



Malheur Musings

Newsletter of the Malheur Wildlife Associates, Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge
... Keeping the Needs of Wildlife First ...

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July 2011

Malheur Wildlife Associates

an affiliate of the National Wildlife Refuge Association

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The Malheur Wildlife Associates is an independent, non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation committed to:

- Conserving, enhancing, and restoring fish and wildlife habitat and cultural history in the Harney Basin through the support of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge staff and programs.
- Assisting the Refuge in providing wildlife-dependent educational and recreational opportunities while enhancing public knowledge and appreciation of the Refuge mission.
- Advocating for support of the Refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System.

Malheur Wildlife Associates Annual Meeting Highlights

Gary Ivey, MWA Board Member

We held our 2011 annual meeting on May 8 at Refuge Headquarters. Twenty people attended, including six of our Board members, Refuge staff members Tim Bodeen, Carla Burnside, Linda Beck and Carey Goss, plus guest members Ray Beck, Cal Elshoff, Suzanne Thornton, Kathy Day, Steve Day, Bonnie Lamb, Chris Janowski, Joyce Cline, John Cline and David Johnson.

Refuge Manager, Tim Bodeen reported that the refuge's Final Draft of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan will be available for public review in July. Check the refuge webpage for the details: http://www.fws.gov/malheur/ccp_overview.html. The refuge received Stimulus Project funding in 2010 to build new fish ladders in refuge dams to improve native fish passage, and the project is nearing completion. Refuge Administrative Officer, Tami Coe is taking the lead in making the flower gardens at Refuge HQ pollinator-friendly.

Refuge Archaeologist, Carla Burnside reported that the University of Oregon's Architectural Field School will be studying the historic Refuge office buildings and Sodhouse Ranch structures. Carla also has a Tribal intern working with her on developing inter-

pretive information about the Civilian Conservation Corps historic work on the Refuge.

Linda Beck, Refuge Fisheries Biologist, reported on her carp telemetry study; she has radio-marked 35 carp in Malheur Lake and is documenting their movements. Ducks Unlimited, Inc. has selected Malheur Refuge as one of three critical sites for a campaign to control carp and restore wetland quality. She also reported that the Army Corps of Engineers is considering building an island to attract nesting Caspian Terns, about 600 yards out from the mouth of Blitzen River in Malheur Lake. Those terns would help with carp management by eating carp.

MWA has successfully completed our carp education project with a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Refuge now has a three-panel carp education display to take to schools and public events. It is currently displayed at the Harney County Chamber of Commerce building in Burns. We have also partnered with the Refuge to upgrade the auto-tour route by producing an audio narrative of each of the stops; the narrative will be avail-

continued on page 2

able for downloading and on a CD. Another project that we are partnering with the Refuge on is the development and construction of an interpretive kiosk at Frenchglen to provide information to refuge visitors. We are also working to help Refuge staff find citizen-science volunteers to support the Refuge biological monitoring projects.

Refuge Fire Management Officer, Shane Theall

Alice Elshoff, MWA Board Member

Shane grew up on a family homestead 35 miles west of Lakeview, enjoying the good, rural Oregon life. When not working on the farm or haying for various relatives, he would camp, fish, hunt and hike. He remembers putting out the occasional small lightning fire. While still in high school, he jump-started his fire-fighting career with an Oregon Department of Forestry summer job. He spent that summer at a small guard station called Camp Six near Sycan Marsh.

While a student at Southern Oregon College, he continued working for ODF during summers. Shane landed a permanent job with the Vale BLM, where he worked for the next 11 years. He spent 9 of those summers at the Snake River Guard Station at the mouth of Hells Canyon.

After another 18 months of training, which qualified him for a Fire Management Officer position, he signed on at Malheur in 2006. With his wife's family in Vale and his family in Lakeview, a home in Hines was a great fit.

He says working for Malheur has been a great experience, and, not surprisingly, he much prefers the field work over office work. One of his favorite times on the refuge is the spring green-up after a fall prescribed burn, when everything is new and wildlife is everywhere.

Shane and his wife, Kim, have two sons and three daughters ranging in age from 4 to 16, plus two dogs and three cats. When not managing fire, he enjoys spending time with the family, fishing, hunting, biking, camping and building/remodeling.

Welcome New Board Member Erica Maltz

Alice Elshoff, MWA Board Member

Erica Maltz grew up in Maine and Maryland. It was all things living in water, from invertebrates to whales, that excited her. She knew she wanted to be a biologist by the age of five.

She began fulfilling that dream at a small liberal arts college on Mt. Desert Island off the coast of Maine, where students build their own programs under guidance of a self-picked panel of professors, and all graduate with a degree in Human Ecology.

Through college, she did her time at waitressing and cooking, but also worked for the National Marine Fisheries Service, watching over endangered Atlantic Salmon, where one of her most treasured experiences was sampling Inuit markets in Greenland.

