



# FRIENDS OF MALHEUR

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

## Malheur Musings - March 2018

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Snow and Ross's geese in the Harney Basin  
Photo by Dan Streiffert

### Director's Message

Dear Friends,

Spring has sprung and the Harney Basin is abuzz with activity. The ethereal purring of sandhill cranes fills the air, intermixed with the plangent honking of thousands of migratory white geese. ([Watch a short clip of these geese taking flight.](#)) Songs of red-winged blackbirds and Western meadowlarks issue forth from the fields and wetlands. Under the sagebrush and juniper, the first wildflowers emerge: sagebrush buttercups (*Ranunculus glaberrimus*) bloom mere centimeters above the soil, tiny high-desert harbingers of spring.

It's not just wildlife that's responding to these longer and (sometimes!) warmer days. Several springtime events are on the horizon for this



Sagebrush buttercup  
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Friends group. First, we're participating in "Fair in the Field", an exhibition of what's happening in Harney County that features partners from the Harney Basin Wetlands Initiative and Harney County Restoration Collaborative. The event, which is targeted toward students of Harney County middle schools and takes place Thursday, April 5 at the Eastern Oregon Agricultural Center, has in the past covered such topics as water systems, irrigation systems, mule deer migration, present and past uses of plants,

sage grouse habitat, flood meadows and grazing, carp, and waterfowl. Fair in the Field is free and also open to the public.

Immediately following Fair in the Field is the Harney County Migratory Bird Festival, April 5-8. Representing Malheur Refuge, FOMR organizes and leads birding tours for this annual festival, now in its 37th year. Most of the festivities take place in Burns, but the many birding and natural history tours range throughout the Harney Basin. Several FOMR Board members are leading tours this year; [please visit the festival website](#) for tour descriptions and registration.

Then in May, FOMR is hosting its Annual Meeting. This weekend-long event is our way of saying thank you to our members, without whose support we would not exist. The Annual Meeting is an opportunity for us to meet members face-to-face and update them on the various goings-on at Malheur Refuge. See more details about this event below.

Hopefully we will see you soon at one or more of these events this spring!

Peter Pearsall  
Executive Director, Friends of Malheur Refuge



### Spring Hours at Malheur HQ

Visitor Center/Nature Store hours:

Open Monday - Friday, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Starting Saturday, March 17, HQ will be open 7 days a week,  
8:00 am - 4:00 pm

## Long-eared Owls

Essay by Peter Pearsall

The long-eared owl is a year-round resident of Malheur Refuge, but its nocturnal habits and cryptic coloration ensure that it is seldom detected by human observers.

This medium-sized owl is active mainly at night, when it flies low over fields and grasslands in search of prey including small rodents, bats, birds and reptiles...[Read more here](#).



Long-eared owl  
Photo by Peter Pearsall

## Keeping Traditions Alive in the Basin

Human use of the Harney Basin dates back many thousands of years, when predecessors of the Burns Paiute Tribe, known as the Wada'tika (meaning "waada eaters"—a native marsh plant), ranged throughout the basin to take advantage of seasonal resources such as fish, ducks, antelope, mountain sheep, coyote, muskrat, bison and a variety of plant materials.



Minerva Soucie  
Screen-grab from  
Hare in the Gate Productions

Enjoy this [short video](#) by Hare in the Gate Productions featuring the late Minerva Soucie of the Burns Paiute Tribe, who taught students to make baskets using plant materials gathered from Malheur Refuge.

## Volunteers Wanted for Short-eared Owl Surveys near Malheur

The Western Asio Flammeus Landscape Study is launching its pilot year of short-eared owl citizen science surveys in Oregon this spring, with many of the survey locations near Malheur Refuge. This is the largest short-eared owl project in the world, spanning eight western states. To learn more about the project and how to participate, [go here](#).



Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*) in flight  
Photo by Dan Streiffert

## In Memory of Ulo Kiigemagi

Ulo Kiigemagi, longtime patron of the arts and supporter of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, passed away on January 24, 2018.

Born on November 10, 1923 in Nõmme, Estonia, Ulo Kiigemagi spent the latter half of his 20's in a displaced persons camp, avoiding German and Russian forces during World War II. He emigrated to the U.S. in October 1949 with his wife, Virve, and settled in Portland, OR to raise their family.



Photo courtesy of

After a distinguished career in Oregon State University's Chemistry Department, Ulo and his wife traveled widely and volunteered often. Ulo's family has instructed that any memorial contributions in his name be made to the OSU Music Department or Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

the Kiigemagi family

## Save the Date: FOMR Annual Meeting



FOMR members on a birding tour at Malheur Refuge  
Photo by Louisa Evers

Hello Friends, Spring is here and that means our Annual Meeting is just around the corner! This year's meeting will be held May 18-19 at Refuge Headquarters.

The Annual Meeting is a great opportunity for FOMR members to receive updates on what this Friends Group has been up to, as well as what we've got planned for the future. Malheur Refuge staff will also be on hand to give presentations about their work.

As with past Annual Meetings, FOMR provides guided tours of Refuge locales for attendees. These caravan-style, carpooling adventures often cover areas closed to the general public, so it's potentially a chance for members to see new parts of this wonderful Refuge.

As the meeting date draws closer, we will send out another email with further details and how to register.

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

[\*\*Become a Member!\*\*](#)

[\*\*Renew Membership\*\*](#)

[\*\*Donate\*\*](#)

Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge | [www.malheurfriends.org](http://www.malheurfriends.org)  
[friends@malheurfriends.org](mailto:friends@malheurfriends.org)  
36391 Sodhouse Lane  
Princeton, OR 97721

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