



## A Challenging Tradition

by **Krista Muller**

Senior Wildlife Technician, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game

At first, the changes are very subtle. The flowers in the garden begin to fade, people begin to close their windows at night, and the Foothills turn from green to brown. Then, as the weeks go by, we notice there's a definite chill in the air as we venture out of the house in the morning. We pull out those long sleeved shirts and perhaps turn the thermostat up a little higher. A time of change is upon us- whether we are ready for it or not.

As a child, growing up in the New England area, these changes always heralded the beginning of a special time of the year for me. Thanksgiving, a time when family would get together, was just around the corner. I would assist my mother in preparing the meal that would be the center of a day filled with stories and laughter. Once those visions faded from view a bit, I knew that the Christmas holidays were coming quickly. Every year, my family would hold true to the tradition of going to a tree farm to cut down our Christmas tree. My Mom would drag out all the boots, scarves, sweaters and mittens she could find for the four of us kids, so that we could layer up for the hours we would spend out in the fields, searching for the "perfect tree". We would inevitably select the coldest day of the year thus far to go on this trek! Somehow though, all of that didn't matter, because we were bundled up, nice and warm, and on an adventure which we would talk about for many weeks to follow. At the end of it all, we would have the best and most beautiful tree yet!

This past holiday season, I spent my first Christmas in Idaho. Several weeks before the tree cutting permits were even printed I decided to start my own tradition by going into the mountains to get my own Christmas tree. I invited several friends to join me in this adventure. Once we were actually on the mountainside, I found myself drawn in thought to the wildlife that inhabits this area. The change in season most certainly affects them - but how many of us really take the time to think about this in the normal flow of our daily lives?

*(story continues on next page)*



PC900 COVERT PRO  
Mule deer using the wildlife underpass; © IDFG.



Ed Bottum, IDFG's habitat biologist, gives a cheer for the new wildlife underpass on State Highway 21 near Boise; © IDFG

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Each year, herds of mule deer and elk migrate long distances from their summer ranges in the high country to their wintering range in the Foothills of Boise, a tradition that has occurred for thousands of years. Unlike humans, mule deer do not have a permanent place to call home where they can turn up the heat if they get cold or a place to store an extra layer of warmth in order to survive the winter. They must come to areas like the Boise valley where there are milder temperatures and less snow, where the fat reserves they have built up will last them until spring arrives. They can't just stop by the local Albertson's and pick up dinner for the night or stop by Kohl's and buy an extra sweater to bundle up. Talk about a challenge!

Mule deer and elk have yet another big challenge to contend with during their migration - urban growth. Humans have created some of the biggest obstacles wildlife has to face. For instance, we have fragmented and developed the lands that they have utilized for centuries for food, shelter, water, reproduction, and rearing their young. As the human population in Boise continues to expand, so does the number of roads and highways being built.

The 36,000 acres of the Boise River Wildlife Management Area (WMA) was established by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game to provide critical winter habitat for mule deer. Now nearly 8,000 mule deer and 1,000 elk come to the WMA to spend the winter. Unfortunately, State Highway 21 (SH-21) splits a large portion of the property in half, making for a more difficult migration. Since 1996, annual collisions between motorists and big game have exceeded 100 deer and five elk per year, with some years exceeding 200 collisions. As one of several staff members from Fish & Game who is responsible for picking up mule deer and elk that are killed by vehicles, I have seen firsthand the effects urban growth are having on these species. It is not a pretty picture. Fortunately, there are people who are working together to minimize the effects roads have on wildlife.

In 2007, a collaborative working group called the Boise River Wildlife Linkage Partnership (BRWLP) was formed. The group actively seeks solutions that will maintain habitat connectivity, while effectively reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions and the undesirable impacts they have on people and wildlife. Over the last several years there have been many positive outcomes to the Partnerships' efforts. For instance, there are now signs warning motorists to slow down and watch out for wildlife crossing the road. This has reduced the number of mule deer and elk killed on this road each year. There have also been "Give deer and elk a brake" tally signs constructed to educate the public on how many deer and elk have been killed in vehicle collisions on the highway.

