



The Grebe

Volume 7, Issue 2

Spring 2011

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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Grebes at Lake Lowell Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

By Addison Mohler, Wildlife Biologist

Aechmophorus grebes--the western grebe (*Aechmophorus occidentalis*) and the Clark's grebe (*Aechmophorus clarkia*)--are conspicuous waterbirds at Lake Lowell. They live in western North America from southern Canada to south central Mexico and the Baja of California.

These birds have a black head and nape, slate white chin and neck and strikingly scarlet eyes enclosed in black plumage in the western grebe and white plumage in the Clark's. The long pointed mandible is another distinguishing characteristic between the two with the western's bill being a greenish-yellow as opposed to the orange-yellow bill of the Clark's grebe. The neck of both species is long and swanlike.

These birds are perhaps best known for their courtship displays which are quite elaborate and have been well studied.

In Utah (presumably similar in southern Idaho) the spring migration peaks in April or May and the fall migration peaks in November but has been recorded anytime between September and November (Trost and Gerstell, 1994). In the 2010 Grebe Survey on Lake Lowell at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, the first grebes were surveyed in May and were counted on the lake until the final survey on December 7.



Western Grebe on Margin of Lake Lowell

(con't on page 2)

Grebes at Lake Lowell

(con't from page 1)

Grebes nest in emergent vegetation by building floating platforms in and amongst anchored vegetation that helps support the structure. Nesting colonies are built on large freshwater lakes or marshes with extensive open water. Nests are usually in or very close to water deep enough for the birds to swim submerged. Nests are constructed as floating platforms in emergent vegetation, protected from wind and waves. Water depths for nesting structures vary from about 12 inches (Short, 1984) to 10 feet (Trost and Gerstell, 1994). Nests are susceptible to drastic water fluctuations (Burton and Peterson, 1997) and water drawdown during nesting seasons is assumed to be deleterious to grebes (NatureServe, 2009 and Short, 1984).

Proximity to open water is not only a necessity for foraging (grebes are diving birds whose diet consists almost entirely of fish) but is also important for escape from predators. Clutches of 1 – 4 eggs hatch around 24 days (Lindvall, 1982) and the young are dependent on their parents for



Grebe Nest on Floating Mat of Smartweed

approximately 8 weeks, fledging in 63-77 days (Storer, 1992). Very soon after hatching the chicks climb aboard either parents back and remain protected until able to swim on their own.

In 2010, grebe numbers on Lake Lowell averaged around 700 during the breeding season with a peak number of 1277 in October during a likely migration event.



Western Grebe Nest with Clutch of Eggs

Mark your calendar...

Upcoming Events

Lecture Series - The Story of Rocks

Tuesday, April 12th, 7 p.m.

The story of rocks through time, including current paleo-research and volcanic activity in Idaho, as well as information on Idaho's geologic resources.

Earth Day Work Day

Saturday, April 23rd, 9 a.m. to noon

Help celebrate Earth Day by improving wildlife habitat at the refuge. Meet at the Visitor Center.

Scout Day

Saturday, May 7th

Lecture Series - Leave No Trace

Tuesday, May 10th, 7 p.m.

Discover the principles of Leave No Trace camping, including a presentation and discussion, demonstration of techniques.

BioBlitz

Friday and Saturday, June 10th and 11th

Surveyors scheduled for Friday and Saturday.

BioBlitz Festival on Saturday, June 11th, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Meet at the Visitor Center

Kids Fishing Day

Saturday, June 11th, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Meet at Gotts Point

Biodiversity Basics Day Camp

June 20th - 24th, 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Discover how animals, plants and humans survive in the desert. Preregistration required.

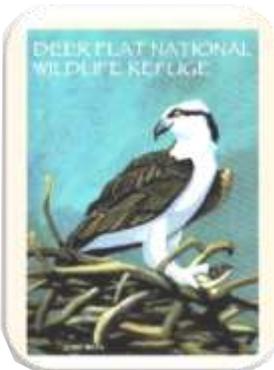
Scout Day Information. Sign up your wolf, bear, and webelo Cub Scouts or Brownie and Junior Girl Scouts to earn wildlife-related badges. Pre-registration is required. Call 467-9278 or e-mail deerflat@fws.gov to pre-register.

Upcoming Refuge Events:

For more information on all events, contact the refuge at 467-9278 or deerflat@fws.gov

The **Grebe** newsletter is published quarterly. If you have an article or photo that you would like to be included in a future newsletter, please contact Denise Hughes at den.hug100@gmail.com

Osprey Cam Upgrade



The osprey pair is back building their nest near the refuge visitor center. Once again we will have the opportunity to view their nesting activities. The webcam was a success last year and we hope it to be an even greater success this year. During the last few weeks we have been busily working on a plan to upgrade the camera equipment so that we don't have the long down time resulting from insufficient electrical



power. The main challenge in integrating our plan has been the consistent rainy weather, but during a two day dry period, Randy and Steve rented a trencher and were able to excavate a long narrow trench from the visitor center to the camera pole. A few days later, the electricians from Budget Electric came out and installed the heavy duty electrical line to the pole. In the next few days we are expecting the folks from Fiberpipe to come out and hookup the camera equipment to the new permanent electrical source. Meanwhile, the ospreys have looked on with silent approval....Or was that ambivalence? Regardless, they continue to carry sticks and to arrange them on the nest platform in preparation for eggs soon to be laid and incubated.

So, tune in to the Fiberpipe link and watch the ospreys as they raise another family at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge: <http://www2.fiberpipe.net/deerflat/ospreycam.asp>

Donations are also solicited to help us maintain and keep the webcam and equipment updated. You can donate online from the website or send donations to:

Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
13751 Upper Embankment Road
Nampa, ID 83686



Excavating Trench for Electrical Cable



Electricians Laying Encased Electrical Line

BIOBLITZ 2011...Two Events In One!

This year Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge is combining two great events in one: BioBlitz and Kid's Fishing Day!

The public is invited to participate in the refuge's 6th annual **BioBlitz on Friday and Saturday June 10th and 11th**. A BioBlitz is a 24-hour rapid survey of biological diversity, and to celebrate this biodiversity we host a public festival. On June 10th and 11th, local scientists, naturalists, and volunteers will comb Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge to find and identify as many different species of plants and animals as possible. Amateur naturalists and volunteers are invited to help with surveys. The **BioBlitz Festival will be held from 10-3 on Saturday at the Refuge Visitor Center**. Everyone is welcome to attend and lend a helping hand as we all celebrate the biodiversity at Deer Flat.

This year's BioBlitz is being held on Free Fishing Day; so bring your pole to Gotts Point for some fishing! From 10:00 am to 3:00 pm, kids can learn about fish biology, fishing ethics, and water safety. Visitors will have a chance to practice casting and rigging and then test their newly-learned skills fishing in Lake Lowell! Fishing poles will be available to borrow if needed.

Want to help?

Last year over 400 people came to the festival and volunteers like you helped the event run smoothly. For this year we need volunteers to help set-up, clean-up, attend the Bug Tent and Kid Craft room, take photographs, teach kids how to fish, do prep work, and help biologists in the field. You may even have a chance to wear the Blue Goose costume! Volunteers will spend the day outside and have the chance to make a difference by connecting people with nature.



For more information, call the
Refuge Visitor Center at (208) 467-
9278 or email deerflat@fws.gov



Friends 2010 Accomplishments



The Friends Annual Meeting, "Evening at the Refuge," was held during February 2010

**We partnered with FWS to support two interns:
Cody & Claire**



The Osprey Web-Cam was successfully installed. We watched the osprey family raise four young.

Friends 2010 Accomplishments



We initiated the Busing Scholarship Program in partnership with FWS and other cooperators. It will link with the refuge's Discover Wildlife Journeys

We completed an upgrade of the Butterfly/Hummingbird Garden.



We partnered with Flying M to Sell "Wild Awake" Coffee.

Friends 2010 Accomplishments



We celebrated National Wildlife Refuge Week at Deer Flat NWR during October 2010.

FRIENDS VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR BIOBLITZ

On Friday, June 10th and Saturday, June 11th, the 6th annual BioBlitz will be held at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. Volunteers are needed to help with activities at the Friend's booth on Saturday. If you can spare an hour or two please join us at the refuge for a day of fun.

To help staff the Friends booth on Saturday, call Genevieve Johannsen at 467-7515.



Volunteer Services

Volunteer Opportunities...

Happy Spring, Friends! I don't know about you, but I am more than excited to wave goodbye to old man winter for one more year. With the warming weather, budding plants, and whistling birds come more opportunities to enjoy all that Deer Flat has to offer.

