



Malheur Musings - October 2017

Friends of Malheur Wildlife Refuge Awarded National Grant!

We're pleased to announce that on September 26, Friends of Malheur Refuge was among 18 Refuge Friends groups awarded grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)! Read the NFWF grant announcement [here](#).

Malheur Refuge staff have authorized our use of a new building, the house just north of the museum at HQ, to host our new Nature Center and Cranes' Nest Nature Store. This grant will assist our work in designing this new space, which will serve as a point of contact for refuge visitors, providing up-to-date wildlife sightings as well as a space for multimedia presentations and environmental education programs.

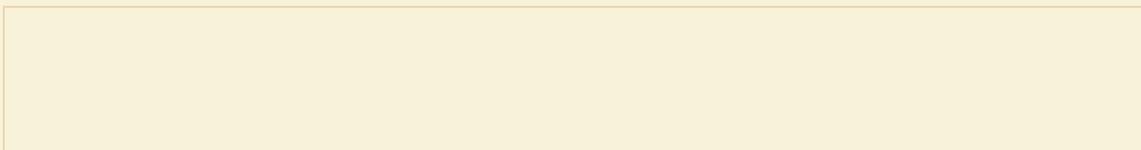


We were awarded \$13,625 for the grant, which required that we match with \$14,777 of our funds. About half of our match will be covered by our staff and volunteer time in working on the new facility; the remaining half will be cash. We hope you might consider supporting this

project by donating or contacting us to see if you can fit our volunteer needs (construction and garden skills). To specifically donate to this cause, please go to our [Donate](#) page and be sure to add in the "Instructions to seller" that it is for our Nature Center/Nature Store Project. Thank you for considering this!

Part of our grant proposal includes installing two [eBird](#) Trail Tracker systems, one at HQ and one at the Harney County Chamber of Commerce. These will provide visitors an electronic gateway to information on bird sightings, enabling them to find out which birds are being reported at the refuge or other Harney County hotspots, and to record their own sightings. These records become part of eBird's online checklist program, an interactive database that scientists, birders, and anyone with Internet access can use to learn where birds are being reported across North America.

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





Fall/Winter Hours at Malheur HQ

Visitor Center/Nature Store hours beginning Monday, October 2:

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)

Falling for Malheur

Fall is a quiet time to visit the refuge, when few people are about. Leaves are turning and the escarpments of Steens Mountain become covered with snow. Lambent tones of ocher and umber dominate the landscape. Sandhill cranes and geese are migrating through on their way to southern winter areas (check refuge grain fields in morning and late afternoon). Bald eagle numbers are increasing.

This is the time of year for opportunities to photograph massive mule deer bucks, as they lose most of their fear of humans during their rut in late October and early November. Malheur has become famous as a place to photograph these impressive animals during their autumnal dominance displays.



Mule deer buck in rut
Photo by Tim Blount

The Big Sit Results Are In!

During the second annual Benton County Big Sit on September 26, the team of three young birders saw 81 species, 9 more species than last year! They raised more than \$3,000 for local and national conservation groups. Read the full report [here](#) and see their [eBird checklist](#) from the day.

Forgot to contribute? Don't fret—donations are

open for another week. To donate, please email Bentoncountybigsit@gmail.com for instructions.



Western grebe
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Historic Sod House Ranch

Late last month, FOMR helped lead a tour of Malheur HQ and the nearby Sod House Ranch site. The eight remaining buildings, all constructed between 1880 and 1890, represent the northern sub-headquarters of what was, for a time, one of the largest largest cattle ranches in the U.S.: the French-Glenn Livestock Company.

For a detailed history of this site and similar historic settlements at Malheur Refuge, go [here](#).

The Sod House Ranch site will be open to the public every day from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm until October 15.



Touring Sod House Ranch
Photo by Peter Pearsall



Caspian tern with carp
Photo by Rick Vetter

Birding Hotspot: The Narrows

by Rick Vetter, FOMR Board Member

As summer ebbs in the Harney Basin, water levels in Malheur Lake do the same. This can lead to a spectacular natural event most evident at the Narrows, where Malheur Lake empties into Mud and Harney lakes.

As small pools of water dry up, non-native common carp become trapped and provide an easy food source for a variety of birds, even birds you would not suspect of eating carp.

If you are traveling to Malheur Refuge, remember to take a moment to stop at the Narrows. You could get 45 species of birds in less than an hour! [Read more here](#).

President's Message

Fellow Friends,

This Friends Group is still recovering from the tragedies of 2016: the occupation of our sacred Malheur Refuge and the damages and stress it caused, compounded by the loss of our Executive Director, who had to resign due to medical issues. We are healing and making plans for some exciting changes to our services to Refuge visitors and the Harney County community. We welcomed our new Executive Director, Peter Pearsall, in August. You may have already noticed his positive impact on our Newsletters and on Facebook.

I have other good news to report. U.S. District Court Judge Anna Brown recently [signed off on a restitution agreement](#) for 13 defendants found guilty of occupying Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. The \$78,000 in restitution from these defendants will go to Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge to help us support Malheur Refuge's needs.

News of the restitution agreement made between the U.S. Attorney's Office and attorneys for the convicted defendants came as a surprise to us. While the agreement provides that defendants will pay FOMR \$78,000 and was signed by the judge, there is a caveat. No single defendant is ordered to pay more than \$10,000; if FOMR actually receives any of this restitution, it will most likely be in small payments over time.

We also recently added three new members to our Board. Join me in welcoming Jarvis Kennedy of the Burns Paiute Tribe; Chelsea Harrison, Director of the Harney County Chamber of Commerce; and Suzanne Staples, life-long birder and long-time Malheur Refuge fan who recently moved to Bend.

Together, we've discussed working towards improving relations between the Refuge and the Harney County community. To that end, we recently voted to establish a Community Relations Committee to identify opportunities for partnering with local groups and engaging the community in refuge activities. We hope to build a much stronger support group for Malheur in the local community to help protect the Refuge from future threats.

I thank all of you who stand with us in support of Malheur Refuge and hope you will continue your support into the future.

Happy Fall,

Gary Ivey, President
Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge

[Become a Member!](#)

[Renew Membership](#)

[Donate](#)

Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge | www.malheurfriends.org
friends@malheurfriends.org

P.O. Box 513
Bend, Oregon 97709

STAY CONNECTED:

