



# The Grebe

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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Winter 2014

## Notes from the President, Noreen Tripp



I am looking forward to an exciting 2014 and I am hoping to see all of you at the Refuge. Our first big project is getting our newsletter "The Grebe" out to you. Denise Hughes set a high standard for the newsletter and with three Friends members, Robert Allen, Janice Engle, and Lyndell Jackson working together to gather articles and photos, edit, and publish it, we continue to have a newsletter to be proud of.

Lyndell Jackson was elected to the office of Friends Vice President. Genevieve Johannsen is our newly elected Treasurer giving Bob Christensen a much needed rest. Kathleen McCarter, our 2014 Secretary, is a retired school teacher who brings her passion for protecting wildlife and the environment. We will miss Dixie Blome, past Secretary on the Board; she will, however, continue volunteering at many of our events during the coming year. Fred Christensen is a Board member from 2013 and brings a quiet steady hand to the group. Two of Fred's passions are the Mason Bee hives that he builds and educating people about pollinators. Robert Ruesink is retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and enjoys teaching about fish and wildlife. Board member, Mike Shipmen, a freelance photographer, also has a degree in wildlife biology; he loves to teach others the art of photography. Heidi Zschack served as the Refuge Volunteer Coordinator in 2013; her great interest is bringing people with common interests together and connecting people to the wonders of nature. We will be learning more about our very talented 2014 board in future newsletters.

The Friends of Deer Flat's first big event for 2014 will be celebrating the 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge. The event will be held on February 22<sup>nd</sup> from 1pm to 4:30pm. I want to thank all the wonderful members who are putting in so much work to make this a fun time for Refuge visitors. Flying M Coffee Garage will be providing some great refreshments. The theme of this event is "105 Favorite Things To Do At Deer Flat Refuge". Be sure to join us on Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> and add your favorite things about the Refuge to our growing list. If you are a Facebook person, you can "like" The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge and post your pictures. *(continued on next page)*

( Continued from front page )

The bird feeding program is in high gear, thanks to all our bird feeders and to all who donate money and bird feed to this program. In the spring we are looking forward to getting back to work in our Pollinator Garden. We have moved the garden and will be placing bricks as the weather permits. I want to say thank to our Master Gardener Tricia Matthews and her husband for all the hard work they put into this project. We will keep you posted on work days in the garden, so if you enjoy gardening or just getting outdoors this is a project for you.

I am looking forward to working with all of you this coming year. Find a Friends project that you love and join us; you will find a list of projects in this newsletter.

Noreen Tripp, President

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## 2014 Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge Board



Seated (L to R): Genevieve Johannsen, Treasurer & Bookstore Manager; Kathleen McCarter, Secretary; Lyndell Jackson, Vice President. Standing (L to R): Fred Christensen, Board Member; Mike Shipman, Board Member; Noreen Tripp, President.

Not pictured: Board Members Bob Ruesink and Heidi Zschach.

## FRIENDS OF DEER FLAT WILDLIFE REFUGE!!!!

### We invite you to be a part of the many projects the Friends are involved in:

- Discover Wildlife Journeys Bus Scholarship, providing funds for school busses.
- Friends' quarterly newsletter "The Grebe"
- We have a great need for people with fund raising skills.
- Bird feeding program
- Pollinator garden
- Osprey-cam
- Keeping our Facebook and web site page up to date
- Helping with Friends events such as:
  - Deer Flat Refuge Anniversary event February 22<sup>nd</sup>.
  - National Wildlife Refuge System celebration (October).

**If you are interested in learning about any of the above or would like to become part of a project team -**

**CONTACT: NOREEN TRIPP** [tonotripp@cablone.net](mailto:tonotripp@cablone.net)



Refuge photo courtesy of Robert Allen

**Notes from the Past-President (2010-13)  
Genevieve Johannsen, 2014 Treasurer and  
Grebe's Nest Bookstore Manager**



As we begin another year of partnering with Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge I want to thank all of you for your support and involvement during my past three years as president. With your help we were able to increase attendance at our anniversary events—giving many more people an opportunity to see the Refuge as more than just “Lake Lowell.”

