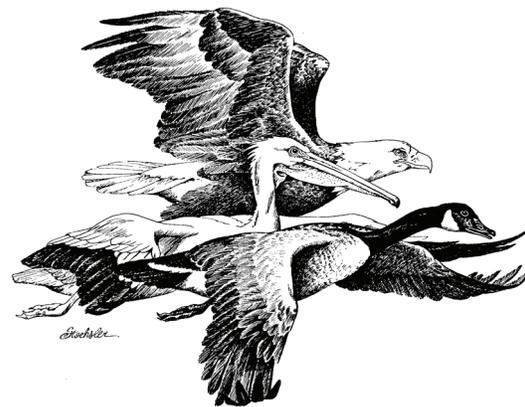


# Words from the Wetlands



News from The Klamath Basin Refuge Complex

Spring 2005

## Refuge Hunt Meeting Scheduled April 16

The Klamath Basin Refuges will be conducting a post season hunting meeting on Saturday, April 16, 2005. The meeting will be held at the Tulelake Fairgrounds from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Topics which will be presented by the refuge staff will include:

- Water projections for the balance of 2005
- A summary of hunting use and success for the past season (See the article on this topic elsewhere in this newsletter)
- Habitat management plans for Tule Lake and Lower Klamath Refuges for the remainder of 2005.

The refuge staff will be asking those attending the meeting for input and suggestions on the following topics:

Changing late season hunting on Tule Lake and Lower Klamath Refuges to an afternoon program. A number of suggestions for allowing afternoon hunting late in the season have been suggested by hunters over the past several years. The refuge staff is interested in receiving suggestions concerning the date hunters would be interested in seeing a switchover to afternoon hunting and the time of day hunting units would open to shooting if afternoon hunting is implemented.

Modifying the current spaced-blind locations to include some blinds in the southwest sump in

exchange for the F and G blinds. The refuge staff will present maps of a possible spaced-blind hunting location in the southwest sump for comment, but will consider suggestions made at this hunting meeting as well.

Continued on page 2

## Dates to Remember:

**April 16<sup>th</sup>** – Post Hunting Season Meeting at the Tulelake Fairgrounds from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

**May 14<sup>th</sup>** – International Migratory Bird Day in Klamath Falls, Oregon from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**May 21** – Tulelake Migratory Bird Festival at the Community Center in Tulelake, California from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## Contents:

<b>April 16th Hunting Meeting</b>	<b>Pages 1 &amp; 2</b>
<b>Water Outlook — Summer 2005</b>	<b>Page 2</b>
<b>Walking Wetlands</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>Changes in Waterfowl Migration?</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>Species Spotlight — Bewick's Wren</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>Klamath Marsh Refuge Plan Begins</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
<b>2004-05 Waterfowl Hunt Season Review</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Refuge Photo Blinds Enhanced</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
<b>Refuge Fire Crew Helps Protect Homes</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
<b>Klamath Refuge Friends Group Formed</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
<b>Refuge Wildlife Photos on New Web Page</b>	<b>Page 9</b>

**Continued from page 1**

The refuge staff would like to know how hunters felt last season's program that allowed spaced-blind users to drive into the "B" blinds, worked. If the experience was a positive one, additional drive-in opportunities may be considered in the coming season.

There has been a request to increase the number of units into which amphibious vehicles are allowed access. The current policy allows amphibious access into units in which ATV's and four-wheel drive vehicle use is permitted. Input on this topic will be considered at the meeting and in the form of written comment.

For additional information, you may contact the refuge at (530) 667-2231. Those unable to attend the meeting may submit comments to Dave Menke at the refuge address or by e-mail at "dave\_menke@fws.gov."

## **The Lower Klamath Refuge Water Outlook — 2005**

**Fran Maiss — Deputy Project Leader**

As I am writing this, the NRCS has announced the March 1 snowpack in the Klamath Basin as 53% of average with the 2005 water year being predicted as 52% of average for inflows into Upper Klamath Lake between April and September. Not a real promising outlook for the summer.

