



FRIENDS OF MALHEUR

NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Malheur Musings - September 2018



A rainbow arcs over the Blitzen River at Refuge Headquarters
Photo by FOMR volunteer Kay Steele

Director's Message

Dear Friends,

Over the past month, while helping to fill in at the Nature Store, I've been struck by the overall composition of people visiting Refuge Headquarters this time of year. Yes, visitation is typically low in late summer, but the variety of individuals coming in--with their disparate backgrounds and interests--has surprised me. Perhaps it is due to the fact that dedicated birders (who constitute the majority of Malheur visitors) generally avoid the place during the hot, dry summer months, and those that do visit are coming for other reasons: solitude, scenery, Steens Mountain, fewer mosquitoes, pure curiosity...to name a few.

I've met many first-time visitors--including a number from outside the country--that,

despite the heat and lackluster birding, arrive wide-eyed with wonder, eager to explore the area. When I try making excuses for the smoky, droughty lassitude permeating the Harney Basin of late, they pooh-pooh my remarks. "It is a beautiful, peaceful place, in spite of all that," they insist. "We've been waiting a long time to see it!"

It's a refreshing change of perspective, one that I'll bear in mind as we reach the tail-end of the summer doldrums. These days, fall is increasingly on our minds. You can feel it in the cooler mornings and evenings; there is a palpable restlessness among the wildlife, as well. Soon fall migration will be underway! Read more about fall birding at Malheur in Alan Contreras's essay below.

For those of you living near Corvallis, there is a birding event coming up this month at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge that we hope you'll participate in: The 3rd annual Benton County Big Sit! This fun day-long bird survey raises money for local and national conservation organizations, including Friends of Malheur Refuge. Get more details about this event below.

We're very pleased to announce that Worthy Garden Club in Bend will sponsor our Pollinator Garden to the tune of \$2,000! Read more about this exciting development and the overall project below.

Lastly, a bit of sad news: I am stepping down as Executive Director of Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge for personal reasons, effective August 31, 2018.

Malheur Refuge will always hold a special significance to me. I trust that FOMR will continue to improve in its capacity as partner and ally to the Refuge, the greater Harney County community, and to conservation efforts across public lands as a whole.

More than anything else, I will miss working with Refuge staff on a daily basis, collaborating on projects and events and assisting with the odd survey or two when I could. It was an absolute pleasure being a part of the Malheur Refuge family.

Best wishes to the Friends group, Refuge staff, and to each and every one of you. May you all continue finding joy and inspiration and hope in our Refuges and other public lands.

Peter Pearsall
Executive Director, Friends of Malheur Refuge



September/October 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

Carp Derby 2018 Results

Carp Derby 2018 is in the books! On Saturday, August 18, under clear and relatively smoke-free skies, the 37 derby participants caught nearly 700 pounds of non-native common carp from the Blitzen River at Malheur Refuge HQ. Staff and volunteers from Malheur Refuge, High Desert Partnership, and Portland Audubon were on hand to help with the event. Afterward, attendees were treated to a BBQ lunch courtesy of FOMR. Thank you to all who attended!



Carp Derby participants
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Benton County Big Sit

The 3rd annual Benton County Big Sit (BCBS) will be held September 22, 2018 at William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuge, located south of Corvallis in Benton County, OR. Organized by young birders Kai Frueh, Ben Frueh and Isaac Denzer, this charitable event raises money for local and national bird conservation organizations, including Friends of Malheur Refuge...[Read more here.](#)



Kai Frueh and Isaac Denzer
Photo courtesy of BCBS

Banding Ducks By Night

Every summer in July and August, Malheur Refuge staff pool resources with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) staff to

band waterfowl at Summer Lake Wildlife Management Area (administered by ODFW) and Malheur Refuge. Both agencies manage waterfowl populations along the Pacific Flyway and frequently collaborate on conservation projects, including these so-called "nightlight" surveys. This year, a combined total of 2,313 ducks were banded...[Read more here.](#)



A molting teal is examined prior to being banded
Photo by Peter Pearsall

Fall Birding at Malheur

by FOMR Member Alan Contreras

Any article titled "Malheur in Fall" should really be called "Malheur and Steens Mountain in Fall" because access to the mountain is the biggest difference between spring migration birding and the experience of autumn. In spring, we gaze longingly at the 9000-foot snowy ridge of the massif; in fall we get to go there. But before we make the 25-mile uphill rumble on the gravel road to the summit, there are major differences to be seen in the Blitzen Valley birding sites as well...[Read more here.](#)



American avocet
Photo by Dan Streiffert

Pollinator Garden Update



A white-lined sphinx moth (*Hyles lineata*) nectars on non-native musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*)
Photo by Stephanie McKnight

We've got great news about the Pollinator Garden at Refuge Headquarters: The [Worthy Garden Club](#) has agreed to sponsor our pollinator garden for the sum of \$2,000! Lisa Sanco, Program Coordinator, has spearheaded this effort and we are very excited to be working with her.

You may recall announcements from the end of last year stating that FOMR is planting a Pollinator Garden at Refuge Headquarters in Spring 2018. That work was delayed due to scheduled construction near the planting site. A concrete walkway is planned for the area adjacent to the garden and we've decided it's best to hold off until this Refuge-contracted work is complete.

At any rate, we're looking forward to beginning work on this project in Spring 2019. A raised-bed plot will be built and planted near Marshall Pond, just outside the Crane's Nest Nature Center & Store. Seeds and plants of a variety of native annual and perennial species will be purchased from a local native plant nursery to plant in the beds. The selected species will represent a variety of flower colors, shapes and phenologies, to attract a diverse array of native pollinators from spring to fall. A focus on early-spring and late-fall blooming species will provide resources for emerging queen bumblebees in spring and migrating monarchs in fall.

Alongside the Marshall Trail, we'll continue to maintain the previously planted trees and shrubs and will add more perennial native shrubs and grasses, including wild currant, wild rose, bitterbrush, rabbitbrush, Great basin wild rye and others. These plants, in addition to providing nectar and pollen resources for pollinators, will eventually grow to provide forage and habitat for resident and migratory birds.

To all who donated for our Pollinator Garden late last year, please know that your contribution is earmarked for this project and we plan to proceed as soon as it's appropriate. We at FOMR care deeply about supporting our native pollinators and we're glad that you do, too.

We're expecting a volunteer contingent from both the Garden Club and Worthy Brewing employees to join FOMR volunteers in a grand construction event April 12-13, 2019. Lodging for volunteers will be available at Malheur Field Station. Please contact us at friends@malheurfriends.org if you are interested in joining us!

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

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

[**Renew Membership**](#)

[**Donate**](#)

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