



THE GREBE

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- ◆ **March 2 - 5 -**
Beyond the Boundaries conference in Washington D.C.
- ◆ **March 6 -**
MONTHLY MEETING at 7 p.m. at Deer Flat Visitor Center
- ◆ **March 13 -**
LECTURE SERIES
(Native plant gardens)
- ◆ **March 17 -**
WEED WARRIORS
- ◆ **April 3 -**
MONTHLY MEETING at 7 p.m. at Deer Flat Visitor Center
- ◆ **April 3 -**
Lecture Series
(Water quality issues)
- ◆ **April 15 -**
Lake opens to boating
- ◆ **April 21 -**
Weed Warriors/Litter Lift
- ◆ **April 21 -**
Earth Day

If you have a story that you would like to have published in "The Grebe", please contact Denise Hughes, 850-5885 or den_hug@hotmail.com

Bad news for the Refuge

The County Commissioners voted unanimously to overturn the denial of Kevin Bailey's Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for building 13 more houses on the 40 acres off Roosevelt that jut down into the Refuge; the Refuge will border this development on three sides. Each house will have its own well and septic tank. Mr. Bailey agreed to meet with the Refuge staff to discuss landscaping and domestic pet predation. The Friends group suggested several other use conditions but none of them were included in the permit.

Elaine Johnson, Refuge Manager, gave an excellent testimony about the adverse affects the housing development was already having on the Refuge and what further problems and negative impacts more people, houses, noise and non-native vegetation would have on the Refuge.

Rene Bine, a neighbor, spoke of the Mr. Bailey's lack of compliance with former CUP Conditions and that rewarding this attitude with another CUP was not setting a good standard.

Ed Wofford, a neighbor and water master of Wild Rose development, spoke about water problems.

Al McGlinsky spoke about the responsibility the Commissioners had to represent and protect the interests of all the people in Canyon County and to be the voice of the people.

I spoke on behalf of the Friends about the impact of septic tanks draining downhill into the Refuge marsh and eventually the lake as well as the negative impact a large housing development would have on the function of the Refuge as

well as on the experience of the 100,000 visitors coming to the Refuge yearly for wildlife preservation experience., etc, etc.

The Action Alert Committee is joining other environmental coalitions and like minded groups to work on the problem of open spaces and protecting the area around the Refuge.

Many thanks to those who prepared statements, sent letters and testified.

By Lee McGlinsky

Bailey property adjacent the refuge



President's Corner

Noreen Tripp and I attended the Advocacy Training and Nonprofit Day at the Idaho Legislature on January 17 & 18th. This annual workshop shows beginning non-profits, such as the Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, how to build an advocacy (support) program into our organization, as well as how to raise grassroots support and engage in effective direct lobbying.

The keynote speaker on the 17th was Dr. Jasper LiCalzi, Chair of the Department of Political Economy, Albertson College of Idaho. He believes that non-profits have an obligation to lobby the Legislature, because they provide a voice for those who cannot lobby for themselves. In our case, the Refuge staff cannot lobby the State government for support but we as Idaho citizens can. We now have a "Lobbying Tool Kit" booklet to guide us if we want to pursue this means of accomplishing our mission.

Noreen attended one of the two workshops, "Mobilizing the Machine: What you need to be successful in your Issue Campaign." I attended the other workshop, "Understanding the Legislative Process." This workshop was very informative; we learned how a bill becomes a law and how to contact our legislators while they are "in session."

Senator John McGee from Caldwell, Senator Shawn Keough from Sandpoint, and Margaret Henbest from Boise had a panel discussion which was very interesting but did not help with our concerns. When another attendee asked about the development around Lake Coeur d'Alene, they assured us that the State of Idaho had provided for individuals to voice their concerns about proposed development through their local Planning and Zoning Commissioners. John McGee recommended buying land, and cited the citizens of Boise who passed a bond to buy land to keep open spaces in the foothills.