At the end of 2010, the Idaho Department of Transportation completed construction of a bridge on SH-21 at milepost 18.2, which allows wildlife to pass safely under the highway safely, thereby minimizing wildlife-vehicle collisions in the area and maintaining habitat connectivity. Within days of completion, the underpass was utilized by wildlife. Special motion-sensor cameras were placed under the roadway to record the species of animals using the underpass. The cameras not only recorded mule deer, fox, coyote, mountain lion, but also elk, a big accomplishment considering most elk do not like enclosed spaces!

This winter, the underpass is officially part of the tradition in the lives of Idaho's wildlife. Cameras have recorded use of the underpass by large groups of deer, some containing mature bucks, as well as several elk, fox and coyote for a second year in a row. In time it is expected wildlife-vehicle collisions will be reduced by more than 80% in the immediate vicinity of the underpass while providing the habitat connectivity the animals need for migration.

With wildlife in mind as I travel Idaho's highways this winter, I will start a new tradition in my family - braking for big game.



Elk were recorded using the wildlife underpass; © IDFG.



A large group of mule deer; © IDFG.



A mountain lion was recorded at night utilizing the underpass; © IDFG.

# AVOID WILDLIFE COLLISIONS. TRAVEL SAFELY.

- Be alert during early morning and evening hours, or when driving during hazardous conditions on snow and ice.
- Use your high beams to see far ahead when there is no oncoming traffic.
- Don't over drive your headlights. If you are driving faster than the distance it takes to stop when you see something in your headlights you are going too fast.
- Slow down when you encounter wildlife. Since deer and elk travel in groups, if you see one you should expect to see more on the roadway.
- Turn on your flashing hazard lights to warn other drivers of danger.
- Go to [www.idahowildlifecrossings.org](http://www.idahowildlifecrossings.org) for more information.



## Did you see that Idaho Bluebird?

**A portion of a Wildlife License Plate purchase and/or renewal contributes to Idaho's Wildlife:**

- Conservation
- Education Programs
- Habitat Improvements
- Wildlife Publications

*Your support helps protect Idaho's wildlife heritage for present and future generations!*

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LOCAL DMV OR ONLINE AT:**

[www.accessidaho.org/secure/itd/personalized/plates.html](http://www.accessidaho.org/secure/itd/personalized/plates.html)



# Surviving Winter's Challenges

by Edna Vizgirdas

Forest Botanist, Boise National Forest

Winter is the most stressful time of year for Idaho's wildlife. Animals have three basic strategies for survival in winter -- they can hibernate, migrate, or tough it out. The key hardships are lack of food and cold temperatures; however, lack of food is generally considered to be the primary factor that causes many species to migrate or hibernate.

But don't let the reduced activity fool you! There's actually plenty going on in the woods -- both above and below the snow. Many animals remain active since they have adapted to winter's challenges. In this article, we'll focus on some of the adaptations that mammals in Idaho have to cope with winter's harsh conditions.

## Physical Adaptations

Snowshoe hares and lynx have large feet to spread their weight over the snow. The densely furred feet of Canada lynx can be up to 4 inches across and act like snowshoes, allowing the lynx to move more efficiently through deep snow. This adaptation helps lynx capture their favorite meal, snowshoe hare. Martens and other mammals grow additional fur between their toes in winter to give them effectively larger feet.

In our area, both snowshoe hare and ermine (also known as short-tailed weasels) turn white in winter. By blending in with the snowy landscape, white coloration helps snowshoe hares escape from hungry lynx and other predators. By remaining perfectly still, snowshoe hares are so well camouflaged that you can snowshoe within arm's reach from one and not even see it. The white coat of predators such as the ermine (and farther north, the arctic fox) helps them to sneak up on their prey. Its compact, cylindrical body shape also helps make the ermine one of the best mousers around.

Animals use fat as insulation to keep their bodies warm in winter. These layers of fat act as an internal coat and help provide energy when food is scarce during the winter months.

Specialized fat, called brown fat, is produced during the food-rich seasons and expended during winter. Brown fat is used by most hibernators for arousal and by many migrators as a fuel source.

## Behavioral Adaptations

In addition to physical adaptations, animals can have a variety of behavioral adaptations to winter. Some mammals, such as flying squirrels and deer mice, will occupy collective dens to conserve body heat, even though they may be non-colonial during the warm season. Some species of snakes will do the same thing. Beavers cache food before winter. Muskrats and beavers construct shelters, partly for protection from severe weather.

