

The Grebe

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 23

WINTER 2018

Join us at the
Refuge Star Party
February 17

(See Page 4)

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
Tricia Matthews, Vice-President
Dianne Barker, Treasurer
Mary Jo Schumacher, Secretary
Rex Hanson, Member
Becky Hanson, Member
Chris Matthews, Member
Kathleen McCarter, Member

Contact Information

13751 Upper Embankment Rd
Nampa ID 83686

Email: friendsofdfwr@gmail.com
[www.facebook.com/
FriendsofDeerFlat](http://www.facebook.com/FriendsofDeerFlat)

Bob & Sheryl Faller
Newsletter Editors

Another Great Year for the Friends of Deer Flat

by Bob Christensen, Friends' President

Last year was another great year for Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, one filled with various projects and events that *Friends* helped support.

Activities included:

- ✓ Providing bus scholarships to 10 Treasure Valley schools for educational field trips at the Refuge
- ✓ Providing food and drinks for Earth Day, Star Gazing Party, Kids Fishing Day, Creepy Critters and Habitat Restoration events
- ✓ Purchasing/installing new electronic equipment for the osprey webcam
- ✓ Continuing winter bird feeding program
- ✓ Maintaining the pollinator garden, including a new monarch milkweed habitat
- ✓ Upgrading the wildlife viewing blind
- ✓ Maintaining *The Grebe Nature Store*
- ✓ Maintaining the Friends website <http://friendsofdeerflat.org>
- ✓ Educating Friends Board members on how to best increase volunteerism and fundraising
- ✓ Producing the *Grebe Newsletter*
- ✓ Planting native shrubs and grasses on Refuge uplands

The new year promises to bring more exciting events and projects to provide environmental education and habitat improvements in Southwest Idaho, so we need **YOUR** help to continue providing refuge support. If you haven't done so, please **renew your membership** to the **Friends** (see the *membership application form in this newsletter*).

Friends Membership provides you with:

- Seasonal newsletters and updates about refuge events and programs
- Invitations to special members-only events
- Discount of 10% at The Grebe Nature Store (open limited hours from Mon-Sat at the Refuge Visitor Center)
- Ability to support conservation efforts at a local venue where all can enjoy nature
- Satisfaction of being part of a group that can take on ambitious projects such as habitat restoration and enhancement of learning opportunities at the Refuge
- A tax-deductible membership fee

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Another Great Year

(Continued from Page 1)



We encourage you to also consider becoming involved in the organization's planning and implementation process. Your help can make a difference and you'll enjoy working alongside many other members who share your same ideals of supporting Deer Flat NWR.

If you have any questions about the Friends of Deer Flat, please do not hesitate to contact me at rcloydchris@gmail.com.

Your Friends of Deer Flat Board 2018



Chris Matthews
Board Member



Bob Christensen
Board President



Tricia Matthews
Vice President



Rex Hanson
Board Member

2018 BOARD MEMBERS FRIENDS OF DEER FLAT WILDLIFE REFUGE

See bios at:

[HTTP://WWW.FRIENDSOFDEERFLAT.ORG/STAFF](http://www.FRIENDSOFDEERFLAT.ORG/STAFF)



Mary Jo Schumacher
Secretary



Becky Hanson
Board Member



Kathleen McCarter
Board Member



Dianne Barker
Treasurer

Celebrating our “2017 Volunteers of the Year”

Congratulations are in order for Kathleen McCarter and Mary Jo Schumacher, both of whom were awarded volunteer of the year honors by Friends’ President, Bob Christensen. Thank you, Kathleen and Mary Jo, for making so many beneficial activities possible.



Kathleen started out as secretary of our Friends group several years ago, and has since been an energetic member of the board. She has especially been active in planning, organizing and working at Friends- and Refuge-sponsored events.



Viewing Blind
by Robert Allen

Mary Jo has been secretary of the Friends for several years. Last year, she was successful in producing a Spanish translation of the Friends’ brochure, getting postcards published for *The Grebe* nature store, and coordinating several Refuge events.

Friends’ Annual Potluck Gathering a Success (Despite Government Shutdown)

Wouldn’t you know it, the day we scheduled our annual Friends’ gathering was the first day of a two-day U.S. Government shutdown. The Refuge was closed to us. However, rather than reschedule and have to re-plan the event, a few phone calls were made and emails and text messages were quickly sent to inform attendees of a new venue for the event—Pres. Bob Christensen’s home in Caldwell.

