

Produced by Portneuf Valley Audubon Society  
Friends of Camas NWR  
358 North Lincoln Avenue  
Pocatello, ID 83201

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. Mailing address is 2150 E 2350 N, Hamer, Idaho 83425 Office phone: (208) 662-5423.

Edited by Nancy Maxwell

**Progress of the Landbird Migration Research:** Dr. Jay Carlisle, affiliated with Idaho Bird Observatory, arrived with his research team at Camas NWR and began monitoring migrating birds on July 20, 2005. Their work is supported by a matching funds grant through U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and includes funding from PVAS. He has posted periodic reports of their work on Idaho Birds Linked Electronically (IBLE) [ible@yahoogroups.com](mailto:ible@yahoogroups.com), and their findings have been extremely interesting. Capturing migrants with ten mist nets, the team's priority is always the safety of the birds. Each bird is banded and data is collected on body weight, wing length, tail length, body fat, muscle condition, body and flight feather molt, and skull development, which normally indicates age. The researchers usually have the bird in hand only a few minutes and the subjects do not appear to be particularly stressed with this process, do not generally object or struggle, and are released without trauma. Perhaps the most exciting data has come from recaptures, birds they have already banded and measured. The second examination allows an assessment of fat gains while feeding and resting at Camas prior to their long journeys south to wintering grounds.

Dr. Carlisle and his team are very accommodating for visiting students and birders, and the outreach and educational importance of their work is enormous. Visiting adults and a BYU Idaho (Rexburg) Ecology class have watched this process in awe, inspiring in many a whole new appreciation of both the birds and Camas. Hamer Elementary School 1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> grade classes, Snake River Audubon Society from Idaho Falls and Portneuf Valley Audubon Society from Pocatello have trips planned to observe the research and the refuge. Although only trained researchers handle the birds, this outreach effort has also produced several volunteers who wish to assist in appropriate ways.

After twelve days of netting in July, the top ten most common species were: House Wren, Yellow Warbler, American Robin, Bullock's Oriole, Black-headed Grosbeak, Warbling Vireo, American Goldfinch, Lazuli Bunting, Rufous Hummingbird, and Western Tanager. Other migrants included Dusky, Least, Willow, and "Western" Flycatchers as well as Calliope Hummingbirds. The first Wilson's and Townsend's Warblers arrived by early August. Interesting observations included Cassin's Finch, Steller's Jay, Dark-eyed Junco, Cassin's Vireo, Hermit Thrush and Canyon Wren. A Brown Thrasher was observed several times, not netted.

By mid August, migration at Camas was accelerating, witnessed by the capture of 38 Wilson's Warblers on August 10 and 11. The research team felt that migration for most species would be well under way by the last ten days of August and into September.

Dr. Carlisle reported that the team captured their first Wilson's Warbler on August 2, and on August 12 captured 109 Wilson's Warblers in addition to 31 other migrants on that day. They regularly caught MacGillivray's and Yellow Warblers as well as Willow Flycatchers. On August 17<sup>th</sup> they banded their 10<sup>th</sup> Northern Waterthrush, 3<sup>rd</sup> American Redstart, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Veery of the season, and three Hammond's Flycatchers. A Black and White Warbler on August 13, the elusive Brown Thrasher, a Blackpoll Warbler and an immature male Rose Breasted Grosbeak on August 28, and perhaps the most exciting find to date, a juvenile Connecticut Warbler on August 30, all created excitement and important data for the study.

On September 1, 2005 Dr. Carlisle posted the following summary of the August observations. "As we get set to begin the most exciting month of autumn songbird migration, I figured I'd give an update re: what we've been seeing at the wooded area around Headquarters at Camas NWR up through August.





