



## Malheur Musings - October 2016

### Results of the "Big Sit"

by Gary Ivey, President, Friends of Malheur NWR



We are grateful to two young men. On September 17, teen-aged birders, Kai Frueh and Isaac Denzer conducted the Benton County Big Sit, a day-long bird watching marathon as a fund-raiser to benefit 4 conservation organizations, including Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Cornell Lab of

Kai and Ben Frueh and Isaac Denzer. Ornithology, Audubon Society of Corvallis, and Friends of the Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex. Birds were counted from Finley NWR's Cabell Marsh blind. They found 71 bird species and raised over \$2,300. Isaac reported: "The sit was a great success. The weather was cloudy with some rain at certain points during the day. We had about twenty people stop by and help us spot some birds!" Their bird species list can be seen here: [eBird list](#).

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## More Than Half of Refuges Lack Own Manager

News Release by Kristen Stade, PEER

Washington, DC - More than half of the national wildlife refuges no longer have their own manager, according to a review released today by Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Hundreds of wildlife refuges have been "complexed" - collapsed into each other - and many have no staff at all, as flat budgets are not keeping pace with both growing costs and number of refuges.

National wildlife refuges provide vital habitat for migratory birds and a host of wildlife, including many endangered species, such as the Florida panther, key deer and manatee in a state where almost all 32 of its refuges are complexed. In addition, most serve as major recreational outlets, especially for hunting and fishing.



Despite their names, refuges are also used for mining, drilling and agriculture. As a result, their management is more demanding than other federal lands.

Yet, as both the size and complexity of the refuge system grows, the number of refuge staff has declined by nearly 15% in the past decade (from 3,556 full-time-equivalent [FTEs] in FY'2005 to 3,036 in FY 2015). Consequently, well more than a third of America's wildlife refuges have no on-site staff. [Read more....](#)

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## Carp Biomass Study

by Linda Beck, Fisheries Biologist, Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

The pilot study for the Carp Biomass Threshold Project began in earnest last week with Doug Peterson, Will Simpson and Paul Kieras traveling from Abernathy Fish Tech Center with all kinds of ideas and test equipment. The picture depicts Marshall Pond at headquarters with two enclosures constructed of different plastic materials and designed in slightly different ways. Two fish each were stocked into the enclosures and water quality is being monitored for the next two weeks by Harney Basin Partners Biologist Ed Sparks and Acting Deputy Refuge Manager Dan Craver. We need to verify that the material can hold up to Malheur weather conditions and that carp will stay alive and contained in the enclosures.



Carp study enclosures at Marshall Pond - by Tim Blount

The Carp Biomass Threshold Project will occur in the Double O unit of the Refuge in Windmill Pond. The Refuge and Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative partners intend to reduce the biomass of carp to a level that facilitates re-establishment of aquatic vegetation and improves habitat conditions for waterfowl. The Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) has tentatively identified 100 lb/acre as a threshold based on data from a Midwestern lake (89.2 lb/acre; Bajer et al. 2009). However, ecosystem response to carp biomass can vary considerably among shallow lakes (Weber and Brown 2009), and biomass required for submerged aquatic plant growth may be substantially less than 89.2 lb/acre. Therefore, the CCP's interim threshold for carp biomass needs formal evaluation with site-specific

data. This project is funded by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Focal Investment Partnership funds and should more definitively identify the carp biomass below which aquatic plants can begin to recover.

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## Carp Electro-shocking Project

by Linda Beck, Fisheries Biologist



Electro-shocking boat on the Blitzen River  
- by Tim Blount.

Forest Service employees from the Hines and John Day were on the refuge on September 21 for a day of electro-fishing for the invasive carp. A specialized boat fitted with electro-shocking equipment and several backpack style electro-shocking units were used to

remove hundreds of fish from the Blitzen River near the mouth of Malheur Lake upstream to the bridge on the boat ramp road. When the units are turned on they send voltage into the water that temporarily stuns the fish, giving fishermen time to net or gaff immobilized carp. From all appearances the idea that this was work never crossed their minds.



Back-pack electro-shocking - by Tim Blount.

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## Retired BLM Employees Volunteer

Friends of Malheur and refuge staff hosted a work party of retired BLM employees on August 31, 2016. The crew worked on fences around Refuge HQ.



Retired BLM volunteer crew - by Tim Blount.



BLM crew constructing fence - by Tim Blount

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***Malheur remains at the forefront of the public lands debate and we, Friends of Malheur, are letting our voices be heard. Your continued support will help us support Malheur Refuge and in our political struggle to support refuges and public lands.***

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