We were hoping to network with other like-minded nonprofit groups at dinner Wednesday evening, but there was only one other organization at our table, the Environmental Education Association. Groups such as the Nature Conservancy and Sierra Club were not present.

On Thursday morning we set up a display board, courtesy of the Refuge, at the Capitol. There were 150 Idahoans representing 100 nonprofit organizations. We met many dynamic people from organizations ranging from the Idaho Food Bank to the Idaho Orchid Society. We were encour-

aged to contact our legislators by taking a note to the House or the Senate and giving it to the doorkeeper. We wrote a note on the current copy of The Grebe--Noreen's idea--and Noreen took it to the House and Senate chambers. We contacted the legislators in Districts 10, 12, and 13. Senator John McGee from District 10, Caldwell, and Representative Darrell Bolz, District 10, Caldwell, both came to chat with us. We introduced ourselves and made them aware of our group and our concerns regarding the development encroaching on Deer Flat NWR. Darrell said that when it comes to development, "Idaho citizens do not want to be told what they can do with their property. "Property rights" is a hot-button and on-going issue." He said that he will be happy to discuss this issue any time; I believe he is as concerned as we are about how quickly the area is moving from farmland to housing developments. The Refuge is in District 13; unfortunately we were not able to meet with the Legislators from that district.

This extremely worthwhile experience has shown us that legislators want to hear from their constituents. We must ask for their support to fulfill our mission: caring for the Refuge. If we don't ask for help, the continuing development around the Refuge and contrary visions for the Refuge itself may work directly against our goals.

By Cathy Eells

Cathy Eells and Noreen Tripp meet with Senator John McGee, District 10



Grant Money Awarded

Thanks to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, we have received \$5,000 in "capacity building" grant funds. The money will be used for our bookstore, computer equipment, and display booth and canopy.

Along with reporting on grant expenditures and activities, we need to meet some specific goals this year: (1) Use the display booth at three events; (2) Make

three (of each) brochures, posters and multimedia presentations; (3) Distribute materials to five neighborhoods; (4) Expand our membership to 74; (5) Operate the bookstore 500 hours; and (6) Obtain \$8000 in in-kind service contributions (volunteer hours, at \$10 per hour).

MISSION STATEMENT

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.

Great Backyard Bird Count

Hoping to attract new visitors to Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge, the refuge Friends group invited local children from the Treasure Valley to help count birds for the Great Backyard Bird Count that is held each February. The data from the bird count is compiled by Cornell University Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society and used to track bird populations.

We were pleased to have 84 children and parents join us at the refuge. Once the children and their parents signed in and received a raffle ticket, they visited a station where the children were shown how to use binoculars and a field guide

Cathy tells kids about basic bird identification



and were given the basics in bird identification. Many children helped to identify the birds on the feeders around the visitor center (American Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, American Goldfinches, and Dark eyed Juncos) but many more headed outside to count the birds on the lake and along the nature trail. The counters spotted Tundra Swans, Common, Hooded, and Red breasted Mergansers, Prairie Falcons, and a Merlin. One lone adult Bald Eagle was seen by most of the counters. When the birds were busy elsewhere, the children had the opportunity to build a bird feeder from a milk carton, to draw their favorite bird on a mural that will hang at the refuge and to play bird bingo and a bird memory game. Cookies and hot chocolate after the nature walk were a big hit also.

We counted 37 species of birds but more important, we introduced Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge to many people who had not visited the refuge before. With events such as this

we can introduce more local people to the refuge. Thank you to all of the wonderful volunteers!!

Nature walk participants



New Members



Please welcome our newest members:
Gordon Barrett,
Harold Nevill,
Larry & Carla Thompson,
Dawnel White

Waterfowl, Eagles, Coyotes, oh my!

