



Birder, hunter and outdoor lover Tim Reynolds enjoying Camas National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. | Photo courtesy of Tim Reynolds

Tim Reynolds, Rigby, Idaho

Birds—observing, banding, and hunting them—are a central part of Tim Reynolds’s life, and the refuges of the Southeast Idaho National Wildlife Refuge Complex offer him great opportunities to follow his passions. The refuges, particularly Camas in Hamer, Idaho, “provide an opportunity for me to escape, to be refreshed, to recharge my batteries,” says Reynolds, who calls Camas’s lakes, ponds, aging cottonwoods and marshlands “an oasis in the middle of a sagebrush desert.” Each year, refuge wetlands seasonally attract tens of thousands of snow geese, cranes, ducks, and migrating waterbirds. An extensive network of canals, ditches, and wells supplement the refuge’s natural water supply to assure that wetlands remain available for the birds during dry months.

However, federal funding pressures could end Camas’s active water management and dry up its healthy wetland habitats. “It costs \$60-90,000 a year to operate all that plumbing,” says Reynolds, “so Camas is considering managing the refuge purely as upland habitat.” What would that mean? The spectacular flights of snow geese and cranes that now fill the refuge’s skies would no longer delight birders like Reynolds, and it would almost certainly mark the end of waterfowl hunting at Camas. “The birds would have to go somewhere else, and so would the hunters” Reynolds says.