One way to make the most of your Refuge visits is to volunteer for one or more of our projects. Deer Flat volunteers are crucial for the Refuge to achieve its mission and goal of being a great place for wildlife to thrive and people to enjoy. Volunteers work with Refuge staff, wildlife, visitors, and other volunteers on a wide range of projects. If you want to learn about nature, spend time outdoors (or indoors), help wildlife, meet like-minded people, gain new skills, or contribute to the greater community, consider volunteering at Deer Flat. Tell your friends, family, neighbors, co-workers, and anyone else about our volunteer program as well... They just might want to volunteer with you!

Spring also makes for a great time for Friends members to volunteer. If you want to celebrate the new season and our planet, think about registering for our **Earth Day Work Day** volunteer event on April 23. We will be removing noxious weeds, picking up litter, and performing light landscaping around the Refuge—and we would love to have your help! If interpretation is more of your thing, we have volunteer opportunities to guide **4th-6th graders on educational field trips** (funded in part thanks to Friends' Bus Scholarship program!) in April and May. If you enjoy talking to folks and families about the many cool critters at Deer Flat, early June (the 10th and 11th) marks our **BioBlitz** and **Kids Fishing Day** celebration and we would love to have volunteers help set up and run activity tables for the event. And if you'd rather be inside to meet and greet visitors, we need (and appreciate) **visitor center hosts** throughout the year. Various other volunteer opportunities are available too!

If any of these opportunities sound up your alley, or you would like to learn more about other volunteer positions and events, please feel free to let me know. You can contact me at 208-467-9278 or cody_dix@fws.gov. It is always a pleasure to talk and serve with Deer Flat volunteers.

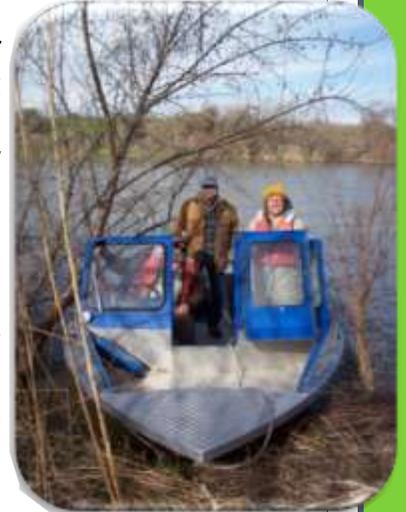
Enjoy the spring season and take care. We hope to see you at the Refuge!

Cody Dix
Volunteer Coordinator

In Search of the Wild Goose Egg

by Bob Christensen

There we were bouncing over the wind-capped waves with the bitter early morning wind freezing our faces and the roar of the outboard jet engine numbing our ears. We were three volunteers (Bob, Leroy, & Janetta) aboard the refuge's keel-hauled work boat piloted by Randy Aulbach, chief of refuge maintenance. Randy has helped with the annual spring Canada Goose Nest Survey from many years. The survey takes place on selected islands of the Snake River between Walters Ferry and Farewell Bend. One hundred and one of these islands are included as the Snake River Islands Sector of the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. Many have unique names such as Fenzl, Brooks, Gosling, Goose Egg, Rhubarb, Cigar, Poison Ivy, Rippee, Squatters, and Ware (the largest island).



Landing on Grassy Island

The goose nest survey consists of two parts: (1) In early April there is the search for active goose nests on the islands. These are mapped and flagged and the number of goose eggs recorded. (2) Then in early May there is a follow up survey to see how successful the flagged nests were in producing goslings. The refuge personnel rely on volunteers to help conduct these activities.



Leroy Inspecting Platform
Box Nest

My first experience in participating in the nest survey was in 2004 on islands downstream of Walter's Ferry. This time, Todd Fenzl was the boat driver. Todd really liked to open up the flat-bottomed work boat until it bounced off every fourth or fifth wave on the wind-blown river, jolting the kidneys and the bladder. During that first experience, about 1/3 of the down-line goose nests we found were on the ground and the rest were in nest boxes on wooden platforms. While pushing our way through the thick brush of one of the islands, we startled a large mule deer doe which jumped up and bounded through the crackling willows and Russian olives, brushing by me and knocking me on my back into a patch of cattails. Yes, many of the islands harbor deer and other wildlife and plants that will stab you, stick you, or bite you...e.g. wild rose, currant bushes, Russian olives, stinging nettle, ticks, etc. Why then do I like the experience when in addition to the above, it also taxes my back, legs, and endurance. Well, it is because of the excitement of the hunt and the surprise of what I find and see.

