

# The Grebe

*New Refuge Manager,  
Eddie Owens,  
Slated to Report  
Early in  
December.*

VOLUME 9, ISSUE 26

FALL 2019

## **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**

Tricia Matthews, President  
Kathleen McCarter, Vice-President  
Becky Hanson, Treasurer  
Rex Hanson, Secretary  
Bob Christensen, Member  
Jolene Edwards, Member  
Cathy Eells, Member  
Chris Matthews, Member  
Mary Jo Schumacher, Member  
Gisel Holdcroft, Member

## **Contact Information**

13751 Upper Embankment Rd  
Nampa ID 83686

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

*Bob & Kathy Christensen  
Interim Newsletter Editors*

*From the President's Keyboard:*

### **FRIENDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

*Dear Friends,*

*As 2019 draws to a close, it is a good time to reflect back on the many accomplishments achieved by this group we call the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge. The Friends have continued to fulfill its mission to "promote, protect and provide resources to preserve and enhance the Refuge for the enjoyment of present and future generations."*



*Brought forth by the generosity of your donations and the dedication of a few volunteers, the Friends have continued to make a difference. So, as you read this final newsletter of 2019, those of us working behind the scenes hope you will continue to support this great mission through your continued Friends membership, donations and as a volunteer.*

*Thanks to each and every one of you!*

*Tricia Matthews*

Correction from my last message: The tree squirrels on the refuge are the Fox Squirrel, an introduced species; and definitely not the native Red Squirrel which inhabits conifer forests at higher elevations.

And, a big THANK YOU to BOB & SHERYL FALLER who have been our newsletter editors for the last several years. They were responsible for developing a new, enticing look to "The Grebe."

## 2020 Membership Renewals

Dear Friends of Deer Flat,

It is membership renewal time and you will be getting a renewal request in the mail in the next few weeks. (*You can also use the membership application at the back of this newsletter.*)

Our Friends group values your membership—*without you we could not do what we do!* Your continued support is crucial to the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge and our Mission Statement:

*...to promote, protect, and provide resources to preserve and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge for the enjoyment of present and future generations.*

The Friends have many exciting projects planned for 2020! One such venture is revitalizing the Kids Space at the Visitor Center. Cathy Eells has agreed to lead this project and she is looking for volunteers to assist her; so, if you, or anyone you know has experience painting, woodworking, or carpeting, please send an email to: Cathy [Eells: cathyeells53@gmail.com](mailto:cathyeells53@gmail.com) or Mary Jo [Schumacher: newfs48@gmail.com](mailto:Schumacher: newfs48@gmail.com)

### Membership provides you with:

- Seasonal newsletter and updates about refuge events and programs
- Invitations to special members-only events
- Discount of 10% at The Grebe Nature Store
- Ability to support Friends conservation efforts on the Refuge
- Satisfaction of being part of a group that can take on ambitious projects such as habitat restoration and enhancing the learning opportunities at the Refuge.
- Membership fee is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law

## November 2019 - Current Board Members



Bob Christensen, Cathy Eells, Mary Jo Schumacher, Chris Matthews,  
Tricia Matthews, Kathleen McCarter, Becky Hanson, Rex Hanson,  
Gise Holdcroft, and Jolene Edwards

## INTRODUCING OUR AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS



Nicole, Gusty & Kaitlyn



### **Kaitlyn Hanley, Environmental Educator**

I spent my childhood in South Florida but found a passion for the outdoors on family vacations to the Adirondack Mountains in New York. There I fell in love with hiking, running and being in nature. I followed my passion via college at Georgia Southern University, and then pursued my master's degree in biological sciences at Clemson University studying pikas in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. This research infused a passion for the alpine (the tall mountains of the Northern Rockies) and environmental stewardship. The plight of pikas revolves around climate change and the entire alpine ecosystem that is declining as our world warms. After my master's degree, I turned away from the world of science and focused on environmental education as a venue to change the future of our world. I absolutely love every activity that gets me into the mountains; but mostly I spend my time running and enjoying the outdoor world. When I am not outside, I enjoy reading a good book, knitting or creating art.