She has worked with the lobster industry, wrangled lake sturgeon, worked with the commercial fishing industry in the Gulf of Mexico and with the Mt. Desert Island Biological Laboratory on estuarine mummichogs. (Hmmm, we'll have to ask her about that one!)

She arrived in Oregon three years ago for a temporary position with ODFW, living in the back of her Jeep Cherokee, because, of course, she would be returning to Maine. But a funny thing happened after several seasonal jobs, when she heard about a position with the Burns Paiute Tribe. Here was a chance to add the human element to working with fish and to assist a group that was trying to do amazing and bold projects in terms of fish and habitat restoration. She was hooked.

We are very glad she is here and we welcome her onto our Board. She sees opportunities for the Refuge and the Tribe to work together, recognizing that the Refuge is an amazing place and also the ancestral homeland of the Tribe.

She lives with her pound-rescued, Beagle mix, loyal companion named Bowser. When not working, Erica enjoys hiking, distance running, cooking, camping, hunting and fossil and rock hounding. She is also anticipating a trip to Siberia/Mongolia with her sister next summer.



Welcome New Board Member Dave Stone

Alice Elshoff, MWA Board Member

Dave Stone is a professional photographer, born and raised in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was afflicted, at an early age, by bear fever, as in, “The bear went over the mountain to see what he could see.” Dave has been taking the cure ever since. In 1980, at the age of 30 and after a ten-year career in social work, he moved to Eugene, Oregon to get his MS in Park Management.

Soon after arriving and unable to conceive of a desert in the famously rainy Oregon, he went to Steens Mountain to treat “the fever.” On the way, of course, he discovered Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. “What a treasure, I thought,” says Dave. “Since then, I’ve gotten some of my best bird photos there.”

He spent the next 30 years touring all corners of Oregon and learning how to protect the natural world. In 1983, he co-founded the Waldo Wilderness Council and achieved Wilderness protection of 60,000 acres at Waldo Lake.

He went on to co-found Oregonians for Utah Wilderness, served for six years as Conservation Chair for Lane County Audubon Society and lobbied in Washington DC for the Oregon High Desert Protection Act.

“I really value the opportunity to work to protect the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge by serving on the board of Malheur Wildlife Associates,” says Dave.



Keeping Art Alive

Randy Parks, Burns Times-Herald

Every year since 2008, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge has taken the lead with the existing art contest for local youths in conjunction with the John Scharff Migratory Bird Festival. This year was especially important to emphasize the value of art education and to encourage support for quality school art programs, as the local school system cut the art program due to budget reasons.

Visitor Services Manager Carey

Goss began coordinating the art contest and developed the “Conservation through the Arts” program. Goss invites teachers to participate in the program. She goes into their classrooms to enhance students’ awareness about migratory birds and their habitat needs, focusing on the surrounding areas, and as a class, works with them to draw a bird.

“This year, I had an opportunity to have a local artist, Ben Holtby, assist

with the program,” Goss said. “I had the idea to enhance the program and to celebrate the 30th year art contest by having Holtby assist me. He was able to teach art that I was not able to. With Holtby and myself in the classroom, I felt we were able to enhance the program and the art contest to where I hope to continue having local artists assist with the program and the art contest every year.”

Funding for Holtby’s assistance was made through the Refuge’s Environmental Education Program. Overall, the program reached more than 500 local students, and their artwork was displayed during the festival.



Ben Holtby assisting local youth with watercolor



Progress in Aquatic Health and Controlling the Invasive Common Carp

Linda Beck, USFWS Fisheries Biologist

This spring has been very productive for the aquatic health program both scientifically and collaboratively. Two college interns, one from Louisiana and one from Wisconsin, were hired to complete ongoing projects. The interns have been instrumental in completing carp collection to further our understanding of age and growth at various sites on the Refuge; extracting otoliths (inner ear bone); and shipping the samples to Dr. Clay Pierce's Lab at Iowa State University for analysis. Also, the students have been trained in telemetry work to track the 35 tagged carp that are dispersed throughout Malheur Lake.

Malheur Lake has increased to over 75,000 acres from an average of 32,000 acres, thus water is flowing into Mud Lake. We have been busy sampling the carp from the Narrows carp barrier. The results are fish sizes ranging from 4 to 16 inches in length. Due to the high water, the carp have an aquatic highway to spread to almost all corners of the Ref-

uge and beyond. Furthermore, carp can enter the Refuge from the high-flowing Silvies River and Silver Creek.

The Refuge received an invasive species grant for \$36,000 to construct three water-control screens on outflow structures to deter carp from leaving the Blitzen River and spreading through the surrounding water ways. This project will start July 1.