Our banding totals for the month included just over 1800 migrants over 1050 of which were Wilson's Warblers alone!! Other birds that have been common during late August have included Orange-crowned, Yellow, & MacGillivray's Warblers and several flycatchers (including pewees as well as Willow - the most numerous empidonax, Dusky, Hammond's, and Cordilleran Flycatchers). Several species are just starting to arrive, including RC Kinglets, WC Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, thrushes, Sharp-shinned Hawks, and Lincoln's Sparrows. Exciting for me is that we've banded 18 waterthrushes, 7 redstarts, and 4 RE Vireos (all of these species are much harder to come by near Boise). Also exciting is that we're gathering some valuable information on "stopover" at Camas as it appears that pretty good numbers of birds are staying on for a couple days or more for laying on fat. For instance, a few days ago we recaptured 34 individuals that had stayed on at least 1 day (& often more). Lastly, the rarities. For years I've heard about how well Camas serves as a migrant trap and so far we're certainly not disappointed ... and Sept. is yet to come. The highlight has to be the Connecticut Warbler captured on 8/30 - a possible first state record. Other goodies have included the Black & White



Warbler seen on Aug 13, a Blackpoll seen Aug 28, 2 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks (28 & 30 Aug), a reported Magnolia Warbler, and a possible Blackburnian."

The research team plans to continue their data collection through September, and has encouraged anyone to come and observe the process and to enjoy Camas. They have been extraordinarily accommodating to guests considering the pace of activities related to gathering and recording data for 150 birds a day! Dr. Carlisle will continue to post summaries of their observations on IBLE and plans to draw some general conclusions about their observations when the migration data is complete, with long-term plans to publish data in a peer reviewed journal. Potentially this research over time would allow correlations with available food sources, weather conditions, and other variables the refuge might manipulate to enhance the nutrition for migrating birds. Very exciting possibilities!

**The Continental Divide Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA)** is a partnership of many organizations and private landowners in Clark, Jefferson, Butte and Lemhi Counties designed to address problems with noxious and invasive weeds in seven Management Zones: Birch Creek, Crooked Creek, Medicine Lodge Creek, Beaver Creek, Camas Creek, Sheridan Creek and Mud Lake. Those zones are designed to fit natural riparian ecosystems, and much cooperation is required of member entities. Each zone has established target priorities, and communication between partners is essential and working well. The mission for CWMA is to "bring together all those responsible for weed control within the boundaries of the CWMA to develop common weed control management objectives; to coordinate efforts along logical geographical boundaries based on similar land types, use patterns and problem species; to prevent the introduction, reproduction and spread of designated noxious weeds and invasive exotic plants into and within the entire CWMA; and to educate land managers, both public and private, and the general public about the invasive exotic plant problem and the efforts to control it." The goals of CWMA include the development of a map database containing the location and other information about all noxious weed infestations using GPS/GIS technology. John Dollar, resident volunteer at Camas NWR, has made a very significant contribution to that effort and has mapped noxious weed infestations and treatments at Camas and most of the surrounding farms as well as more remote sites within CWMA. Two other goals involve the establishment of noxious/invasive weed free corridors in all riparian areas and right of ways, and to strive to rehabilitate former infestation sites with native plant species where appropriate. Camas NWR has made major contributions to those goals with its attention to restoration of native plants to the Camas Creek corridor, including hundreds of native trees.

Staff has implemented major efforts to eradicate Russian Knapweed on the refuge and has consulted with surrounding farmers and has physically implemented eradication efforts for neighbors. Camas staff is coordinating a joint Bunker Hill Spray Day for October 6 when several agencies and neighboring landowners are encouraged to assist with the control of Russian Knapweed by applying Plateau herbicide on private lands on and adjacent to the refuge's south boundary.

Public education efforts are made with each intervention and presentation by Camas staff. Many casual outdoor enthusiasts, and even farming community residents, haven't really considered the dangers attached to invasive noxious weeds. All plants compete for resources just as do animals. When an introduced weed is more aggressive than a native plant in using or adapting to available resources (water, nutrients, sunlight), the native plants may be overwhelmed, indeed, die out. That has a ripple effect for the native wildlife which may depend on those plants, from invertebrates to browsers. Some important pollinators require very specific host plants in order to reproduce successfully, and if the plants disappear, so do the pollinators. While some noxious weeds may appear superficially "pretty," the toll they take in the loss of native plants, which are essential to the ecosystem, can be devastating. Camas NWR used \$8,328 of herbicide to treat 350 acres for Russian Knapweed in 2004 and monitors the effectiveness of various treatment strategies. Several other weed species were also treated; however, Russian Knapweed was by far the most extensive. Each of the Management Zones in CWMA has distinct problems and priorities, goals, and objectives. The organization is keeping communication and cooperation at the



