



FRIENDS OF **MALHEUR** NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Malheur Musings - August 2018



A recent smoky sunrise at Refuge Headquarters
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Director's Message

Dear Friends,

Wildfire season is upon us. Distant blazes have draped a thin pall of smoke over the Harney Basin of late; the acrid smell of it, the radiant glow it imparts to sunrises and sunsets, are daily reminders of how tinder-dry our region is. The West is burning and our hearts go out to those affected by the many active wildfires near and far.

In spite of the smoke, heat and aridity, life carries on at Malheur Refuge. Breeding birds are seeing their young fledge and begin fending for themselves: immature blackbirds, wrens, ducks, gulls, warblers, egrets, herons, cormorants, quail, ibises, shorebirds, pelicans, owls, hawks and more are all learning the ropes after having been raised at

Malheur Refuge earlier this year. Many migratory species are staging on the Refuge by the hundreds or thousands in preparation for their southward journeys. As the water levels in Malheur Lake drop, mudflats are exposed to shorebirds while non-native carp are trapped in ever-shrinking pools, creating a smorgasbord for fish-eating birds. (Read more about this seasonal phenomenon below.)

In other news, we're gearing up for the annual Carp Derby at Refuge Headquarters on Saturday, August 18 and we could use some help! If you or someone you know is interested a short-term volunteer opportunity, please get in touch with us soon! More details below.

Another volunteer opportunity is a longer-term commitment: We're currently seeking volunteers to help staff the Crane's Nest Nature Center & Store at Refuge Headquarters during the next 2-3 months. See below for more details.

We hope everyone is staying safe and cool through this torrid summer!

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

Shrinking Waters Trap Carp

During this hotter-than-average summer, Marshall Pond at Refuge Headquarters has fallen unusually low and is shrinking by the day. While this is an unfortunate scenario for the wildlife and visitors that use and enjoy the pond, it provides a unique opportunity to see, on a much smaller scale, what occurs at Malheur Lake through the summer.



A common carp wallows in Marshall Pond
Photo by Peter Pearsall

As the shallow lake starts to dry up, hundreds of acres of mudflats are exposed, providing ideal habitat for migrating shorebirds. With summer's advance, the lake evaporates into a series of smaller pools that trap common carp, making easy pickings for an incredible variety of fish-eating birds and other wildlife. [Read more here.](#)

Malheur's Butcherbirds

Shrikes, with their masked eyes and subtly hooked beaks, are sometimes known as "butcherbirds" for their habit of impaling small prey on sharp branches and other projections. Shrikes are predatory songbirds--smaller than robins yet substantially more ambitious in their taking of prey. Being passerines of a flesh-nibbling sort, shrikes lack the gripping talons of raptors but possess in full their killer instinct..[Read more here.](#)



Loggerhead shrike
Photo by FOMR volunteer Kay Steele

The Superlative Pronghorn

Across the deserts and grasslands of western North America roams a hooved mammal that is neither deer nor goat nor antelope, being instead a relic of a bygone era when giant sloths, dire wolves and mastodons ruled the land. Pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*) are one of a scant few remnants of the Pleistocene megafauna, a suite of oversized land animals that went extinct in North America around 11,000 years ago..[Read more here.](#)



Pronghorn
Photo by Dan Streiffert

Calling All Volunteers!



Volunteers and participants at last year's Carp Derby
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Hello, Friends! We've got some upcoming volunteer opportunities at the Refuge and we'd love to see you here!

For those interested in a fun, one-day commitment, we could use help during the annual Carp Derby at Refuge Headquarters, on Saturday, August 18. Volunteers can help staff kids' activity stations and the carp weigh-in station, assist with our picnic-style cookout, and serve as roving interpreters during the event, which lasts from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Learn more about the event [here](#).

We also have openings for longer-term volunteers. If you're available to spend a month or more in southeast Oregon and have an RV or similar set-up to stay in, we are looking for volunteers to help staff our Crane's Nest Nature Store/Nature Center at Refuge Headquarters during the rest of August, September and possibly into October.

This volunteer position involves operating the Crane's Nest Nature Center/Nature Store at Refuge Headquarters and providing general interpretation of the Refuge to visitors. Volunteers will have some proficiency with cash registers, point-of-sale devices, etc., as well as a basic understanding of how to maintain an inventory of Nature Store items. Good communication skills are desirable, as is a willingness to interpret Great Basin natural and cultural history. We ask that our volunteers commit to at least a month-long stint, working 3 days (~24 hours) a week, but the duration of the stint may be negotiable.

Refuge Headquarters provides RV pads with hook-ups and a nearby building with communal kitchen, bathrooms and laundry. There are two RV spaces available for volunteers.

Please contact us at friends@malheurfriends.org if you are interested in either volunteer opportunity.

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

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