

WORDS FROM THE WETLANDS

SUMMER



2011

NEWS FROM THE KLAMATH BASIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE COMPLEX

The Legacy of Dave Menke By, Ron Cole

On April 28th, 2011 Dave Menke, a 33 year veteran of the US Fish and Wildlife Service passed away. He left behind a career of accomplishments, awards, accolades, friends, co-workers and peers. He also left behind his most precious and special family. Dave first began working for US Fish and Wildlife Service in 1978 when he worked at Desoto NWR in Iowa. In 1984 Dave moved to Kodiak NWR where he met the love of his life Valeria Martin. Their love flourished and they spent many happy times hiking in the wilderness, observing and photographing flowers and wildlife.

In 1991, David transferred to the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge and he and Valeria moved to Klamath Falls, Oregon. They were blessed with their first child Rebecca in 1992, their second child Matthew in 1997, and their third child Sarah in 2001. David continued with his passion for wildlife photography, having photos published in refuge newsletters and local newspapers. Dave had a about a 30 minute drive to work each day, but oftentimes it took him longer because he just couldn't resist stopping along the way to look at birds. When birds sang, he knew how to listen as if they were speaking directly to him. That is why in all of his time at the Klamath Basin Refuge, when it came to identifying birds, knowing what they were, why they were there, where they came from, and where they were going, he was our Mozart of birding.

Dave was responsible for everything that involved the public. He supervised and directed the operation of all activities that people did on all 6 of the refuges. From wildlife observation, interpretation, education, fishing, hunting, and other outdoor activities, he made sure that people enjoyed a quality experience and that wildlife came first.



He was in charge of managing the Refuge Visitor Center, helping plan the remodeling and upgrade of the entire facility. He designed interpretive signs, hiking trails, photo blinds, and blinds for those who are physically challenged. His organizational skills and his attention to detail were second to none. He was a tireless promoter of wildlife observation, particularly birding. His efforts at helping develop and organize a network for birders to share their daily observations transformed the Klamath Basin Birding Community into a well connected group of thousands. He took his skills well beyond the boundary of the refuges, helping develop the Klamath Basin Birding Trail, Volcanic Legacy Scenic Byway, Emigrant Trails Scenic Byway, Modoc Volcanic Scenic Byway, Basin & Range Birding Trail, the Tule Lake Bird Festival, International Migratory Bird Day, the Winter Wings Festival, and numerous other projects that helped bring people outside and into the fresh air. If there was a birding tour going on somewhere in the Klamath Basin, Dave probably organized it, helped those did, or was leading it.

During his last couple of months he had been working on plans to convert the old "duck hospital", located across from the Refuge Visitor Center, into an outdoor education school to be used by schools in northern California and southern Oregon. When it is completed, it will be named the "Dave Menke Outdoor Education Center".

During his long career with USFWS he was a Refuge Law enforcement Officer for over 20 years, and when he came to the Klamath Basin, he supervised the largest waterfowl hunting program in the National Wildlife Refuge System. That meant getting up before daylight in order to check hundreds of hunters into the refuge. He often didn't return home until dark, putting in 10-14 hour days, sometimes without any overtime or compensation. He did this tirelessly year after year because he was a dedicated professional. Dave was also a remarkable photographer. He has been honored and published in many national and international media for his stunning depiction of wildlife on National Wildlife Refuges. Over the years his photos have been prominently displayed and used by the USFWS in a variety of publications, helping to tell the story of the hard work that the Refuge System accomplishes on behalf of our nation's wildlife. While the rest of us that worked with him just glanced at birds, Dave had the ability to take what we saw every day and turn it into an image that each of us could cherish for a lifetime. His photographs have been distributed across the nation and even to other countries. It would not be a stretch to say that his photographs have been viewed by thousands if not millions of people all over the world.

How did he get such wonderful photos of wildlife? Let's let Dave tell you in his own words. Here is an excerpt from an essay he contributed to a book published by the Shaw Historical Library commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. The book is called "Wings That Fill the Sky-America's First Waterfowl Refuge". He titled his essay "A Memorable Day in a Refuge Photo Blind".



Photo by Dave Menke

If you are interested in the Dave Menke Scholarship fund please visit www.davemenke.org



Photo by Dave Menke

"One of my most memorable days in a refuge photo blind was September 1, 2007. I arrive at the blind at first light (about 5:15am). With coffee thermos and seat cushion in hand, I repose in the blind waiting for daylight while listening to the sounds of the awakening marsh. The symphony of sound, which greets me as the light strengthens, consists of the eerie calls of soras, Virginia rails, and American coots, punctuated by the nearly constant chattering of nearby marsh wrens. The highlight of my morning photo session is the opportunity to photograph both snowy and great egrets perched on a snag over the water only 30 feet from the blind. Taking pictures of these two wary birds at such close range requires a lot of care to minimize noise and motion from within the blind. I take several dozen photos of the two egrets, which serve as the culmination of one of my most successful wildlife photo outings in over 15 years in the Klamath Basin. As I look back at my field notes, I realize that during the morning I have photographed 15 different bird species, all at extremely close range. Not bad, I think as I hurry to my car in order to get to work by 8:30 am."

As accomplished as Dave was with a camera, we all know that his best work was done after he set it down. Sure, his job title was Outdoor Recreation Planner, but he was much more than that. He was a naturalist, a federal officer, a supervisor, a biologist, an ecologist, a co-worker, a mentor, a colleague, a friend. He was quiet, humble, yet confident. He was focused, creative and articulate. He was patient, dedicated, and trustworthy.

Even with all of his professional skills, milestones and accomplishments, his most important job title was that of father and husband. He would also argue that his most significant accomplishment of all were his 3 children. Dave will be missed every day, but his spirit remains strong through everything he left behind.

2011-2012 HUNTING SEASON

by Stacy Freitas
Hunt Program Coordinator

Hunters and non-hunters alike are looking forward to the upcoming fall waterfowl migration. The Refuges are already seeing an increase in the number of Mallards and Pintail arriving. Production numbers this summer were steady in spite of the cold, wet spring and some late nesting. Due to this, several of the birds you see this fall will be younger than usual and probably won't reach full color until later in the fall making early identification difficult.

The bag limits, season dates and let in times for the Refuges have been posted on our webpage or may be viewed through DFG and ODFWs web sites. The opening day for both the California and Oregon portions of the Refuges is October 8th. The bag limits for ducks did not change from last season; it continues to be 7 total with 2 Mallard hens, 2 Pintail, 1 Canvasback, 2 Redheads or 3 Scaup. The goose limit for the Oregon side is 4 dark geese and 6 white geese. The California limit is 8 per day including 6 white or 6 dark geese, no more than 2 large Canada geese.

Youth hunts will be held after 1:00p.m. on October 15th, 22nd and November 26th. The 2011 Ladies hunt will be held in conjunction with the youth hunt on October 15th.

Good luck to you all in the upcoming season. For more information on waterfowl and pheasant hunting please see our hunting web page at <http://www.fws.gov/klamathbasinrefuges/hunt.html> or feel free to contact us at the Refuge Visitor Center at (530)-667-2231.



What's happening at the Klamath Marsh?

By: Mike Johnson, Manager of
Klamath Marsh NWR

Refuge staff has been able to complete quite a few projects this season and we will attempt to get others finished prior to freeze-up. Major maintenance projects completed include; new septic systems for the bunkhouse and the manager's residence, extending computer connections to the bunkhouse, installation of new flooring in the bunkhouse, installing new ATV bridges in 5 locations, hauling and stockpiling of approx. 1,000 cubic yards of cinder and rock and site preparation for our new shop.

The biological program accomplishments included: eagle nest surveys, water level monitoring, selecting and data collection on grazing /haying units and the Williamson River restoration project. This restoration program is an on-going project and this year it involved 21 U.S. Navy personnel utilizing over 8,000 pounds of explosives over a 5 day period to restore approximately 300 acres of river channel habitat. A lot of this work entails trying different methods and explosive types to determine the most efficient and cost-effective means for restoring the Williamson River channel within the refuge.

In July refuge personnel spent about 2 weeks on survey and mapping work due to an outbreak of Clear-wing grasshoppers on the refuge and adjacent private lands. These outbreaks occur periodically and can severely reduce forage on adjacent private lands. Refuge areas had been surveyed in June but because of high water levels it was assumed that there would be few grasshoppers hatching. By July a severe outbreak occurred along the western boundary of the refuge and on adjacent private lands. Some ranchers started a treatment program while others determined it was not practical or cost-effective. Working with both the USDA and OR. Dept. of Agriculture refuge personnel came up with a possible treatment plan taking into account locations of threatened and endangered species and the proximity of water. The most effective method is to treat the grasshoppers when they first emerge from the ground. However, due to the number of adults, the amount of forage available on the refuge, the rough terrain and the proximity of aquatic habitat it was determined that treatment would not be successful nor cost-effective.



To assist local ranchers which had treated for grasshoppers but were still severely affected we were able to locate some units on the refuge which would benefit from haying or grazing. One Special-Use-Permit was granted to hay about 60 acres. Two others ranchers were allowed to graze for 30 days on 3 units totaling about 400 acres. Grazing and haying these areas will benefit Sandhill cranes, Oregon Spotted frogs and waterfowl this next spring.

Grasshopper surveys will commence again in early May of 2012 in order to determine if a treatment plan will be necessary.

Besides work on Klamath Marsh NWR we completed several projects on Upper Klamath NWR. Working with the FS we were able to replace many of the directional signs along the UK Canoe Trail. Refuge Personnel also did considerable work at the UK cabin which is utilized by the Klamath Bird Observatory as a field camp for their passerine banding program. A domestic well was drilled at the cabin site and a pump and pressure tank installed. A well house was also constructed. This was the first step of a multi-year project to provide water and sewage treatment facilities at the cabin. We did obtain Klamath County permission and a permit for installation of a septic system. We hope to install the septic system and construct a combination toilet and bathhouse next year.

Our volunteers were also busy at Upper Klamath Refuge this year. They managed to install boundary signs on the Barnes-Agency addition (7,700 acres) and also spent several days mapping the location of noxious weeds on the new addition.

Our final project this year is the construction of a new shop up at Klamath Marsh NWR. The new electrical feeder line has been installed and construction will commence on Oct. 11. The contract calls for a 30 day construction period. We will have an update on this project in the next issue of this newsletter.



Pictured to the right is the 2011 YCC crew working hard at the Klamath Marsh.

Geese, Geese and More Geese: Managing for Spring Goose Migration

By: Bridget Neilson

Something is suddenly different along the Auto Tour Route on Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge, there's a new fence with Powder River Gates and a few black ungulates are roaming the fields of Fairchild Island. One might ask, "What is going on beyond those gates and why?" The Refuge has undertaken a new management action on Fairchild Island and it's for the birds. Well, a little play on words might get your attention but really, it's for the birds, specifically snow geese and white-fronted geese. We are undertaking a pasture management program on Fairchild Island, an 864 acre parcel of land that is located directly south of Unit 3 and a close-zone sanctuary for waterfowl.

As many of our local ranchers and farmers know, these geese congregate in large numbers in the Klamath Basin between the months of February and May. At times, there are more than a million of these geese that are feeding on private lands specifically, the irrigated pastures, alfalfa fields, and at times, the grain fields that span the landscape between Lower Klamath NWR and Upper Klamath Lake. The tender, fresh, green sprouts of alfalfa and pasture grass contain the highest amount of protein in the early spring. Geese feed intensively on grasses during the spring, working to improve their overall body condition for the upcoming migration and nesting season. On occasion, the numbers of birds utilizing these private lands are so great that they can damage local crops.

The good news is that the conservation community and federal agencies from Canada and the U.S. have been successful at recovering these species of geese from record low numbers in the 1980's. Population objectives were established through the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. Lesser snow geese were established at 1 million to 1.5 million individuals and White-fronted goose population target was established at 600,000 individuals. These benchmarks were established to identify when the species had recovered from previous low populations and also as to what degree the population needs to be managed. Currently, the North American populations of lesser snow geese exceed 4 million individuals and white-fronted geese populations hover around 1.2 million birds. Obviously, these species of birds are doing quite well, mostly attributed to better species management in the Arctic and Canada and restoration of wetlands in the lower 48 states. While these birds are doing so well and we have a large refuge to provide habitat for them, they insist upon using private lands for some parts of the year. This creates conflict between agriculture and wildlife. Some of the solutions for this conflict have been to create a spring depredation hunt season for white geese and white-fronted geese only. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife established a short, spring hunt that was established to "haze" birds from private lands. The spring hunt is allowed only on private lands. The spring goose season is only 22 days and provides only a brief time that the birds won't use private lands due to human disturbance and hunting. When this season is over, the birds resume the typical feeding activity and in short, create the conflict once again.

The Refuge has an obligation to the Kuchel Act of 1964 as we are required to manage for waterfowl however we are required to also reduce negative impacts caused on private lands by waterfowl. The Act also directs the Refuge to consider agricultural uses that are consistent with waterfowl management.

The USFWS decided we needed to provide a solution as well. Considering that geese are preferring to feed on these pastures prior to their departure, we decided that we'd provide similar type habitat to where they are utilizing. The primary purposes of implementing this project on Fairchild Island is to provide high quality foraging habitat for Arctic nesting geese, reduce damage to private lands, and to provide nesting habitat for upland nesting shorebirds such as the long-billed curlew. In addition, irrigated pastures invite other wading birds such as white-faced ibis, black necked stilt, and American avocet. We have 3 options for management scenarios to grow tender green grass shoots; grazing, haying, and burning. While refuge lands are managed in a variety of ways, Fairchild Island's location and historical productivity provides us with a short term solution to this problem. In addition, our recent management of Fairchild Island yielded marginal results with little waterfowl or upland game utilizing this area. We hope to provide at least 800 acres of irrigated pasture for spring goose use through this project. This is our first year at this endeavor and we will utilize several different management tools to achieve the desired results and will most likely have to modify our techniques until we achieve the desired outcome. Unit 3 is directly adjacent to Fairchild Island as well, which is a primary roosting and loafing site for many types of waterfowl. The location of good feeding habitat close to loafing habitat should encourage geese to utilize refuge lands more during the spring and provide one more solution for landowners in the local area. In addition, the historic management of Fairchild Island was similar to this new project and through our historic data collection, we determined that Ross geese and lesser snow geese used to frequent the island prior to our allowing it to return to the dry upland landscape that it is today. In essence, we hope to see immediate positive results; large numbers of geese using Fairchild Island.



Pictured Above: Geese during Spring Migration

**PLEASE NOTE:
WE NEED YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES!**

Due to the change of hands with our newsletter we have lost a number of email addresses that received the newsletter electronically. To save on environmental and postage costs we would like to send you the newsletter electronically. Please email: hallie_rasmussen@fws.gov with your name and email or call the Refuge at 530-667-2231 with your current email. Thank you!



**Klamath Basin Refuge Association
Bookstore Update**

Hope this letter finds you all doing well and staying warm. The Association has been expanding the Refuge bookstore with new books, interpretive materials and assorted Refuge shirts and sweatshirts. We encourage you to swing on out to the Tule Lake Visitor Center to browse the new items and check out the books we have in stock. We also want to remind you that members receive 20% everything in the bookstore! If you are not already a member and are interested in joining the Klamath Basin National Wildlife Refuge Association there is a membership form on the back of the newsletter.



