



# the Grebe

Volume 3, Issue 1

Winter 2008

Mission of The Friends of Deer Flat:

*The purpose of this group 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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## Photo/Observation Blind Completed

Elaine Johnson, Manager of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge has always wanted a blind to let visitors view the many species of wild life that live in or migrate through the refuge. The newly formed group, "Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge", decided to undertake the blind as their first project. They consulted with Elaine Johnson, their members and members of SIBA (South west Idaho Birding Association) as to where and how the blind should be constructed and developed a unique design. The blind is located



at the high water line of Lake Lowell, approximately 800 feet south west of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. It is hidden in a cove bordered by Cotton Wood trees, Russian Olive trees and thickets of Indigo. The area abounds with wildlife and is one of the favorite places where Jim Holcomb of SIBA likes to take beginning bird watchers as there are always birds to see at this location. Susan Kain, a staff

Construction was started and completed in October 2007

member on the Refuge, located grant money from the Idaho Fish

and Game's "Watchable Wild life program" to build the blind. The Friends President, Noreen Tripp wrote the grant for the project.

Material and labor to build the blind were donated by Brian Cooper of RRC Contractors, Inc. Brian, his sons Luke and Zachary, along with Jonathan Nagel and George Hoyt, did an outstanding job in building the blind. The blind is not only a find looking structure but is build to last. Brian, an avid bird watcher, identified 30 species while working on the blind. Larry Knopp also donated building materials. These people took the plan from paper to reality. We thank them for their generous gifts. They have given all of us a unique opportunity to watch wildlife. The blind is named the "Coop" in appreciation of Brian Cooper's donation.

## President's Corner

As I reflect back on 2007, I realize just how busy our Friends group has been. We completed some wonderful endeavors for the Refuge. The Grebe Nest is open and has been successful since the grand opening in early April. Even with the bookstore being open on a limited basis; sales have been better than I could have hoped for. The observation/photo blind has been completed. Jim Iverson kept this project moving forward; I think I can speak for everyone when I say that it has exceeded our wildest expectations.

The Membership Committee has been very active; working with our members and organizing three events, the Great Backyard Bird Count, the Star Gazing Night, and International Migratory Bird Day.

2007 was a productive year. I want to thank each of you for your hard work and support during this past year. It has been an honor to serve as the President of our Friends group. We may be small in members but we have lots of energy and power. Working together we can make things happen for our Refuge. I am energized about the upcoming year. As we move forward, we can accomplish many things for Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

Thank you again for a wonderful year. Noreen Tripp, President.

### Photo/Observation Blind (con't)

Lake Lowell was built as an irrigation reservoir and because of this, the water level fluctuates greatly. The water level is at its highest in the spring and then slowly recedes until September or October at which time the shore line will be 200 feet from the blind. Most blinds are oriented to see one particular view, but in this situation the blind is octagon in shape with two viewing portals on each of seven sides – allowing 14 people views in all directions. Shore birds may be in close view in the spring when the water is high. Bird feeders have been set out around the blind, to enhance up close viewing of bird species when the water is low.

**“30 species  
of birds were  
seen during  
the  
construction  
of the blind”**

We hope that many people come and enjoy watching wild life at the blind. To get to the blind you can take the trail that goes west from the visitor parking lot and follow the nature trail. As you near the blind you enter a “quiet zone” – because birds are shy and noise and movement will scare them away. Step quietly into the blind, unlatch a viewing window shutter and slowly open it up. When you are through, we ask that you close the window shutters and door as you leave.

The blind was completed and dedicated on Saturday, November 17, 2007.

by Jim Iverson, Projects Chairman of the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge



Western Screech Owl roosts in wood duck box near blind

*Mark your calendar...*

## Upcoming Events

### ***General Member Meeting***

Tuesday, January 8th, 7:00 p.m., ***Annual Elections***

### ***Lecture Series***

Tuesday, January 15th, 7 p.m. - ***Craters of the Moon***

### ***Executive Board Meeting***

Wednesday, January 23rd, 7:00 p.m.

### ***Lecture Series***

Tuesday, February 12th, 7:00 p.m. - ***Your backyard can be a wildlife habitat***

### ***Great Backyard Bird Count***

Saturday, February 16th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Join us for a national bird winter bird count.