In deep snow, deer and elk follow in each other's footsteps to save energy. Moose have special joints that allow them to swing their legs over snow rather than push through snow as elk do.

Red squirrels, also known as chickarees, are one of the most conspicuous mammals in Idaho's forests. They don't hibernate, but store food for winter consumption in caches called middens. Filled with pine, fir and spruce cones, midden piles can be 15X 30 feet or larger. Red squirrels cut conifer cones from tree tops in fall and haul them to their midden, centrally located within their 1 to 4 acre territory. The fall cone-cutting frenzy can result in the storage of 20,000 cones. If you're in the forest during this 4 to 6 week period, you might get hit on the head with a falling cone!

In eastern Idaho, red squirrel caches are an important food source for grizzly bears. At higher elevations, squirrels cache thousands of cones from whitebark pine. In fall, grizzlies raid these nutrient and calorie-rich caches, helping them to prepare for hibernation. But of course this makes it tough on the squirrels that are dependent on their cone supplies for winter's meals.



A coyote searching for food; © Nick Kiriazis ([www.nickkiriazisphotography.com](http://www.nickkiriazisphotography.com))

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### Life Under the Snow

A blanket of snow acts as an insulator and a physical, protective barrier. The subnivean air space is a snow-free layer (around 1 inch) between the ground and the snowpack. Even when air temperatures range from 20 to 50 degrees below zero, the subnivean air space can remain a comfortable 20 to 30 degrees above zero.

Living beneath the snow provides insulation and protection from predators for small mammals. Shrews, mice, voles, and moles don't have enough surface area on their bodies for their fur to adequately protect them from the cold. The subnivean air space allows these animals to survive. It also allows for escape routes from predators including red foxes, coyotes, and weasels. The warmer air at or near ground level creates open spaces that eventually become a network of tunnels where many animals spend their winters – protected from the harsh weather and predators above.

Spend some time exploring Idaho's winter landscapes, and see if you can discover signs of our amazing wildlife. As the saying goes, there's no such thing as bad weather, only inappropriate clothing. So grab your winter woolies, and go wild this winter!



Snowshoe hare; © Ray Vizgirdas

# *Invasion of the Snowys!*

by **Vicky Runnoe**

**Conservation Education Supervisor, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game**

If you have spotted a large white owl recently, you are not seeing things. Idaho and many other northern states are hosting snowy owls this winter. These large mostly white owls are leaving their typical wintering areas in northern Canada and moving into the northern United States. Such a large movement of birds is known as an irruption, and is often associated with a decline in winter food.

Snowy owls feed mainly on lemmings so this irruption could indicate that the lemming population has decreased significantly. However, lemming populations have been large this year. So, why are the owls moving? High numbers of lemmings translates into a successful breeding season for the owls. This, in turn, creates competition for food at wintering areas. Young, inexperienced owls cannot compete with older adult birds, and are forced to move south to find prey. Observations of snowy owls in the northern states confirm that many are young birds.

Snowy owls spend the winter in open fields and marshes. They perch on the ground or exposed perches such as fence posts, while they search for rodents and birds. Because snowy owls see few humans in their Arctic habitat, they can seem quite tame. It is, however, very important to observe the owls from a distance. In addition to their long flight, young birds are not yet adept hunters and may be catching barely enough food to survive. Disturbance by enthusiastic observers can cause the owls to use precious energy needed to hunt and stay warm. Keeping your distance and using binoculars, spotting scopes, and telephoto lenses will help minimize disturbance to the birds.

Snowy owls are on the wish list of many birdwatchers and wildlife photographers. That wish may be fulfilled right here in Idaho this winter season.

## **Snowy Owl Fun Facts:**

Snowy owl pairs fiercely defend their nests against predators, even wolves.

An individual adult snowy owl may eat three to five lemmings per day, or up to 1,600 per year!

The snowy owl can be found represented in cave paintings in Europe.

Young male snowy owls are barred with dark brown and get whiter as they get older. Females keep some dark markings throughout their lives. Young males tend to have a white bib, a white back of the head, and fewer rows of bars on the tail than females. Although the darkest males and the palest females are nearly alike in color, the whitest birds are always males and the most heavily barred ones are always females. Some old males can be nearly pure white.

Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology

# Winter Wildlife Events

## Boise Watershed

11818 West Joplin Rd., Boise;  
(208) 489-1284 [www.cityofboise.org/Bee/WaterShed/Home/index.aspx](http://www.cityofboise.org/Bee/WaterShed/Home/index.aspx)

*Go with the flow to the Boise WaterShed every third Saturday of each month for fun and activities the whole family can enjoy! Activities and crafts take place from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., followed by a wastewater treatment plant tour from 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. Closed-toe shoes required for tour. Note: For the safety of our guests, wastewater tours will be canceled if snow or ice is on the ground. FREE admission! No pre-registration required unless indicated.*

## Jan. 21 - Family Snow Day

Everyone loves a snow day! Join us for a flurry of activities from 10:00 to noon at the Boise WaterShed, followed by a trip to Bogus Basin for an afternoon of snowshoeing courtesy of Bogus Basin SnowSchool. The morning will include fun snow-related activities, crafts, and even snow cones! At 10:30, BSU snow scientist Dr. H.P. Marshall will present and demonstrate cutting-edge snow science research. At noon, participants will be driven to the Bogus Basin Nordic Lodge (courtesy of Caldwell Transportation Company), where snowshoes will be provided. Small groups will be led by SnowSchool leaders on family-friendly trails. Beginners welcome! All may participate in the morning activities at the Boise WaterShed, but space is limited on the snowshoe trip. Pre-registration and a \$2 per person donation is required by January 17 to reserve your place in the program. Call 608-7300 or email [boisewatershed@cityofboise.org](mailto:boisewatershed@cityofboise.org).

## Feb. 18 - Our Home, Our History

The history of our watershed is rich with stories of early settlers. Travel back in time with the Idaho Humanities Council for a historic look at our watershed, complete with interesting artifacts and a costumed character who shares entertaining tales! At 10:30, Janet Worthington will perform a fun-for-all-ages

dramatization of life in the 1800s in Treasure Valley as Mary Hallock Foote, wife of mining engineer Arthur Foote, who worked on the Boise River irrigation project which later became Arrowrock Dam. The presentation will be followed by live Idaho folk songs performed by John Thompsen. In the exhibit hall, kids can pan for gold and practice their hand at siphoning water with the Boise Project

## Mar. 17 – World Water Day

Celebrate clean water at this festive event to raise awareness of World Water Day. Water is a basic requirement for all life, yet water resources are facing increasing demands from and competition among users. Learn what the Treasure Valley Engineers Without Borders is doing to help improve water access around the world with a presentation at 10:30. Then celebrate water with TRICA's leap troupe as they perform a dance to live music at 11:30. Inside the exhibit hall, make global crafts and rain sticks and learn about local and worldwide water challenges.

## School Break Programs

*Drop in to these fun all-ages programs offered on school break days! In addition to the exhibit hall, special activities and crafts will take place from 10:00 a.m. to noon. FREE admission! Day care groups, home schools and Mom's clubs welcome! No pre-registration required.*

## Jan. 20 – Snow Day

Explore snow and ice in this fun hands-on program! From 10:00 a.m. to noon, make and take your own 'snow' crystal, perform ice experiments, and simulate an avalanche. At 10:30, BSU hydrology student Dave Eiriksson will discuss snow science and avalanches. Note: No school today for Meridian K-8 Schools.

## Spring Break: Mar. 26 - 30

From 10:00 a.m. to noon, create beautiful spring eco-crafts for all ages. Make paper from recycled materials at our papermaking

station. Explore your watershed with a large-scale tabletop model and learn how you can become part of the pollution solution. Participate in hands-on science activities led by BSU scientists at 10:30 each day. Then take a wastewater treatment plant tour at 11:00. Tour limited to 40 people, closed-toe shoes required, no strollers.

## Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve

Arco; (208) 527-1300;  
[www.nps.gov/crmo](http://www.nps.gov/crmo)

*When the Loop Road is closed to car travel by snow, there are many other options for exploring the wonderful winter world of Craters of the Moon.*

*Visitor Center open daily from 8am - 4:30 pm, except for federal holidays (Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Day, MLK Birthday)*

*View exhibits and audio-visual presentations to learn more about your national monument. There are also publications on sale in our book store about the cultural and natural history of the park and the region.*

## Cross-country Skiing/ Snowshoeing: Mid Dec. - Feb.

The 7 Mile Loop Drive is groomed for skiing as snow pack and staffing allow. Most of the Loop Drive follows relatively level terrain and can be completed in 2 to 4 hours. There are also excellent opportunities for snowshoeing throughout the park. Visit the website for maps and current conditions: [www.nps.gov/crmo/planyourvisit/winter-activities.htm](http://www.nps.gov/crmo/planyourvisit/winter-activities.htm)

## Deer Flat NWR

13751 Upper Embankment Rd.  
Nampa; (208) 467-9278;  
[www.fws.gov/deerflat](http://www.fws.gov/deerflat)

Jan. 14, 21, 28; Feb. 11, 18, 25;  
March 3, 10 -

## Junior Duck Stamp Art, 10am-4 pm

Drop in to learn about Idaho waterfowl and create your own Junior Duck Stamp art contest entry. Art supplies provided. Free.

*Wild About Life Lecture Series; 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7pm; free*

## Jan. 10 - Identifying Raptors of Southwest Idaho, 7pm

This Wild About Life lecture will go over a colorful review of area birds of prey including easy take-home hints for recognizing them, plus why SW Idaho attracts so many raptors. Lecture presented by Dr. Leon Powers, Professor emeritus, Northwest Nazarene University.

## Feb. 21 - What to do About Cheatgrass, 7pm

Andy Ogden, of Idaho Fish and Game, will be presenting a lecture on the impacts of Cheatgrass and methods of controlling Cheatgrass for small land owners.

## Environmental Resource Center

P.O. Box 819, Ketchum; (208) 726-4333; [www.ercsv.org](http://www.ercsv.org)

Programs are free to our members. Suggested donation for non-members: \$10/individual, \$20 family. Attendance will be capped at 25 individuals, so registration is strongly recommended. To register, call the ERC at 208.726.4333.

## Jan 14 – Winter Animal Tracking

The ERC is thrilled to present the inimitable Ann Christensen! Ann has been sharing her passion and knowledge for the outdoors and our amazing home with valley youth and families for decades. We are honored to have her join the ERC this January for one of her legendary winter animal tracking workshops. Spend the day learning how to decipher the messages animals leave behind in the snow.

Winter Wildlife Events continues on page 4...

# Winter Wildlife Events cont...

We'll meet at the ERC office (471 North Washington, between 4th and 5th Streets) at 9:45 a.m. to sign in and arrange carpools, spend some time learning basics indoors, and depart to head north to our tracking destination. We'll return to the ERC at 2:00 p.m. Bring snowshoes (and poles if you'd like), plenty of warm clothes, and a lunch. No dogs please. Ann and the ERC will provide the teaching resources you will need for a successful day in the field.

## Jan. 22 and Feb 26 – Snowshoe Birding

Winter in the Wood River Valley is, perhaps unexpectedly, an amazing place for birds. We all know that a great number of birds migrate south in the winter, and many of our summer residents have left us for warmer destinations. However, with it's waters open year-round, Silver Creek Preserve is the southern destination for many amazing birds. This winter, join local birder Poo Wright-Pulliam on an exciting adventure – snowshoe birding at Silver Creek Preserve. We will meet at the Park and Ride in Hailey (River and Bullion) at 9:45 to sign in and form carpools, and depart for Silver Creek at 10:00 a.m. We will return to Hailey at 2:00 p.m. Please bring snowshoes (and poles if you'd like), warm clothes, lunch, and binoculars if you have them. The ERC will provide two high powered scopes, and field guides and binoculars to share. No dogs please.

## Feb. 4 – Storytelling in the Snow!

When you look at the snow as a blank page in a storybook, your imagination quickly fills it with tales of adventure and survival! Join ERC AmeriCorps members Hannah Beane and Hadley DeBree on a unique journey into turning a creative eye towards the signs and symbols left in the snow. During this workshop, we will blend natural history with a bit of whimsy and fantasy to help families discover a new perspective on the winter world.

While we will look for tracks and other animal sign, we will focus more on a sense of place and less on concrete identification, making it an ideal adventure for families with younger children - but the young at heart of all ages are welcome!

The workshop will take place from

10:00 a.m. until noon, and we will meet at the Adam's Gulch Trailhead

## Feb. 28 – Winter Skills Camping

You've had the gear, now you just need the nerve – take the plunge into winter camping! Join ERC AmeriCorps member Hannah Beane in this overnight workshop that will give you the skills – and confidence – you need to camp safely and comfortably in the snowy world.

