

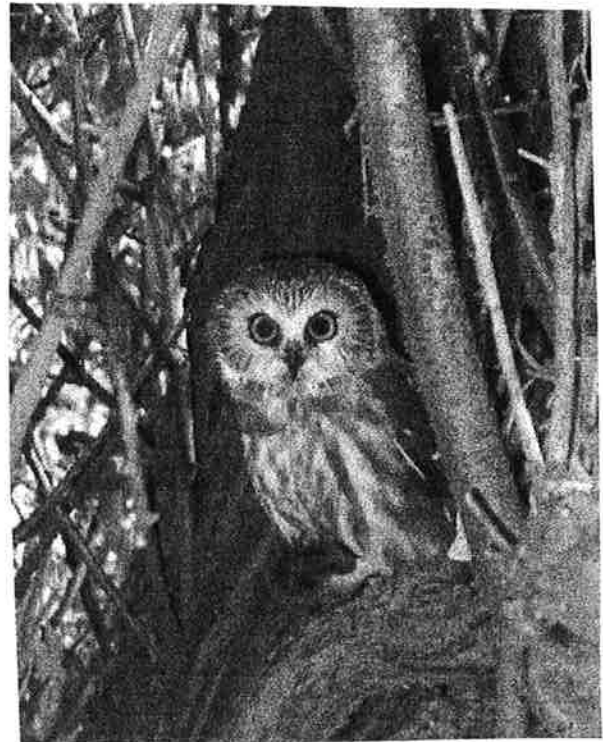
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Camas National Wildlife Refuge is 36 miles north of Idaho Falls on I-15. Exit at Hamer and follow signs east, north, and west over I-15 to the refuge, about 5 miles. The mailing address is 2150 E. 2350 N. Hamer, Idaho 83425. Refuge Headquarters phone: 208-662-5423. Rob Larrañaga is the Refuge Manager.

Both **water and waterfowl** appear to be arriving on the refuge about 30 days later than usual this year. As of March 21, we had no water yet in Camas Creek and the first sandhill crane and one Canada goose were observed in the field west of the manager's home on **March 10**. Trumpeter Swans were observed headed north from Great Salt Lake on the Ides of March, and an Audubon observer heard sandhill cranes over the Pocatello west bench in heavy snow on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Rob Larrañaga attended Water District 31 annual meeting in early March and learned that the snow pack was at 114% of normal as of March 1<sup>st</sup>, compared to 80% last year at this time. The Camas Creek drainage snow pack was at 114% in 2006 when we had good flows and ample water for nesting areas. The fall of 2005 had heavy rain also which helped with flows as well. We're hopeful that we have a prolonged melt so we're dealing with good volume over several weeks instead of flood volume all at once. Due to the late winter pumping of water at Sandhole Lake and on the core marsh was not started until the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, in preparation for the arrival of large numbers of waterfowl in the near future. Although several inches of snow was still on the ground, the open water in Big Pond welcomed over 250 tundra and trumpeter swans combined. After a winter of intense blowing snow, several snow storms, and prolonged lower temperatures than in recent years in the Hamer area, spring is indeed on the way!

**Owls on the Refuge!** Camas NWR always has conspicuous bald eagles in winter, but we're also blessed with a variety of owls. In recent weeks a northern saw-whet owl has been sighted frequently near the office, and great horned owls regularly roost in the huge trees around the headquarters. Short-eared owls were found on refuge throughout the winter, which is uncommon, to include a sighting in late December on the same day that a long-eared owl was observed. In January, a great gray owl was observed on the tour route. In summer, short-eared owls are common on the refuge, hunting low over the marshes, and long-eared owls nest in abandoned magpie nests on the refuge. Dr. Chuck Trost once found a deceased boreal owl on Camas; and in addition to the above mentioned species the refuge bird list reflects sightings of screech owls, pigmy owls, barn owls, and an occasional visiting burrowing owl. Several long time birders in the area remember comments about snowy owls in years of rodent eruptions, but we don't have documentation of those sightings. Just be alert to the possibility of these sightings when you are enjoying your refuge, and be sure to tell us about interesting finds. We appreciate knowing the location, time of day, and weather conditions for all unusual sightings.



Saw-whet owl near the Headquarters in 2007.

**Sage Grouse Habitat Restoration** is another exciting effort in progress on the Refuge. Again, several groups are participating in the planning and execution of restoration of native grouse habitat to a 20 acre abandoned agricultural land site on Camas NWR. The primary objective is the enhancement of brood-rearing

habitat. Initial funding for the project has been partially obtained, \$5000, through a grant in the name of Dubois Grouse Days for the Camas NWR project from the Rocky Mountain Power Foundation. The North American Grouse Partnership is providing a philosophic foundation and basic coordination of grouse habitat partnerships both on and off the refuge. Additional funding sources include the Idaho Office of Species Conservation (\$10,000.00), U.S. Geologic Survey's Science Support Partnership (SSP) for a three year \$21,938.00 contribution, and in-kind contributions from the Nature Conservancy, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

A major aspect of the USFWS involvement includes the integration of this project in the Land management and Research Demonstration program, administered by Dr. Mike Gregg. The Land Management Demonstration Areas are places where new habitat management techniques and approaches are developed, implemented and showcase-place where professional land managers and others come to

learn about cutting edge habitat management techniques and technology and carry back with them the information and knowledge which allows them to better manage their own lands. Mr. Gregg is one of the presenters at this year's Dubois Grouse Days Festival. An implementation planning meeting is scheduled in conjunction with the Dubois Grouse Days and specific project information will be included in the summer newsletter. To right, on far right, Mike Fisher of USFWS discusses the restoration site with other members of the partnership.