By Bob Christensen

One afternoon in late January, I drove out to the Marsing Bridge and followed the river in an easterly direction as far as Walter's Ferry. I then crossed the bridge and followed the Snake River back to Marsing on the opposite side. I enjoyed the sunny day. I watched two Red-tailed Hawks flying slowly across farm fields and saw several Sparrow Hawks perched quietly on power lines. Several rafts of Canada Geese and ducks (unidentified because of bad backlight and glare off the water) were on the river, along with two waterfowl hunters at the head of one of the refuge islands

Returning by way of the Lower Dam Road, I had a good view of the long cracks in the ice that extended for thousands of feet. A few hundred yards from the dam, I saw several extended lines of geese and ducks huddled in elongated groups along some long, thin leads of open water. I put my spotting scope on these flocks and soon picked out five Bald Eagles (4 adults, 1 juvenile) scattered on the ice near the waterfowl. Two of the eagles were side-by-side and one had a duck-sized carcass in its talons.

I watched as small flocks of ducks and geese winged their way across the ice and settled down among the birds already on the ice or, in the case of most of the ducks, into the narrow channels of water. Near the boat ramp at the north end of the dam, several people were venturing out onto the ice surface.

I paid close attention to the eagles, which were seating motionless on the ice. After several minutes, two coyotes came across the ice toward the ducks, geese, and eagles. For about a half hour I watched these cunning canines try to maneuver closer and closer to the groups of waterfowl—zigzagging back and forth and nonchalantly looking away or beyond their mark. It became apparent that their primary target was the eagle with the carcass, a ready meal if they could get hold of it. Their cool approach did not fool the waterfowl or the eagles—all heads were turned their way.

As the two coyotes closed in on the eagles, the bird with the carcass flew up and then alighted again on the ice 25 yards away. One of the coyotes sniffed the ice where the carcass had been, the other came up nose to beak with the other eagle until it jumped up and slashed at him with its talons. When the second coyote moved in close, the second eagle flew over and joined his buddy.

The coyotes then meandered casually over to another long line of geese and ducks. They made their way to the far side of the open water and slowly moved along it keeping their eye on the reaction of the ducks in the water and the geese on the opposite side. Both coyotes from time to time urinated and then defecated on the ice as they moved along. Having no success with this flock of waterfowl, the coyotes again moved slowly back toward the two Bald Eagles—again approaching closely until the eagle with the carcass flew a short distance away and the other flashed his talons at them.

After another meager attempt at harassing another flock of geese, the two coyotes moved back toward the southern shore. About half way back they met a third coyote walking on the ice towards them. They all met for a few moments as if to take tabs on the situation - "How's the hunting guys?" "Not worth a duck's leg, Chum." Then the two disappointed canines walked slowly towards the shore, while the new would-be-predator ambled eastward on the ice toward a more promising hunting ground.



Lake Lowell
during the
January freeze

FRIENDS OF DEER FLAT WILDLIFE REFUGE

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**Vice President - John Augsburger
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**Treasurer/Secretary - Kris Horton
(461-9717)**

Upcoming Programs

March 6 - General Meeting

Join us for a round table discussion with other local groups who are concerned about the development around the refuge perimeter. We are looking for ideas to protect and improve the outer boundaries from some of the current development.

March 13 –

Susan Belle, a Horticulture professor from University of Idaho Ada County Extension, will discuss native plants and Xeri-scaping, a water conserving gardening strategy



Rabbitbrush

April 3 - Water Quality Issues

Join us as we discuss water quality issues in Idaho; the ways in which we as individuals contribute to water pollution and



what we can do to help. Amy Luft, Environmental Education Coordina-

tor with the Department of Environmental Quality will lead the discussion.

The Friend's group general meeting will be held right after the program.

May 1 - General Meeting

Colleen Moulton, from Idaho Fish and Game, will discuss the designation of Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge as an Important Bird Area. (tentatively scheduled)

May 8 - Local Fish Identification

Amy Parrish with Idaho Fish and Game will show us how to identify Idaho's fish, and the importance of riparian areas and human impact.

Yellow Perch

