

Cabin Lake update August, 2025

Some History of Cabin Lake

written by Gordon Wetzel

The Cabin Lake Bird Blinds and watering holes are operational again, thanks to Mel Crabb who has taken over maintenance of the system. For the last 2 years Clay Crofton volunteered his time to maintain this wonderful birding asset. Before Clay, Tom Lawler did the job for 8 years and before that, Don Franks maintained Cabin Lake and numerous other wildlife guzzlers in the area. By the way, Mel is married to Kathleen Franks, daughter of Don Franks and they live in Fort Rock. If you haven't been to Cabin Lake, it's an area on the edge of the Deschutes National Forest and the sage-steppe desert. It is located on Cabin Lake Road, 10 miles north of Fort Rock, by an out-of-commission Forest Service ranger station. The bird blinds and water basins (called guzzlers) that provide water for the birds and wildlife are maintained by East Cascades Bird Alliance. On the interface of the forest and the desert, bird species are abundant and diverse. These blinds attract birders and photographers from all over. National Audubon Society magazine had an article in 2016, featuring Don Franks and the Cabin Lake bird blinds. You can find it here - <https://www.audubon.org/news/secret-pools-oregon-desert-are-magnets-all-kinds-thirsty-animals>

“Cabin Lake's system is vastly different from the typical guzzler,” according to Nancy Bruenner, who heads up one of many “Adopt A Guzzler” programs for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW). (Currently, about 30 volunteers are involved around the state.) Most guzzlers are much bigger—up to 10 or 30 feet across—and are often supported by hunting chapters, with the purpose of providing water for migrating mule deer, upland game birds, and antelope, Bruenner says.”

To visit the Cabin Lake bird blinds, park on the road to the old ranger station shown in the photo and walk past the station buildings. (search for Cabin Lake Bird Blind in Google maps). Remember to bring some suet cakes – the birds will appreciate it.