



FRIENDS OF MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Malheur Musings - December 2017



The sun sets behind Refuge Headquarters
Photo by Stephanie McKnight

Dear Friends,

Let's face it: 2017 has been a year of extremes. Natural disasters at home and abroad, political turmoil, social unrest, humanitarian crises and other exigencies will undoubtedly serve as hallmarks of these past twelve months.

As the sun sets on this tumultuous year, it's important to remember what's at stake regarding our public lands. Recently the U.S. Senate voted to open 1.5 million acres of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling, slipping the measure in with a sweeping bill to rewrite the U.S. tax code. The bill now moves to the House of Representatives for a vote, and the inviolability of one of the only pristine wildlife areas left on Earth hangs in the balance. Meanwhile, the construction of a deeply unpopular border wall still threatens to cut through critical habitat in Texas' Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge. And in what some are calling the largest reduction of protected land in American history, plans are underway to reduce the size of Utah's 1.3-million-acre Bears Ears National Monument by 85 percent, while also cutting the 1.9 million acres of Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in half.

There are worrisome developments afoot, to be sure. But one way to resist them [is to speak up](#). Contact your Senators and Representatives to remind them how important and invaluable our public lands are. Remind them that "what a country

chooses to save is what a country chooses to say about itself"—in the words of Mollie Beattie, the first woman to head the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Donate to conservation groups that take it upon themselves to be good stewards of these lands. If you can, volunteer at a National Park or Refuge or with an associated Friends group. It's all that we can do to show our unwavering support and respect for that unparalleled benchmark in conservation, our National System of Public Lands.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us." Of late I've also been reminded of a passage in Terry Tempest Williams' recent book, *The Hour of Land*. It's a passage I think merits being quoted in full, as it speaks directly to our current predicament:

"This is what we can promise the future: a legacy of care. That we will be good stewards and not take too much or give back too little, that we will recognize wild nature for what it is, in all its magnificent and complex history—an unfathomable wealth that should be consciously saved, not ruthlessly spent. Privilege is what we inherit by our status as *Homo sapiens* living on this planet. This is the privilege of imagination. What we choose to do with our privilege as a species is up to each of us."

Let's put this privilege of imagination to work. Let's envision a legacy of care that protects our nation's natural wonders for future generations, for all to enjoy. To let the land be—to simply *preserve* it—is the very least we can do.

Peter Pearsall, Executive Director
Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge



Fall/Winter Hours at Malheur HQ

Visitor Center/Nature Store hours:

Open Monday - Thursday, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Open most Fridays from 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Closed Saturday - Sunday (brochures will be available at Headquarters)

Round Barns and The Settling of The Basin

by Peter Pearsall

The Peter French Round Barn is but one of many historical sites scattered throughout Harney Basin that represent a distinct shift in human use of the area, as seasonally itinerant bands of indigenous people gave way to permanent Euro-American settlements...[Read more here.](#)



Peter French Round Barn
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Meet Ed Sparks, MNWR Habitat Biologist

by Ed Sparks

"I was born in Oregon City and grew up on a farm outside of Canby, Oregon, until I was 9, when my family decided to move to Burns," writes Ed Sparks, the Wildlife Habitat Biologist at Malheur Refuge. "We moved around Harney County a bit but I spent about half of my ten-year stint here down south of Frenchglen, where my family worked for the Rex Clemens Ranch."



Ed on an airboat at Malheur Lake
Photo by Alexa Martinez

[Read more here.](#)

Our High-Desert Solitaire

From late summer to early spring, the foothills of the basin, filled with juniper trees and flanked by lichen-covered rimrock, ring with the flute-like calls and songs of Townsend's solitaires. In our region, these thrushes migrate down from the mountains to take advantage of food sources at lower elevations through the winter...[Read more here.](#)



Townsend's solitaire
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Thank You for Donating on Giving Tuesday!



'Tis the season for giving thanks, and we at Friends of Malheur Refuge are thankful for our supporters. You understand that Friends groups such as ours are crucial partners of the National Wildlife Refuge System; you understand that your donations go toward bettering our nation's refuges, whether through habitat restoration, improved visitor experiences, educational outreach, or any number of other valuable services.

We're proud to assume these responsibilities on behalf of the Refuge and the wildlife that use it, and we couldn't do so without your enduring support. Your donations and volunteerism allow us to do this necessary work and expand our capabilities into the future.

Thank you to everyone who donated to us on #GivingTuesday! We are beyond grateful for your support. Your generous contributions will go toward breaking ground on our new pollinator garden in spring, as well as other projects inside and outside the future Crane's Nest Nature Center at Refuge Headquarters.

If you didn't get a chance to donate on #GivingTuesday, please consider [doing so today](#) as a year-end gift to the Refuge. Looking to do some last-minute holiday shopping online? You can support Friends of Malheur Refuge with every purchase you make through Amazon by using our [AmazonSmile](#) portal.

As always, stay tuned to our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#) for updates!

[Become a Member!](#)

[Renew Membership](#)

[Donate](#)

STAY CONNECTED:

