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The only newspaper in the world that really cares about the Bear Lake Valley

Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge Fifty Year Anniversary



PHOTO BY PAUL HUFZIGER

Ducks flit across the water at the BL National Wildlife Refuge.



PHOTO BY PAUL HUFZIGER

The refuge has been caring for birds such as these for fifty years.

BY PAUL HUFZIGER

Fifty years is a long-recognized time to celebrate an anniversary, and Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge has met that mark. Located just a short drive south of Montpelier on Highway-30, and a frequently overlooked resource for Bear Lake County, sits this vast national wildlife refuge. The refuge was established on May 9th, 1968 with the sole purpose of protecting and managing habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds. The Bear Lake National Wildlife Refuge gave authority to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to manage the land, which covers over 18,000 acres of cattail marsh, open water, swamp, and flooded meadows. Areas of this refuge include scattered grasslands, alkali flats, and brush-covered mountain slopes.

The agency has the distinction of being the only federal agency where management of wildlife

and recreation is their number one job.

Over a period of fifty years, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has raised over 250,000 ducks and 50,000 to 80,000 Canadian geese. Other migratory species include trumpeter swan, tundra swan, sandhill crane, great blue heron, snowy egrets, white face ibis, and a host of shorebirds. Trumpeter swans were reintroduced in the 1990s and would be unable to thrive if it were not for the efforts the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners. Springtime provides an excellent opportunity to see little baby ducklings, goslings, and ibis, which are always under the watchful eye of their protective parents. Visitors may also see other game to include mule deer, muskrats, skunks, rabbits, and less frequently moose, voles, coyotes, beavers, badgers, and weasels.

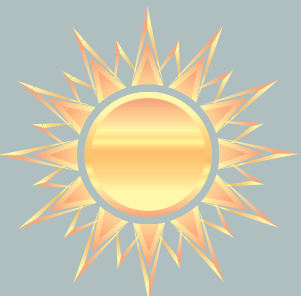
If you want to take the family out for a combination bird watching and fishing day trip, this is the place to do it. The refuge is open most of the year, but special regulations apply during the hunting

season in which 7400 acres are open to hunting waterfowl. An added bonus is that access to the refuge is free of charge, and it is open from sunrise to sunset. There is a marked auto course where you can drive through the refuge without having to get out of the car to take pictures. Photographers will love the variety of opportunities to take that once-in-a-lifetime shot from photographing a bald eagle close up to an unbelievable sunrise or sunset. If you like to mountain bike, you can ride out to the refuge and travel the auto tour and then hike one to catch a close up view of wildlife. Canals and waterways are loaded with carp, which are good fighters and make a nice meal if you have the right recipe. Local fisherman are secretive about bait, but most prefer to use worms and corn on a small hook. While fishing, it is important to wear life jackets, and normal safety precautions are should be observed around all bodies of water and canals. The banks are steep, rocky, slippery, and water is swift and fairly deep.

see REFUGE p. 6

WEATHER

Forecast:
Mostly Sunny



Highs & Lows
April 9 - April 15

DATE	High	Low	PRCIP
April 16	66	34	
April 17	43	27	.02
April 18	53	19	
April 19	64	30	
April 20	63	34	
April 21	64	33	
April 22	69	32	

Weather courtesy of
Steve Kunz



Railroad safety and train signals

BY PAUL HUFZIGER

One of the most important things which helped develop the city of Montpelier was the expansion of the train. For those who live here, the train is still a very big part of our lives, and you may wonder why that horn is blowing seemingly all the time. You may have heard a series of short whistles and wondered what on earth they mean. Sometimes it seems that the engineer is just playing around; well, he is not. That blowing horn is critical to the operation and safety of the train. Horns are sounded for safety reasons and to warn of approaching trains.

The following narrative explains and translates some of those horn signals. The General Code of Operating Rules contains information on horn use. These rules are frequently updated and have the most up-to-date information.

In visiting the local train depot and speaking with the Senior Supervisor Operating Practices, a lot was learned. It became immediately evident that this man had a lot of passion for what he does. Trains are very heavy, with the heaviest trains in the world being from Finland and weighing in at 5400 tons. Slowing these trains down takes a coordinated effort and begins as far away as six miles to slow and stop it properly. Only in an



PHOTO BY PAUL HUFZIGER

Union Pacific railroad uses a series of varying whistle combinations, each one with a specific meaning used to communicate with others on or near the railways.

emergency can last-ditch efforts slow the train sooner by pulling the emergency stop, which still requires one half mile to one mile to stop. This emergency stop can result in a train derailment and is only used when a life or death situation happens. The horn whistle and bright lights are safety measures to keep the train operating without any incidents.

When you hear a succession of short sounds, the whistle is sounded in an attempt to attract attention to the train. It is also used when persons or livestock are on the track at other-than-road crossings. You could imagine the catastrophe it would be to have a prized steer run over. The consequences would be horrible for the cow but could also result in a derail-

ment of the train.

An incident in India resulted in more than 500 passengers being killed when their train plunged into the Bagmati River in 1981. The rail accident, the worst in India to that date, was caused by an engineer who was reverential of cows. As the train approached the bridge over the river, a cow crossed the tracks. Seeking to avoid harming the cow at all costs, the engineer braked too hard. The cars slid on the wet rails, and the last seven cars derailed straight into the river. With the river far above normal levels, the cars sank quickly in the murky waters.

When the train is at a stop, one long whistle is blown. The air brakes are applied, and pressure is equalized. Two long whistles mean that the brakes are released, and the train proceeds. Those three short sounds that we are all so familiar with mean the train is backing up or an acknowledgement of a hand signal to back up. Four short sounds are a request for a signal to be given or repeated, if not understood.

As you can tell, this is almost like a foreign language that is going on between the engineer, vehicles, pedestrians, obstructions on the track, and warnings and signals to others involved in the safe operation. When the train sounds one long and three short signals, this is an instruction

see RAILROAD p. 6

INSIDE

Inserts include

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INDEX

Editorial.....	2	News.....	10
Society.....	3	Obituaries.....	11
Rural Route.....	5	Sports.....	12
Legal.....	7-9	Classifieds.....	13-14
Business Directory.....	9		