### **Gusty Catherin-Sauer, Volunteer Coordinator**

Born and raised near the Frank Church Wilderness Area, Augusta Catherin-Sauer (Gusty) has always had a passion for the great outdoors. Gusty loves getting outside on adventures with family and friends. She has spent the past five summers as a rafting guide on the Salmon River of No Return, and aspires to be a livestock packer in one of the U.S.A.'s gorgeous national parks! From an early age she was curious about natural science and environmental studies. During her undergraduate years at Hampshire College near Amherst, MA, Gusty became involved with grassroots community organizing. This experience led to an interest in organizing efforts to conserve and responsibly manage our public lands. She is beyond thrilled to be the 2019-20 Volunteer Coordinator at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Nicole Hutcherson, Environmental Educator**

Being raised in the Sonoran Desert, I grew up surrounded by cacti, beautiful skies, and a large close-knit family. My siblings and I spent our time out in the sun, exploring the bizarre desert environment, and cultivating a curiosity for the unique world around me. This, along with role models such as the great science communicators Bill Nye, Steve Irwin, and Neil Degrasse Tyson, helped to foster a love of science and nature that quickly grew into a fierce passion. I pursued an education in wildlife and biology in hopes that I, too, could make learning a fun, exciting experience that would help people love the creepier and less understood parts of nature. While most of my family stayed down in the desert, I migrated up north with my fiancé to Idaho, the year after we both graduated from NAU. With my degree in biology I have participated in research involving bat populations, along with a stint in training education animals at private zoos down in Texas, and much of my time has been spent in assisting with education programs associated with museums and nature reserves. Now as a full-time resident in Idaho, I've been exploring the new-found world of snow and the green wilderness of the state!—which is what led me to the Deer Flat Refuge. After spending the last year working at the Deer Flat NWR, I fell in love with the surroundings and decided to spend a second AmeriCorps term helping expand and add to the wonderful outreach programs that the Refuge provides.

## *CREEPY CRITTERS – 2019* by Kathleen McCarter



It was a cold and blustery evening on Saturday, October 26<sup>th</sup> when the intrepid Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge set up their booth on the front lawn of the visitor center. We welcomed many masked visitors, mainly families and children, to the event. Most of them were delighted when we handed them warm apple cider and cookies. Children were also able to choose some small prizes, such as spider and bat rings and pencils at our table. There were several large snakes and other reptiles indoors they were allowed to touch and hold. (See fearless Kiana H. with a large Boa!)

We shared some information about the Friends group with Creepy Critters attendees and told them about some of our activities, such as the upcoming sagebrush planting project.

I'd like to thank all of the Friends members who helped make this event a success while enduring the bone-chilling cold. As you can see, we had only one casualty from hypothermia (see relaxing skeleton). At the end of the event, Friends also provided hot pizza for the many volunteers—which was readily enjoyed and appreciated.



## A Puddle Duck Hideaway *by Bob Christensen*

In early summer of this year, I placed a movement-sensitive wildlife camera on the edge of a small pond nestled among the cattails and reed canary grass of the Leavitt wetlands, located just off the east dike of the Refuge. The last couple of years, I have been talking with refuge management and other potential partners about what we can do to enhance these wetlands for the benefit of waterfowl and other water-loving species. So, in an effort to document the value of small open ponds among the cattails, I set up my camera at a small patch of open water which was inundated by the backwaters of the lake and also fed by water spilling from the terminus of a nearby irrigation lateral.

Much to my surprise, the camera captured an amazing variety of wildlife coming and going from the wetland pond. They included, not only numerous puddle ducks (primarily mallards, with a few northern pintails mixed in), but a mule deer family, herons, egrets, blackbirds, and even one or two mystery species. Of particular delight to me, was a variety of snapshots showing the different flight styles posed by the puddle ducks as they took off from the narrow pond.