We have partnered with other organizations and businesses to finance bus scholarships, add activities, and provide meals and refreshments for volunteers and participants. Two special members, Bob Sobba and Doug Cleveland, generously shared their skill with us and added a publication that documents our first 100 years and honey produced in hives on the Refuge to our bookstore offerings, significantly increasing our earnings potential. Julie Steele, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited, has been a strong supporter of our bird feeding program. You have also helped us to add financial resources by participating in our semi annual gift-card fundraisers. I am very grateful for all that each of you do to help us grow.

After a few years of limited involvement we went public again and participated in activities that would give us visibility and allow us to network. We will be participating in the Cabin Fever Reliever event at Karcher Mall on February 1<sup>st</sup> and I invite all of you to join in the fun at our booth or just as participants.

To give our very-capable and dedicated volunteers a bit of a break I am re-activating my business and marketing background and replacing Cathy Eells as bookstore manager for the next year and I am replacing Bob Christensen as treasurer. I appreciate the bookstore surveys that were completed and returned in December, and I would still welcome input. There are no big plans for change, but I encourage you to stop by and see what we have and to leave a comment regarding what you would like to buy to support us. The more fiscally sound we are the more we can support the Refuge's needs.

# CELEBRATE 105th Anniversary Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge



Saturday February 22nd

1 PM to 4:30 PM

Deer Flat Refuge Visitors Center

13751 Upper Embankment Rd. Nampa

*Coffee and pastries provided by :*

Discover 105 Fun things to do at  
the Refuge!

- Speakers
- Crafts & face painting for children
- Refreshments
- Photo walk (weather permitting)
- Bird & wildlife watching

*Flying M Coffee Garage*



Sponsored by:  
Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge

## DUCK OVER LAKE LOWELL

Marie Beauchamp (class of '13) painted the "Duck Over Lake Lowell" as a final project of her painting class at Treasure Valley Community College, Caldwell Center. Each quarter the drawing and painting classes travel to Deer Flat to study the animals and changing seasonal environments of these amazing creatures. In her painting, only the second landscape she has ever attempted, she captured the intensity of this magnificent duck in flight over Lake Lowell and was awarded a red ribbon at the 2013 Canyon County Fair.

Linda Varnes, Art Instructor  
Treasure Valley Community College  
Caldwell, Idaho



## THE POWER OF THE GROUP

Thanks to the combined efforts of Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge members and many others in the community, a proposed shooting range next to the Refuge was stopped in its tracks. In August 2013, Stan Culling, Acting Refuge Manager, became aware of an application by Reliance Arms, LLC to establish a shooting range next to the Refuge. The application requesting a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) had been filed with the Canyon County Planning and Zoning Commissioners in July. The proposed site was the abandoned gravel pit on the corner of Indiana Avenue and Roosevelt Avenue, 200 feet from the Refuge boundary and kitty corner to the Refuge entrance parking lot. A hearing was scheduled before the Planning and Zoning Commissioners on October 17.

Stan alerted the Friends of Deer Flat who quickly began mobilizing a response. Friends members and others who had interest in and concern for the Refuge were notified about the gun range proposal. Claudia Haynes from the Canyon County Alliance for Responsible Growth was asked to assist in organizing the group to oppose the application.

At a meeting scheduled on September 20 at the Refuge Visitor Center, the group jumped into action. People took on various tasks – contacting others to help, researching the impact of firing ranges on the environment and the effect on birds and other wildlife, researching the county Comprehensive Plan and Conditional Use Permit requirements, and contacting local newspapers.

A second meeting was held on October 4 to discuss the gathered information and to organize a letter writing campaign. The response was overwhelming; over fifteen letters were written to the Planning and Zoning Commissioners opposing the gun range and raising specific concerns relating to the proximity and effects on the Refuge. News articles appeared in the Idaho Press-Tribune on October 4 and October 18.

On October 7, less than one month after the group organized plans for opposing the application, Reliance Arms, LLC formally withdrew their CUP application.

Lyndell Jackson

## CALLING ALL FRIENDS!

Come out to the Refuge, get some fresh air, visit with other Friends, and help clean up our adopted section of the Refuge on Iowa Avenue from the Upper Dam to the end of the curves. The “clean up crew” of volunteers meet every other month – January, March, May, July, September, and November – to pick up litter and to assist the Refuge staff in maintaining the area. Dates vary, but email notices are sent out the week of cleanup.

The Friends adopted the Iowa Curves six years ago. Kris Horton has taken on the leader role since the beginning and has done a terrific job of notifying volunteers, providing trash bags, and organizing the clean up. The Friends thank Kris for all the time and hard work she’s put into this project.

Questions? Call Kris Horton at 249-0044 or email her at [krisinidaho@q.com](mailto:krisinidaho@q.com).

Noreen Tripp, Friends President



## Grant Won for Pollinator Garden

The Idaho Horticulture Society has awarded the Friends \$1012.56 to begin construction on a new xeriscape Pollinator Garden in back of the Refuge Visitor Center. The goals of the garden are to highlight the essential role of bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators, to showcase the wide variety of flowering native plants, and to address the need for water conservation in our high desert habitat.

The Pollinator Garden will feature sustainable native plants, a drip irrigation system, plant identification markers, and a brick seating area. The personalized bricks that were placed in the original garden will be used to form a new pathway; additional bricks can be purchased for \$25 to help fund the maintenance and enhancement of the garden. Future plans call for adding benches, informational signage, a brochure, a self-guided tour map, educational programs, and more plants.

Work on the garden will commence this spring and be completed in time for National Pollinators Week – June 16-22, 2014. This grant was made possible by the generosity of the Idaho Horticulture Society and the collaborative efforts of Noreen Tripp (project coordinator), Tricia Matthews (master gardener), Lyndell Jackson (information coordinator), and Jon Minkoff (lead writer). Valuable assistance was also provided by Refuge staff, other Friends members, the Idaho Botanical Garden, the Idaho Native Plant Society, and the University of Idaho Master Gardener program.



Chris & Trisha Mathews at work in the new Pollinator Garden site. Photo by Noreen Tripp.

## BOB (Robert C.) CHRISTENSEN

### Biographical Sketch

Bob was born and educated in the state of Utah but has lived the last 23 years in Idaho. He received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Brigham Young University with majors in zoology and wildlife science and minors in botany and range science. Bob is a *Certified Wildlife Biologist* by The Wildlife Society. From 1972 to 1974 he was employed by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as a Conservation Officer. From 1974 to 2003 Bob worked for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation as a biologist, ecologist, and environmental specialist with duty stations in Yuma AZ, Billings MT, Provo UT, Denver CO, and Boise ID. In October of 2003 he retired from his position as the Regional Environmental Officer in Reclamation's Pacific Northwest Region. Bob currently resides in Caldwell with his wife, Kathy. They have six children and 23 grandchildren.

Bob continues to enjoy his biological interests by volunteering at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge. He has been a member of the Friends of Deer Flat group since its beginning and has for the last 7 years served as treasurer. Of special interest to him have been the volunteer experiences of monitoring the bald eagle nesting activities at the refuge, operating the osprey webcam, helping with goose nest surveys and duck banding programs. Bob enjoys observing wildlife, and because of his graduate experience in raptor ecology, continues to have an interest in all raptor species.



