



The Nature Center Stream



W I N T E R

The Seasonal Newsletter of the MK Nature Center

2 0 1 3



LONG AWAITED PROJECT GETS UNDERWAY

Marcus Pierce, a local artist, was selected to design and paint an aquatic ecology-themed mural on the 200 square feet of concrete supporting our largest and most popular fish-viewing windows- those at the Alpine Lake (Waterfall).

For nearly 10 years now we have been planning to beautify the concrete infrastructure that supports our fish-viewing windows. Our vision is to increase the educational value and aesthetic features of the Nature Center by adorning the concrete with very classy, nature-themed art. Once again, the generosity of our supporters has allowed us to take on another special project, which could not be achieved otherwise.

This project was made possible by: Willow Hahn, Scott and Susan Prestel and Family, Lori Schram, Mick and Joey Chase, the Pierose/Scantling/Olson/Shanafelt/Gleason Clan (as a gift to their parents), the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and our friends at the Sawtooth Fish Hatchery who gave us their fish feeding donation money. A big thanks to all of you!

Among other public art works, Marcus is noted for the beautiful steelhead trout that has become synonymous with Tom Grainey's Sporting Pub in downtown Boise and the Morley Nelson (Birds of Prey) Mural at Morley Nelson Elementary and Community Center.



A close up of some of Marcus's work. More to come in the next edition of the newsletter.





DEALING WITH LOSSES

Dave Cannamela, MK Nature Center Superintendent

Losing loved ones is part of life. It hurts and it will always hurt. Accepting these realities is a helpful first step to dealing with the pain. Recalling and embracing the memories takes away the sting and brings a smile to our faces. As perplexing as it seems, it's quite an adaptation to be able to hurt so badly and manage a smile at the same time. We lost two dear friends this fall; Jerry Conley and Ralph Schaeffer, different in so many ways, but the same in our hearts, and both very endearing characters.

This newsletter features these two men. I hope you take the time to read about them and appreciate their contribution to the Nature Center and to humanity.

I say this all the time- the best thing about this job is the friends I make- when I leave this joint, I get to keep them. Our hearts go out to our friends in their time of need, and we hope our friendship will provide some comfort. Please understand, your visits are precious to us.

MK Nature Center-Your Face-to-Fish Connection

HO, HO, HO! 2012 BIRDSEED SALE



Santa sitting with 11 year old William at MK Nature Center. A caribou (not Rudolph, or any member of Santa's team) poses in the background. Santa was a new addition to our Bird Seed Sale this year. Hopefully, we can get him back next year.

Our annual bird seed sale was a success and we thank all of you who came and supported us! And a thank you to Julie and Boyd Steele (owners of Wild Birds Unlimited in Boise) for partnering with us for this event! Your support is much appreciated!

Jerry Conley



When Jerry's name comes up, it's natural for people to think of him first in reference to his career; and rightfully so. Jerry Conley was the youngest Fish and Game director ever in the nation, and Idaho's longest serving director (16 years). He led the Department during some interesting years; the murder of two Conservation Officers, the beginning of nongame funding, the creation of Citizens Against Poaching, and the creation of the Wildlife Congress. And of course, he played a large role in the creation of the Nature Center back in 1991.

But what really makes us smile, and sometimes laugh out loud, is thinking of his warmth, his smirk, his smart-alecky mannerisms, his positive attitude and his ability to get things done. I didn't know Jerry very well in the early part of my career- it was only when I came here to the Nature Center and Jerry and Janet would come visit that I really got the opportunity to enjoy the full force of their friendship. Jerry would put his hand on my shoulder and tell me all kinds of stories about the Nature Center (and other things). Two favorites: the one about Mary Agee picking the paint colors, and the day the steelhead were stocked in the river and he caught two just outside of the NC. There was something about the way he told stories that made me always look forward to hearing them, over and over again. Jerry was always complimentary about what we (the Nature Center staff) had done with the place. I'm gonna miss Jerry and those talks, but right now I'm gonna think about Jerry with that smirky, devilish smile on his face and twinkle in his eye, and I'm gonna smile myself.

Ralph Schaeffer



Ralph Schaeffer was a peach of a guy- that's how my mom would put it. And there's really no better way to capture it. Everyone that knew him, knew him as "RalphandArleen," the cutest, most volunteering couple in Boise. You name a place in Boise, they've volunteered there- and a lot. They worked at the Idaho Botanical Garden, the Discovery Center, Idaho Conservation League, The Idaho State Historical Museum, and of course, the Nature Center. Unless they were traveling on some adventure, they were here to work every special event. Being from Connecticut and having relatives from Long Island, unlike the Idahoans, I was not shocked and dismayed by the accent and the mannerisms; hell, that's my normal. But it sure was funny to watch peoples' reaction to it.

You know how a dog perks up its ears and cocks its head when he's totally perplexed? That's the reaction they got with their thick New England accents- what the heck is that?