*Lifting off in Style*



## Community Outreach - 2019

As Community Outreach Co-Chairs, Mary Jo Schumacher and Cathy Eells have had a busy and productive year. They launched the 2019 season by having a Friends booth at the Information Fair at the Caldwell Events Center (O'Connor Field House) in April; followed by Dia de los Niño's at its new venue on Indian Creek Plaza in downtown Caldwell; Raptor Fest at Indian Creek Winery, Kuna; and culminating with Fiesta Patrias, held at Indian Creek Plaza on September 15. All events brought hundreds of people, including families with children, to Caldwell and Kuna. The entertainment, food, booths and volunteers raised awareness of the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, as well as many other non-profit organizations from the Treasure Valley.

## Fiesta Patrias



(L to R) Rex Hanson,  
Cathy Eells,  
Becky Hanson and  
Mary Jo Schumacher

The Friends of Deer Flat participated in the annual Fiesta Patrias on September 15th, of this year. This event was hosted by Yanira Corvera and Radio Rancho at Indian Creek Plaza in Caldwell. Friends Outreach Coordinator, Cathy Eells did a great job of putting everything together for our participation in this event.

The Friends had hundreds of children visit our booth! They enjoyed our educational spinning wheel and prizes. This was a great outreach to meet our Hispanic neighbors. It was truly a fiesta; the live music, food and atmosphere were exciting! We met many folks who had not been to Deer Flat Wildlife National Refuge. After learning about the visitor center, bird blind and walking trails, many were looking forward to a visit.

Here is some information about the origin of this holiday: September 16, 1810—Fiestas Patrias is a patriotic holiday in Mexico—the anniversary of Mexican Independence from Spain. Like ourselves and other colonial countries, independence is a cause for great celebration.

## UPDATE ON SAGEBRUSH STEPPE RESTORATION EFFORTS

### Over 190 Volunteers Helped Plant 1,900 Shrub and Forb Seedlings.

The Friends' sagebrush steppe restoration project, adjacent to the refuge visitor center, continues to advance. On November 1st & 2nd, 2019, a total of about 190 volunteers met at the Refuge to carry out our third annual planting event, where they placed about 1,300 native shrubs and 600 perennial forbs in refuge upland soils. We have now replanted a total of about 6 acres as part of our restoration efforts.

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

The Friends partnered with Rotary District 5400 to invite volunteers to help with the planting project. A huge THANK YOU to all who helped with this fall's project.

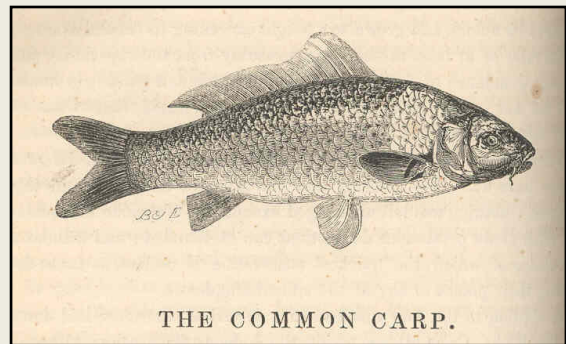


## INVASIVE SPECIES ON THE REFUGE

When you hear the words “invasive species,” you might think primarily of weedy plant species such as cheat grass, wild mustard, prickly lettuce, pepper grass, or white bryony; or even invasive woody species such as Russian Olive, tamarisk, and false indigo bush. Invasive plant species displace native vegetation, altering the composition and structure of vegetation communities, affecting food webs, and modifying ecosystem processes; thus resulting in considerable impacts to native wildlife.

But what about invasive (non-native) animal species? Numerous kinds of non-native mammals, fish, amphibians, and invertebrates live and thrive within the Lake Lowell and Snake River Islands Units of the Refuge. Non-native fish which have been historically stocked in Lake Lowell include channel catfish, black crappie, and Lahontan cutthroat trout, among other species.

The most prolific invasive fish in Lake Lowell is the common carp. This species has been present in Lake Lowell since at least the 1950s. Common carp directly compete with other fish species for food (aquatic invertebrates and plankton), while their feeding behavior can cause significant changes in the composition of macrophyte, phytoplankton, and invertebrate communities, altering the food web and trophic structure of aquatic systems. As carp root around in muddy lake bottoms while feeding, they stir up the sediment and damage plant roots, causing otherwise clear waters to become muddy. Sediment and organic material suspended in the water column causes subsurface sunlight needed for plant growth to be reduced or even eliminated; and photosynthetic plant production and oxygen levels decrease. These disturbances result in a decrease of aquatic vegetation and plankton that serve as food and habitat for migratory birds, aquatic invertebrates, and other fish.