**The Sixth Annual Dubois Grouse Days Festival** will be held April 11th and 12<sup>th</sup> to “celebrate Greater Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse and the wonderful environments that are their home.” A beautiful brochure which lists all the activities, trips, presentations and displays, including a Camas NWR tour, is available from Jeri Teavener, P. O. Box 85, Dubois, Idaho 83423, or at [www.grousepartners.org](http://www.grousepartners.org). Options include three different tours to observe the dancing and booming of grouse on leks, activities for children, a roast beef dinner, opportunities to visit with agency representatives about wildlife, conservation, and preservation strategies, use of photography blinds, arts and crafts displays, research presentations, and displays of local wildlife artists. The brochure [provides information about accommodations, fees, travel directions, and schedules. Events begin Friday evening and conclude with a banquet Saturday April 12<sup>th</sup>



This celebration has grown from modest but beautiful beginnings to an attraction which brings people from all over the intermountain west to learn about the ecology and beauty of Sage and Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse in the shadow of the Tetons, the Centennials, the Beaverhead, and the Lemhi Mountains. Camas NWR will be offering a sage-grouse viewing tour near the refuge, a general wildlife and sage-grouse restoration project tour on the refuge, and children's activities at the event, as part of this year's program. This is a fabulous family opportunity with activities to interest everyone.

Left, photo by Hubert Quade for the Sixth Annual Dubois Grouse Days Festival brochure.



**International Migratory Bird Day Celebration** activities are planned for May 10<sup>th</sup> on Camas NWR and will include trail work by volunteers and Boy Scouts as well as the placement of, Eagle Scout constructed benches, at observation sites. Portneuf Valley Audubon make their annual contribution of weed barrier fabric and in-kind labor. We also hope to remove weeds from the area where newly planted trees are prospering and a day of fellowship and worthwhile labor will honor our efforts for migratory birds. The National Forest Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and Snake River Audubon will be joining in the celebration this year by providing a tent with children's activities and information for the whole family to enjoy. Bird watching tours will be offered.

Photo to right shows youngsters from the Hamer Boy Scout Troop "connecting with nature" and contributing hard work on the trails for International Migratory Bird Day.



**"Time Out with Chris Millgate"** presented coverage on Channel 6, KVPI Television on March 12 and March 16 of the significant eagle roost on Camas NWR, with discussion of eagles, owls, elk, moose, white-tailed deer, coyotes, and smaller mammals. We want to thank Mrs. Millgate for the coverage and extending an invitation to her viewers to "Come and enjoy your refuge."

We want to wish Steve Bufford, Manager of Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge, who has participated in many shared activities in the south east Idaho NWR complex, a very happy and prosperous retirement, well deserved after many years of service to USFW and the people of Idaho. Steve was instrumental in initiating the Annual Butterfly and the Dragonfly Counts which will provide important baseline data for monitoring these populations on Camas National Wildlife Refuge. Best wishes and please come and visit us, this is your refuge too!

We also deeply regret the passing of longtime Camas NWR Manager (1993-2004) Gerry Deutscher. Gerry had a long and productive career with the Fish and Wildlife Service that included stints at Brown's Park, Bear Lake, Stillwater, Camas and Guam National Wildlife Refuge. He was instrumental in the protection of Camas NWR water rights, which is so crucial to the welfare of our refuge in times of drought. He retired from the service in August of 2006 and he and his wife, Sonok, had settled into Avon, Indiana for their retirement years. He was a huge asset to the USFWS and to Camas particularly, and was a dear friend who will be honored and remembered by all. A recently planted riparian tree grove will be augmented with some additional trees in memory of Gerry and named in his honor. We will miss you Gerry.



**Enjoy Spring Migrations on the Refuge!** Camas National Wildlife Refuge is open 365 days a year from dawn till dusk. Late March and April will offer clouds of snow and Canada geese, sandhill cranes, trumpetter swans and many species of diving and dabbling ducks as well as ibis and other shorebirds. Come and enjoy your refuge!

Your comments and questions about the content of the Newsletter are always welcome. Please contact Nancy Maxwell at 208-232-2784 or P. O. Box 4784, Pocatello, Idaho 83205, or e-mail to [outlier@peoplepc.com](mailto:outlier@peoplepc.com)