We are still working to confirm the details on this workshop, including location and start time. Dinner and hot beverages will be provided. Please contact us to receive more information as it becomes available.

The workshop is ideal for individuals who already have the needed winter camping gear, but you may also rent equipment from a local gear shop if you like to test the (frozen) waters before making the investment.

Minimum age for this workshop is 13. Participants ages 13-16 must be accompanied by an adult. Registration cost is \$35 members/\$45 non-members. A full gear list will be sent to you upon registration.

**Foothills Learning Center**  
3188 Sunset Peak Rd., Boise;  
(208) 514-3755; [www.cityofboise.org/Bee/Foothills/index.aspx](http://www.cityofboise.org/Bee/Foothills/index.aspx)

*Second Sat. Programs are from 10am to 2pm. All ages welcome! Free; no registration is required. Please leave pets at home-thanks!*

## Jan. 14 - Fun Furry Fliers

Did you know that bats find their food with their ears, are nocturnal and can eat hundreds of mosquitoes in one hour? Fly over to the Foothills Learning Center on the second Saturday in January to learn more about the only mammal that can soar in the sky. Our resident graduate fellow Emerald Shirley leads the fun.

## Feb. 11 – Cold Play

Bill London from Idaho Fish and Game is an extraordinary teacher and storyteller. Learn how birds and game animals adapt to the challenges of a harsh Idaho winter.

Compare the pelts of deer in summer and winter. Find out how animals are adapted to the changing seasons.

## Mar. 10 - It's The End of the World as We Know It!

And we feel fine. Resident geologist Bryant Ware will lead hands-on activities showing the causes and effects of geologic hazards such as earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis and more. It will be fun for all ages to explore the tremendous power of earth's unstoppable forces.

## MK Nature Center

600 S. Walnut St., Boise; (208) 334-2225; <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/education/mknc/>

Join our favorite experts with a brand new lunch and learn series

All Winter Wednesdays are from 11:00am—12:30pm at the MK Nature Center. Gourmet soup and salad lunches from OpenTable Catering. Cost is \$16.50 per session, per person

## Jan. 11- Tracking wildlife in winter

## Jan. 25- Raptors of the Boise River

## Feb. 8- Care & feeding of backyard birds

## Feb. 22- Winter survival of deer & elk

## March 7- Creating a garden plan with native plants

Register and purchase tickets at [www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com)

Limited to 20 participants

For more information please call 208-334-2225

## Ponderosa State Park

1920 N Davis Ave., McCall; (208) 634-2164; <http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov/parks/ponderosa.aspx>

Ponderosa State Park is a great place to view winter wildlife. The park is closed to vehicles at the Activity Center in the winter, but strap on a set of Nordic skis or snowshoes and enjoys the trails. We have groomed skate and classic trails throughout the park. We have marked snowshoe trails. They all wind through stands of 200-300 year old Ponderosa pine, western larch and firs. The possible wildlife that

may be viewed include: foxes, grouse, woodpeckers, pine siskins, nuthatches, chickadees, pine squirrels, owls, coyotes, mule deer, and moose. If you don't see the animals, they do leave their tracks in the snow. Mounts of some of the parks animals are available for viewing at the Visitor Center in front of a larger fireplace.

Some of the park events this winter include: Free Nordic Ski and Snowshoe Day - January 7th, McCall Outdoor Science School clinics on snowshoeing and Nordic skiing throughout the winter, and Ski Joring Day – early March. Rangers are glad to take school groups or organizations on snowshoe tours of the park looking for signs of wildlife. Please make your arrangements several weeks in advance by call 1-208-634-2164, and asking for Terri.

If you would like to stay overnight at Ponderosa State Park, we have deluxe cabins to rent, just minutes from downtown McCall. Where you can watch the foxes roam the park from inside your warm cabin. Reservation can be made at 1-888-922-6743.

More information about fees, events, and cabins this can be found at [parksandrecreation.idaho.gov](http://parksandrecreation.idaho.gov) with links to Ponderosa State Park or call 1-208-634-2164, between 10 AM and 5 PM.