Fishery managers realized the negative impact carp were having on game fish populations and the aquatic ecosystem of Lake Lowell and began trying various measures to remove the carp; ultimately treating the lake in the 1960s with the pesticide rotenone. Carp populations remained low enough for other game and panfish numbers to rebuild; until the 1990s, when a severe drought caused a decline in panfish numbers and an explosion in the carp population. After several years of poor fishing, Idaho Fish and Game studied ways to improve the lake’s fishery, and by 2010 concluded that the carp population was so high that the only way to eliminate them was to again treat the lake with rotenone. However, due to the extensive size and high water levels of Lake Lowell, it was not deemed practical or sensible to treat the lake at that time. Currently, carp are being caught and removed through commercial fishing activities. Unfortunately, the amount of carp being removed by these means is not enough to create any appreciable decrease to the carp population.

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<sup>1</sup> The above information was summarized from appended materials to the 2016 “Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan.”)

## POLLINATOR GARDEN/COMMEMORATIVE BRICK UPDATE

by Patricia Matthews



This year there have been two notable changes to the pollinator garden program. This past spring, members of the Nampa Garden Club generously offered their services to maintain the garden. Through additional planting, weeding, and mulching by these ladies, the garden continues to thrive despite harsh weather and hungry wildlife.

Commemorative bricks, which have been incorporated throughout the garden, provide personalized messages from donors to those who visit. Purchases of these bricks help to support Friends activities at the Refuge. New to those interested

in purchasing a brick, orders may now request a symbol instead of plain text. There are over 300 symbols available. Contact [friendsofdfwr@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofdfwr@gmail.com) to learn more.

The refuge pollinator garden, located behind the Refuge visitor center, was relocated to a more visible location beginning in 2013; with the help of Tricia and Chris Matthews as well as two local boy scout groups. The garden focuses on plants that are native to the Intermountain West region that will attract an assortment of pollinators such as birds, bees, butterflies, beetles, etc. One section is also planted with milkweed in the hopes of attracting monarchs passing through the region.



## FEEDING IS “FOR THE BIRDS”

Another winter bird-feeding season is upon us at Deer Flat NWR. “Thank you” again to Rachel and David Staats for organizing and managing this effort, helped with the aid of many volunteers. We also want to acknowledge our friends from the Southwestern Idaho Birders Association for their annual cash donation to help us purchase bird seed.

A big thanks also goes to Boyd and Julie Steele, owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Boise, who have not only donated bird seed, but also donated a new hopper feeder for our winter bird feeding project. Boyd mounted it on a pole with a metal perch for our birds to enjoy black oil sunflower mix (house finches, house sparrows and northern flickers). The dark-eyed juncos, mourning doves, and California quail love to nibble on the spillover seed that falls to the ground (lucky ground-feeding birds!). The next time you are at the Visitor Center, stroll out the back doors and check out the new feeder, mounted on the pole near the pollinator garden.



## NEW PRODUCTS AVAILABLE IN *THE GREBE NEST*

We are pleased and excited to have several new products for sale in the nature store at the Visitor Center:

Mark Luper, a new refuge volunteer, Friends member, and craftsman, offered us the opportunity to sell his beautiful walking sticks—He is donating fifty percent of the profit to our group. He repurposes wood he has found on the forest floor in Custer County; then carves and polishes it, adding his personal creative touches to each walking stick. Each is unique and one of a kind.



We had our western grebe logo embroidered on ball caps in a variety of colors. You may choose a structured or unstructured style.



Calling all bug fans! The store now has “Amber InsectNside” candy—a tasty sweet treat for future entomologists.

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*All profits from sales in our nature store support projects, events and educational outreach for Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.*



## The Grebe Nest Nature Store

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

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 know you want to buy 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](mailto:friendsofdfwr@gmail.com) about available symbols.)

**Brick price is \$50 for one; \$45 each for two or more.**  
**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: \_\_\_\_\_