



Migrations



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Summer 2009



A story about the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge | Produced by Jeff Hogan | Narrated by Peter Coyote | Photos courtesy of Cary Crumhall

'Wings of Thunder' gets rave reviews

By Sarah Yates

Hollywood it wasn't, but close. Red carpet. String ensemble. Swan ice sculpture. Bistro tables. Quiche. Stemmed glasses. Important people. Applause.

"Wings of Thunder," a portrait of life on the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, had its premiere screening Friday evening, June 19, to an entranced crowd of benefactors, bird lovers and refuge supporters gathered in the James V. Hansen Wildlife Education Center.

Filmed by award-winning producer and cinematographer Jeff Hogan, the film showcases the abundance, beauty and fragility of what is often called the "crown jewel" of the US Fish & Wildlife Service in stunning photography and original music, with narration by talented actor Peter Coyote.

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SPRING 2009

Editor
Sarah Yates

Contributors

Diane Countryman
Megan Stewart
Clint Wirick
Betsy Beneke
Jim Dowling
Jerrye Stillman

‘Wings’ continued..

As viewers left the auditorium, their one-word responses told the story: stunning, breathtaking, amazing, fantastic, wonderful, brilliant, enlightening, neat -- all pronounced in tones that begged for exclamation points!

Most of those superlatives were aimed at the photographic wonders performed by Hogan, but also appreciation of the often poetic script and a musical score that not only soared with bird flight but reflected seasons and quiet moments on the water, as well.

Viewers were entranced by the mating dance of western and Clark’s grebes set to romantic music, the quiet blink of the eye of a nesting avocet, a gathering of huge beaks in a convocation of pelicans, bald eagles devouring

In order to chronicle a year of changing seasons, Hogan spent countless hours in the marshes waiting for the right moments, the perfect light, the changing weather and a host of other factors. Aerials were shot from planes and a hot air balloon. Eighteen hours of film were edited to just under one-half hour, a task akin to having to give up some of one’s children.

The film title comes from an 1843 journal entry by explorer John C. Fremont describing Bear



Lloyd Gunther, former Refuge Manager, chats with Friends of the Refuge President Jon Bunderson at the reception.



Cinematographer Jeff Hogan and Al Trout , producer, share a moment during the reception preceding the film premiere. All reception photos credited to Megan Stewart

River Bay “animated with multitudes of waterfowl...rising for the space of a mile...with noise like distant thunder.”

In addition to breathtaking vistas and close-ups of birds, the film relates the story of the loss of much of that pre-pioneer habitat and includes historic photos of restoring the wetland environment after establishment of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in 1928.

Produced by Friends of the Refuge, “Wings of Thunder” culminated three years of effort spearheaded by the volunteer efforts of Al Trout, retired

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'Wings' continued..

manager. Troy Beauchamp served as editor assisted by Becca Scott. The script was written by Al Trout, Hal Crimmel and Martha Moench, with the original score composed by Mark Emery and Tracy Collins.



Brigham City Mayor Lou Ann Christensen visits with Leigh von der Esch, Director of the Utah Office of Tourism & Film.

of Refuges, Brigham City Mayor Lou Ann Christensen, former Box Elder County Commissioner Clark Davis, Evan Hirsche, president of the National Wildlife Refuge Association, and Leigh von der Esch, Director, Utah Office of Tourism and Film.

Final speaker was Al Trout, the man behind both the Refuge restoration and much of the film. Opening with Fremont's journal notation, he concluded with his own notes, "The story does not end here. We have a responsibility to pass on this Eden of wildlife."

Expressing concern that children are growing up apart from nature, Trout emphasized that it is hoped this film will be part of a larger movement to "reconnect and educate an entire nation of children to God's creation" so future generations can "benefit from the legacy we have so richly been blessed with".



Volunteer Tom Walker and Bob Valentine, Friends of the Refuge board member, chat at the reception.

A hush came over the crowd as "Wings of Thunder" finally lit up the screen as the concluding feature of an evening of celebration. Guests had mingled over food and drinks, then moved to the auditorium for a series of speeches by various dignitaries and representatives of partnering agencies.

Emcee Bob Valentine opened with the story of the restoration of the flood-decimated Refuge, beginning in the late 1980s under direction of Al Trout. Three of the original volunteers - Bob Ebeling, Tom Walker and Quinn Eskelsen -- were introduced.

Speakers included former US Representative James V. Hansen, Rick Coleman, US Fish and Wildlife Direct-

The public viewed the film all day Saturday at the Wildlife Education Center, leaving the auditorium with much the same comments as those who attended the Friday night premiere.