### ***Executive Board Meeting***

Wednesday, February 27th, 7:00 p.m.

Western Grebe near the upper dam



## ***Annual Elections***

Following is the slate of 2008 officer nominees to be voted on at the general meeting in January:

*President* - Lyndell Jackson

\* *Vice President* - Needed (see below)

*Co-secretaries* - Lynette Wilfing and Lee McGlinsky

*Treasurer* - Bob Christiansen

\* **NEEDED - VICE PRESIDENT!!!**

- Flexible hours
- Great benefits
- No experience necessary
- Friendly, cooperative work environment
- Energy and ideas a plus
- Opportunity for advancement

Job duties:

- Attend monthly board meetings
- Assist as needed
- Assume role of president in 2009

To apply or for more information, contact:

Noreen Tripp at 468-0402 or

Lyndell Jackson at 459-4740

*The Grebe is published quarterly for the members of the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge. If you have photos, stories, or other information for the Grebe, please email it to: [idahobirder@hotmail.com](mailto:idahobirder@hotmail.com) or call 850-5885*

## BANDING DUCKS AT LAKE LOWELL

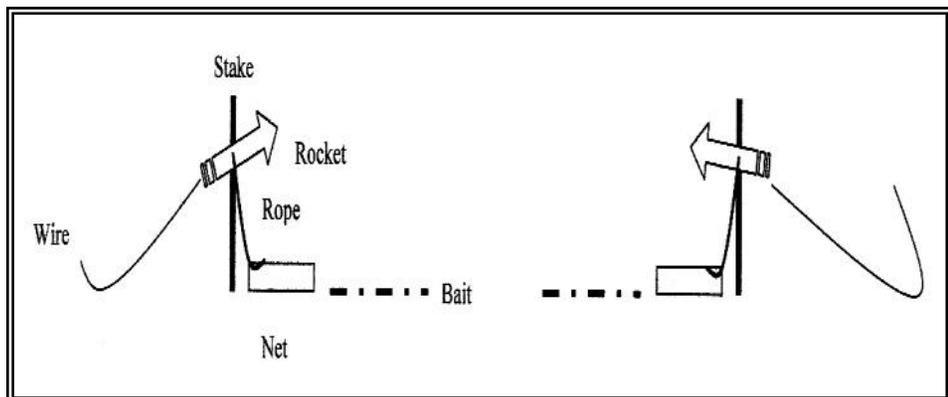
### (FETTERING THE FRANTIC FLOCK)

by Bob Christensen

On a pleasant, but cool morning in early September, Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge employees and a small group of us volunteers met at the refuge visitor center, arriving about 6:00am. We carpooled along dark, dirt roads to the place where we expected to help band ducks. The site was located on the edge of Lake Lowell about a mile NW of the visitor center. About ¼ mile inshore, we sat in the parked vehicles in the dark, patiently waiting for "first light," when the rocket nets were to be fired.

A volunteer under the direction of the refuge staff had been baiting ducks for the past week by scattering cracked wheat on the shoreline of the lake, and then he had set up two rows of about 4 rockets a piece. The two rows of rockets faced toward each other at a distance of about 100 feet. Each rocket was attached by rope to a portion of a long net, which was folded along the base of the rocket stakes. The rockets were positioned to shoot off in a slightly up and outward direction in order to carry the nets over both rows of baited area.

Initially, while we waited, there were a lot of ducks feeding on the bait, but it was still too dark to fire the rockets. In the early predawn light we could barely make out several flocks flying in and out of the area. Then these all flew off. The waiting lasted almost an hour, until it



was getting quite light—light enough so that we could see several deer feeding along the edge of a nearby corn patch. Then finally, about the time we were giving up, a smaller flock of several hundred ducks came in to the bait; and the rocket crew hit the ignition button from their hiding place behind the nearby bushes. There was a flash, a loud report, and a puff of black smoke as the nets flew up and over the unsuspecting waterfowl. Then we revved up our engines and flew down the bumpy road to help secure the frenzied flock.

On site, it took us a few minutes to get organized. Meanwhile, more than a few ducks extricated themselves from the nets before we could secure the edges. There was a chorus of quacking and a loud fluttering of wings as the floundering fowl tried to beat their way out of the entanglement. Soon an assortment of feathers and some excrement befouled the beach and duck down floated on the light morning breeze.

We immediately began untangling ducks from the clutches of the net. We carried them one and two at a time to holding boxes. Others took them from there to the refuge staff to begin the banding (not bonding) experience. Each duck was first identified as to species, age, and sex and then a metal identification band was placed on one of its legs. Some of the ducks were then taken over to a table where Idaho Department of Fish and Game employees took swabs of their throat and anal areas—to be tested for avian influenza.

## BANDING DUCKS AT LAKE LOWELL (CON'T)

Most of the waterfowl caught by the rocket nets were mallards. There were also a few pintails and wood ducks, and at least one widgeon. In addition, quite a few American coots (sometimes called "mud-hens," a member of the rail family) had been caught in the melee. The coots, being smaller and more active, were really getting knotted up in the nets. I soon found out that they also liked to bite (a good pinch with the beak), which left bruises and blood blisters on the exposed skin of my wrists.

Each of us volunteers, at least those that wanted to, had the opportunity to band a few wild mallards--juveniles and adults of both sexes. When we released them, most flew quickly off, leaving a few loose feathers in their hasty departure. But some ducks, having temporarily lost their flight response, fell to the ground when tossed into the air, then waddled hurriedly away, quacking their displeasure as they headed zigzag toward the refuge of the lake.

By 10:30am all waterfowl had been released, the nets rolled up, and the rocket sets taken down. A hazy September sun illuminated the lake and its riparian shorelines. All that remained on the beach were the telltale feathers to remind us of what we had experienced with our frenzied feathered-friends.



Bob Christensen banding a Mallard duck with refuge staff looking on.

## New Volunteer Program



In 2008, the Girls and Boys Scouts will be working towards their wildlife badges at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. If you have a couple of hours to spare, please consider volunteering to help introduce our local children to the refuge. The Scouts will meet on the first Saturday of every month for two hours. Volunteers are needed to facilitate pre-planned lessons. Please contact Amy Ulappa at 467-9278 for more information or to register as a volunteer.

## Yard Sale was a Success!

The first annual Friends Yard Sale was a huge success despite it being a drizzly day. The sale was held in Nampa in September. We made \$620.84 for Friends projects. Thanks to the many volunteers including Kathy and Jim Iverson, Patricia Honea, Nila Husky, Lynn Wilfling, Lee McGlinsky, and Dixie and Bob Blome. Leftover items were donated to the Idaho Youth Ranch.

Thank you to Lynn Wilfling, Lee McGlinsky and Noreen Tripp for organizing the fund raiser. **Start saving your unwanted treasures for next year's Yard Sale.**

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## Time to renew your Membership

2008 will be upon us in a short few weeks and yes, **it's time to renew your membership.** Your gift is critical to our ongoing work to preserve and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. With your help, we can fund projects like the photo/observation blind and help to educate the people of the Treasure Valley to the importance of the refuge.

**Thank you** for caring to support your values with your money. **Please continue your advocacy by renewing your membership today. We are strong and successful thanks to your support!!**

For your convenience, there is a renewal form at the end of the newsletter. Our current members do so much more for Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge than provide necessary financial support. FDFWR's credibility is greatly enhanced when we can point to YOU - a vital and growing membership from all walks of life from all over Idaho.



The new road located at Indiana and Roosevelt

## Upper Dam closed to traffic

If you have spent any time at the Visitor Center lately, you have seen or driven over the new road construction. In early December 2007, the Upper Embankment Road will be permanently closed to vehicle traffic. After repairs are completed, the dam will be open to foot traffic only.

The new entrance to the Visitor Center is located at the corner of Indiana and Roosevelt. **From Hwy 55**, continue past Lake Avenue towards Caldwell, turn left on Indiana. Continue driving on Indiana to the new refuge road. **From Iowa Street**, continue to follow the road past the entrance to the upper dam and drive parallel along the dam. Follow the road past the ponds. Turn left on Roosevelt and continue to Indiana. Turn left into the refuge.

Detour signs will be posted at the upper dam that will direct drivers to the new refuge entrance.

## Canyon County Alliance for Responsible Growth

During 2006, the Friends of the Refuge formed an Action Committee to monitor the burgeoning developments being proposed around the refuge with no apparent thought to the impact these developments will have in the future of the county generally or to the refuge specifically. Many of the Friends testified against the developments at Planning and Zoning hearings and before the Board of County Commissioners. As the burden of monitoring and testifying became less and less effective and the Action Committee felt more and more drained of time and energy, a new tactic was instigated.

In April 2007 a group of Canyon County residents, including Friends members, came together to discuss their concerns. The rampant progression of housing developments are a threat to open space and loss of farm land throughout the county - it became an issue that included more than the refuge. This new group became the Canyon County Alliance for Responsible Growth (CCARG). The Mission Statement of CCARG is: We support responsible growth that honors and protects the current and future economic and cultural value contributed to Canyon County by agricultural land and open space.

To date, the CCARG has identified, and is working within, several points of focus:

- The Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway. This offshoot of the Alliance has recently been approved by Idaho Transportation Dept. (see Byway article in this issue of the Grebe).
- Three primary committees: Outreach, Education, and Action. Each of these is composed of sub-committees.
- The Action political subcommittee will be spending much time on finding candidates and doing what it takes to promote them to get them voted into office to replace the current County Prosecuting Attorney and Matt Beebe's position as County Commissioner.
- All three primary committees will be putting energy into investigating a newly proposed 1,000 plus housing development adjacent to the lower Lake Lowell Dam and refuge area.

I will keep you updated as things progress. We encourage anyone who wants to work with the Alliance to attend meetings and get involved. Our next meeting is Nov. 19, 5:30 p.m. at Mancino's Pizza and Subs across from Albertsons on Cleveland Blvd. in Caldwell. Please call me if you have questions or would like more information.

Lyndell Jackson  
459-4740



## *Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway*

The Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway began in early 2007 as one of many ideas promoted by the Canyon County Alliance for Responsible Growth as a possible means of slowing the conversion of farm land to houses in Canyon County. The Byway was such a powerful idea that members of the Alliance created a separate Corporation and took immediate action to create the Byway. .

After some preliminary excursions and adventures by Byway members, the Caldwell/Canyon Economic Development Council sponsored a bus trip along the proposed Byway route. Pictures were taken and ideas exchanged. It was clear the main Byway route, while passing through some of the finest agricultural, recreational, geological, and archeological sites in Canyon County, would miss many other worthy sites. The idea of "super side routes" was created to accommodate the huge variety of Canyon County sites that deserve to have tourist visits.

Over the summer of 2007 an application was created that showed the main Byway route and the proposed super side routes. Photos along the route and of near-by sites were included in the application. In October, 2007 the application was approved by the Idaho Transportation Board.

The effort to tie the many varieties of Canyon County sites together will require cooperation with other organizations that share some of the goals of the Byway such as the Friends of the Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge and the Wine Growers Association, as well as the various cities along the route that will benefit from the tourism.

Now the real work begins. A Corridor Management Plan (CMP) must be created that will detail the informational and educational signs and kiosks that will line the Byway. Money must be raised to pay for the creation of the CMP. The Byway Corporation has approximately one year to complete the CMP.

After acceptance of the CMP by ITD, the design, purchase, and placement of the signs and kiosks can happen. In some cases, land may have to be purchased on which to place these signs and kiosks. There is much more to do, but the Snake River Canyon Scenic Byway Corporation sees this work as vital to infuse Canyon County's economic growth with tourism.

by Harold Nevill - hnevill@pte.idaho.gov  
Lyndell Jackson - 459-4740

*Traveling north along  
the byway:*

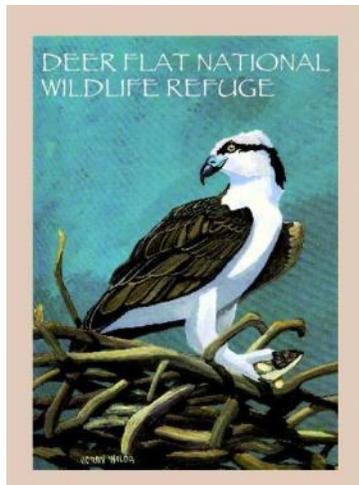
*\*Start at State Highway 45  
at Walter's Ferry.*

