

January 19, 2016



# WINGTIPS

Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

## Malheur NWR, the Stamp, and Us



The beauty of Malheur NWR in late summer.  
Photo: Oregon Historical County Records

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## A Statement from the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

The seizure of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in Oregon by a group of armed occupiers is now into its third week. We would have hoped that by now the confrontation would be over, resolved in a peaceful fashion, with the armed insurrectionists gone and the refuge back to fulfilling its role managing the land for wildlife and making this natural treasure accessible to the American public.

No such luck.

Instead, the drama continues; the occupiers are emboldened; the locals' wishes are ignored, and the American public is locked out.

This is a great disappointment and a great injustice. These outlaws are keeping the American people from enjoying the refuge and are keeping land-managers and professional conservationists from doing important work. That work means appropriately caring for the resource, to benefit wildlife and the public, for today and tomorrow.



Early conservationists, Herman Bohlman (boat) and William Flinley (camera) documenting the wonders of Malheur Lake in 1908.  
Photo: Audubon Society of Portland

This seizure is not what visionary conservationists would have imagined 108 years ago when they [convinced President Theodore Roosevelt](#) to establish the refuge. Today, the 187,000+-acre refuge accounts for some of the most important bird and wildlife habitat in the region and on the Pacific Flyway. In fact, Malheur also represents a classic success story in the area of true cooperation and regional consensus-building. In 2013, the refuge adopted a long-term management plan ([Comprehensive Conservation Plan](#)) through a creative and inclusive process that brought together local communities, hunting and conservation groups, tribes, government

entities, and other stakeholders to hammer out a strategy for wise management, neighborly-interests, and serious wetland restoration.

If these lawless out-of-state occupiers wanted to seize a federal property that represented bad management and the dismissal of local interests, they actually [picked the wrong place](#).

Unfortunately, much of the background on the refuge, its purpose, its origin and growth, and its conservation value are being lost in the commotion. Sometimes, the media confuses the national wildlife refuge with federal BLM lands or even national parks.

This is of some concern to the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp. The role of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, often called the Duck Stamp, has been instrumental in securing some of the most valuable habitat at Malheur NWR. A major portion of the refuge was acquired through [investment of Duck Stamp dollars](#), put into the federal Migratory Bird Conservation Fund (MBCF). About 48,000 of the current 187,000+ acres of the refuge have been secured via MBCF/Stamp dollars, through willing sellers. That's just over a quarter (25.8%) of the refuge.

This means that those millions of Americans who have bought the Duck Stamp in the past or today - be they waterfowl or other hunters, birdwatchers, stamp collectors, anglers, wildlife photographers, environmental educators, refuge friends group members, or others - have either

already played a role in securing Malheur or have a special and personal stake in making sure that their current "investment," through the stamp, is secure.

Today, the seizure at Malheur presents a challenge to the very concept of government land-stewardship in America, and it is an attack on our natural heritage and on open access to our lands.

Simply put, attempts to seize any part of the refuge system are attempts to take property away from the American people. That effort is not simply the agenda of a small group of armed extremists. In the past few years, state and federal lawmakers across the American West have proposed laws to take over federal lands inside their states. Instead of making federal land management smarter, these misbegotten efforts undermine the conservation-and-access rationale for these lands, be they national wildlife refuges, forests, parks, or BLM lands. Such moves could ultimately put priceless landscapes on the auction block, sold off with some weak justification linked to "deficit reduction." The extremists

in Oregon, in fact, may be creating the political and social space for these sorts of proposals to sound more "reasonable."

Back in Oregon, the brazen land grab must be brought to a close, safely and quickly. The illegal occupation needs to end, and the armed occupiers should be brought to justice. Most importantly, however, the case needs to be made to the American public over how these treasured landscapes got to be secured for the American public in the first place, including the role of the Duck Stamp, and why modern conservation management of our federal lands is so vital for Americans today and for those Americans who will follow us.



American Avocet with chicks at Malheur NWR.  
Photo: Barbara Wheeler/USFWS

## One simple thing to do...

We encourage you to send letters to your members of Congress on the Malheur situation. A suggested message can be edited and altered. You can *use your own words* through this link available from the [National Wildlife Refuge Association](#).

## Connect with the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp

The Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp is an independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to two fundamental goals:

- \* To increase promotional and educational efforts among various target audiences concerning the stamp and the National Wildlife Refuge system.
- \* To increase the regular, voluntary purchase of the stamp among hunters and non-hunters alike.

Membership is annual, corresponding to the year of validity for the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (Duck Stamp), namely from the beginning of July to the end of the following June. Our "Regular Friend" fee is modest, only \$15.

You can access a secure online form to join the Friends - or to make a contribution - [via Razoo](#). Or you can access a simple mail-in membership form [here](#).

When you join our Friends you will receive a stamp-holder, sticker, and/or other supporting material (as supplies last). You can use these to "spread the word" about the stamp to your colleagues and co-workers.



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