

The Grebe

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SPRING 2017

Join us for the
"Kids' Fishing Day
at the Refuge"
on June 10
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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.



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Contact Information

13751 Upper Embankment Rd
Nampa ID 83686

Email: friendsofdfwr@gmail.com
[www.facebook.com/
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Bob Faller
Newsletter Editor

Fickle Wildlife

by Bob Christensen, Friends' President

You can't trust wildlife, whether it's an eagle, gopher snake, badger, or spotted frog. It will always have a surprise for you. As a wildlife professional and observer over the last 50+ years, I keep learning over and over again that when you are dealing with wild things, you always should expect the unexpected.



First case in point: A group of us went out early in February to place nest cameras on the two known bald eagle nesting trees adjacent to Lake Lowell. We actually saw both eagles visiting the nest on the north side of the Narrows before we sent our climber up the tree to place the camera.

However, at the East Side nest site, there was no evidence of nest building activity. Where were those birds? What we found out was the Narrows eagles were just pulling the wool over our eyes. They did a switch on us, and built a new nest on the south side of the Narrows. That is where they chose to nest this season. Later exploration on the East Side found the other pair of bald eagles was there, but with a new nest located about a quarter mile southeast of last year's nest tree.

So, in the end, we were unsuccessful in placing a camera at either nesting territory. Oh, those unpredictable eagles!

Second case in point: In 2010, the Friends established an osprey webcam to record nesting activities of the resident osprey pair that had raised young on a pole nest near the refuge visitor center for several years. We were delighted to watch them successfully rear and fledge osprey chicks during the 2010 through 2014 seasons.

However, in 2015 and 2016, although these magnificent birds went through their courting and nest-building rituals, they failed to produce any eggs. In the meantime, we were having trouble keeping the webcam operating.

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Fickle Wildlife

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Second case in point (continued): This spring, with the help of dedicated partners, we were able to get the webcam operating again after many hours of tedious work—the ospreys are on camera again. However, to our chagrin, although the ospreys have returned from their winter migration and have been actively rebuilding their nest, it appears this will be another season without eggs or young. The female should have been brooding eggs before the end of April, but now it is May and no incubation behavior has been observed. Fickle fish hawks!

Thanks to our Friends' Volunteers: Unlike wildlife, we can always rely on our dedicated Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge volunteers. Without all of you, we could not keep our programs going and certainly would not be able to instigate new ideas, such as the new postcard project (see article in this newsletter). Thanks to all of you who donate your time and funds to help support our very own National Wildlife Refuge and help reach out to local families, students and communities. You are dependable and great!

Note: I will talk more about our Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Project in our next newsletter. (Bob Christensen)

Start of a New Chapter

by Rex and Rebecca Hanson

A new chapter of the **Idaho Master Naturalist Program** has been formed—*The Deer Flat Chapter*. Sixteen enthusiastic students began weekly classes on March 6, with more classes continuing through May 22.



Several presenters have been very generous with their time, covering a broad range of subjects:

- Conservation Ethics
- Ecology
- Birds
- Insects
- Rangelands
- Fishes
- Bats
- Reptiles
- Plants
- Mammals

In addition to Monday evening class time, students have enjoyed several Saturday excursions, including trips to Celebration Park, the Orma J. Smith Natural History Museum at College of Idaho, and the Birds of Prey Conservation Area. Each class and excursion provides information about volunteer opportunities which the students are looking forward to taking on—a great way to combine inside and outside learning experiences!

For more information about the Master Naturalist Program and chapter, contact Melissa Murillo, Volunteer Coordinator at melissa_murillo@fws.gov.

Recent Refuge Happenings

by Annette deKnijf, Refuge Manager

Winter was quite something this year at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. We had to reschedule meetings and events on several days until Randy (our maintenance foreman) could get the roads plowed. And we were compelled to close the offices and visitor center one entire day—very unusual for us.

This year's **Refuge Star Party** on March 4th was a *stellar* event. Skies cooperated and the telescopes were well-used. *See Page 4.*



Some of you may be aware that we have been participating in the planning stages of a **Lake Lowell Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Plan**. Community partners are in the process of applying for FLAP grants (Federal Lands Access Program) to fund portions of a *bike-ped trail* on a stretch of Iowa Avenue between Middleton and Midland roads. Also, a study will determine the feasibility of placing a path along the west side of Hwy 45 between Lake Shore Drive and Burk Lane. More information about this plan can be found at: <https://flh.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/flpp/studies/lake-lowell-access-plan.htm>



We are getting lots of ideas from our community partners on what to do with our 240 acres of farm fields. National Wildlife Refuge regulations prevent us from continuing to allow the use of genetically modified (GMO) crops. So, we are now in an exploratory stage of determining appropriate uses for these valuable refuge crop lands. Ideas range from continuing planting the traditional crops (corn, peas, beans, winter wheat, etc.) to providing seeds and plants for *Burned Area Emergency Response* (BAER) projects. Stay tuned—we will keep the public informed about this planning process.

