christensen, President)

If you would like to compare the Friends' vision statement with the statement developed for the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, please go to the following link and scroll down to page ES-ii:

<https://www.fws.gov/uploadedFiles/DF%20FCCP.Executive%20sum.pdf>

Restoration Project Planting

Volunteers Needed

Plant Shrub and Grass Plugs on the Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Project Site

The Friends' Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Project, adjacent to the Refuge Visitor Center, is advancing to the next stage—the actual hand-planting of native shrubs and bunchgrass plugs.

“Planting Event”

Saturday November 4, 2017

9 a.m. to about noon

Collage of Silver Sage Planting April 2017



We will be planting and watering about 1,800 sagebrush seedlings, 100 saltbush seedlings, and 1,000 bunchgrass plugs. Getting this done in one three-hour planting session will require about 50-70 volunteers with shovels and lots of energy.

If you would like to help us plant this fall, please contact the Refuge Volunteer Coordinator at 208-467-9278. We are counting on you!

Plant and Animal Life Highlights



Refuge Uplands Amassed with Yellow Flowers

By Tricia Matthews



The summer is winding down here at Deer Flat Refuge. Upland slopes are amassed with yellow sunflowers. Birds and windy days have spread sunflower seeds into fields in every direction around the Visitors' Center. Bees and goldfinches love them!

In addition to sunflowers, there is a yellow flowering plant along the roadway that does not get much attention. A little research revealed them to be **Curlycup Gumweed**, a member of the Aster family and common in our dry, open areas of southern Idaho. According to the *Backpack Guide to Idaho Range Plants*, beneath each flower is a sticky bract that was used by Native Americans and early frontier doctors to treat lung ailments. In fact, it is still used in modern medicines today to treat asthma and whooping cough. But it is best known as a treatment for poison ivy and other types of skin irritations. Otherwise, it has no value as food for wildlife.

Curlycup Gumweed data from Backpack Guide to Idaho Range Plants, 7th Edition, by University of Idaho Rangeland Center (2013).

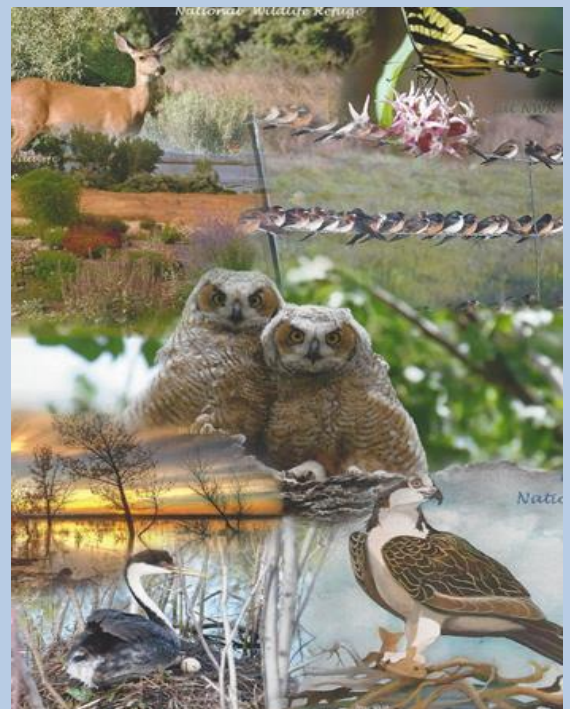
Post Card Project Update

by Mary Jo Schumacher

The Friends of Deer Flat are excited to announce we have **beautiful, newly designed post cards** for sale now in our *Grebes Nest* Nature Store.

There are eight different post cards that represent the Refuge and surrounding area. Proceeds from sale of these postcards and other merchandise in the nature store help to support and fund our conservation projects and public outreach events at the refuge.

Please stop by to see the post cards and other fun items we have for sale. **And remember...members of Friends always get a 10% discount!**



Improving our Service to Deer Flat

Tricia Matthews, a board member of the Friends of Deer Flat (bottom row, 2nd from right), recently completed the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) **Friends Academy** at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia.



National Wildlife Refuge System Friends Academy 10
August 21 - 25, 2017



Facilitated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this intensive training covered a variety of topics related to the NWRS, which included how volunteers can effectively support the refuge system.

Each year, 20 participants who share the passion and commitment to improve refuge visitation and education are selected from refuge Friends groups around the country. At this time of limited federal support, the NWRS desperately needs the help of Friends members and volunteers. Even only one hour per week can make a difference.

Friends Board Mentoring Workshop

by Kathleen McCarter

This past summer, our Friends' board welcomed Sue Hix from the Friends of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge near Minneapolis, MN, and Tim Miller, District Manager of La Crosse District, WI, portion of the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

These mentors took us through a planning process to help establish our SMART* Goals and build a plan to accomplish them. Some of our main goals established through this mentoring workshop are to:

- **Recruit skilled, committed, diverse candidates for our Friends Board and other active roles in our group. This will be an ongoing process.**
- **By January 2018, make annual planning with USFWS staff a regular item on the Friends calendar.**
- **Expand the Friends network and promote the Refuge in surrounding communities to increase public support for the Refuge, acquire new Friends members, and recruit new Refuge volunteers.**

*SMART=*specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound*

“The Friends of Deer Flat have developed excellent skills and have an impressive track record in seeking out funding sources through grants, but they need the support framework of more people to implement projects.”

- Sue Hix, Mentor from Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge



Back row (L to R): Kathleen McCarter, Noreen Tripp, Sue Hix, Susan Kain.
Front row: Mary Jo Schumacher, Tricia Matthews, Annette de Knijf, Bob Christensen, Tim Miller

Friends Joining the Fiesta

On August 19, members of Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge participated in the annual Fiesta held at Our Lady of the Valley Catholic Church in Caldwell. The Fiesta, sponsored by the area's Hispanic community, provided an excellent platform for members to spur interest in the Refuge.

A table was set up under a shade canopy to allow the children to participate in different ways. There was a fish naming exercise that combined joint participation of both children and interested parents. The ever popular Mystery Box was there for the children to reach inside and identify an object of nature, using only their sense of touch. Rewards were given in the form of posters, coloring books, pencils and stickers.

We also distributed some of our newly translated Spanish brochures to publicize the Refuge to the community.

The new pastor, Father Rob, was delighted to see the Refuge participating. He said Fiesta was not for Catholics only, and was glad to see other members of the community at the event.



Participating in this outreach event were Friends members Susan Doty, Mary Jo Schumacher and Harry Schumacher.

Also helping were Annette de Knijf, Manager of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge and Friends liaison, and Malinda Keith, a Refuge RV volunteer.

- Reported by Harry Schumacher

Join in the Fun at Creepy Critters

The Friends of Deer Flat will be joining forces with Deer Flat Refuge Staff for the annual

“Creepy Critters at the Refuge”

Saturday, October 28, 2017

Time: 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: Deer Flat Visitor Center

There will be many hands-on wildlife-related activity stations, craft table, reading, and Halloween candy and other refreshments for children of all ages to enjoy as they learn more about the refuge.

Friends of Deer Flat members are encouraged to volunteer for this family-friendly event. Last year, the Friends provided hot chocolate and cookies to refresh the ghosts and goblins who attended.

Refuge Happenings

by *Annette deKnijf, Refuge Manager*

Bat Detectors

Acoustic bat detectors were deployed July 20 at the Refuge—recording from dusk to dawn for four nights. The detectors recorded the possible presence of the California myotis, Western small-footed myotis, little brown myotis, long-eared myotis, Townsend's big-eared bat, Western red bat, spotted bat, and silver-haired bat.



Gate at Gotts Point

For public safety, the USF&WS Regional Office provided most of the funds to bring electricity to Gotts Point and to install an automatic gate, which should be completed in the next couple of months. Gotts Point has been one of the "hot spots" on the refuge for nefarious deeds. Hopefully, installation of the gate will reduce that activity, as well as provide an improved sense of security for the public and refuge staff.

Road Safety Audit

The Federal Highway Administration, along with several local stakeholders, conducted the road safety audit May 10-12, and produced a report covering all the public roads and parking areas around the refuge and the entrance road. Recommendations from the report will be used in the future to improve public safety.

Trail Counters

USF&WS' Washington DC office funded materials and installation of trail counters, installed May 11-12, to help the Refuge assess visitation activity. One is at the trailhead of the Observation Trail on the corner of Indiana and Roosevelt. It counts visitors coming and going (both pedestrians and bikes combined). Another is on the Gotts Point to Kingfisher Trail. This one separates bikes and pedestrians and counts coming and going.



ICC Youth Crew

Idaho Conservation Corps worked on the Refuge three weeks this summer. During the first week, June 13-21, a young-adult, all-female chainsaw crew chopped up many of the downed trees around the residences at the maintenance compound.

During the second (June 26-30) and third (August 21-25) weeks, high school-age crews helped repair fences, painted refuge kiosks at boat ramps along the Snake River, and repaired goose nest boxes on Refuge islands.

Deer Flat Refuge in the News

Several articles about Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge were published in the *Idaho Press Tribune* in 2017. Below are article summaries, compiled by Kris Horton.

Deer Flat Friends Keeping Biologist Busy in Retirement

(Published April 23, 2017)



Bob Christensen, President of the Friends of the Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, has been retired since 2003. He spends 15-20 hours weekly as president of the volunteer group at the Refuge.

The group, which boasts 60 to 80 members year-to-year, has made a significant impact on the refuge since its inception in 2006.

Members participate in many activities, such as:

- setting up bird feeding stations and viewing platforms
- securing grants such as the one that assisted in the construction of the centennial trail that marked the refuge's 100th anniversary
- operating a web site and nature store
- putting together a newsletter called *The Grebe*

A recent endeavor was to develop a sagebrush steppe restoration program that will serve as a pilot to plant seedlings in an area overrun by invasive cheat grass.

(See "Restoration Project" story on Page 2 for more information on how to volunteer).

Community outreach is also a very important part of the group's efforts, such as helping to fund a program called *Discover Wildlife Journeys* that provides scholarships to bus students out to the Refuge for field trips.

What to Do With Farmland

(Published August 11, 2017)

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge is gathering input and project ideas on the future use of 240 acres of farm ground near Lake Lowell.



The refuge contracted with local farmers to farm the land, free of charge, as long as a portion of the crops benefited the wildlife. However, the land has been idle for two years due to a new federal rule that requires crops raised on wildlife lands not be genetically modified. The farmers have elected not to continue farming these acres. Therefore, the refuge is looking to work out a similar arrangement with another group of farmers, or raising seeds and plants for wildfire rehabilitation, among other options.

Officials to Take Down Fire Tower at Refuge

(Published August 18, 2017)

The watchtower on the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge was constructed in 1937 to serve as a fire lookout and a perch for refuge officials to monitor happenings along the Lake Lowell shoreline.



But in recent years, climbing it has become a right-of-passage to some "undisciplined individuals," much to the chagrin of Refuge staff.

Due to concerns about public safety, wildlife officials propose to take the tower down after the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service completes a required historical review of the tower.

GREBE'S NEST NATURE STORE

Proceeds from the Grebe's Nest Nature Store are used to help fund conservation projects and public outreach events at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge



Starting in 2017, all members of the "Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge" will enjoy **10% off all merchandise purchased in the nature store.** Just present your membership card to access this member benefit.

Hours of Operation

Mondays

9 am to 1 pm

Tuesdays

9 am to 4 pm

Wednesdays

9 am to Noon

Thursdays

1 pm to 4 pm

Fridays

10 am to 2 pm

Saturdays (if staffed)

10 am to 4 pm



Yes!

I want to be a member.

Just copy this page, cut on dotted line above, complete the requested information below, then mail it along 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 Enhancement
- Staffing the Bookstore
- Organizing events
- Litter lifts
- Weed eradication
- Project Management
- Photographic Documentation of Events and Activities
- Historian
- Newsletter
- Publicity / Public Relations
- Grant Writing
- Fundraising
- Lobbying and Advocacy
- Board of Directors
- Advisory on specific policies, protocols and processes.
- Other (please specify)

Engraved Brick Fundraiser for Refuge Pollinator Garden

To provide for many refuge activities, Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge sell engraved bricks that are placed in the Refuge Pollinator Garden. For \$35 each or 2 for \$60, your brick(s) will be a permanent part of the Pollinator Garden located just behind the Refuge Visitor Center.

*For more information, please contact
Friends of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge (c/o Bricks)
13751 Upper Embankment Road, Nampa, ID 83686*