



Shoreline

Summer 2006 Volume 2 No 2

Idaho's First BioBlitz a Huge Success!

In June, Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge hosted Idaho's very first BioBlitz.

During this 24-hour rapid biological diversity survey, scientists, naturalists and volunteers combed the refuge to collect and identify as many different species of plants and animals as possible. While scientists

searched for life on the refuge, community members attended a BioBlitz Festival to discover local biodiversity and get out into the field with scientists.

BioBlitz 2006 survey teams identified 134 plant species and over 120 animal species. A particularly exciting find was a Jerusalem cricket

that was sent to a California expert to determine whether it

was an undescribed species. Unfortunately, the cricket's true identity will probably remain a mystery until the next refuge BioBlitz. The cricket did not survive the journey and identification requires listening to

the cricket "sing," or make noise by rubbing its back legs together.

BioBlitz documentation of other refuge residents will provide important baseline data to help refuge staff

manage the refuge and maintain healthy wildlife habitat. A full



Photo by Mike Shipman



Photo by Mike Shipman



Photo by Dick McKee

Photos clockwise from top: Joe Kozfkay from Idaho Fish & Game with live fish from Lake Lowell, scientists busily identifying insects in the bug tent, Dorene MacCoy & Ross Dickinson from US Geological Survey catching aquatic invertebrates.

A special thanks to BioBlitz sponsors: Moxie Java, Stone Lumber, Silverhawk Realty, Idaho Press-Tribune, Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge, and Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

Additional thanks to all the volunteers from US Geological Survey, US Forest Service, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Orma J. Smith Museum, Golden Eagle Audubon Society, Southwest Idaho Birder's Association, Idaho Entomology Group and the local community.

Photos clockwise from top: Bug tent volunteer leading a bug-catching expedition, sego lily, western grebe on Lake Lowell, refuge wetland, black widow spider, bug tent activities, catching small mammals with Ray Vizgirdas of US Fish & Wildlife Service, catching fish on Lake Lowell with Idaho Department of Fish & Game.

list of species documented during BioBlitz 2006 will be posted soon on the Deer Flat website.

The BioBlitz Festival was attended by over 200 community members who caught insects, went on boat rides, learned to bird, identified native plants, observed our resident pocket gophers, and discovered the importance and excitement of local biodiversity.



This event will serve not only as a foundation for future refuge events, but hopefully for future Idaho bioscience events as well.

Thank you to everyone who participated in BioBlitz 2006! Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge has a small staff so volunteers really help achieve refuge goals!



Dick McKee



Dick McKee



Mike Shipman



Dick McKee



Mike Shipman



Dick McKee



Dick McKee

Osprey Raise Family at the Refuge

It's time to send out birth announcements! In spring and summer many young animals are born at the refuge.

Although most of the well-

concealed babies are hard for people to see, some animals don't seem to mind being in the public eye.

Since the mid-1990s, a pair of osprey has called Deer Flat its spring and summer home, setting up housekeeping on a nesting platform along the lakeshore below the Visitor Center. Fortunately for us, osprey like to be able to see in all directions from their nest, which means that we can get good views of them!

You can watch the osprey through a spotting scope in the Visitor Center's wildlife viewing room or walk the self-guided nature trail that passes close to the osprey nest. The Visitor Center is open 8 A.M. to 4 P.M. weekdays and 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. Saturdays.

Osprey, sometimes called "fish hawks," catch fish by plunging feet-first into the water. Several adaptations help them grasp the slippery fish, including a reversible front toe and spines on the bottoms of their feet.

The male has been doing all of the family's fishing since they returned to the lake in early April. He will continue to

fish for the family until mid-July. The female is staying home to tend the three chicks by feeding them small chunks of fish, keeping them warm



Photo by Roger Early

when it's cool, and shading them from the sun when it's hot.

Refuge visitors will be able to watch the osprey family all summer long as the chicks grow, exercise their wings, and finally learn to fly and fish on their own. In the end of August or early September, these international travelers head south to warmer climes.

Deer Flat's osprey probably spend the winter on the coastal and inland waters of Colombia

and Brazil, along with most of the osprey that breed in the western U.S. If we're lucky, they will return to southwest Idaho early next April!



Photo by Matthew Locati

Be Careful! It's Fire Season

A recent fire at Gotts Point destroyed approximately 6 acres of wildlife habitat and threatened the homes of



refuge neighbors. While the cause of the fire is unknown, it was most likely started through carelessness or arson. The fire was fueled by dry cheatgrass

and spread quickly through the sagebrush grassland.

Unfortunately, refuge fires are not infrequent, especially during the hot, dry summer months. Sagebrush grasslands at Lake Lowell provide food and cover to many wildlife species, including mule deer, rabbits, foxes, coyotes, red-tailed hawks, and American kestrels.

"It's a shame we lost this

important habitat to human carelessness," said Elaine Johnson, Refuge Manager. "Sagebrush doesn't survive a hot fire.

Once you lose the sagebrush in a fire, it's very difficult to bring it back."

It's difficult to bring back the sagebrush because it cannot compete against cheatgrass

and other exotic annual grasses for water and soil nutrients.

These non-native grasses increase the frequency and intensity of wildfires in rangelands by providing a dry, abundant fuel in a dense, continuous turf.

Cheatgrass also re-establishes itself more quickly than native plants after a fire. That means that a burned area can turn into a solid field of cheatgrass that increases future risk of fire and reduces the value of the habitat to wildlife.

Refuge neighbors and visitors can help prevent habitat loss and reduce the financial costs from human-caused fires by being careful with fire and immediately reporting fires at the refuge.

Never throw a lighted cigarette out of a vehicle or walk off and leave a burning cigarette. Do not park on dry grass or drive through tall



Firefighters from the refuge and other local fire departments battled the recent Gotts Point blaze.

grass, especially when it is hot outside.

Please be aware that open fires and fireworks are

prohibited on national wildlife refuges and

that anyone found responsible for starting a fire on public lands can be held responsible for paying firefighting costs.

Human-caused fires have a high cost to people and wildlife. A 2003 fire at Deer Flat caused by fireworks exceeded \$30,000 in suppression and rehabilitation costs. Of course no dollar figure can be applied to the lost wildlife and plant habitat.

International Migratory Bird Day Celebration

Visitors celebrated International Migratory Bird Day in style on May 13th by admiring displays and exhibits,

dissecting owl pellets, seeing eye to eye with a great horned owl, and viewing the movie "Winged Migration".

The celebration also included an official grand opening for the



new wildlife viewing platform just west of the Visitor Center.

Completed in spring 2005, this disabled-accessible platform provides new and improved wildlife viewing for refuge visitors.

The platform is accessible by vehicle, but only after obtaining a permit at the Visitor Center. For more information, call 208.467.9278.



Young visitor meets a kestrel

Local wildlife needs you. Become a

WEED WARRIOR!



Who: You? Help wildlife and spend time outside.

What: Remove invasive weeds to improve wildlife habitat at Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge.

When: 3rd Saturday of each month, 9 A.M. - 11 A.M.

Where: Meet at the refuge Visitor Center with gloves, water, and a shovel.

Lower Dam Boat Ramp Gets a Face Lift

The Lower Dam Boat Ramp recently received an asphalt overlay courtesy of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and the Idaho Bass Federation in cooperation with Deer Flat

National Wildlife Refuge. The overlay will extend the life of the boat ramp and make the drive in a little smoother.

The boat ramp has not been re-paved since it was originally installed. Marsing Job Corps constructed the boat ramp and parking lot around the same time they built the current Visitor Center, which was completed in 1975.



Care about wildlife? Concerned about the refuge? Then consider becoming a refuge volunteer!

WE NEED YOU...

your talents, your enthusiasm, and some of your time,
to help fill the following positions:

Visitor Services Assistant
Biological Assistant
Office Assistant
Recreational Survey Assistant

Environmental Education Assistant
Landscaping Assistant
Litter Collector
Refuge Friends Group Member

For a volunteer application, stop by the Visitor Center or
Visit the refuge website at <http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/currvol.htm>



Many thanks to all our refuge volunteers!

AmeriCorps Volunteer Extraordinaire

A lot has been going on in the back office at the refuge in the past couple of years.

Lauren Giebler, full-time AmeriCorps volunteer since

October 2004, has volunteered for well over 3,000 hours and, as the AmeriCorps motto promises, has been "Getting Things Done for America!"

Lauren was hired to expand and improve the refuge environmental education program. Her initiative, enthusiasm, and creativity have helped her succeed in the task. Among other things, she has designed or improved eight EE programs, helped create a summer day camp, built several self-contained educational trunks that are available for teachers to borrow, and conducted programs for over 6,500 people.

Thanks in large part to Lauren's outreach efforts, participation in EE programs has more than doubled since she arrived.