Photo by Susan Kain



Photo at Request of Bob Christensen

## Dixie Blome

### Friends of the Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge Board Member

Living in Canyon County, Idaho, and across from the Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge has awakened our senses to what meaning life holds for my husband, Bob, and I. Without thinking, Idaho residents claim the high desert, the mountains, rivers and lakes as our deserved playgrounds. We are observed by the rest of the nation, they want what we have; therefore, the population increases and farms are sold for subdivisions. More demands are placed on water, food supply, quality education, infrastructures, recreational facilities, hospitals and on and on. Pollution of air, water, and food sources quickly follow! People are distressed –other animal species are displaced and lost as their habitat becomes fragmented. This is the reason we developed a small habitat on our farm as the other species have no voice and we cannot assume they will exist for future generations. We love what we do and the rewards are wonderful and varied. We watched with interest, and misconceptions on our part, as the Friends group formed and started to develop. We joined in the beginning and our true education began as we started to interact with the Refuge staff and realized their values and missions. We realized that it takes a lot of education, patience, effort and, yes, frustration on all sides to work toward a common goal of preserving the land that curls around Lake Lowell, as well as the Lake, itself. We are doing this not just for the human residents but for the songbirds, the eagles, quail and pheasants, blue herons, white egrets, to name a few of the birds, and for the deer and the coyotes that move silently through the night, not forgetting what lives beneath the soil, crawls upon it, swims in the Lake and seasonally migrates through this area.

I have worked on the Events Committee and have also served as Secretary of the Board for three years. It has been a pleasure to see representatives of different aspects of Idaho life, some wilder than others, come together for something less tangible, projecting into the future species unable to say thank you except by the sweet song of the meadow lark, the plaintive mourning dove call, the moonlight frog sonata, the eerie soft sound of the great horned owl, the howl of the coyote or just the peace that steals over you in the solitude of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.



## Doug Cleveland, Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge Member

My love of Lake Lowell started in 1947 when in the seventh grade I rode my bicycle to upper dam to fish. Much has changed since then and much has stayed the same. My family (wife and four children) have over the years enjoyed what the lake has offered. My grandkids when visiting with their parents always seem to make their way to and spend time at the lake. I am particularly happy to be a member of The Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge. My participation has been limited this past year because of heart surgery. This behind me, this year will be different!

In my retirement one of the hobbies that I enjoy is keeping bees. Living just across 12<sup>th</sup> Ave from the upper end of the lake, the bees in the colonies in my back yard spend their summers on the Refuge. I also keep several colonies near the east central part of the Refuge. The varied plants and trees on the Refuge offer a wide variety of nectar from early spring to late fall. This results in honey in a variety of colors and flavors.

Honeybees are in trouble. We are losing them for several reasons. I enjoy and have given several presentations to various groups, birders, garden clubs etc in the Refuge auditorium.

I am vice president of the Treasure Valley Beekeepers, an organization of over two hundred hobby beekeepers. Many are finding out how easy and fascinating it is to keep bees. If there are some that would like to find out if they could become one of those, I encourage you to let me know!



Doug and his son, Ron with a bee frame

## Fred Christensen, Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge Board Member

### Wild bees need our help, too!

Helping wild bees is new to me, but it has been popular on the west coast for years and the hobby is well established there. Ron Bitner got me interested in it and as you may already know he is an expert. The wild bee is a great pollinator. Three hundred and fifty can do the job of 4,000 honeybees. This is not to minimize the importance of honeybees; but wild bees are equally important as pollinators, especially in the event of dwindling honeybee populations. There thousands of different species of bees and likely many are not even identified yet!

As far as wild bees are concerned, several different species are currently recognized. They do not sting so a hobbyist doesn't have to be concerned about that. They will do well if you have a flowering shrub or two or a few flowers in your yard or vicinity. They also require some mud for sealing their hive. Wild bees do not winter kill, but start developing in the hive in winter and are fully developed by the time the weather starts to warm up. However, you must be very careful in the use of insecticides in your yard not only to protect wild bees by the many other species of pollinators that may be present. Your hive likely will be visited by leaf cutter bees which cannot survive the winter temperatures. Leaf cutter bees were introduced to provide pollination for Agriculture crops and they are housed in the fields in bee blocks (structures that keep the temperature just above freezing). For complete information, go to the Internet and look up Mason Bees. Pay close attention to the Blue Orchard Bee which can do well in the Treasure Valley. Notice that many of these bees look more like flies than bees!