**The World Center for Birds of Prey**  
5668 West Flying Hawk Lane, Boise; (208) 362-8687; [www.peregrinefund.org](http://www.peregrinefund.org)

## Jan.21 & Feb 18- FREE Family Field Trip Saturdays

Visit the World Center anytime between 10am-4pm and watch live bird presentations (10.45am, 12.15pm, 1.30pm, 3.15pm), explore the archives of falconry, and learn interesting facts about birds of prey.



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Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game  
P. O. Box 25, Boise, ID 83707-0025

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Do you drive a car? Do you pay taxes? If you answered yes to both of these questions, you can help support nongame wildlife in Idaho! If you are reading this newsletter, you probably already have an Idaho Wildlife license plate! Thank you!

The proceeds from your plate purchase help programs and projects directed toward species not hunted, fished or trapped (over 90% of Idaho's wildlife including plants!)

Another way you can make a difference in wildlife conservation in Idaho is on your 2011 tax form. This option is located on line 33 of Idaho Tax form 40. Donate any amount and feel great that you are supporting nongame fish, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and birds!



**DO SOMETHING WILD!**  
Check off a gift for watchable wildlife on your Idaho income tax form. It's deductible!

*Thank You to All Contributors*

- Barbara + Clark Barlow
- Anne Bowler
- Matthew Gibson
- Dr. June Heilman
- Kelly McKittrick
- Merlyn Nelson
- Ben Ramsey
- Cassandra Sanchez
- Alexander Sapiens
- Cory Sellers
- Bob Sommer
- Eileen Stukel

The following people made direct donations, purchased or renewed a wildlife license plate, or let us know of a tax check-off donation between October through December 2011. This list represents those who marked the contributor box when they donated to the Wildlife Diversity Program. However, many subscribers not listed here have contributed generously and Idaho's nongame wildlife thanks you ALL!



Snowy owl; © Envirotex/ Creative Common, Flickr



# JOIN THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

## COUNT FOR FUN, COUNT FOR THE FUTURE

December 2011--As movie-goers watch the stars of *The Big Year* in their quest to count birds, some may be motivated to try the hobby for the first time. The annual Great Backyard Bird Count is the perfect opportunity. The event is hosted by Audubon, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, and Canadian partner Bird Studies Canada. The results provide a snapshot of the whereabouts of more than 600 bird species.

Anyone can participate in this free event and no registration is needed. Watch and count birds for at least 15 minutes on any day of the count, February 17-20, 2012. Enter your results at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org), where you can watch as the tallies grow across the continent. The four-day count typically records more than 10 million observations.

"When thousands of people all tell us what they're seeing, we can detect patterns in how birds are faring from year to year," said Janis Dickinson, director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a perfect example of Citizen Science," says Audubon Chief Scientist, Gary Langham. "Like Audubon's Christmas Bird Count, volunteers help us with data year after year, providing scientific support that is the envy of many institutions. It's also a lot of fun."

The 2011 GBBC brought in more than 92,000 bird checklists submitted by participants from across the United States and Canada. Altogether, bird watchers identified 596 species with 11.4 million bird observations. Results from the 2011 GBBC included:

- Increased reports of Evening Grosbeaks, a species that has been declining;
- A modest seasonal movement of winter finches farther south in their search for food;
- The Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported from Alaska for the first time, more evidence of an introduced species rapidly expanding its range.

Although it's called the Great "Backyard" Bird Count, the count extends well beyond backyards. Lots of participants choose to head for national parks, nature centers, urban parks, nature trails, or nearby sanctuaries. For more information, including bird-ID tips, instructions, and past results, visit [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

### How to do the Great Backyard Bird Count: Feb. 17-20, 2012

#### 1. Plan to count birds for at least 15 minutes on one or more days of the count.

You can count each day or just some of the days and you can count in different places. Just be sure to keep a separate list of birds for each day and each location.

#### 2. For each type of bird you see, count the most you see at any one time.

For example, maybe you see two chickadees when you start watching, then five chickadees a few minutes later. The number you put on your list for chickadees is five. Do not add two plus five. (This way you don't accidentally count the same bird twice.)

#### 3. Enter your results on the Great Backyard Bird Count website ([www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org))

Then watch the maps as more and more people enter their reports.

American tree sparrow; © Lesley Mattuchio

### Windows to Wildlife

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