Below are a few of the wildlife species that I recorded on that first trip:

Canada Geese
Mallards

Great Blue Herons
Magpies

American Coots
Gulls

(con't on page 11)

On another goose nest survey on the Snake River islands below Marsing, Idaho, we got our hiking boots and pant legs wet hiking through the dew covered grasses, tules, and brush. The currant bushes were in full golden bloom. Most of the goose nests that we located were on the ground, with only a few in the bark-filled box nests. During this trip I added to my wildlife list:

- Black-Crowned Night Heron Rookery
- Long-eared Owl nesting among the BCN Herons
- Double-crested Cormorant
- Wood Ducks
- White Pelicans
- Swainson's Hawk
- Red-tail Hawk on nest
- Great-horned Owl
- Ospreys at nest
- Mourning Doves
- Rough-winged Swallows
- Cliff Swallows
- Song Sparrow
- American Robins



**Goose Nest on Ground
Note Golf Ball in Center**



Bob Records Nest Data

I have also participated in the goose nest survey on the Snake River between Payette and Weiser, Idaho. Again I added to my wildlife list of species seen during the surveys. Of special note was the discovery of a new bald eagle nest.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Bald Eagle on Nest | Tundra Swans |
| Gull Rookery | Cormorant Rookery |
| Great Blue Heron Rookery | Great Egret |
| Beaver | Raccoon Tracks |



Goose Nest in Platform Box

Last year, 2010, I participated on the same stretch of river as this year. The wide open islands tended to have fewer goose nests than the smaller, more densely vegetated ones. Again, I added to my list::

- | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Snow Geese | California Quail | Ring-necked Pheasants |
| White-fronted Geese | Red-winged Blackbirds | Red-phase Red Fox |



Goose Nest in Bowl of Tree

So, back to my account of this morning... Silo, Channel, Grassy, & the Tule Group, were names of the islands we visited, all located downriver of Homedale, Idaho. We found a few goose nests with only one egg in them, one with 11 eggs, and all numbers in between. Our first stop was Silo Island. Here we found a considerable number of Canada goose nests...some in boxes and some on the ground. Of special note was a nest in the low bowl of a large cottonwood tree.

Not far from there, we spotted a goose lying low on a ground nest out on the open slope of the island. She held tight for us to get a few good photos. In her nest we found 4 warm eggs and a golf ball...go figure. On the first

Channel Island we were approaching a nest box when we saw the head of goose poke up fleetingly above the boards. I made my camera ready and Leroy went up and tapped on the side of the box. Out came mother goose in a flurry of beating wings. I got a good photo shot of her rising straight up above the nest. On the Tule Group of small islands we found a dozen or so nests tucked in among dense growths of willow. Two of the nests were within four feet of each other. We also found one nest where all of the eggs had already hatched out. On one of the Tule islands, Janetta saw a raccoon running off with a large goose egg in its mouth.

On Grassy Island we saw numerous pairs of geese in the open center of the island, but found no viable nests...only one destroyed nest. But perhaps the most ominous sight we experienced was back on the river as we navigated a large bend approaching the Adrian area. There in front of us was a large flock of snow geese milling around along the eastern shoreline and edge of the river. As we approached they rouse in unison to paint the sky with a white cloud that slowly dispersed into large snowflake like dots against the blue background. Then followed a dark cloud of white-fronted geese that dispersed into numerous twisted skeins beating back and forth across the river and adjacent lowlands.



Canada Goose Flying off Platform Nest



Newly Hatched Goslings

How to order Friends logo items through **Cabela's corporate outfitters**

Orders can be placed via email, online, phone, or fax. Our contact information is as follows:

- ◇ Email (embroidery@cabelas.com)
- ◇ ONLINE CATALOG (<http://content.yudu.com/A1qr2a/K12011SprCorpOutfit/resources/index.htm>) → choose your items
- ◇ Phone: 800-243-6626 (ask for a embroidery representative) Monday-Friday
7 a.m. – 7 p.m.
- ◇ Fax: 800-237-4401

When ordering you must reference the customer number and logo ID listed below:

- ◇ Customer number: 27905089
- ◇ Logo ID: 30009455



Any item listed in the catalog (except for ball caps) can be purchased in any of the colors listed. Ball caps can be purchased through the Grebe bookstore.