Fred makes wild bee boxes to provide our wild pollinators with quality brood sites.

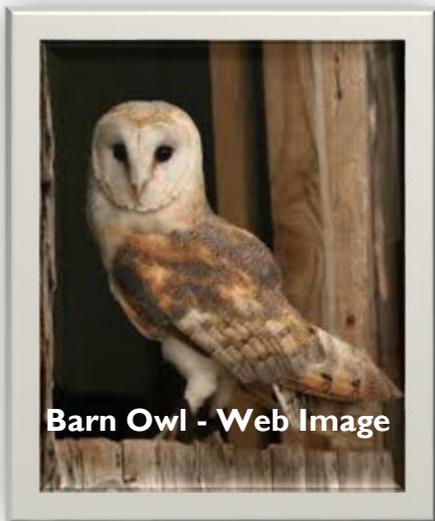
## *Owls of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge*

*by Bob Christensen*

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge provides diverse habitats for several owl species. Those which regularly nest on the Refuge are: the barn owl, western screech-owl, great horned owl, and long-eared owl. Other species which are more rarely observed include: the flammulated owl, snowy owl, northern pygmy-owl, burrowing owl, barred owl, short-eared owl, and northern saw-whet owl (information taken from *Birds of Deer Flat NWR*).

Because of their nocturnal nature, owls are less often observed on the Refuge than many other bird species. However, they can be found if one takes the time to explore the Refuge...especially the cottonwood woodlands along the edge of Lake Lowell and on the Snake River island sector of the Refuge. I have observed all four of the owl species that nest on the Refuge while participating in Refuge wildlife programs.

My first sighting of a great horned owl (GHO) on the Refuge was while hiking through the woods on my way to inspect the bald eagle nest on the east side of Lake Lowell. As is my habit, I stopped along the trek to glass (by aid of binoculars and spotting scope) a stick nest in a tall thin cottonwood tree. Much to my delight I readily saw two large feathered ears poking above the nest and a GHO's large yellow eyes staring back at me. On another occasion, I was poking around the trees at the Refuge maintenance/residence area, looking for raptor nests, when I spied a large opening in one of the ancient cottonwoods in front of the stone house. I thought I could see a large bird back in the dark hole, so I quickly set up my spotting scope. And there again, was a large GHO glaring at me...what a look she gave me! (*continued on next page*)



**Great Horned Owl**  
**By USFWS/Addison Mohler**

*(continued from prior page)*

Barn owls on the Refuge are commonly encountered early each spring while cleaning out the wood duck boxes. Some years we have found just a few and other years many barn owls have been roosting in the boxes. On another occasion my granddaughter, Anna, and I were helping with a goose nest survey on Silo Island when we happened upon an old wood duck box that had fallen part way out of the tree. It was only accessible through a small triangular opening. However, upon close inspection we could make out the outline and light golden plumage of a sleeping barn owl in the dark recesses of the box.

Some years back, Jim Holcomb and I were helping with the goose nest surveys on the islands, and on one particular island was a nesting colony of herons. Their nests were up high in the tops of the cottonwoods. While watching these remarkable birds and their nesting behavior, we soon spotted something that didn't quite fit in. There in the middle of the colony of heron nests was a long-eared owl in its own nest....its long ears poking into the sky...and not the least disturbed by its noisy neighbors.

And last, and least in size, I have had several opportunities to witness a sleepy-eyed screech owl. The first occasion was while helping with the construction of "The Coop," the bird observation blind located just southeast of the visitor center. Not far from the activities was a wood duck box mounted on the side of a cottonwood tree. Every once in awhile, a small owl would stick his head out of the hole and examine our work. Of course, it was a western screech owl. Also, on many occasions during spring cleaning of the wood duck boxes I have had close encounters with screech owls. Some are lethargic and refuse to move from their comfortable roosts inside the boxes, while others skedaddle at the first hint of an invader. But each time we carefully close the boxes and leave them in peace.