Nineteen Friends members and two guests filled the home with warm camaraderie and good things to eat, including an abundance of fried chicken. It was indeed a cozy time for all. Awards for 2017 Friends volunteers of the year were presented to Mary Jo Schumacher and Kathleen McCarter (see separate article). Other 2017 board members (Tricia Matthews, Dianne Barker and Bob Christensen) were presented with bouquets of flowers for their timely service.

Bob Christensen presented a slide program, which detailed the Friends accomplishments during 2017, and three door prizes were won by Levi Brown, Hank Purvis, and Jack Sutz (the newest member in attendance).

Thanks to all who participated. And to those who “would’ve if you could’ve,” we’ll see you next year.



David Staats, Hank Purvis & Bob Christensen at Potluck

Beat Cabin Fever at the Annual Refuge Star Party

by Mary Jo Schumacher, Board Secretary



Photo of 2017 Refuge Star Party
copyright ProImage Photography

Please join the festivities at the Third Annual Refuge Star Party on Saturday, February 17, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Admission is free!

The College of Idaho Planetarium will bring its interactive StarLab! The Boise Astronomical Society will set up telescopes for star gazing and a presentation will be given by Dr. L. Paul Verhage.

The kids will not want to miss this event. There will be star crafts as well as lessons on how migratory birds and other creatures use stars to navigate. A volunteer from the Caldwell Library will read star stories! A live owl presentation will thrill children of all ages!

Friends will host a refreshment table of cookies, coffee and cocoa, courtesy of Lisa Myers at the Flying M. The Friends will also have an outreach table with stargazer brochures for sale.

A Timberline High School teacher and students will have an information table to show night sky photos and share tips about photographing the night sky. In addition, they will present night sky photos in the Refuge auditorium from 6:30-6:45, and will demonstrate star photography outside after star gazing begins.

Schedule of activities:

- 5:30, 5:55, 6:20, 7:35, 8:00—View the night sky in The College of Idaho's StarLab.
- 5:30-6:20—Solar viewing.
- 5:40, 6:00, 6:20, 6:40, 7:00—Star stories with the Caldwell Public Library.
- 5:45-6:15—Live owl presentation by the Morley Nelson Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area. Learn how these birds get around in the dark of night.
- 7:00-7:30—Easy Star gazing presentation with Astronomer Dr. L. Paul Verhage.
- 7:00-8:30— Outdoor star gazing with the Boise Astronomical Society.

Join the Idaho Master Naturalists—Deer Flat Chapter

Interested in nature and want to learn more about the natural beauty of Idaho? Enjoy volunteering your time?

Idaho Master Naturalist Program may be for you!

Over one year, participants attend at least 40 hours of classes/field trips, and volunteer at least 40 hours toward conservation to become certified. Classes will be held February 9 to May 18, 2018, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. at the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center, 13751 Upper Embankment Rd, Nampa, Idaho. Field trips supplement the class schedule and will be held on other days. A \$100 registration fee is charged, with \$50 refunded upon certification. To sign up or get more information, contact mndeerflat@gmail.com.



Some members of the
2018 Idaho Master Naturalist Group -
Deer Flat Chapter at Leslie Gulch, OR
Photo by Barbara Erter

Update on Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Project

Over 100 Volunteers helped plant 3,000 shrub and bunchgrass seedlings on the Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Project Site at Deer Flat NWR



For those who wondered, the Friends' Sagebrush Steppe Restoration Project adjacent to the Refuge visitor center has advanced to the next stage.

Beginning on November 4, 2017, and over subsequent days, almost 100 volunteers planted about 2,000 native shrubs and 1,000 bunchgrass plugs.

Some vegetative sampling plots were also set up to monitor the success of this grand planting effort.

More work is still ahead of us, including watering the plants next summer and keeping the weeds from overtaking the site.

Take a few seconds to review this collage of photos showing our planting exercise.

*All photos taken by
Annette de Knijf,
Deer Flat Refuge Manager*

The Grebe Nature Store Update

The Friends are pleased to announce the addition of several new and exciting items in our nature store. The backpacks and water bottles shown here display the Friends of Deer Flat logo.

For kids, we now carry bird whistles, bumble bee finger puppets, and bald eagle rings. Remember to check Nature Store hours before making your trip and always present your Friends' membership card to receive a 10% discount on all of your purchases. In the future, purchases will be available using your debit or credit card.



Durable nylon draw-string backpack with zipper pocket (\$10)



Heavy plastic water bottles (PABA-free) with pop-up spout & carrying strap (\$10)

Refuge Happenings

by Annette deKnijf, Refuge Manager



Randy Banding Ducks.

Photo by Deer Flat NWF; Sept 2011.