Earth Day Work Day was a great success on April 22nd. We had over 100 participants picking up litter, sprucing up the wildlife-friendly landscape, and battling with white bryony plants. The Friends of Deer Flat provided breakfast snacks and drinks for all volunteers.

KIDS FISHING DAY AT THE REFUGE JUNE 10 – 10 AM TO 3 PM



On Saturday, June 10, the Friends will be assisting Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge in helping celebrate *Kids Fishing Day* in Nampa. This free event will be held at Gott's Point on Lake Lowell. Children will be taught how to fish, including casting and rigging skills. **There will be several hands-on activity booths for the kids to enjoy.** Over the years, this event has attracted hundreds of children and their families in an effort to connect them with outdoor activities and a life-long passion for fishing. In order for the event to be a success, we need the generous help and support of community volunteers like you. **If you are interested in helping to make this event a success, please contact Melissa Murillo at 208-467-9278 or melissa_murillo@fws.gov to sign up.**

Star Gazing Party a Success

by Mary Jo Schumacher



The **Second Annual Star Gazing at the Refuge** event was held March 4, 2017, at the Refuge's Visitor Center. There were more than 200 participants. The skies were clear enough to star gaze with telescopes provided by the Boise Astronomical Society. The College of Idaho's Whittenberger Planetarium brought their Star Lab, which was a favorite of children and adults alike.

Dr. L. Paul Verhage did a presentation on star gazing. Dr. Verhage is a high school science and electronics teacher. He also teaches astronomy classes to the public and leads robotics workshops. **He presented the material in an interesting and often humorous manner.**

Marie Quenzer, an accomplished artist, published writer and Native American story teller was on hand to tell star stories. Her stories were legends told by various tribes. Some were of the constellations that are familiar to us by other names. **Caldwell Public Library presented a story time for the children.** Star craft tables were set up and volunteers helped the children with star crafts.

Along with Friends and Refuge supporters, volunteers from various community schools were on hand to help out. Thank you to the Meridian High School Upward Bound (TRIO) students who helped staff the Friends refreshment, welcome and passport tables.



The Flying M Coffee House in Downtown Nampa donated cookies and coffee for the event. The Friends send out a big thank you to Lisa Myers, who has donated for the second year to this event. The Flying M cookies were the talk of the event! If you have not attended the Star Gazing event, consider it for next year!

Pictured: Mary Jo Schumacher, Left, and Lisa Myers, Right

On May 6, the annual **"Idaho Gives" Fundraising Campaign** was held. The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge received pledges totaling **\$696 from 20 different donors.** We are thankful for your generosity, and we hope you feel gratified by donating to the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge.

Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge Board



Blue Goose Passports Now In Stock in Bookstore

A new souvenir guide book to the National Wildlife Refuge system is now available at the Deer Flat Visitor Center Nature Store.

Blue Goose Passports are a fun way to record your visits to any of the 563 National Wildlife Refuges you visit. Most refuges have a space for their own distinctive stamp, which you can get for free, usually at a visitor center. And there is space to make notes about each refuge you visit.

In addition, your Passport purchase at Deer Flat NWR helps support the many projects and programs supported by the Friends of Deer Flat.



General Public Price: \$10

Friends' Price: \$9

Osprey Webcam Operational!

by Bob Christensen, President

Watch the Osprey in the wild via our webcam at Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge! The webcam has been mostly nonfunctional this last two years due to equipment failure, poor internet connection, and need for technical expertise.



But thanks to many long hours and continued persistence this spring, Daniel Brown and Hinsel Scott, our new webcam partners from Geeks Worldwide succeeded in getting the osprey webcam functional again. **Many thanks to you, Daniel and Hinsel!!** To view, go to - <http://friendsofdeerflat.org> and click on the Osprey Cam tab, then select the "live" YouTube feed.

Note: While the resident osprey pair rebuilt the nest and displayed pair bonding rituals, there has been no sign this year of successful laying and incubating of eggs. But keep an eye on them. Anything can happen!

Friends “Postcard Project”

by Mary Jo Schumacher



“Osprey”
Watercolor by Jerry Wilda



“Great Horned Owlets “
Photo by Jennifer Brown-Scott

Many visitors to the Refuge have inquired about the availability of postcards. At a recent board meeting, the **Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge** decided it would be a good idea to have postcards printed and made available for purchase in our nature store. I volunteered to take the lead in this project.