I guess the good news is that this fall/winter we had a rather normal delivery of water to refuge wetlands in a timely manner. This was a first since 1999. Currently our marsh areas and wetlands are fairly well filled and the spring migration of waterfowl is in full swing.

As we did last year, the refuges have entered into a written agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation to deliver and maintain about 15,000 acre feet of water in refuge seasonal marshes for later release to the Klamath River, sometime between April 1 and June 15.

This will assist the Bureau in planning for and meeting the required Klamath River flows for this spring. In return, the Bureau will attempt to deliver an equal amount of water through the ADY Canal and/or by groundwater pumping on as consistent a delivery schedule as possible during the period between June 15 and September 30. This arrangement worked fairly well last year, which was also dry. The refuge staff was able to de-water seasonal marshes in a timely manner, thereby growing the optimum mix of seasonal wetland plants in advance of what turned out to be a normal fall flood up. Lower Klamath Refuge also received a consistent supply of 25 cfs through the ADY Canal over the summer which allowed us to keep our most productive permanent marsh, Unit 2 relatively full and enough D Plant deliveries to maintain other permanent units.

For the upcoming summer, even though it appears dry, the refuge should be able to keep Unit 2 which encompasses 4,500 acres supplied, either with minimal ADY deliveries and/or ground water supplementation. The maintenance of our other 5,400 acres of planned permanent marshes is an unknown. If the D Plant from the Tulelake Irrigation District runs, that water will be used to maintain some or all of this acreage. If not, or if it runs minimally, some method of internal water redistribution will be necessary to maintain some wetlands.

All in all, predicting the summer/fall management scenario for the Lower Klamath NWR is a bit like forecasting the weather, you make what you think is an educated guess, but only time will tell if you were right.



# Walking wetlands” – Can there be coexistence between wetlands and agriculture?

**Dave Mauser — Wildlife Biologist**

Traditionally, some people have viewed wetlands and agriculture as competing or even conflicting land uses. Certainly thousands of wetland acres in North America have been lost to drainage and the plow; however, on Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), these traditionally “incompatible” land uses have been thrust together by the Klamath Reclamation Project and the Kuchel Act of 1964. Located within the Klamath Project, Tule Lake NWR is an overlay refuge on lands previously withdrawn by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation for irrigation and farming purposes. The Kuchel Act of 1964 mandated that the refuge be managed primarily for waterfowl but with “full consideration to optimum agriculture that is consistent therewith”. Despite the intent of the Kuchel Act, biological and agricultural values on refuge lands have declined in the recent past. Sedimentation and stabilized water levels have lowered the productivity and diversity of wetlands and continuous farming has led to declining soil organic matter and increases in soil pests, both of which threaten the sustainability of the local rural economy.

## **Walking Wetlands** Species that Benefit



In the mid-1990s, the Refuge staff and several partners (U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Tule Lake Irrigation District, California Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Universities of California and Washington) began experimentally rotating a flooded wetland cycle, on a one to four year basis, into farm leases on the Refuge. Not surprisingly, these newly restored wetlands supported a large number and diversity of waterfowl and other waterbirds. However, what surprised both farmers and Refuge managers was that wetlands had substantial benefits to agriculture as well! Research and reports from individual farmers indicated that wetland rotations eliminated the need for soil fumigation (to control nematode pests) and some fertilizers at a cost savings of more than \$200/acre. In addition, crop yields increased by approximately 25%. The ability of wetlands to control soil pests and weeds and enhance soil fertility allowed some growers to produce organic crops. Success on the Refuge has led several farmers to explore ways of incorporating this technique onto private lands within the Klamath Basin.

Both the Refuge and its partners will continue to explore the ramifications and utility of this program. Perhaps the seemingly conflicting dual mandates of the Kuchel Act for waterfowl management and agriculture may, in fact, represent a unique opportunity to explore the potential for “win-win” solutions!

## Waterfowl Migration Changes: What's Going On?

**John Beckstrand — Wildlife Biologist**

In recent years the timing of the waterfowl migration through the Klamath Basin has seen great change. A large proportion of the waterfowl in the Pacific Flyway still pass through the Basin during fall and spring migration. But what has changed is the timing and duration of their stay. In the fall of 1997, waterfowl numbers reached their highest in over 30 years on Lower Klamath Refuges. Since that time, fall use by ducks and geese has been declining while at the same time spring waterfowl use has been increasing. The trend of fewer birds in the fall and more birds earlier in the spring has become quite noticeable to duck hunters and bird watchers alike. In 2004 many people commented that habitat conditions on Lower Klamath Refuge which typically supports about one-half of the waterfowl in the Basin in the fall, looked better than they had in a number of years. The refuge received full deliveries of water in a timely manner for flooding wetlands by the peak of the waterfowl migration. Seasonal units had good seed production and plenty of standing grain was available. Yet on Lower Klamath the number of duck use days in the fall (1 duck for one day = 1 use day.) was the lowest in over twenty years while goose use days were the second lowest. Possibly for the first time, waterfowl use in the spring of 2004 was higher than it was in the fall.

### White-fronted Geese

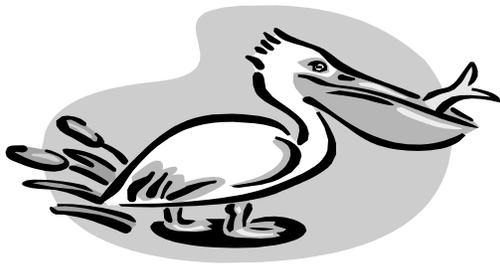


Words from The Wetlands



**Pintails on White Lake**

What's going on? Historically one of the management goals of the Klamath Basin Refuge Complex was to hold early fall migrant waterfowl until the rice harvest was completed in the Central Valley (Valley). In the Valley, most wildlife areas and duck clubs didn't begin flood up of their wetlands until just before the start of duck season. As earlier maturing varieties of rice were developed, wetland managers on public and private lands began flooding earlier to attract waterfowl and establish a tradition of use. Finally, in the late 1990's more restrictive air quality regulations reduced the desirability of burning rice stubble and farmers turned to flooding to break down rice stubble and reduce soil pathogens. As a result, several hundred thousand acres of rice stubble is flooded in the Valley by early fall which, in turn, attracts early migrants such as white-fronted geese and pintails that historically stayed longer in the Klamath Basin. By late fall the Central Valley contains upwards of half a million acres of flooded rice fields. That is a waterfowl banquet the Klamath Basin can't compete with! On the flip side, by early or mid January much of the waterfowl food resources in the Valley have been depleted and large numbers of birds head for the Klamath Basin. The Klamath Basin has always been important as a migration stop for waterfowl and increased spring use may make the Basin even more important for the welfare of migrating waterfowl headed for the breeding grounds. Unless we can make fall migrants a better offer in the Klamath Basin, this new "tradition" may be around for a while.



# Species Spotlight

## **Bewick's Wren**

*Thryomares bewickii*

**Toby Duran — Volunteer and  
Tulelake High School Student**

The Bewick's Wren also known as *Thryomares bewickii*, is common throughout the Klamath Basin and can be found here year round. The places to look and find these little song birds would be Stukel Mountain, Moore City Park, the Link River, and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge. A visit to refuge photo blind # 4 (reservations required) provide an opportunity to get a close view and take some great snapshots of this beautiful bird.

They are easy to tell apart from the other Wrens. The thing that gives them away is the predominant white stripe above their eyes. They also are slender in shape, with a white underside, a long rounded tail, which has white spots on it. They are 5 inches to 5 ½ inches in height, with a wingspan of 7 inches to 7 ¼ inches wide.

Their habitat ranges from open woodland areas such as Modoc Forest and upland thickets. They can also be found near fencerows and brushy areas especially near riparian habitats. This basically describes the entire Klamath Basin because nearly everywhere you go, you see fencerows and brushy areas.

When it comes to nesting, look for a place that has a cavity in it. For example, holes in trees, gaps between rocks, and holes in the ground.

Their nest may contain cotton, hairs, snakeskin, wool, and an inner layer of feathers. They start breeding in March and lay their eggs in June.

Bewick's wrens usually lay 5-7 eggs, which are white and irregularly dotted.

This wren is common in the southwestern and far western United States and is found rarely east of the Mississippi River. Males build dummy nests and are known to attack the nests of other birds nesting near by. The Bewick's Wren has a very melodious song that may be hard to distinguish from that of a song sparrow.

There are five other species of wrens in the Klamath Basin. They are the rock wren, house wren, canyon wren, winter wren, and the marsh wren. These species are not as widespread as the Bewick's Wren but with a little luck and effort, you can find them in their favored habitats. A good place to start is in the unusual sightings book found at the refuge headquarters, on Hill Road (five miles west of Tulelake, California).



**Bewick's Wren Tule Lake NWR  
Photo Blind 4**

# **Klamath Marsh NWR to Develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)**

**Walt Ford — Refuge Manager**

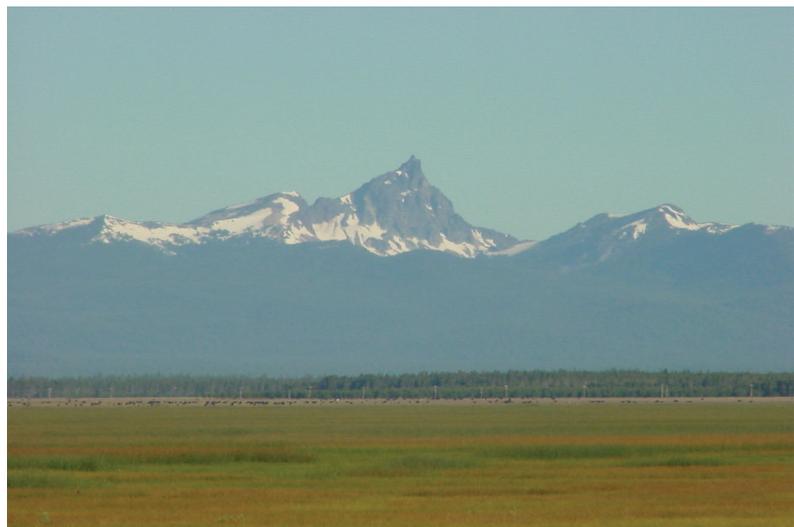
Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) has begun the process to develop a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), a 15 year Master Management Plan. When Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997, it mandated that each refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System complete a CCP by the year 2012. By developing a CCP, the Refuge will simplify future management decisions and also provide continuity whenever there's a change in Refuge Managers. The CCP seeks community based support of Refuge goals and objectives which makes public participation essential during the planning and development phases of the CCP.

The CCP at the Klamath Marsh NWR was originally slated to begin in 2008 along with the other five refuges of the Klamath Basin Refuge Complex. After careful consideration, it was decided that Klamath Marsh NWR would be better served if a CCP was developed independently of the other refuges in the Complex. This decision was based on the complexity of issues that surround Klamath Marsh NWR, i.e., haying, grazing, water right/usage, prescribed fire program, Tribal issues, grasshopper control, forest management, managing for wildlife species diversity, public use, programs, etc.

The entire planning process from start to finish is expected to take approximately three and one-half years. This includes the preplanning phase, which is where the Refuge is now. During this phase, the Refuge conducted a Habitat Management Review in September 2004. This review was carried out by multi-disciplinary experts from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Forest Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service;

Klamath Tribes; Oregon State University; Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife; The Nature Conservancy; River Design Group, Inc.; and David Evans and Associates. The process required the participants to review extensive documentation on Refuge history and past management strategies prior to arriving on site. Once the members were assembled, they finalized the goals and objectives for the Wildlife and Habitat Management review. This was followed by three days of on-site visits to the various habitats present on the refuge and concluded with the development of recommendations that best support the purposes for which the Klamath Marsh NWR was created. These recommendations will be instrumental in the development of the management objectives for the CCP.