*\*Continue north to Map  
Rock Road then to Chicken  
Dinner Road.*

*\*Keep driving north to Lowell  
Road, then to Plum Road,  
Homedale Road, Allendale  
Road, Ustick Road, Fargo  
Road, Dixie Road,  
Wamstad Road*

*\*On Apple Valley Road go to  
the intersection of Apple  
Valley Road and US 20/26  
to the Snake River at the  
Nyssa, Oregon bridge.*

## *the Grebe Nest*



Cathy Eells has been adding to the inventory of the Grebe Nest; three of the latest additions will make wonderful gifts for the upcoming holiday. Jerry Wilda, a local artist, has been busy drawing local birds and wildlife and he has generously donated some of his work to the Friends group. Cathy turned a drawing of an Osprey into — a Deer Flat National Wildlife t-shirt (in both long and short sleeves). The shirt will be available in a few weeks.

The Grebe Nest also has notecards for sale. The notecards depict some of the wildlife seen at the refuge. The artwork on the cards is also by Jerry Wilda. The cards are sold in packages of four.

**New  
additions to  
the Grebe  
Nest make  
great gifts!**

Dixie and Bob Blome have donated several copies of a children's book. "*Awesome Ospreys, fishing birds of the world*" by Donna Love is now available. The book has realistic and colorful drawings complemented by osprey facts. Both children and adults will enjoy this book!

## **Friends Group applies for Grant to Fund History Projects**

The refuge's February 2009 centennial is just around the corner. To help us prepare to celebrate, we recently applied for a National Wildlife Refuge Preserve America grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. If we get the grant, we will work with volunteers and college student interns to better document refuge and reservoir history. We hope to tap into many historical resources, including refuge files and local museums and archives. We are particularly excited about conducting oral histories with local residents, as opportunities to capture the recollections of those involved with early refuge history are lost with every passing year.

We also hope to install a new historical trail from the refuge Visitor Center to and across the Upper Dam. The trail will include interpretive signs with information about the history of the refuge and reservoir, as well as the current refuge mission. We hope to dedicate the new trail in February 2009 during the refuge centennial celebration.

We were very fortunate to be able to partner with eleven local organizations on this project. Their commitments vary widely, including providing matching cash donations, offering oral history training, creating art work for the interpretive signs, and more. We look forward to working with these partners and appreciate their support of this project!

*Be a Friend! Join Today!*

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*Name*

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*Address*

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*City*

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*State*

*Zip Code*

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*Telephone*

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*Email*

*Annual Membership Categories*

*Senior (62+)*            \$10

*Individual*            \$15

*Family*            \$25

*Student*            \$10

*All contributions are tax deductible*

*Please print this page and return with a check payable to:*

*Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge  
13751 Upper Embankment Road  
Nampa, Idaho 83686-8046*

*Noreen Tripp - 208-468-0402*





To preserves and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

**FRIENDS OF DEER  
FLAT WILDLIFE  
REFUGE**

13751 Upper Embankment  
Road  
Nampa, Idaho 83686-8046

**Executive Board:**

**President - Noreen Tripp  
(468-0402)**

**Vice President - John  
Augsburger (362-2769)**

**Treasurer / Secretary - Kris  
Horton (461-9717)**

**Membership - Lyndell  
Jackson (459-4740)**

**Projects - Jim Iverson (459  
-6051)**

**Newsletter - Denise Hughes  
(850-5885)**

**We are on the web at  
[www.deerflatfriends.org](http://www.deerflatfriends.org)**

## Black Bear



Tuesday, **December 4th**  
**Bear Neighbors**

Bears are an exciting part of Idaho's ecosystem. Learn about history of bears, dispel myths, and get caught up on the latest research going on in the Northwest. Jennifer Struthers, Idaho Fish and Game

Tuesday, **January 15th**  
**Craters of the Moon**

Explore the geology and biology of one of Idaho's natural wonders with a presentation from one of the park's biologists - Michael Munts, Craters of the Moon National Park



Tuesday, **February 12th**  
**Your Backyard can be  
a Wildlife Habitat!**

Learn how you can certify your backyard as a "wildlife habitat" with the National Wildlife Federation - Susie Headlee, National Wildlife Federation