forefront in a war on noxious invaders. Camas NWR staff and activities are contributing to the success of not only Camas efforts, but those of neighboring partners. Kieth A. Bramwell (208-374-5309) of Dubois is Chairman of the Continental Divide CWMA. He has retired from his position as Extension Educator for Clark County. Prior to his retirement from the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System, he prepared a comprehensive document describing the structure and goals of CWMA for all of the Management Areas. He would welcome any and all questions about the Continental Divide Cooperative Weed Management Area.

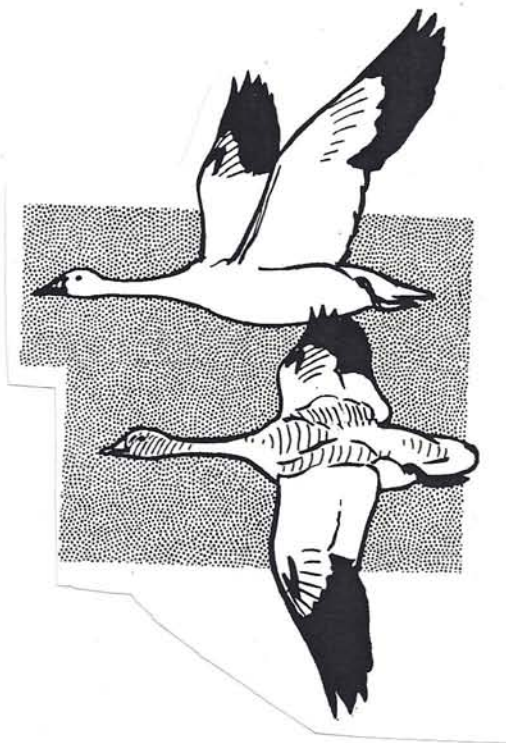
**Water on the Refuge:** Water is the lifeblood of any wetland. Most historic wetlands have suffered due to man's interruption or diversion of ancient water sources. In Idaho, irrigation for farming has allowed the growth of a very important industry, but diversion of water for that purpose would have deprived Camas and other historic wetland sites of essential water had not some of these crucially important wetlands been legally protected. When Camas became a part of the National Refuge System in 1938, the original water rights for this land were protected. Camas NWR receives water from Camas Creek and from nine wells on site. Camas has water rights for a volume of water from Camas Creek, and from the wells. Flow rates for the Creek, and water levels for the wells must be constantly monitored, with data reported to the Fish and Wildlife Service and Idaho Department of Water Resources. Sid Brown has monitored Camas NWR water for 30 years, and has a wealth of historic perspectives regarding the lifeblood of the wetland.

All staff members have participated in monitoring and controlling the water, with an enormous amount of man hours devoted to daily control of water levels during the breeding season to assure that waterfowl nests are not left high and dry or flooded out. Great care and planning are required in order to assure that areas flooded at the beginning of nesting can be maintained at target levels during the brooding and fledging stages. Other areas are flooded or drained to accommodate Moist Soil Management natural plantings of wildlife food sources. Water management is a dynamic and changing concern which varies with weather, season, and land use. Without protection and skilled manipulation of water, the wetland would wither and die, becoming as arid as adjacent desert areas.

**Camas NWR Staff:** Sid Brown, Heavy Equipment Operator with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for Camas NWR, has watched over this refuge for 31 years and six months. He is scheduled to retire the end of September, and the loss of his experience and knowledge will be painful for the refuge, but is a very well earned reward for him. He has lived, worked, and ranched in this area all his life, raised a family and established a beautiful home and property on Medicine Creek where we hope he enjoys leisure days with his lovely wife and family. He will be sorely missed, but congratulations and very best wishes are also heartfelt by all who have worked with him at the Refuge.