Lauren's passion for the refuge and for encouraging stewardship of natural resources has led her to



undertake a wide variety of other projects during her service as well. Just to choose a few, Lauren started

Action Saturdays, a Saturday-morning family service learning program. In

spring 2005 she worked with partners to build a disabled-accessible wildlife-viewing platform. Noticing that many local

residents were unaware of the refuge or refuge

activities, she initiated this refuge newsletter.

She was actively involved with the establishment of the new refuge friends group, Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge.

Finally, her most ambitious project was to organize the BioBlitz highlighted in the cover article of this newsletter.

Although Lauren will be missed when she moves on to a master's program at Colorado State University in August, her contributions to refuge programs and building partnerships will continue to positively impact the refuge for years to come.



Playing Bat & Moth



Surveying frogs below the Upper Dam



Day camp fun!

Thanks, Lauren!

Substantial Drop in Goose Population

In early April and early May, refuge staff and volunteers boated to and walked 32 of the 101 refuge islands in the Snake River to assess the health of the

average 169 nests were successful, hatching on average 849 goslings.

Although high water later in the season affected success, “the high water did not affect the number of nests started, and even without the flooding the goose production would



Photo by Roger Early

local Canada goose population. Similar nesting surveys have been conducted since 1953.

Unfortunately, the news was not good. Only 183 nests were located, down from an average of 216 over the previous 4 years. Worse yet, only 82 nests were successful, hatching 369 goslings. In the past years, on

be at an all time low,” according to Todd Fenzl, Deputy Refuge Manager.

Fenzl speculates that the decline is due to unsustainable harvesting. Idaho Department of Fish & Game raised the limit to four birds in 2002. Also, “the hunting season runs to within a month of the start of nesting, so mated pairs looking for nest sites are overly vulnerable to harvest.”



Refuge Eagle Nests Failed

A new bald eagle nest along the north shore of the lake caused a flurry of excitement at the refuge in mid-March. Refuge staff, volunteers, and visitors kept an eye on the pair until they were obscured by the emerging leaves in April. When last seen, the parents were beginning to feed the newly-hatched chicks.

Unfortunately, several weeks later the eagles had apparently abandoned the nest. “We’re not sure why the

nest was unsuccessful,” Deputy Refuge Manager Todd Fenzl said. “It’s possible that the great horned owls nesting nearby took the chicks.”

Bald eagles have been actively nesting across the lake from the new nest since 2000. Given that the old nests were inactive this year, it seems likely that the same pair moved across the lake to the new nest. There has also been a pair nesting on the eastern end of the lake since 1986. Although they also laid eggs and incubated this year, that nest also failed.



Friends Update

The fledgling group Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge has begun to take flight thanks to the hard work of group members. The group is now incorporated and has been granted 501(c)(3) non-profit status by the IRS. It is now eligible to apply for grants and do more fund-raising. Group donations have already been used to help support the BioBlitz and refuge day camp.

Friends have been busy spreading the word about the group by staffing booths at Earth Fest in Boise and at International Migratory Bird Day and the BioBlitz Festival at the refuge. The newly-printed flyer, including the group's new logo and a membership form, has also helped in outreach efforts.

Several committees are working on projects. The *Projects Committee* has been working with refuge staff to prioritize how best the group can contribute to the refuge. The *Membership and Fundraising Committee* is pursuing ideas about how to make the public more aware of the group and what it offers, and is also working towards

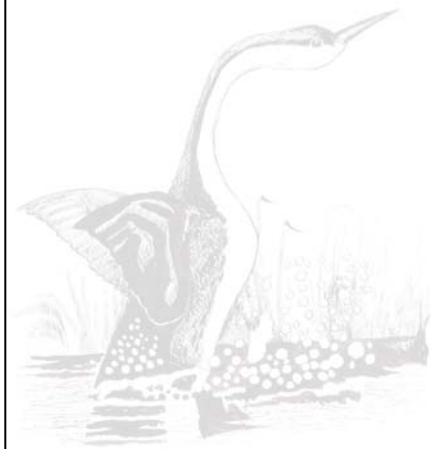
opening a bookstore at the Visitor Center to raise funds. The *Action Alert Committee* is developing guidelines for how to address proposed developments near the refuge that could negatively impact the refuge mission.

