

Harney County Migratory Bird Festival Goes Virtual for 2021

Every April, hundreds of visitors flock to Harney County to witness thousands of migratory birds making their way north along the Pacific Flyway. The Harney Basin is very-nearly the halfway point for birds from Coastal Texas, the Mexican Highlands and Central California traveling to their breeding grounds in Canada, Alaska and even eastern Siberia.

Since 1981, the Harney County Migratory Bird Festival – held in honor of John Scharff – has showcased and celebrated the annual migration and the people who come to experience it. In 2020, the festival was canceled entirely due to Covid-19. This year, the festival is going virtual, with nearly all activities happening online. Even though Harney County is essentially back open for regular business, the decision to host an in-person or virtual festival was made many months ago when the majority of event planning takes place.

Rest assured! The festival planning committee has been hard at work, putting together a great line-up of virtual content for you to enjoy. There are three different opportunities to explore:

1. ["Prairie Songs for a Feathered Heart"](#) digital story – Follow the fictional tale of Magnus Sparrow, heir to a 100-year-old lumber dynasty and a life-long birder who has suddenly vanished. Sparrow left cryptic clues of a possible treasure and his whereabouts around Harney County. Navigate your way through the area by way of an interactive map. Watch a dozen videos (featuring locals!) about the history, birding, people, places and things of Harney County to find Magnus and the treasure. Bonus: Virtual birding! Find 22 hidden birds in our story chapters! Available beginning April 22.
2. [Live Programming](#) – Ten presentations across three days will be available through Zoom, a free-to-download online meeting space that you can use on any device that connects to the internet. Hear from keynote speaker Kenn Kaufman, local archaeologist Scott Thomas, Wildlife Curators from the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, and many more! Registration opens April 1 with unlimited virtual attendance.
3. [One in-person caravan tour for locals only, and one in-person nature walk](#) – Both of these activities are free of charge and Covid-safe, and do not require any pre-registration. Just meet at the right location at the right time and you're all set for an adventure.

Other festival favorites that locals and visitors both have come to expect and enjoy include the art show and sale, birdhouse building workshop with the Burns Lions Club, and the youth art program and contest. Each of these activities is still happening, but on a different scale.

- Up to twenty-five vendors will be featured through Harney County's [Spark Mercantile](#) to give virtual festival participants an opportunity to extend their online shopping across multiple artists and sellers in the Pacific Northwest. This digital market runs April 22 to May 31 on [sparkmercantile.com](#).
- Instead of gathering for a workshop, the Lions Club assembled birdhouse building kits for pick up and construction at home. Instructions are included, or you can watch their step-by-step e-tutorial on the Harney County Migratory Bird Festival YouTube channel. Location for kit pick up will be announced soon.

- The [Artist in Residence \(AIR\) Program and Youth Wildlife Art Contest](#) are in full swing, almost identical to previous years with a few modifications for health and safety. AIR Program works and contest entries will be displayed in downtown businesses by April 22. Art contest entries are due to the Chamber of Commerce by April 9!

All the details on the virtual event and other festival favorites are available online at www.migratorybirdfestival.com. Here you'll find a full schedule, how to access and navigate the digital story, how to register and participate in live programming, where and when to grab a birdhouse building kit, how to shop our e-commerce vendors, and much, much more.

The 2021 virtual Harney County Migratory Bird Festival would not be possible without many contributing partners. Please share your appreciation for this event with the [Friends of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Burns District Bureau of Land Management](#), [Portland Audubon](#), [High Desert Partnership](#), [Malheur National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Spark Mercantile](#) and [Sage Designworks](#), [Foundry Collective](#), [Valadrian Creative and Consulting](#), and Mr. Dave Vickstrom.