**Long-eared Owl**  
Web Image



**Western Screech Owl**  
By USFWS/Addison Mohler

## Coming Soon: A Final CCP for the Refuge!

The Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge Draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS) was open for public comment from March 15-May 15, 2013. The Refuge received many comments on the Draft CCP/EIS from agencies, organizations, and individuals during the spring 2013 comment period. To address those substantive comments, changes and clarifications were made to the final CCP/EIS. In addition, the Service has responded to all comments, documented in appendix H (Public Involvement) of the Final CCP.

Once reviewed for accuracy and completeness and approved by our US Fish and Wildlife Service Headquarters Office, the Final will be sent out for printing. Refuge staff anticipates that the Final CCP/EIS will be available to the public for a 30-day review period in late winter or early spring.

Thirty days after the release of the final CCP/EIS the Regional Director will sign the Record of Decision and a final CCP will be printed.

Stan Culling, Acting Refuge Manager  
Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

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## Update on Osprey WebCam

The webcam is currently not operating. Strong fall winds blew the camera off position and disabled our ability to communicate electronically with the camera. We are waiting for warmer weather to be able to access the camera via lift or ladder to correct the problems. Our goal is to get it back operating before the ospreys return in late March/early April.



Refuge photo courtesy of Robert Allen

# 2013 Membership Application

\* \* \* \*

Please fill out this page and return with a check payable to:

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



\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email address

(please include email address if you have one – this is our primary means of communicating with Friends members)



Goose Eggs & Golf Ball

### Annual Membership Categories:

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

### TOTAL

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**All contributions are tax deductible.**

### Friends Activities

Please Mark the Activities that Interest you:

- |                           |                                |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Habitat enhancement       | Public relations               |
| Staffing the bookstore    | Grant writing                  |
| Greeting Refuge visitors  | Lobby on behalf of the Refuge  |
| Helping organize an event | Be an officer in Friends group |
| Litter pickup             | Other _____                    |
| Weed eradication          |                                |
| Education events          |                                |
| Photography               |                                |
| Publicity                 |                                |

For more information, contact the  
refuge at 467-9278 or

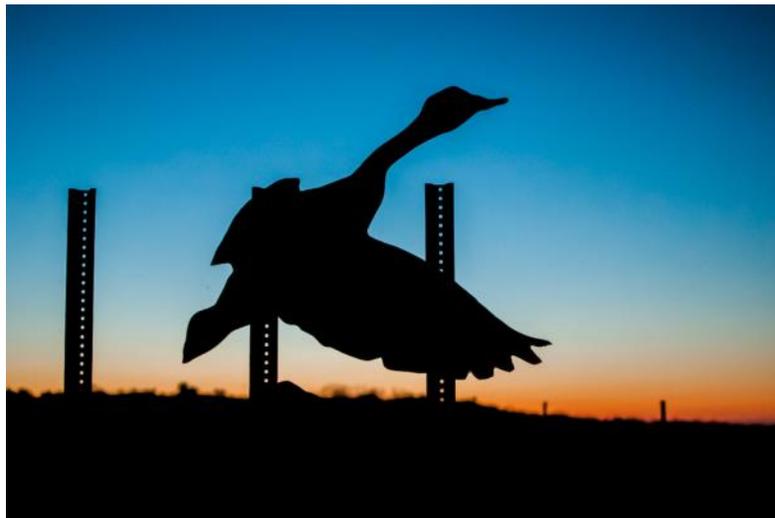
Email: [deerflat@fws.gov](mailto:deerflat@fws.gov)

Website:  
<http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/index.html>

Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/DeerFlatNWR>

Executive Board:

- Noreen Tripp, President
- Lyndell Jackson, Vice President
- Kathleen McCarter, Secretary
- Genevieve Johannsen, Treasurer



Refuge photo courtesy of Robert Allen