Once the preplanning phase is completed, the public will receive notification that participation by interested individuals and groups will be essential to help identify other potential issues and concerns, and to provide input in helping resolve those issues. Public involvement is instrumental in completing the draft CCP and NEPA documents. Your input will help make the CCP a better management tool for the Refuge and I look forward to your participation in this important planning process.



**Klamath Marsh National Wildlife Refuge with Mt. Thielsen in the background**

## Refuges 2004-05 Hunt Season Summaries

### Dave Menke — Outdoor Recreation Planner

Despite relatively normal water and crop conditions on both Tule Lake and Lower Klamath Refuges during the past year (following four water-short years), waterfowl hunting success didn't rebound as much as many hunters and the refuge staff hoped. In general, both marsh and field hunting habitats looked pretty favorable at the start of the season. Drawings for the first weekend included 200 and 300 hunters drawn for Tule Lake field and marsh units respectively. On Lower Klamath 200 hunters were drawn for field permits and 250 were drawn for marsh permits the opening weekend.

Lower Klamath Marsh hunting success on opening day averaged 4.38 ducks per hunter this year compared to an average of 3.47 ducks per hunter the previous season. Opening day goose hunting success in field hunting units this year was 1.00 goose per hunter in 2004 compared to 1.04 geese per hunter on opening day last season. On Lower Klamath, season-long duck hunting success in marsh units was about the same as the previous season (2.16 ducks per hunter on average). Mallards taken this year by marsh hunters equaled 27 percent of all the ducks taken compared to 29 percent last year. In the previous five seasons, mallard averages on Lower Klamath were: (2002-03 - 18 percent 2001-02 - 40 percent; and for the 2000-01, 1999-00 and 1998-99 seasons 46, 52, 59 percent mallards taken by hunters respectively). Season-long goose hunting success on Lower Klamath declined 24 percent in 2004 compared to the previous season.

Overall waterfowl hunting use on Tule Lake Refuge was down significantly this season (3,817 hunters in 2004-05 compared to 4,716 hunters using all waterfowl hunting areas the previous season). Duck hunting use and success was lower in

marsh units in 2004 (hunter use down 22 percent and duck harvest down 33 percent compared to the 2003-04 season). Goose hunting use decreased by 16 percent and the goose harvest declined 67 percent in the spaced-blinds and free roam field areas in 2004 compared to the previous season. Tule Lake Marsh hunting success on opening day (October 9, 2004) averaged 3.39 ducks per hunter this year compared to an average 3.71 ducks per hunter last season. Spaced-blind goose hunters harvested an average of 0.24 geese per hunter on opening day this year, compared to 0.16, 0.53, 0.82 and 0.52 the previous four years. Most of the white-fronted geese in the Basin used Lower Klamath Refuge this year and it appears that the vast majority of white-fronts passed through the Basin without stopping or migrated south prior to the hunting season, as has been the case for the past several years.

Additional hunting statistics for the past hunting season are available on the "hunting" section of the refuge web site:  
**"klamathbasinrefuges.fws.gov."**

### Refuge Photo Blinds Enhanced

Refuge volunteer, Howard West, has constructed two new photo blinds for use by wildlife photographers on Tule Lake Refuge.

A newly revised photo blind leaflet provides detailed directions to the eight photo blinds located on Lower Klamath and Tule Lake Refuges. The leaflet has information about the wildlife species likely to be seen and photographed at each blind and the best times of year to use a particular blind. All blinds are placed for morning photography and require advanced reservations and a modest payment for each photographer using the blind.

**To receive a copy of the photo blind leaflet or make a reservation, you may contact the refuge visitor center at (530) 667-2231.**

## Partnership between Refuge and Rural Fire Department Protects Homes and Wildlife

Scott Swanson — Forestry Technician

With an ever-increasing threat of devastating wildfire, local, state and federal cooperators are teaming up to reduce this risk. In the summer of 2001, the southern Oregon community of Keno was listed in the Federal Register as a town at high risk from wildfire. Through the help of Rural Fire Assistance grants from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2002, the small forested community - and northern neighbor to Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge - started preparing its neighborhoods for potentially deadly wildfires. John Ketchum, Chief of the Keno Rural Fire Protection District, put forth an encompassing program, which combined hazards mapping, community education and the removal of hazardous brush, trees and foliage. Since the program's inception, hundreds of homes and thousands of acres of land have been deemed fire-safe.

