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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. Brian Wehausen, NWR Manager

We welcome new Southeast Idaho Refuge Complex Leaders! Annette De Knijf joined the Complex in October of 2007 as Bear Lake NWR Manager, coming to us from the Washington Maritime Refuge Complex System on the coast of Washington State. When Rob Larrañaga accepted a transfer from Camas NWR to the New Mexico Las Vegas National Wildlife Refuge Project Leader post in June of 2008, Camas NWR, Minidoka NWR, and Gray's Lake NWR were all without refuge managers due to retirements and transfers. We want to introduce three new Refuge Managers in this issue of the Newsletter, and will introduce the new Complex Project Leader, Tracy Casselman, replacing Dick Munoz who retired in January, in the summer issue. These new USFWS individuals bring a wealth of diverse experience and knowledge to our South East Idaho Complex, and we welcome all of them.

Brian Wehausen has recently assumed the duties of **Refuge Manager for Camas NWR**. Brian was born and raised in Northeastern Wisconsin on the shores of Lake Michigan. He received a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point and has nearly fourteen years experience with government wildlife agencies, most of them with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Brian and his family have moved to Camas from Devils Lake, North Dakota. Brian, his wife Bonnie, and two sons Andrew (6) and Taylor (5) enjoy hiking, hunting and fishing, as well as a wide variety of sports, especially hockey, which the boys have played for the last two years. Bonnie attended the University of Idaho and is familiar with our area. All are looking forward to the mountains and streams and rivers of Idaho as well as the new Hamer community and exploring area Wildlife Management Areas, Refuges, the lakes, high desert and mountains. Brian's experience with managing the North Dakota pothole waterfowl breeding areas and migrations will surely benefit our efforts with Camas NWR. We are delighted to welcome Brian and his family! To right, Brian at the refuge Headquarters.



Bill Smith, left, is the new **Refuge Manager for Grays Lake NWR**, a 22,000 acre hardstem bulrush marsh north of Soda Springs, which attracts large numbers of ducks, sandhill cranes, Canada geese and trumpeter swans, among other shorebirds and waterfowl. Grays Lake is a crucial nesting area for many species as well as an important migratory link in the Pacific Flyway. In cooperation with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Grays Lake's uniqueness as prime crane habitat made the refuge a choice for the USFWS to try to boost the population of endangered whooping cranes, a close cousin of the sandhill crane. Waterfowl banding is done each year at Grays Lake in cooperation with Idaho Fish and Game, and like Camas, control of invasive weeds and water management are crucial issues. (<http://www.fws.gov/grayslake/>)

Bill graduated from Southern Illinois University-Carbondale with a BS in Zoology/Wildlife Management and has worked as a biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Missouri Department of Conservation. He worked at Grays Lake with USFWS as the refuge's biological technician from 1998-2002, before taking a wildlife biologist position with the U. S. Bureau of Land Management in Nevada, managing a 5 million acre Resource Area of Great Basin and Mojave Desert habitats. He returned to Idaho in September 2008 from Honolulu Hawaii where he worked with USFWS as the refuge manager for Palmyra Atoll NWR within the Pacific Remotes NWR Complex. His diverse professional interests have centered on wetland and riparian ecosystems, and leisure interests include woodworking, hunting and fishing, hiking, backpacking, camping, canoeing, and gardening. Bill is engaged to another FWS biologist, whom he met while previously at Gray's lake, Adonia Henry, who is relocating to Idaho for an August wedding! Welcome and congratulations to both, we're pleased to see you return!

Jeffrey Krueger has assumed duties as **Manager of Minidoka NWR** and has settled in with wife Amy, a paramedic and EKG technician who shares Jeff's love of outdoor activities and life in the refuge system. Jeff grew up in Wisconsin and attended the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point where he graduated in 1996 with a B.S. in Wildlife Management and Biology. He worked with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources monitoring wildlife and conducting surveys, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association restoring wetlands, and as a seasonal employee with USFWS assisting the refuge biologist with Massasauga Rattlesnake research. He worked with the National Park Service at Everglades National Park in 1998 as a Motor Equipment Operator, and after eighteen months transferred to North Dakota Arrowwood National Wildlife Refuge and Complex where he served as a maintenance worker for roads, buildings,

buildings, equipment, and water control structures. He performed native prairie restoration work, prescribed and wildfire firefighting duties and numerous biological surveys for four years, and then transferred to Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in central Iowa where he worked as a biological sciences technician for over five years performing tall grass



prairie restoration work, prescribed and wildfire firefighting duties, heavy equipment operation and maintenance coordination of the YCC program and the pesticide management program. Jeff brings to Minidoka a very diverse range of experience and skills and is eager to explore a very different high desert/lava arid habitat and the mountains of Idaho.

Minidoka NWR includes 80 miles of shoreline around Lake Walcott, from Minidoka Dam, which is not on the refuge, upstream for about 25 miles. About half of the Refuge's acreage is open water and wetlands; the rest of the refuge is low, rolling uplands covered by sagebrush, grasses, and isolated juniper patches among outcrops of basalt. Undisturbed habitats are critical to colonial nesting birds, especially American White Pelicans and molting waterfowl. Nowhere else in southeastern Idaho can such habitat be found in this quality or quantity.... These areas support the large numbers of molting geese and ducks that can exceed 100,000 birds during late summer and early fall. The aquatic plant beds also support large numbers of warm water and rough fish, which in turn provide food for colonial nesting bird species, and high populations of river otters and mink. The upland habitats support a variety of shrub-steppe and grassland bird and mammal species. The basalt lava flows provide habitat for some of the more diverse reptile faunas in Idaho. (<http://www.fws.gov/minidoka/>) We welcome Jeff and Amy and look forward to enjoying Minidoka under Jeff's management! Above left, Jeff Krueger, Minidoka NWR Manager, and Ed Ryan, Refuge Maintenance worker.

Resident volunteers John and Sharon Dollar were on the refuge most of the winter and delayed their welcome of a new grandchild to be of assistance with the water control devices if needed with the spring thaw. They plan to return in June, and are very much appreciated as always.

National Migratory Bird Day was celebrated on the refuge on May 9th, and groups from the Forest Service, Idaho Fish and Game, the Bureau of Land Management, Snake River and Portneuf Valley Audubon Societies, Brian Wehausen, Refuge Manager, and our new Southeast Idaho Refuge Complex Project Manager, Tracy Casselman, welcomed visitors on the refuge. We want to thank all of these participants for their involvement. It was a pleasant event for all who were able to enjoy the weather and the wildlife on Camas NWR.

Advocacy for the Refuge System in Washington!! Because of the Portneuf Valley Audubon Society's involvement at Camas NWR with contributions of labor, funding for projects on the refuge, and the *Newsletter*, Dave Mead, President of PVAS, and Chuck Trost, founder of this chapter and field trip chair, were invited to join over 450 Friends of the Refuge volunteers to lobby our representatives in congress for an increase in the refuge budgets for next year. Refuge budgets have been slashed by over 30% in the last several years and they can't afford to replace biologists, maintenance personnel, continue invasive weed control. The meeting was held from February 21-25 and was sponsored by the non-profit National Wildlife Refuge Association. Twenty-two environmental groups also were sponsors, under the acronym of C.A.R.E. (Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement). National Audubon Society was one of them, and the National Rifle Association was also a sponsor. This really got our representative's attention.

In addition to attending two NRWA meetings with the staff of Congressional Committees, -Dave and Chuck also met twice with Senator Crapo. They also met with Representative Mike Simpson's Chief of Staff, Lindsay Slater, and had the opportunity to speak with Representative Walt Minnick, our only Idaho Democrat, at the CARE/FWS Hill Reception. At every opportunity they impressed the representatives with the dire needs of our refuges, and how concerned PVAS has been for Camas NWR. They calculated that over the past four years PVAS has contributed \$6380

in cash and over 500 volunteer hours to help build trail, produce the *Newsletter*, and rehabilitate the dieing riparian vegetation at the refuge. This doesn't count the numerous hours of bird banding at the refuge over the last four seasons at Camas. Dave and Chuck felt they had excellent interactions with our representatives and believe the effort was highly effective. We hope this group effort results in an increase in NWR funding next year, and were pleased with the value our legislators seem to place on Camas National Wildlife Refuge and the Southeast Idaho Complex.



Above left to right, Dave Mead, President of the Portneuf Valley Audubon Society Chapter, Senator Mike Crapo, and Chuck Trost, Ph.D, Professor Emeritus, Department of Biological Sciences, Idaho State University, and founder of the PVAS Chapter and field trip Chairman.

Spring 2009 on Camas! Due to ample snow pack in the Camas and Beaver Creek drainage areas, when water finally arrived on April 14th, the flow was steady and sufficient to flood the nesting and migration feeding areas Brian hoped to use for migrating waterfowl. Some pumping began on March 12th from Camas wells in anticipation of snow geese, swans and other waterfowl we knew were headed north. As of mid May, Spring Pond, Big pond, Redhead pond, Avocet Pond, and Toomey Pond are all at target goals for maximum water levels. Center Pond has ample water in the north part of the marsh and is still slowing flooding; we are adding water to Two-way Pond. Ray's Lake has fluctuated somewhat with creek flows but has a good supply of water and has added some water to Mallard Slough and to Sandhole Lake. Since there is still snow in the high country, we hope the flows of Camas Creek will continue well into summer.

The snow geese presence was short lived, but Brian estimated between 10,000 and 15,000 roosted on Sandhole Lake and a large number also roosted on Big Pond as we had ample water to support them. The sand hills numbered in the average range for Camas, 100 to 150, and at least 12 remained, perhaps nesting, as of May 12th. A few trumpeter swans usually remain to nest as well and may be hidden out there in the lush cover. Large numbers of pintails, redheads,

shovelers, mallards, ruddy ducks, scaup, many bufflehead and eared grebes, among other waterfowl, were observed in transit, refueling at Camas for continued journeys north. Brian observed an exotic black swan with a large group of Tundra's, just off the refuge, and spotted a neck collared Tundra swan on Sandhole Lake that was banded in July of 2008 as an adult male on the Kobuk River Delta near Kotzebue Sound in Northwest Alaska. The cattails and rushes are full of yellow headed and red winged blackbirds, several species of sparrows and wrens, and Harriers are plentiful in beautiful breeding plumage. On May 9th a small group of white tail deer, two red foxes, and three coyotes were observed, and Brian Wehausen and Tracy Casselman also saw 24 elk cows, that Tracy observed again on May 20th. On May 16th, both a short-eared owl and a saw-whet owl were seen, as well as this majestic moose! The refuge is open from dawn until dusk seven days a week 365 days a year. Come and enjoy your National Wildlife Refuge in the spring!



Your comments and/or questions about the Newsletter are always welcome. Please contact Nancy Maxwell at 208-523-4344 or outlier1@yahoo.com