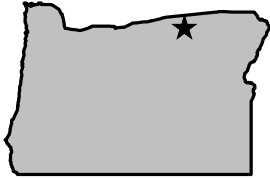


CHAPTER 3—UMATILLA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

A Riverine-Shrub Steppe Biome



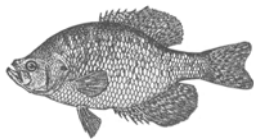
In 1969, the **Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge** was established in an effort to restore wildlife habitat lost after the construction of the John Day Dam. Although the 76-mile-long lake that was formed destroyed wildlife habitat, wetlands also were formed to replace arid land. The 25,347-acre refuge is located in the arid Columbia Basin of northeast Oregon and southeast Washington astride the Columbia River. Species of plants and animals unique to both marsh and desert environments are now common within the borders of the refuge. The refuge is named after the Umatilla Indian people who, along with several other Native American groups, once inhabited this portion of the Columbia River. The native place name, *Umatilla*, is believed to mean “land of many lakes.”



Badger (*Meles meles*) Rarely seen, these creatures are nocturnal, hunting and foraging for food in the cover of darkness. Badgers have thick, powerful front legs with long claws that allow them to quickly dig the tunnels in which they live and find food. Badgers enjoy a wide variety of food types including fruit, insects, plants and a number of small animals such as snakes and lizards. One badger den, or ‘set’ was found to contain over ½ mile of tunnel and would have required the removal of 70 tons of soil over the course of 200 years during which the tunnel was used.



Burrowing Owl (*Speotyto cunicularia*) As the name implies, these owls build their nests below ground taking over holes abandoned by badgers, gophers and foxes. These owls are quite different from typical owls in that they often live in colonies and hunt insects, their primary food source, during the daytime. Though many scientists study these endangered birds, it is still unclear where the Burrowing Owl of North America and Canada spend their winters after migrating from the Great Plains. Knowing where they spend their winters is important because only 50% of the owls return each year to traditional nesting sites.



Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*) Pronounced “Cropee,” this fish inhabits lake waters of the central and eastern United States. These fish, eagerly sought by fisherman for their delicious flavor, have large bodies and very small heads and are identified as the largest of the sunfish. They thrive in clear-water lakes and spawn in late spring when waters warm to above 58 degrees Fahrenheit.



Black Cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera*) Also known as the Balsam Cottonwood, this tree species primarily grows west of the Rocky Mountains. The long straight trunks of the Black Cottonwood grow rapidly along marshes and streams where they can meet their requirements for direct sunlight and water. Cottonwoods are so named because they release fluffy white seed material that resembles cotton and gives the appearance of a summer snowstorm.

Migration Activity: Birds often move or migrate from nesting grounds in the United States and Canada to warmer climates in Mexico, Central and South America. Contact a local wildlife biologist familiar with migratory birds that either originate from or pass through your area. Adopt a species of migratory birds from your region and plan field trips to visit feeding or nesting grounds or build feeder boxes designed to provide food. Visit these sites for additional information on migrating birds of North America:

<http://www.npwrc.usgs.gov/resource/othrdata/migratio/migratio.htm>

<http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/pub/virtualbird/educational.html>

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/>