



FRIENDS OF
MALHEUR
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Malheur Musings - November 2017



Little Blitzen Gorge, Steens Mountain
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Dear Friends,

The frosts of winter have arrived to the high-desert expanse of Malheur Refuge, adding a brisk urgency to the air. Most of fall's migratory birds have long since departed, and those few stragglers that remain must be feeling the instinctive itch to continue southward as temperatures drop further.

Yet all is not barren and lifeless on the refuge at winter's onset. Hardy species such as great horned owls, ravens, golden eagles, bobcats and mule deer can be seen even in the coldest months, doing their best to survive in a landscape laid bare by dropped leaves and decayed grasses. Even the pint-sized golden-crowned kinglet, weighing about as much as two American pennies, is known to overwinter on the refuge. Read about this songbird's canny adaptations to cold in my essay below.

In addition to hardy wildlife, the peace and solitude one finds on the refuge in winter can be a reward in itself. "Winter brings a sweeping peace to Malheur, the priceless solitude that is usually reserved for inaccessible wilderness," writes Noah Strycker in his essay, "Malheur in Winter". "A person fills more room in wide-open spaces, and it doesn't take many fair-weather tourists for Malheur to get crowded. In winter, when hardly anyone visits, the landscape exudes meditative calm." Scroll down to read his essay in full.

We at Friends of Malheur Refuge hope that you too can find some meditative calm this holiday season, whether by taking a trip to the high desert or visiting a refuge, park, Wilderness, National Forest or Monument near you. Enjoy the hushed stillness of our wild spaces in winter. It's just one of the many salubrious benefits offered by our nation's public lands, lands that belong to us all.

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

Friday, 8:00 am - 3:00 pm

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

Malheur in Winter

Essay by Noah Strycker

In the high desert, winter draws back the curtain, unmasking the actors, and simplifies the plot lines. Nests from previous seasons reveal themselves after the leaves drop, reminders of birds that have since flown thousands of miles to warmer climes.



But minimalism is itself a virtue, and the cold months at Malheur present a chance to set aside the usual distractions. When a landscape is laid bare, so, too, is the life within it. [Read more here.](#)

The Kinglet's Golden Rule

Essay by Peter Pearsall

Kinglets in winter are a marvelous sight, their movements frenetic, flighty, and all too fleeting. They are industrious while others lie torpid, fluttering about in their desperate search for calories and warmth.



Golden-crowned kinglet
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Tiny golden-crowned kinglets, common autumn migrants and occasional winter residents at Malheur Refuge, are thermodynamic wonders. [Read more here.](#)

Get Ready for Giving Tuesday!

Giving season is just around the corner and Friends of Malheur Refuge is excited to announce our participation in [#GivingTuesday!](#)

#GivingTuesday is a global day of giving back. On the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, you'll have the chance to join us and people around the world in support of a cause close to your heart. Please keep FOMR in mind for your end-of-year giving.



More details to come!



The Harney Lake nest, at right
Photo by Rick Vetter

A Legacy's End: Iconic Eagle Nest Falls

by Rick Vetter, FOMR Board Member

Sometime in early October, one of Oregon's largest eagle nests south of Burns, Oregon, came to rest along the ancient shoreline of Harney Lake.

Often referred to as the Narrows or Harney Lake nest, this centennial nest provided memorable views to thousands of people who visited Harney County and Malheur National Wildlife Refuge for many decades. [Read more here.](#)

New Auto Tour Signs, Courtesy of FOMR!



Volunteers and Alice Elshoff, FOMR Vice President (at left), put up the new signs

On your next trip to Malheur Refuge, be sure to check out the new, colorful signs along the Center Patrol Road. On October 27-28, ten volunteers arrived with shovels, tampers, bars, levels, drills, buckets of gravel and paint brushes. Under the direction of FOMR Vice President Alice Elshoff, they proceeded to remove all 38 of the old signs, replanted or replaced the posts, stained them and attached the new signs, which feature pelicans with binoculars, people-watching from a red convertible. They look great, even if we do say so ourselves!



Thank you to our wonderful volunteers!

More than 12 years ago, FOMR wrote the brochure and procured the original signs for Malheur's Auto Tour Route, a 42-mile self-guided tour along the Refuge's Center Patrol Road. Nineteen stops mark the way and are interpreted in a script available at Refuge Headquarters or [online](#). The script touches on the natural and cultural history and geology of the area, provides information about the plant and animal life found on the Refuge, and highlights current Refuge management priorities.

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

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STAY CONNECTED:

