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Edited by Nancy Maxwell  
208-523-4344

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. Brian Wehausen, NWR Manager

**Tracy Casselman** assumed duties as the new **Project Leader for the Southeast National Wildlife Refuge Complex** on April 26, replacing Dick Munoz who retired in January. In this position, Tracy is responsible for Bear Lake, Camas, Grays Lake and Minidoka National Wildlife Refuges as well as the Oxford Slough Waterfowl Production Area. Mr. Casselman is a 16-year veteran of the Fish and Wildlife Service who started his career as Assistant Manager of the Edwin B. Forsythe NWR in New Jersey. He later became the Deputy Project Leader when Forsythe was combined with Cape May NWR. Most recently, Tracy hails from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where he spent nearly eight years as Project Leader for Seney NWR, the Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Management Area, and a number of Island Refuges in the Great Lakes.

The Casselman family includes wife, Christine, and daughters, Emma and Lillie, who arrived in Chubbuck on July 15<sup>th</sup>. They have already fallen in love with southeast Idaho. The girls have joined scouts, soccer and band. Christine is getting the family settled while substitute teaching. Everyone is enjoying the weather and outdoor opportunities of the region. Last week, Lillie, 8, remarked, "it's nice to see winter and not be in it."

Tracy looks forward to meeting all who care and want to know more about the National Wildlife Refuges of Southeast Idaho and invites you to stop by the office which is located 4425 Burley Ave in Chubbuck.

To right, Left to right, Tracy Casselman, daughter Emma, wife Christine and daughter Lillie at Scout Mountain, Caribou National Forest, just South of Pocatello, exploring the scenery of Idaho. The mountains are almost as pretty as those girls! We welcome all of the Casselmans to Southeast Idaho!

**Thanks to Farrel Downs and John and Sharon Dollar,** Camas NWR continued to prosper and serve the wildlife and the human guests for almost six months without a Refuge Manager from July through December 2009 Farrel has been a lifelong resident of the Hamer area where he has ranched and farmed and raised a family. He has also been employed at the



Camas NWR as a Maintenance Worker for almost 18 years. Farrel is a multitasking person who not only operates the necessary machinery but helps to manage the water flow, conduct inventories, manage plantings, is a skilled carpenter and mechanic, and will try to do just about anything anyone needs on the refuge. In the absence of a Refuge Manager, he and John and Sharon continued to maintain the land, road

To left, L to R, John Dollar, Farrel Downs, and Sharon Dollar, who are very much appreciated!

buildings, and services necessary for the refuge. The Dollars first came to Camas NWR as resident volunteers from Birmingham, Alabama in June of 2004 and have served over five years. John Dollar retired from a career in business computer programming and Sharon from the very specialized world of open heart surgery nursing. She says that "In one month, we sold our home, married off our last son, welcomed our first grand-baby, and quit our jobs" in pursuit of a drastic change of lifestyle,



which they found through the USFWS Volunteer program. Both have an almost spiritual appreciation of wild things and conservation efforts and both have retained their professional dedication and skills to meet refuge needs. John is an expert GPS mapper and has focused his efforts on noxious and invasive weeds, which surrounding farmers and refuges have appreciated. Sharon is now a trained heavy equipment operator as well as very proficient in everything from remodeling to tree planting, mowing, road maintenance, and like Farrel and John, will attempt any task the refuge needs. Thanks to the efforts of these three, the transition to the management of Brian Wehausen was certainly facilitated, and we thank them.

To left, John checking water and pump data at Sandhole Lake on September 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge Celebrated 100 years of Conservation!** On February 25, 1909 President Theodore Roosevelt set aside 25 miles of the Snake River upstream from the Minidoka Dam as a preserve and breeding ground for native birds, and thus created Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge. The importance of this man-made reservoir to vast numbers of migratory birds for nesting, feeding, molting, as well as a stop over during the spring and fall migrations, was recognized over 100 years ago. Today there are over 230 different species of birds that utilize the refuge for all, or a portion, of their life cycle.

On Saturday September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, Minidoka National Wildlife Refuge held its' official Centennial Celebration at Lake Walcott State Park. The weather was warm and sunny with very little wind, a perfect day for an event in the Park. Attendance for the event was great despite the hurried efforts to get the event organized, with an estimated 200 visitors coming out to enjoy the festivities. The public was invited to enjoy booths and events including face painting, wildlife origami, pinecone bird feeder construction, owl pellet dissection and a scavenger hunt. Local falconer, Stephen Buffat, was present to display three of his falcons and explain to visitors how the animals hunt and live. The Oregon Trail Muzzle Loaders group set up a large booth and tent, showing visitors tools, clothing, guns and cooking items used around 1909 when the refuge was established. Hatchet throwing was a big hit with young and old alike.