Whether you're an official member or not, you are invited to join other friends of the refuge at one of the monthly Friends meetings held the first Tuesday of each month at 7 P.M at the refuge Visitor Center. Upcoming meetings include:

- **July 11** Al Larson of the Audubon Society will speak about and show photos of area birds and plants. (Note that this meeting will be held the second Tuesday because of the July 4th holiday.)
- **August 1** Lauren Giebler, who has served as the refuge AmeriCorps volunteer for nearly two years, will share stories about her experience.
- **September 5** Todd Fenzl, Deputy Refuge Manager, will talk about refuge history and wildlife.



BioBlitz visitors enjoying crafts at the Friends of Deer Flat booth. Photo by Denise Hughes



Mission Statement: "to promote, protect, and provide resources to preserve and enhance Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge for the enjoyment of present and future generations."

Interested in becoming a member, joining a committee or receiving the new Friends of DFWR newsletter? Then call Al McGlinsky at 208.465.0404.

Summer Activity Schedule

July

Wednesday, July 5
Reading at the Refuge
2 P.M., Visitor Center

Tuesday, July 11
Friends Group Meeting
7 P.M., Visitor Center

Saturday, July 15
Weed Warriors
9 A.M., Visitor Center

Tuesday, July 18
Reading at the Refuge
10 A.M., Visitor Center

Wednesday, July 19
Reading at the Refuge
2 P.M., Visitor Center

August

Tuesday, August 1
Reading at the Refuge
10 A.M., Visitor Center

Friends Group Meeting
7 P.M., Visitor Center

Wednesday, August 2
Reading at the Refuge
2 P.M., Visitor Center

Tuesday, August 15
Reading at the Refuge
10 A.M., Visitor Center

Wednesday, August 16
Reading at the Refuge
2 P.M., Visitor Center

Saturday, August 19
Weed Warriors
9 A.M., Visitor Center

September

Tuesday, September 5
Reading at the Refuge
10 A.M., Visitor Center

Friends Group Meeting
7 P.M., Visitor Center

Wednesday, September 6
Reading at the Refuge
2 P.M., Visitor Center

Saturday, September 16
Weed Warriors
9 A.M., Visitor Center

Tuesday, September 19
Reading at the Refuge
10 A.M., Visitor Center

Wednesday, September 20
Reading at the Refuge
2 P.M., Visitor Center

Saturday, September 30
Litter Lift
9 A.M., Visitor Center

Join the Refuge Team!

Now Recruiting Environmental Education & Interpretive Specialist



Responsibilities include:

- ✓ Increase awareness of refuge EE and interpretive opportunities
- ✓ Conduct on- and off-site EE programs for K-12 students
- ✓ Coordinate natural history talks and walks

Benefits include:

- ✓ Taxable living allowance of up to \$10,900
- ✓ Education award of \$4,725 (after full 11-month term of service)
- ✓ Free housing available
- ✓ And more!

For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/amicorps.htm>
or contact deerflat@fws.gov or 208.467.9278

Environmental Education

PASS IT ON!

Do you know someone who might be interested in a FREE, fun environmental education program? Then please pass on a copy of Shoreline or help them contact us at the refuge. Thank you for helping us spread the word about our programs!

All programs and field trips are free!!

For more information about other Environmental Education opportunities, including Service Learning and Community Programs, please contact the refuge at 208.467.9278 or deerflat@fws.gov.

Classroom Programs

Bring the refuge to your classroom! Refuge staff will visit your school to present a standards-based, interactive environmental education program. Choose from the programs listed below or request one tailored to meet your needs!

- Alien Invaders
- Animal Camouflage
- Animal Toolkits
- Bird Beaks
- Ecosystems Alive
- FISH!
- Highways in the Sky
- Touch Trunk
- Wetlands' Wonders
- What Did the Owl Eat?



Field Trips

Visit Deer Flat National Wildlife Refuge at Lake Lowell for a standards-based environmental education activity or hands-on exploration of sagebrush upland, riparian, and lake habitats!

One Class? Schedule a hike on the Nature Trail and/or an environmental education activity. All visits include time in the Visitor Center and a brief orientation to the refuge.

More Than One Class?

Large groups will be split into smaller groups and rotated through 3 or 4 stations. Stations include the visitor center, nature trail, and one or more outdoor environmental education activities. Each station lasts approximately 20-25 minutes. The Visitor Center station includes an 11-minute refuge orientation video.

Want to know more?

Visit the refuge website at <http://www.fws.gov/deerflat/education.htm> for more information, including a calendar of refuge availability, details about classroom programs and field trip FAQ's.

Schedule a classroom program or field trip!

Phone: 208.467.9278 Fax: 208.467.1019

E-mail: deerflat@fws.gov