The project took on a life of its own. As I displayed the photographs in public locations for public appraisal and voting, others wanted to submit their work. Lisa Myers graciously donated a table at the Flying M for customers and staff to view and vote for their favorite photos. After a lengthy process, eight selections were made.

Two items of special interest in the submissions shown above:

- A cute photo of Great Horned Owlets in a nest received the most votes by a large margin. This photo was taken on the refuge by a former refuge manager, Jennifer Brown-Scott.
- A drawing of our iconic Osprey was submitted and selected by the board. The drawing was commissioned by the *Friends* from the very talented local wildlife artist, Jerry Wilda. Thank you, Jerry!

The other photographs selected were taken by Stan Culling-USFWS, Doug Clegg, Denise Hughes, Addison Mohler-USFWS, Bob Christensen, and Thomas Jay Oord. Thank you all so much for your generosity. Also, thanks to everyone who submitted photographs, even though they were not selected this time around.

After final postcard selections were made, I contacted various printers. It was a steep learning curve on what goes into printing a postcard, but a fun project! After bids were received, the board ordered the initial printing of **eight different Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge postcards by Printcraft of Caldwell, Idaho. The cards will soon be available exclusively at our Nature Store.**

Thank you to Noreen Tripp and Harry Schumacher for their help in showing the photographs to the public. **And, a special thank you to the photographers and artist who allowed us to use their beautiful work.**

Birdfeeder Program

by Rachel Staats, Birdfeeding Program Leader

Birds are one of the main things that attract visitors to Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. To enhance their experience, the Friends of Deer Flat feed small birds at the visitor center and at the bird blind in the woods next to Lake Lowell.

“The feeders are great because they give visitors the opportunity to have a close-up experience with birds.” said Susan Kain, Visitor Services Manager at Deer Flat. “They’re particularly appreciated for our *Discover Wildlife Journeys* field trips when fourth and fifth graders learn about birds. Students use binoculars to watch feeder birds and make observations about the adaptations they’ve learned about.” Some of the more common birds attracted to the feeders are finches, chickadees, sparrows, juncos, towhees, and doves.

The bird-feeding program started in 2009, with Noreen Tripp as leader. I replaced her as leader in 2015. My father, Dave Staats, helps me. Volunteers feed the birds three times a week from November to March. In 2015, we started feeding the birds only at the visitor center in April and May so that we could have birds for spring *Discover Wildlife Journeys* field trips. In 2016, we started feeding the birds at both the visitor center and the blind, so that we could have birds for the fall field trips.



Rachel Staats feeds the birds at the Deer Flat Visitor Center on November 12, 2001.

Photo by David Staats

At the beginning of every season, we hold a training session for new bird-feeders. (Returning bird-feeders are not required to attend but are welcome to drop in.) We put notices in the Refuge and Friends newsletters and the local papers, looking for volunteers. In September 2015, one person showed up. In September 2016, my dad thought we might get three or four. We got 16! A lot of people want to help feed Deer Flat’s birds.

Occasionally perches fall off the tube feeders. My dad and I have brought a couple to Wild Birds Unlimited in Boise. They’ve fixed Wild Birds-brand feeders at no charge. Once a cat belonging to Julie, the owner, sat on my lap.

This winter’s deep snows forced an end to feeding at the blind for a couple of months and made it hard at times even to feed behind the visitor center. Some intrepid volunteers cut paths to the bird-feeders through the snow.

Volunteer feeders this season: Renee Ackerman, Gene and Teresa Brown, Jeanette Corso, Bob Faller, Mike Ferdinand, Larry Hansen, Bob Hays, Barbara Hopwood, Janet Kubosumi, Louise Laduke, Victoria Martinez, Kathrynne McPherson, Heather Meyer, Jessica Mueller, Ruth Pittman, Hank Purvis, Cassidy Rowley, Dan Schrup, Gary and Marti Stiehl, Isaias Valenzuela, Debbie Vermaat, and Dena Wilson. The Friends of Deer Flat spent about \$480 for birdseed this past season, and have received donations of money and birdseed. **Thanks to this year’s volunteer feeders for all they’ve done with the program!**



“Get Well” Wishes to Tony Tripp!

*The Friends of Deer Flat would like to send heartfelt wishes to Tony Tripp as he deals with some health issues. In late April, Tony suffered stroke symptoms and is recovering at home while doing physical therapy. Tony and Noreen have been ardent supporters of the Friends group for many years and have been instrumental in establishing and furthering many projects at the Refuge. **Best wishes for a speedy recovery.***

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

*For questions or more information, contact Bob Faller
467-6676*



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