Case Hicks, a Theodore Roosevelt re-enactor from Denver, Colorado, was present throughout the day mingling with the public. Hicks remained in character regaling visitors with the stories of his, Theodore Roosevelt's, life and adventures. Prior to cutting the cake, Mr. Roosevelt gave a speech regarding the importance of protecting our natural resources and the true value behind refuges like Minidoka, as well as the importance they play in all of our lives. Hicks was



Case Hicks, of Denver, Colorado, portraying President Theodore Roosevelt for the Minidoka Centennial Celebration with the FWS Mascot, the Blue Goose. (Brian Wehausen, Camas NWR Manager!)

popular with all of the visitors, and was vital in making the event a success. Hicks also visited two of the local schools on Friday, prior to the event, as Theodore Roosevelt, telling students about his life and adventures.

Other booths and activities included the Minidoka Sheriff's Departments' boating safety display, the Idaho Fish and Game display, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service booth with their furs, tracks and posters. Hagerman National Fish Hatchery set up a booth and spoke to the public about the native fish species in Idaho, and their involvement in protecting and enhancing those resources. Ducks Unlimited was present also, talking to visitors about protecting habitat important to waterfowl and signing up kids for their Green Wings program. The MiniCassia Bassers bass fishing group was on hand also, teaching kids, and adults, how to cast various types of lures and rod and reel combinations. The Minidoka Historical Society provided a number of photos and narratives showing the construction of Minidoka Dam as well as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crew that once resided where Walcott Park currently stands.



Minidoka celebration visitors enjoy constructing pine cone bird feeders.

The photos showed many of the walls, canals and structures the CCC created that are still evident today. Complex Fire Management Officer, Lance Roberts, brought out the Complex's big Type 4 fire engine along with the Marsh Master, to show off some of the equipment that the Service utilizes for prescribed and wildland fire operations. Kids were able to climb up into both vehicles to get an idea of just how big they are, and what it might be like to operate them. Author Ken Retallic was also present to promote and update his book "Idaho Wingshooters Guide". Ken answered questions about his book and talked with visitors about bird hunting opportunities within the state of Idaho. Retired Refuge Manager, Steve Bouffard, was on site to lead interested visitors on a birding hike around the Park and talk to them about native bird species and the importance of habitat protection. One of the kid's favorite events was the arrival of "Puddles," the blue goose mascot of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Puddles mingled with the crowds, took pictures with the kids and palled around with President Roosevelt until he had to return to his flock. Towards the end of the event a drawing was held to give away donated items such as recipe books (Oregon Trail Muzzleloaders), binoculars (Eagle Optics), a rod/reel & hats (Snake River Marine), a grab bag (FWS) and one of Ken Retallic's books.

Complex staff, along with refuge volunteers and volunteers from the Idaho Youth Ranch, worked together to serve a delicious chili lunch and birthday cake to the visitors who attended the celebration. The event wrapped up around 2:30 Saturday afternoon and by Monday, Refuge Manager Jeff Krueger was fielding questions about what Minidoka Refuge had planned for next year. It's safe to say that the centennial celebration was an outstanding event. Many thanks go to those who helped organize and make this such an exciting success as well as to those who came out and celebrated with us. Finding directions and excellent maps are available at [www.fws.gov/minidoka/](http://www.fws.gov/minidoka/)

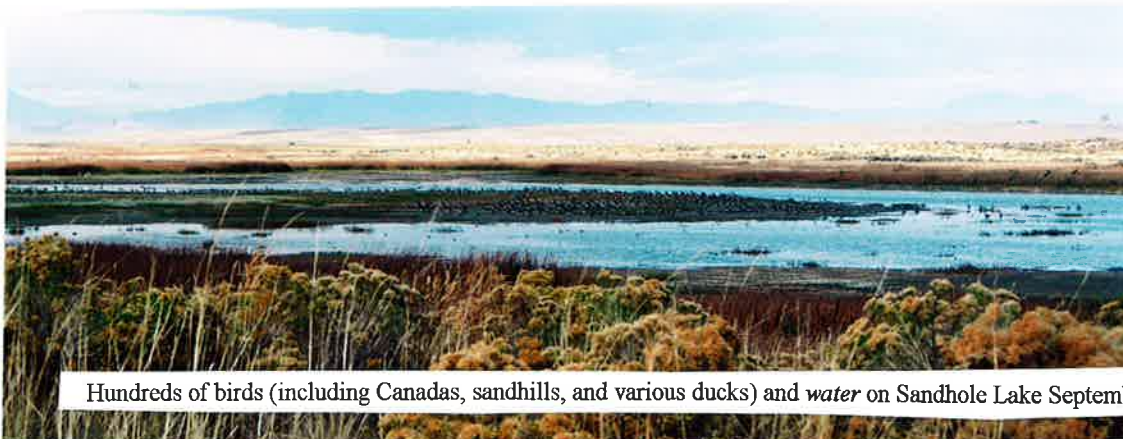


Grays Lake on July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009. Still many sandhill cranes, white faced ibis, and several other species of ducks and shorebirds.

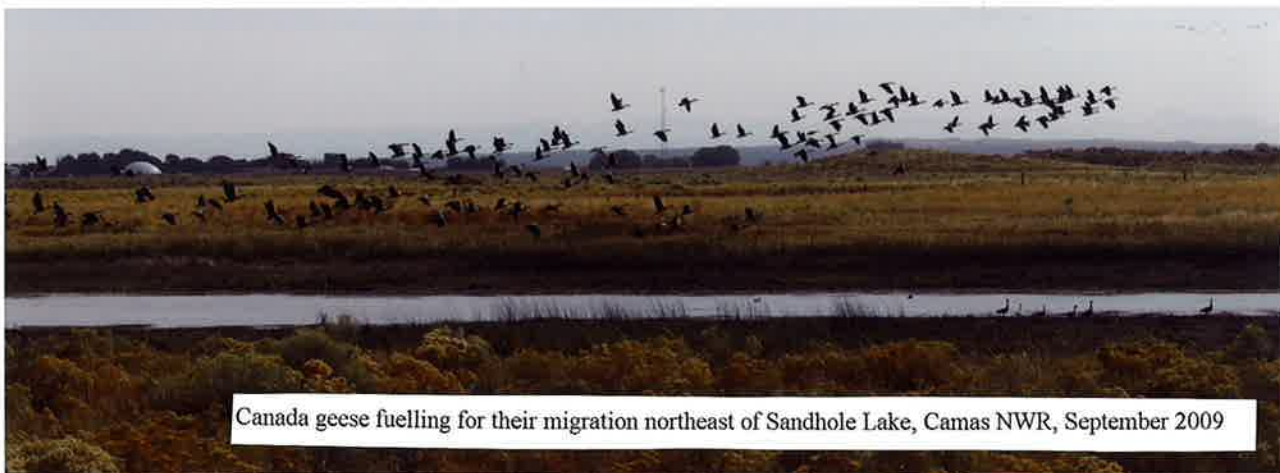
**Oxford Slough**, our **Waterfowl Reproduction Area** component of the SEINWRC in Marsh Valley, does not have an on sight manager nor a Headquarters. The WPA is fenced, with WPA signs, and although there are no staff on sight and no brochures available, it is open to foot traffic and is a magnificent hardwood bulrush marsh surrounded by mountains. Oxford is essential for large numbers of nesting waterfowl, “especially redhead, and colonial nesting birds such as Franklin’s Gulls, Forster’s and black terns, white faced Ibis, *snowy* and cattle egrets, black-crowned night-herons, and great blue herons.” Trumpeter swans are sometimes observed and “playa areas surrounding the marsh attract migrating shore birds in spring and nesting shorebirds such as black necked stilts and American avocets in summer. ([www.fws.gov/oxfordslough/](http://www.fws.gov/oxfordslough/)) The web site has excellent maps and finding directions for those who would like to explore this gorgeous wetland area. More birding information is available in the *Birder’s Guide to Idaho*.

**Change in Focus for the Camas NWR Newsletter.** The Portneuf Valley Audubon Society Board of Directors, which pays for the production and distribution of the Newsletter, has voted to expand the focus to include all of the Refuges in the Southeast Idaho NWR Complex in addition to Camas NWR. This and future Newsletters will include news, events, and goals for Grays Lake NWR, Bear Lake NWR, Minidoka NWR, Camas NWR., and Oxford Slough Waterfowl Reproduction Area. We have neglected Bear Lake NWR and Manager Annette de Knijf, due to all the personnel changes in the rest of the Complex, and hope to highlight Bear Lake and Ms. De Knijf in the Spring/ Summer edition of the Newsletter, as well as the Comprehensive Conservation Plans for all of the Refuges. Bear Lake NWR is the southernmost Refuge in the Complex, near Montpelier, Idaho, and is certainly a fabulous resource we need to emphasize and explore. Finding directions and excellent maps are available on line at [www.fws.gov/bearlake](http://www.fws.gov/bearlake) Finding directions and maps for Grays Lake and Camas are available at [www.fws.gov/grayslake/](http://www.fws.gov/grayslake/) and [www.fws.gov/Camas/](http://www.fws.gov/Camas/)

**Fall and winter at Camas!** We have been blessed with ample water throughout the summer and fall, with areas flooded into August and September which have been dry throughout the seasons in recent years. Sandhole Lake had water, and of course birds, into October with Rays Lake drying out as late as the third week of September. New green grasses and forbs in the mud flats attracted as many as 150 Elk by September 28, and pronghorn were observed west of the marsh at about the same time. White tails, mule deer, foxes and coyotes are commonly observed, as well as between 400 and 500 sand hill cranes, many of which left before a strong cold front on September 29. A porcupine migration is in progress with animals returning to heavier cover near the bunkhouse and the Headquarters from out on the marshland and uplands. Waves of migrating ducks and geese generally arrive as feeding grounds are frozen to the north, and maximum numbers of ducks can be observed in October, with Canada geese throughout the fall, and the snow geese and swans into November. Autumn is a spectacular time at Camas; the refuge is open from dawn until dusk 365 days a year. Come and enjoy your refuge!



Hundreds of birds (including Canadas, sandhills, and various ducks) and water on Sandhole Lake September 29<sup>th</sup> 2009.



Canada geese fuelling for their migration northeast of Sandhole Lake, Camas NWR, September 2009