

# Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge

*A Place for Wildlife and People*

## **An Oasis for Wildlife**

Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge was established in 1909 by President Theodore Roosevelt as a wetland oasis in an arid region. It is one of the oldest refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System. The refuge encompasses over 11,000 acres and includes 104 islands in the Snake River between the Ada-Canyon County line in Idaho and Farewell Bend in Oregon. As the region becomes more urbanized, the refuge has increasingly become an oasis not only for wildlife, but for people to connect with nature and the outdoors.

Many different wildlife species depend on Deer Flat Refuge as a place for food, a place to rest, and to raise their families. Birds that live on the refuge include osprey, grebes, cormorants, eagles, American white pelicans, great blue herons, snowy egrets, great horned owls, nuthatches, chickadees, hummingbirds, various shorebirds, geese, and a plethora of ducks. Mammals using the refuge include mule deer, beaver, coyotes, and the mountain cottontail rabbit. Fish species include largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, yellow perch, rainbow trout, Lahontan trout, and bluegill.





### Managing the Lake

Between 1906 and 1909, the Bureau of Reclamation built two earthen dams to create Lake Lowell reservoir. The refuge was established shortly after its completion, making the Lake Lowell Unit of Deer Flat Refuge an “overlay” refuge. Lake Lowell is one of the largest off stream reservoir in the country, irrigating up to 200,000 acres under the management of the Bureau of Reclamation. While the Bureau of Reclamation regulates the water levels for irrigation, the lake itself remains a National Wildlife Refuge.



## Public Use

The National Wildlife Refuge System is directed by Congress to prioritize six types of public use at refuges throughout the country, as long as it is compatible with the purpose for which the Refuge was established. Those types of public use are: hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, photography, environmental education, and interpretation. At Deer Flat Refuge, the Service strives to balance public use, including recreation on the lake, with the requirement to protect wildlife. The refuge was established as a place to protect natural resources, for wildlife to breed and nest, and as a wildlife sanctuary. Wildlife dependent recreation is permitted - so long as the refuge can still meet its requirement to protect wildlife.

Deer Flat Refuge provides a place for people to engage in all six priority uses. There are opportunities to hunt deer, ducks, and upland game birds; fish for



bass, catfish, perch, and trout; observe wildlife from a number of trails, the visitors center, or wildlife observation platforms; and take part in the many different family friendly nature programs throughout the year. Additionally, the Lake Lowell Unit of the refuge has beaches for swimming and picnicking as well as several boat ramps for recreational boaters to access the water.

### Creating a Long-Term Plan

Congress directed the refuge to complete a Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (CCP/EIS). This is a 15-year refuge management plan that identifies the best options for achieving the wildlife related goals that the refuge was established to achieve. Under this plan, public upland and on-water recreation activities on the Lake Lowell Unit will continue, including fishing, hunting, boating, photography, hiking, and environmental education programs.

Working with the public was an important part of the planning process. During the public comment process, during which time the Service collected written and verbal comments given during public meetings, a lot of feedback on public use at the refuge was received. The final management plan reflects those provided comments and the best available science. It provides for the management goals and biological objectives for protecting wildlife, scientifically

grounded strategies for improving refuge wildlife habitats, and different types of recreational opportunities. New benefits for the public include: expanding and improving trails, off-trail access, signs, and visitor facilities for wildlife observation, improving photography, fishing, and hunting opportunities; and improving interpretive programs.

The final management plan protects wildlife by implementing seasonal closures during times when wildlife are particularly sensitive to disturbance. For example, as in the past, Lake Lowell will continue to be closed to motorized boating October 1 – April 14 to protect migrating and overwintering waterfowl from disturbance.

The final refuge management plan represents a balance – a way to provide recreational opportunities the public desires while also protecting wildlife.