The Aquatic Health Program received \$36,000 in funding through the Malheur Wildlife Associates via the Oregon Conservation Strategy grant process for Spotted Frog distribution and population assessment work. This project will take 1½ years for completion, but will answer many questions about the spotted frog population at the Refuge. An additional \$10,000 was received from Cross Program Recovery funds to complete genetic work at Colorado State University.

The Funding and Partnership Workgroup has been working on a

funding strategy and Harney Basin carp control strategy. Bruce Taylor, from the High Desert Partnership, Defenders of Wildlife and Joint Venture, has been leading this effort. These strategies are in draft form, but will be finalized soon. Building at a watershed level, fish biologist Linda Beck has been meeting with a core group in Harney counting to further strategize about a basin-wide carp control implementation plan.

The Refuge has been working hard on collecting baseline water quality data, conducting research, and noting carp presence and absence. All this information is aiding the Refuge to move forward with understanding of carp control and aquatic health to help our feathered friends.

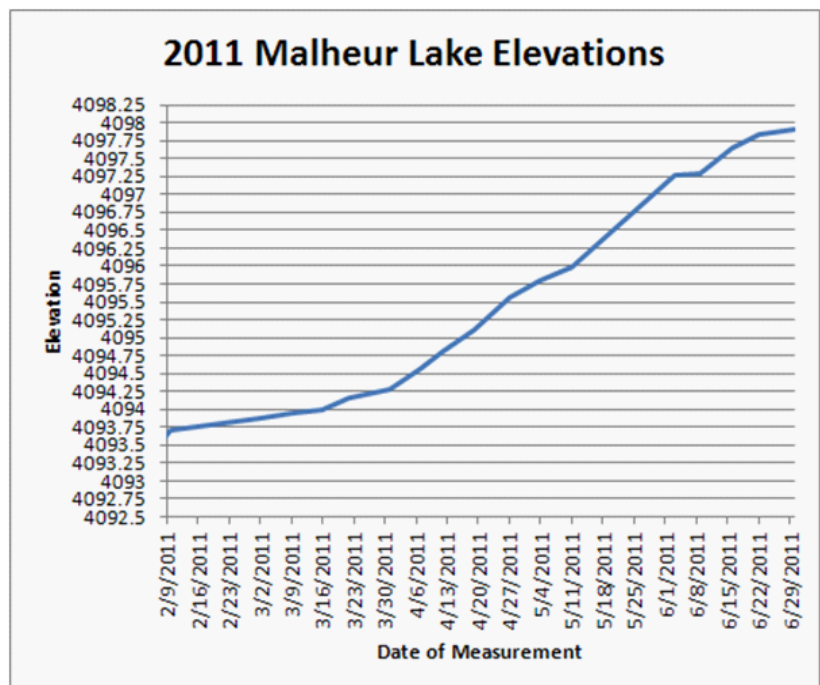
Malheur Wildlife Associates supports the Refuge's effort to control invasive carp. If you would like to donate to this cause, please send checks to Janice Cupernall, Malheur Wildlife Associates, 36391 Sod House Lane, Princeton, OR 97721.

Water, Water Everywhere

Carla Burnside, Refuge Archaeologist

Malheur and Mud lakes receive water primarily from the Donner und Blitzen watershed on the western slope of Steens Mountain, which is located south of the Refuge. Occasionally, water enters Malheur Lake from the Silvies River to the north. This year Malheur Lake is receiving water from both rivers and has been rising dramatically in elevation. The Refuge takes weekly readings of the elevation of Malheur Lake to calculate the elevation of the lake and to estimate the surface acreage of the lake. In early March, Malheur Lake was at 4,094 feet above sea level with a surface area of 44,000 acres. On June 30 the surface area of the lake was at 80,180 acres. The level of the lake is holding fairly steady, and we do not anticipate that it will rise above the current level of 4,097 feet.

Malheur Lake has spread beyond the Refuge boundary to private property adjacent to the north side of Malheur Lake. Bird watching has been good along Highway 205 and along Ruh Red lane to Lawen. High flows on the Blitzen River have been flooding a portion of the north Center Patrol Road, but refuge staff hope to complete repairs on the damaged road by mid-July. For road updates, check the Refuge's web site at: <http://www.fws.gov/malheur>.



Upcoming Events 2011

Carey Goss, Visitor Service Manager

Saturday, August 20

For more information about these events, please contact the Refuge at 541-493-2612.

Annual Invasive Carp Awareness Day

On August 20, adults and children are invited to fish for invasive carp using different fishing methods such as angling, fly fishing and bow fishing along a two-mile stretch of the Blitzen River near Malheur National Wildlife Refuge headquarters.

The event will be held as a joint project with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to educate the public about the impact of carp to wildlife and Refuge wetlands. The carp caught during the fishing event will be used in a research study to gather population information and study fish health.

