



Lake Abert Conservation and Restoration

Lake Abert, located in southcentral Oregon north of Lakeview, is Oregon's 6th largest lake and its only lake with a high salt concentration. The lake was selected by Oregon Lakes Association (OLA) as a place of special interest because there is no similar lake in Oregon and the lake ecosystem is threatened when water the salinity rises above 15%, which is already 5 times higher than the ocean. Extreme salinity events are caused by low water levels as a result of drought, climate change, and upstream water diversions. From 2014 to 2016, the lake nearly desiccated, shrinking to about 5% of its normal full surface area. Historically, conditions like that only occurred during the Dust Bowl era of the 1920s and 30s.

The lake has a simple but productive ecosystem with the dominant fauna being brine shrimp, alkali flies, and waterbirds. No fish or amphibians live in the lake and there are few insects other than flies. However, the diversity of waterbirds using the lake is quite high with over 80 species being reported. The most conspicuous birds are American Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, gulls, and waterfowl; however, smaller phalaropes and sandpipers are most numerous. Every summer, the lake attracts tens to hundreds of thousands of shorebirds like Wilson's phalarope that fatten-up on the shrimp and flies so the birds can migrate south, with some going 5,000 miles to southern South America.

The goal of OLA's Lake Abert conservation and restoration efforts is to ensure the lake ecosystem remains productive and supports a diverse and productive invertebrate and bird fauna. If you would like to be involved in this important project, please support OLA. For more information, contact Lake Abert Conservation Committee chairperson, Ron Larson (rlarson@ccountry.net).



Lake Abert images by Ron Larson. Sunset, American Avocets, California Gull, Killdeer and Blacknecked Stilts.