We first pay our respects to Randy Aulbach, Maintenance Chief, who passed away October 3, 2017. On November 15, 2017, we held a Celebration of Life in his honor. We will all miss him, his expertise, and his helping hand.

- John St. Pierre, seasonal maintenance worker at Turnbull NWR, came to Deer Flat on a "detail" in October/November to **help with maintenance needs** until we can fill Randy Aulbach's position. He helped winterize all the vehicles and equipment, oil changes, fluids, etc. He mowed the Friends' restoration plots, and organized and cleaned around the maintenance boneyard and shop buildings.
- Tod Nuffer, equipment operator at Grays Lake NWR, **conducted ATV-UTV training** November 7.
- **New AmeriCorps volunteers arrived** at the refuge in September 2018: Rhian Smith and Nathan Horwood, Environmental Education, and Nic Carlson, Volunteer Coordinator.
- We held a **successful Creepy Critters** event on October 28, 2017.
- **Eagle Scout McCoy Bartlet installed fishing line receptacles** at Upper Dam East & West, Gotts Point, Parking Lots 1 & 7, and the Lower Dam Recreation Area boat ramp.
- The **Idaho Master Naturalist Program** is continuing for its second year.
- **Environmental Education programs** continue with schools back in session and include Discover Wildlife Journeys at Refuge, SEEDS classroom visits, etc.
- On November 30, 2017, the Friends had a table at the **Hyatt Watershed Project** open house. Another open house is scheduled March 7 and will be **on restoring the health of the Boise River**.
- On December 14, 2017, Lake Lowell Area Bicycle Pedestrian Access Plan received an Idaho Department of Transportation **Excellence Award in transportation planning**.
- On December 14, 2017, the Refuge hosted our **holiday potluck and white elephant gift exchange**.
- January 11, 2018, I met with Canyon Highway District No. 4, J-U-B Engineers, Inc., City of Caldwell, and COMPASS at a kick-off meeting for "step-down" planning, specific to the **Bike-Ped plan for Indiana & Orchard** possible shared bike lane (Indiana from Roosevelt to Orchard; Orchard from Indiana to Riverside).

“Take a Hike”

by Bob Christensen, Board President

Visiting or hiking at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge in January may seem a little bizarre to some “nature lovers,” but when the sun is shining and the wind is moderate, it is a great time of year to witness unique natural phenomena—no matter the temperature.

You may have noticed Lake Lowell was frozen over the early part of the January, leaving few, if any, open water areas for our web-footed friends (mostly wintering Canada geese & mallards) to find a secure resting place when they return from foraging in adjacent farm fields.

On a January hike, I observed these birds congregated around any small patch of open water they could find, many actually roosting on the adjacent ice. When I looked closer, I also saw several bald eagles perched nearby on the ice, just waiting for a chance to take some unwary prey.

These are the kinds of scenes that will be experienced if only one is willing to vacate the house in less than ideal conditions and challenge the chilly weather.

Another winter adventure I had recently was taking a hike to the east side of Lake Lowell, to find and see if the resident bald eagle pair was on territory and if they intended to nest there. Since this nest is on the east end of Lake Lowell, getting there requires a strenuous hike through tall grasses, weedy overgrowth, dense shrubbery and forests of cottonwoods choked with many old logs to climb over. But I found that the effort was worth it. I followed deer trails where I could—some well-trodden and some scarcely used. I even caught a glimpse of a few muleys as they slipped away through the woodlands.

Great flocks of crows were flying and roosting throughout the forest. And as I moved through the area, I happened to flush a great-horned owl from an ash tree where it was taking its midday sleep. In its mad flight to distance itself from me, it flew doggedly straight toward a tree laden with roosting crows. Boy, what a sight it was to see those alarmed crows scatter in a cacophony of endless “cawing!” I thought they might mob the owl, but in this case, they were more concerned about getting a quick distance between them and their natural enemy.

And yes, I finally reached the eagle nesting territory, after bucking some rather thick brush. Just southwest of Gull Island, I found the resident pair of bald eagles at the same nesting tree that they used last year. The female was busy rearranging sticks on the nest, while the male perched on an adjacent limb keeping watch. They took very little notice of me, so at a distance of about 200 yards, I sat down in a weed patch and watched them a while. What magnificent birds (our national emblem) with their bright white heads, deep yellow bills and their “mean green” eyes.

So my advice to all you nature enthusiasts, is **“take a hike” at the Refuge**, no matter what the season. You are likely to find something unique and memorable, and even something to talk to family and friends about.



Photo from USFWS

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



All members of the "Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge" 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, and 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