



FRIENDS OF MALHEUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Malheur Musings - July 2018



Yellow-bellied marmot
Photo by Dan Streiffert

Director's Message

Dear Friends,

Summer has arrived in the Northern Great Basin. The days are long, hot and windy; the migratory birds of spring have long since passed though on their way to more northerly latitudes; and most forbs and grasses are dry or rapidly drying in the heat. The species that remain here--as well as those that *remain active*, instead of senescing or estivating--are a hardy bunch, indeed. (Read more about canny adaptations to life in the desert in the essay below.)

We at FOMR are doing our best to remain active, as well. As Refuge visitation slows down during the hot summer months, we're focusing on improvements to the Crane's Nest Nature Center & Store. FOMR volunteers are doing a tremendous job keeping the space looking its best, whether by touching up the exterior paint, caulking gaps in windows and doorways, or refurbishing old shelving for use as a "new" merchandise

display. Maintenance staff at Malheur Refuge helped us install the wooden carp sculpture (formerly located on the deck outside of the Visitor Center) in its new home outside of our front entrance. We've also got a slew of new merchandise for sale, so be sure to stop by if you're heading this way!

FOMR staff and volunteers continue to be involved with a number of Refuge-specific projects through the summer, including various wildlife and habitat surveys led by Refuge staff and partners. (See notes about the bobolink count and impoundment surveys below.) We'll provide further updates from the field as the summer progresses.

Stay cool out there!

Peter Pearsall
Executive Director, Friends of Malheur Refuge



Summer Hours at Malheur HQ

The Visitor Center and Crane's Nest Nature Center & Store share the same hours:

Open 7 days a week, 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Bobolink Count Recap

On Saturday, June 9, a stalwart group of FOMR volunteers and staff from Malheur Refuge, Portland Audubon, and High Desert Partnership participated in the annual bobolink count at Malheur Refuge. Participants braved chilly, stormy conditions at the Refuge's southern end to count bobolinks in wet-meadow habitat. Fewer than 100 bobolinks were seen or heard--a comparatively low count for this survey--but weather likely kept many birds under cover. Thank you to all that helped with the count!



Male bobolink
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Making Do in the Desert

The plants and animals of the Northern Great Basin are resourceful to a fault, having evolved ways of coping with blistering heat, bitter cold, desiccating wind, and an occasionally profound lack of water. Their adaptations never cease to astound--they eke out lives in inimical conditions, securing provender from an arid, even barren landscape. Extreme conditions call for extreme modification, even in seemingly nondescript species such as the Brewer's sparrow...[Read more here.](#)



Brewer's sparrow
Photo by Mick Thompson/Eastside Audubon

Impoundment Surveys at Malheur

Every summer, Malheur Refuge biologists conduct bird surveys at various water impoundments at the Refuge, determining the extent to which waterfowl, shorebirds and others use these managed bodies of water. An emphasis is placed on locating, identifying and aging waterfowl broods. Observers count the number of chicks per brood and number of broods per water body, as well as document water depth. Shorebirds and additional waterbirds are also counted.



Clark's grebe with chicks
Photo by Dan Streiffert

On June 27, FOMR staff assisted with the first of these surveys at Boca Lake, alongside staff from Portland Audubon. Additional surveys will take place every two weeks from mid-June to late August at five other Refuge impoundments.

American White Pelicans

Soaring on wide, black-tipped wings over North America's inland lakes, rivers and reservoirs in summer, the American white pelican is an impressive bird even from afar. With nearly all-white plumage and a foot-long bill, these ponderous waterbirds are difficult to confuse with any other species in our area.

Abundant carp populations in Malheur Lake are particularly enticing to non-breeding pelicans in summer, and peak numbers are usually seen by mid-July and early August...[Read more here.](#)



American white pelicans
Photo by Dan Streiffert

Track Bumble Bees in Your Area!

Interested in participating in a citizen science project that contributes to invertebrate conservation? Bumble Bee Watch is a collaborative effort created by The Xerces Society to track and conserve North America's bumble bees. This project allows individuals to:

- Upload photos of bumble bees to start a virtual bumble bee collection;
- Identify the bumble bees in your photos and have your identifications verified by experts;
- Help researchers determine the status and conservation needs of bumble bees;
- Help locate rare or endangered populations of bumble bees;
- Learn about bumble bees, their ecology, and ongoing conservation efforts; and
- Connect with other citizen scientists.



Nevada bumble bee on showy milkweed
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Visit the [Bumble Bee Watch website](#) for details about how to participate.

FOMR Mentoring Program



FOMR Members touring the Refuge
Photo by FOMR

In just a couple of weeks, FOMR will host the Friends Partnership Mentoring Program at Malheur Refuge! This nation-wide program offers peer-to-peer coaching for Refuge Friends organizations and their Service partners to help the partnerships flourish and sustain success.

The program is geared towards well-established partnerships seeking guidance on things such as capacity building, taking on a significant new project, or Board development.

The Mentoring Program at Malheur Refuge will take place July 20-22. The tentative agenda includes workshops, a Refuge tour and a social event to which partners, members and friends are invited. FOMR encourages any and all interested members to attend the social event Friday evening, July 20. If you'd like to attend the Friday social, please RSVP by sending us a note at friends@malheurfriends.org.

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

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