Avocet Corner Bookstore

'Wings of Thunder' DVD \$10
(sales support environmental education)

New Item! Pocket Naturalist Bird Guide for Bear River Refuge....\$5.95

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INQUISITIVE WEASEL photo by Jerrye Stillman

Amateur Photo Contest 2009

Capture the essence of Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge on film! Share your images with others by entering the Refuge's 2nd Annual Amateur Photo Contest. Up to three entries per person may be submitted. Entries must be received by August 31.

All entries must be photographs taken at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge and may be submitted in these six categories: Bird Life, Other Wildlife, Plant Life, Scenic, Creative Nature, Recreation and/or Education. Winners will be announced during National Wildlife Refuge Week in October, with cash prizes awarded in each category.

For more information, contact the BRMBR, 2155 West Forest Street, Brigham City, UT 84302, (435) 723-5887, or email: bearriver@fws.gov. Rules and entry form can also be found on the website at: <http://bearriver.fws.gov>.

Critter Corner

Long-tailed Weasel

Mustelidae frenata

**By Clint Wirick
USFWS bio-tech**

The long-tailed weasel belongs to one of the largest families of carnivores, the *mustelidae* family. This family includes animals like mink, badgers, raccoons, weasels, and otters.

Distribution

The long-tailed weasel is common throughout Utah, and most of the United States. Its range also stretches into portions of Canada, Mexico, and South America.

Identification

The long-tailed weasel has a small head and a long thin body with short legs. It has brown fur on the upper half of its body with a white to yellow under belly and a black-tipped tail. In its Northern distributions its fur turns to white in the winter.

Diet

The long-tailed weasel is a carnivore, meaning it mainly eats meat. This little mammal has a high rate of metabolism and can eat up to 40% of its own body weight on a daily basis. Most of its diet is made up of other small mammals such as mice, voles, gophers and the occasional bird or insect. Its long thin body allows it to get into most any burrow or hiding spot to hunt and retrieve prey.

Behavior

The long-tailed weasel is a solitary animal that often makes its home in abandoned burrows of other small mammals or under wood piles and rock piles. It is most active during the nighttime hours but is also active during the day. It can live in all types of habitat but is usually not too far from water. At the Refuge visitors can often spot long-tailed weasels running along dikes and roadsides.

Exhibit features Dowling photos

**A self-portrait
By Jim Dowling**

Drop by and enjoy photos by Jim Dowling on exhibit in the Wildlife Education Center classrooms for the remainder of this summer.

A native of Indianapolis, Indiana, Dowling traveled to Utah in 1973 to attend Utah State University and study wildlife biology.

He quickly gained an affinity for Utah's panoramically diverse geography and abundant wildlife and has called Utah home ever since.

Over the past 36 years his outdoor interests and hobbies have included search and rescue, small stream fly fishing, back packing, hiking and of course, birding.

Jim's birding excursions take in the breadth of Utah from Cache Valley to Southern Utah, extend down into Central Mexico and reach as far north as Alaska.

Additionally, he has held a long time interest in photography and thought it "natural" to intertwine it with his passion for birding.

The pictures displayed in the classroom are Jim's first public showing and represent a small sample of countless hours in the wilderness and the digital dark room.

Jim currently resides in Salt Lake City with his wife and two dogs.

When he is not birding, he volunteers with Hawk Watch International and is an active member of The Audubon Society.



Jim Dowling's favorite moments are spent photographing wildlife in Utah, his adopted home state.

BEHS donates bird collection

Box Elder High School has donated its biology class bird specimens to the Bear River Refuge education program.

The specimens range in size from a tundra swan to a black necked stilt chick, and are mostly native species. The collection was assembled over many years by the school.

"They will be very helpful to our education program," said Kathi Stopher, FWS Instructional Systems Specialist.

A taxidermist volunteer is now being sought to clean and refurbish the specimens. Anyone interested in helping with this project can call Stopher at 435-734-6438.

Nomads for the Generations

By Diane Countryman

Tom and Doris Butler live in Bayonet Point, FL for only 3 to 5 months of the year. What do they do for the remaining 7 to 9 months? They travel to our country's wildlife refuges.

When Tom retired as a computer analyst several years ago, they took cruises and got tired of it. So four years ago they ventured off to volunteer at our nation's wildlife refuges – seven thus far.

“I like the animals,” said Doris, “there's personal satisfaction in doing good for our country.”

Doris helps with the information desk, bookstore, and office while Tom likes the BIG boy toys and helps with maintenance. He has built a lumber rack for Maryland's refuge, a ramada for New Mexico's Sevilleta Refuge, and a work bench for our Bear River. They volunteered at Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma before coming here..

After four months with us they will be returning to Maryland in August, visiting family along the way. They will spend two months at the Blackwater Refuge where Tom may plow their fields for winter wheat and build a deck for their fire quarters and Doris will support the office and visitor center before returning home, again visiting family along the way. That beats cruising any day of the year.

Both Doris and Tom devote whatever time is needed to get the job done – none of that only 40 hours a week stuff - “I want something left here for my grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and the



Tom and Doris Butler love FWS Refuges and enjoy volunteering for them.

Photo by Megan Stewart

generations after that. Something other than shopping malls.” Doris is very adamant in her conviction, as is Tom. They are expecting their sixth great-grandchild.

They met at a square dance and have been dancing ever since. Currently they round dance in Ogden every Tuesday night.

We will miss them when they leave, and look forward to their return.

GUIDED REFUGE TOURS

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Al Trout, former Refuge Manager, talks with former Congressman James V. Hansen at the Film Premiere reception.
Photo by Megan Stewart

YCC provides youth with job experience

Four local youth, age 15 through 18, will be working for eight weeks at Bear River Refuge this summer as part of the Youth Conservation Corps, assisting Refuge staff in a variety of tasks as they also earn about the environment.

Jen Cary, Corps leader, brings plenty of experience in working with youth on the Refuge since she has directed on-site student projects with Dr. John Cavitt of Weber State University for three years.

As an ornithologist, she thoroughly enjoys helping students discover the wonders of wildlife-- especially birds.

Cary said the students will help staff in maintenance and safety, working around the building and out on the refuge.

Not only will they learn work ethics and cooperation, but will also develop awareness of the environment, biology, and wildlife including nest monitoring and bird banding.

"It will be a well-rounded experience for them, open their eyes to the environment, and be great to put on a resume," said Cary.

New Refuge staff

By Sarah Yates

Mark Vaughn

Mark Vaughn, Administrative Assistant, has been on board since June 8, in his first civilian position after retiring from the US Air Force. He's seen a lot of the world including Korea and Japan, Iraq and Afghanistan.

His job description is "anything administrative" such as filing, logistics, travel, vehicle maintenance requests, etc.

"So far, I am loving it. The people are fantastic, and I love the mission. It was either this or forestry," he said.

Mark has a 22 year old son and is engaged to be married.

Clint Wirick

Clint Wirick's official title is biological science technician, and he officially started with USFWS on May 1. It is his first position since graduating from Utah State University with a major in range science.

He will be assisting in biological surveys, avian influenza surveillance and grassland monitoring during the next few months.

"It's a good place to work," he said, noting that it is also nice for his family -- his wife and three children (two of them twins) -- to continue to live in the local area. Clint grew up in Plain City and then moved to Willard, so this is home.

Jess Herbert

Jess Herbert has just come on board as an intern, with his initial assignment to help with environmental education, greet visitors at the Information Desk and clerk in the Avocet Corner Bookstore.

This is his first assignment with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, but he is used to working with people since he comes to us through the Department of Workforce Services.

Jess is familiar with our area, growing up fishing and camping near the Bear River. Since he loves nature, he is excited about this new opportunity. His educational background also includes studying Fire Science at Utah Valley State College.

FRIENDS OF THE BEAR RIVER REFUGE

Name _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Mail with check to Friends of the Bear River Refuge, 2155 West Forest Street, Brigham City, UT 84302

MEMBERSHIP:

Have you renewed your Friends of the Refuge membership for 2009? Your dues help in the many projects and activities sponsored by the Friends group, including guided tours, educational opportunities and this newsletter. Please renew now.

VOLUNTEERS:

The Refuge can always use volunteers and there are opportunities to fit every skill, including staffing the information desk, bookstore clerk, teacher/naturalist, refuge tour guide, special events assistant, newsletter staff, clerical/computer tasks.

**Friends of the Bear River Refuge
2155 West Forest Street
Brigham City, UT 84302**

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↓ Friends of the Bear River Refuge is a not-for-profit support group whose members are wildlife enthusiasts who care about nature and wild places. We feel an obligation to learn more about the natural world, share that knowledge with others and preserve the refuge as a place for future generations to experience and learn to care about.

↓ **www.fobrr.org**
435-734-6443

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