**A New Face in the Tule Lake NWR
Visitor Center**

My name is Keith White and I would like to introduce myself as the new temporary visitor services specialist at the Klamath Basin Refuges Visitor Center. First allow me to provide you with some background information about myself. I was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. After graduating from high school I joined the United States Air Force and served 23 years. Upon retirement in 2002 I began my second career as a middle school math teacher in Phoenix, Arizona. I taught for 9 years and decided I needed a change in careers. During a recent visit to the Grand Canyon I was introduced to Environmental Education and Interpretive Rangers. I decided that this was the new career I was looking for. Now that you know a little about me and how I ended up here let me share with you my experiences since arriving on September 6, 2011.

Since my arrival I have come to appreciate the abundant wildlife and natural resources as well as the rich history of the local area. I have already visited Captain Jack's Stronghold, Camp Tulelake, Lava Beds National Monuments and the Petroglyphs to name only a few locations. I have had the pleasure of being a part of the community during the Tulelake Butte Valley Fair and enjoyed meeting all the local citizens. My responsibility of staffing the visitor center has exposed me to local as well as international visitors. This being my first duty station as a ranger I lucked out and have the pleasure of working with a great group of individuals in the Fish and Wildlife Service. My experience so far has only inspired me to continue working in this field. I thank everyone for making me feel welcomed and a part of the local and Fish and Wildlife Service family.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Spotted Sandpiper in the Klamath Basin

by Michele Nuss—Park Ranger

The Spotted Sandpiper might well be one of the best known of American shorebirds, and breeds along the edges of nearly any water source throughout the northern half of the continent. They are easily identifiable with distinctive bold, dark spots on their undersides during breeding season. However, in non-breeding plumage, a Spotted Sandpiper loses most of its spots.

The flight pattern of a Spotted Sandpiper can aid in identification, as they typically fly low over water with short bursts of rapidly vibrating wing beats, alternating with brief glides. On occasion, especially if flying high, they have been known to maintain a steady wing beat, in which case their flight pattern matches that of any other sandpiper.

Another helpful clue for identification is the habit of a Spotted Sandpiper endlessly bobbing its tail. The bobbing gets faster when the bird is nervous, but stops when the bird is alarmed, aggressive, or courting. When foraging, they teeter and bob almost constantly. Young Spotted Sandpipers begin their lifelong custom of teetering within 30 minutes of hatching.

Breeding grounds extend from northern Alaska and Canada across most of the continent to southern United States. It is the female who arrives at the breeding grounds earlier than the male and is the one who establishes and defends the territory. However, it is the male who takes the primary role in parental care, incubating the eggs and taking care of the young. Spotted Sandpipers are polyandrous in that the female might breed with more than one male.

Four brown-spotted buff eggs are usually laid in a saucer-shaped hollow or a ground depression lined with grass, moss, twigs and feathers and might be partially concealed by a log or a rock or hidden in vegetation. Incubation lasts for 19 to 22 days and the young leave the nest soon after they hatch. At around 18 days they are able to fly. When feeling threatened, chicks are capable of swimming and diving to escape danger but often prefer the method of suddenly becoming motionless on the ground, where they are extremely difficult to see.

When foraging, Spotted Sandpipers will walk or wade, picking up items from the surface of the ground or shallow water, but will also grab insects out of the air. In addition to insects, they eat fish, worms, mollusks, crustaceans and spiders. Often they will dip their food in the water before eating.

So wherever your adventurous spirit might lead you on your outings, chances are you're likely to encounter a spotted sandpiper at one time or another during your outdoor excursions.



KLAMATH BASIN WILDLIFE REFUGE ASSOCIATION

Membership Application / Renewal

Name _____

Single \$15

Address _____

Family \$20

City / State / Zip _____

Sustaining \$35

Telephone _____

Benefactor \$50

E-Mail _____

*Mail to: Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Association
4009 Hill Road, Tulelake, California 96134*

US Fish and Wildlife Service
Klamath Basin NWR Complex
4009 Hill Road
Tulelake, CA 96134-9758
(530) 667-2231

Would you or a friend like to be on our free newsletter Email list?
email or call Refuge Headquarters.
hallie_rasmussen@fws.gov — 530-667-2231