Farrel Downs has worked with the refuge for 13 years, is a lifelong resident of the area, has raised a family, ranched and farmed, and rumor has it that Farrel can fix anything. He is technically in maintenance, but his skills have at times demonstrated his abilities as a mechanic, a carpenter, a biologist, an educator and a human relations representative for the refuge. He has assumed responsibility for much of the noxious weed control, demonstrated those skills for neighboring farmers, accounted for goslings, spotted rare birds, and helped with the orientation and training of volunteers. Everyone is very grateful for the innovation and creativity Farrel brings to problem solving and we are so grateful that he is not yet retiring!

Rob Larrañaga has been Refuge Manager for Camas NWR since January of 2004. Rob grew up in New Mexico, notes that his ancestors originated in Mexico and the Basque culture in Spain. He has loved the outdoors and wild things all his life, attended Eastern New Mexico University in their Wildlife and Fisheries program, which opened the door to a career with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Perhaps the most important event of his career at Eastern New Mexico University was an introduction to his lovely wife Leslie, whom he says is as devoted to the refuges and the people involved in the refuge system as he is. He started his career with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1991 at Anahuac NWR in Southeast Texas, near Houston. He has worked on 5 National Wildlife Refuges and one Ecological Services Office, most recently as Deputy Project Leader, Columbia National Wildlife Refuge, Othello, WA. The Service has required many moves, and Rob says Leslie has adjusted to changing communities and finding new friends and roles with grace and flexibility. Although a professional speech pathologist, Leslie now is a full time homemaker, refuge welcoming committee, and mother of two





robust boys, Brandon and A. J. She is very active in their school and community activities, and is always willing to provide hospitality and nourishment for visiting staff at the refuge. Rob is a federally commissioned law enforcement officer, a nationally certified wildland firefighter, and is active in outreach and education programs. He says collaboration with many other agencies and educational efforts with diverse audiences, as well as work with the volunteers who contribute so much at the refuge, has been a highlight of his career. Numerous people have offered praise for his efforts with other Hamer and area organizations and his enthusiasm about the achievement and merits of others.

**Dick Munoz** is the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Project Leader for the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex, based in Pocatello, and has oversight for five units, Oxford Slough near Preston, Bear Lake NWR, Grays Lake NWR, Minidoka NWR, and Camas NWR. Dick has been with the USFWS since 1977, 28 years and nine months, and has had a multitude of experiences and roles with the Service. He notes that each of the units he currently supervises has unique assets and complex problems of its own, states that he very much enjoys the diversity of challenges, has wonderful skilled refuge managers, and says that all of the refuges are taking a long look at the benefits of the volunteer program since it has contributed so much to Camas. Rob and others have expressed gratitude for Dick's oversight and guidance and value his style of supervision very much.



**Anticipated Fall Schedule:** Migration schedules for ducks and geese are prompted by freezing conditions in the north. When food sources freeze, the birds depart for open water and available food. Ducks arrive from August (teal) through November, and since the geese are often the last to leave the frozen north, some arrive when Camas is frozen over and may stop at Mud Lake or American Falls Reservoir. The largest numbers and varieties of ducks and geese can usually be observed at Camas in late October. The refuge is often full of spectacular clouds of birds. Approximately 500 sandhill cranes will peak on Camas in late September with over 350 already utilizing receding water levels in Ray's and Sandhole Lakes. This is also a prime area to witness the initiation of fall via the bugling of bull elk. Observation of white-tailed bucks in rutting behavior is best during the Thanksgiving holiday, allowing for excellent photo opportunities. Contact the Refuge office regarding fall bird hunting opportunities.

**The Winter Newsletter** issue will look at the big game mammals found on the refuge, birds that winter on Camas, planned projects and needs for Spring, winter recreational activities and a summary of Dr. Carlisle's research efforts.

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 4787, Pocatello, ID 83205, or e-mail to [outlier@peoplepc.com](mailto:outlier@peoplepc.com)