Come join the fun and help us help wildlife!

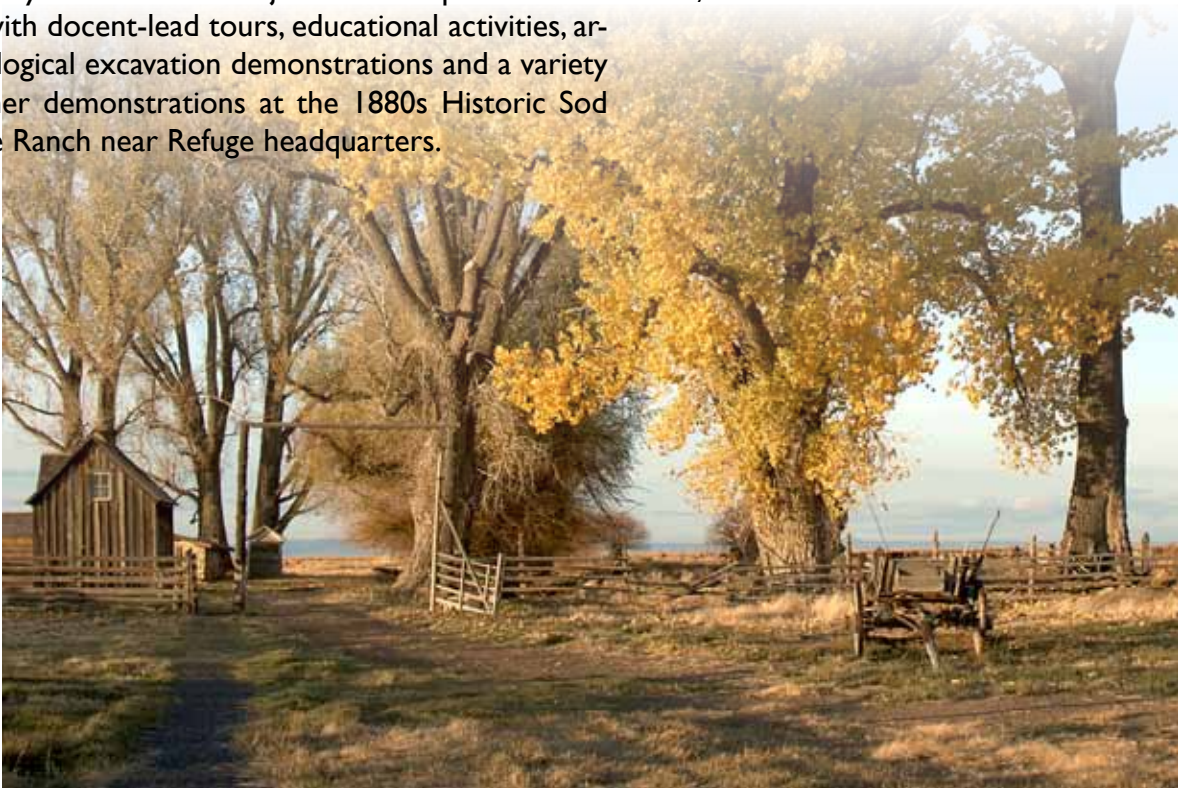
Ranching Heritage Day is Back

This year, Ranching Heritage Day will return in conjunction with Invasive Carp Awareness Day on Saturday, August 20 to celebrate wildlife and the ranching history of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

Everyone is invited to join us to experience the past with docent-lead tours, educational activities, archaeological excavation demonstrations and a variety of other demonstrations at the 1880s Historic Sod House Ranch near Refuge headquarters.



At last year's event, 79 participants caught 138 carp to help with the study.



Annual dues:

- \$10 Individual
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I am interested in hearing about work parties via email. Please add my email address to the project notification list.

Malheur Wildlife Associates is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

National Wildlife Refuges: Wildlife's Best Friend

National wildlife refuges are places in the United States where wild creatures can get what they need to live—food, water, shelter, and space. On national wildlife refuges, the needs of wildlife come first.

The mission of the National Wildlife Refuge Association is "To protect, enhance and expand the National Wildlife Refuge System, lands set aside by the American people to protect our country's diverse wildlife heritage." To learn more about NWRA, visit www.refugenet.org.



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This newsletter is published biannually by the Malheur Wildlife Associates for the benefit of its members. Copies are also made available to refuge visitors and through various other outlets.

MWA Annual Meeting Highlights...1
 Refuge Fire Management Officer, Shane Theall ...2
 Welcome New Board Member Erica Maltz ...2
 Welcome New Board Member Dave Stone...3
 Keeping Art Alive...3
 Progress in Aquatic Health and Controlling the Invasive Common Carp...4
 Water Water Everywhere...4
 Invasive Carp Awareness Day...5
 Ranching Heritage Day is Back...5