Last Call to Renew Your Membership or become a Member For 2011

Dear Friends, 2011 is soaring along with the spring winds. Summer will be upon us before we are ready for it. If you have not renewed your membership or become a member of the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge (FDFWR), then now's the time to do it. Your tax exempt gift is critical to our ongoing work to preserve and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition to providing financial support, our current members can do so much more for Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. FDFWR's credibility is greatly enhanced when we can count on YOU as a vital and growing membership from all walks of life.

For your convenience, there is a renewal form below. If you have any questions concerning your membership or about what Friends members do, please call Bob Christensen at 208-454-2518.

Be a Friend! Join Today!

Name

Address

City

State Zip Code

Telephone

Email

Annual Membership Categories:

Owl (Senior & Student)	\$10
Deer (Individual)	\$15
Fox (Family)	\$25
Osprey	\$50
Eagle	\$100
Goldeneye	\$500



Cottontail
On Visitor Center Lawn
Spring 2011

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

What Would You do for Free Money?

Did you know that each month funding for Friends related activities are available through corporate, foundation, and agency grants. Over the past five years, a few volunteers have written a variety of grants to fund projects including the photo blind and the Centennial Trail improvements. As we work to make the Discovering Wildlife Journeys field trips available to as many students as possible in the area, we continue to look at grants as a key source of funding. A key handicap is the limited number of Friends members involved in writing the grants.

What would you do for free money? Would you give up a Saturday morning to help with a grant? Would you give up an evening or two? Would you research and explore funding sources to verify that our Friends mission is a match?

If your answer is yes to any of these questions, please let us hear from you! The three to four of us with our oars in the water aren't enough to win the race. We need to be rowing with a full crew. Will you join our crew? If so, please e-mail me at gcj_83651@yahoo.com and use the subject "interest granted" so that I don't delete your response as an unknown source. You may also call and leave a message at 467-7515.

Stunning Wildlife Refuge Photography Gallery Now Online!

The full gallery of winning and "runner's up" images are now available to view in NWRA's 2010 Refuge Photo Contest Gallery!

Visit <http://www.refugeassociation.org/contest/2010-gallery.html> to see the amazing selection of images featured in the gallery. Once on the website, click on the link 'Refuge Image Library' and it will take you the winning photos of the last few years. Photos are taken of the many sights of our national wildlife refuges. You'll be amazed!



BUY A BRICK AND HELP EDUCATE A CHILD

Have you had the opportunity to visit the hummingbird/butterfly garden that is located on the southeastern corner of the Visitor Center? In the upcoming months, the garden will be undergoing a facelift.

The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge are now selling engraved bricks that will be used in the garden as a fund raiser for the Educational Outreach Program at the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

Here is your opportunity to leave your mark at the Deer Flat Refuge while contributing to the important educational programs offered at the Refuge. When you buy a personalized brick, your name or the name of a loved one will be make a permanent part of the Hummingbird/ Butterfly garden located just outside the Refuge Visitor's Center. Whether you are honoring a friend, client, family member or celebrating a special occasion, our engraved bricks make a wonderful and lasting gift.

Each brick is 4"X 8" with up to three engraved lines.

There is a maximum of 15 characters and/or spaces per line.

Note: Although bricks will be engraved and installed in a timely manner, the date of placement cannot be guaranteed due to requirements of the engraver and the necessity of installing the bricks. Donors will be notified when their brick has been installed.

Minimum donation per brick is \$25.00

Please indicate:

Line 1: _____

Line 2: _____

Line 3: _____
maximum of 15 characters/spaces per line

You may order as many bricks as you want.

Your Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____



Send check or money order to:

Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
c/o:bricks/nt
13751 Upper Embankment Rd.
Nampa, Idaho 83686



FRIENDS OF DEER
FLAT WILDLIFE
REFUGE

13751 Upper Embankment
Road
Nampa, Idaho 83686-8046

Executive Board:

*President - Genevieve
Johannsen (467-7515)
Vice President - Vacant
Secretary - Vacant
Treasurer - Bob
Christensen (454-2518)*

*Newsletter - Denise Hughes
(850-5885)*

We are on the web at:
[www.fws.gov/deerflat/
friends.htm](http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/friends.htm)

To preserves and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

The Grebe is published four times a year — look for the next issue in Summer 2011

The Many Faces of Spring Migration

Female Ring-necked Ducks (top left) are searching for nesting areas, Red-winged Black-birds (top right) are setting up nesting territories, Cinnamon Teal (bottom right) have returned to the valley to nest, White-crowned Sparrows (bottom left) prepare to head north to higher elevations, and the ever present Great Blue Herons can be found on nests in rookeries .