In the spring of 2004, firefighters from the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex assisted Keno Rural Fire Protection District by pruning and removing hazardous vegetation. Over three days, the refuge fire crew cleared dead and decadent foliage and brush and thinned low hanging tree limbs for two homes on approximately five acres. The piled debris was burned under the supervision of qualified and experienced fire managers from the Refuge.



### Reducing fuel hazards in Bear Valley Refuge

The Keno-area hazardous fuels reduction program is augmented by a concurrent project within Bear Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Since 2001, fire managers have used a combination of tools to thin overgrown, stressed forests to encourage healthy roosting and nesting areas for bald eagles and reduce the threat of wildfire to Keno. By fall of 2004, nearly 50% of the 4,200 acres of refuge land were treated through timber sales, low-impact logging operations, hand thinning with power saws and prescribed burning.

Creating fire safe areas and achieving the goals of the 2001 National Fire Plan depend on community collaborative partnerships, such as joint ventures between local and federal agencies like the community of Keno and Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Together, we are creating educated, fire-wise communities and firefighting partnerships enabling us to safely and efficiently combat any wildfire.

Learn more about Fire Safe initiatives and the National Fire Plan by visiting <http://www.fireplan.gov>. Explore the specifics of Bear Valley NWR and its ongoing prescribed fire projects at <http://klamathbasinrefuges.fws.gov/fire/bvrx.html>. Discover the Keno Rural Fire Protection District and its undertakings online at <http://www.kenofire.com>.

## Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association Formed

### Carl Millegan — Refuge Operations Specialist

The Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association was formed on December 6, 2004 and began business on January 1, 2005. The Refuge ended its agreement with San Francisco Bay Wildlife Society and formed a Friends Group that will be directly tied to the Klamath Basin Refuges. The board members are from the Klamath Basin and have a key interest in seeing our refuges and the surrounding communities thrive. Board Members are:

Laurence Hearne: President and Director  
James Aslett: Vice-President and Director  
Molly Peterson: Secretary and Director  
Kim Kirby: Treasurer and Director  
Terry Harris: Director  
Jerry Maxwell: Director  
Ralph Morrill: Director

The focus of the Association is to assist with our sales outlet in the headquarters visitor center and help with educational programs. They are ordering needed supplies for the sales outlet and working with Dave Menke, Refuge Outdoor Recreation Planner, to purchase educational materials for refuge visitors.

The Refuge and the Association are looking to increase membership and would like to get people involved in aspects of the Refuge and its operations. The Refuge can always use the help of volunteers and appreciate what they do for us. If this is something you are interested in please contact Carl Millegan, Refuge Operations Specialist, at (530) 667-2231.

The Refuge would like to recognize and give special thanks to the Association board members for their hard work at making this happen. The Refuge and the community will greatly benefit from their work.



**Sage Thrasher at Photo Blind 4**

### Klamath Basin Wildlife Photos Featured on Local Web Page

Hundreds of photos of wildlife species found in the Klamath Basin are shown in the “habitat” section of a locally produced web page “[tule-lake.com](http://tule-lake.com).” The web page features close up wildlife photo portraits of Klamath Basin birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Many of the images were taken from refuge photo blinds or at other locations on the Klamath Basin Refuge Complex.

A short description of each wildlife species, the habitat it occupies in the Klamath Basin and the location where the photograph was taken are listed with each photo. Photos are listed under seven habitat headings (Five habitat groups are currently posted with the final two to be added soon) covering the entire Upper Klamath Basin watershed.

*The web site is being produced by local videographer Anders Tomlinson and is receiving financial support from the owner of Jocks Supermarket in Tulelake, California.*