Ralph was invaluable to us in all respects. The sheer volume of work that he did for us is ridiculous, but the value of his friendship, personality and character is immeasurable and lasting. Just last summer, Ralph replaced most of the fence posts along the Nature Center's perimeter fence-by himself.

What a character- the mood always got better when Ralph came through the Nature Center door, exclaiming, "Hey BABE!" to his wife Arleen who was staffing our front counter. And now I'm having one of those moments when I'm struck with pain and sorrow, but smiling because of what I still have and what will never go away.



Ralph is pictured here with Lyla Olson at the 2011 Holiday Party at MK Nature Center. Not usually so friendly with strangers, Lyla caught on quickly to the kind of guy Ralph was!

MINDY JACKSON-PERRING

Sara Focht, MK Nature Center Education Coordinator

Mindy Jackson-Perring has been volunteering at MKNC since the summer of 2011. Mindy found herself with a little free time and searched “good and hard for an organization [she] believed in wholeheartedly.” She has always loved plants and animals, so she contacted Idaho Department of Fish and Game and eventually ended up at the Nature Center, doing some volunteer work. Mindy’s contribution to MKNC has gone far and wide since then. She has helped us with Salmon and Steelhead Days, International Migratory Bird Day, the Bird Seed Sale and has staffed the sturgeon station at Face-to-Fish Days. She also is replacing all of our plant identification signs on the grounds (which have faded from the sun).

Because of her hard work and dedication to MKNC, she received the Hahn Family Scholarship for 2012. The purpose of this award, which is given annually, is to help fund the education of natural resource students. Mindy is a General Studies Major with a Biology and Environmental Studies minor at BSU and will graduate in May of 2013.

When not helping at the Nature Center, or attending classes, Mindy is outside! She might be camping, fishing, riding ATVs, or on a boat! She ultimately wants to be a pilot and would love to work for IDFG if it all fits together.

We appreciate all the skills Mindy brings to MKNC. Her knowledge, professionalism, and kind personality create a bright spot at the Nature Center.



Donning her Salmon and Steelhead Days volunteer shirt, Mindy helps students from Riverside Elementary learn about fungus! I contacted Mindy when staffing the Riverside Rangers program and it turns out she is a great teacher. Is there anything this woman cannot do?

5TH MASTER NATURALIST CLASS BEGINS IN 2013

January 15th will mark the beginning of the 5th Idaho Master Naturalist Program class in Boise! MK Nature Center partners with the Idaho Botanical Garden and the Foothills Learning Center to sponsor the local Sagebrush-steppe Chapter.

The Idaho Master Naturalist Program aims to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to actively work toward stewardship of Idaho's natural environment. Program components consist of 40 hours of education provided by the sponsors, and 40 hours of volunteer time provided by the participants. Upon completion, the participants certify in the program.

The 2013 class is full, but if you are an adult interested in learning more about Idaho's birds, mammals, and plants, and you want to volunteer your time toward conservation in Idaho, contact Sara Focht at sara.focht@idfg.idaho.gov to get on a list for next year.



Left: 2010 Master Naturalist Leah Cruz finds a surprise while volunteering to maintain nesting boxes! Middle: Woodland star flowers are among the first to bloom in the Boise Foothills in the spring. These were found on a Master Naturalist hike near Military Reserve, Boise. Right: 2011 Master Naturalist Claudia Klokke looks for birds at the Idaho Botanical Garden during the Ornithology class.

TEEN DONATES TO NATURE CENTER

Naomi Clayton (13) became a Bat Mitzvah this summer at the synagogue Ahavath Beth Israel. She is an 8th grader at Anser Charter School. She plays tennis, basketball, backpacks with her family, loves horses and might want to be a veterinarian. She sounds like a pretty typical teenager. What is not so typical is her donation to MK Nature Center!

Naomi donated a portion of her Bat Mitzvah money to us! The amount donated a multiple of 18. Eighteen is the numerical value of the Hebrew word for life, "chai." In the photo to the right, Dave Cannamela happily accepts her donation. Thank you Naomi!



MK Nature Center-Your Face-to-Fish Connection

RIVERSIDE RANGERS-THE BEST YET

Riverside Rangers is an annual education program conducted at Riverside Elementary School in Boise. During the fall of 2012, we completed our 4th Riverside Rangers program. We were thanked with beautiful golden sunshine and comfortable temperatures all four days! Nearly 350 children from Kindergarten through 3rd grade each enjoyed 2 1/2 hours of outdoor education. This year, the stations were especially exciting and well-received.

Kids were wowed at the “blood sucker” station as volunteer educators used fake blood to show how parasites can transfer diseases! And live leaches! Need I say more? Crayfish were presented up close and personal at the “Mudbugs” station. Our poor crayfish were pretty terrorized by the end of the week. Recorded bird sounds were broadcast at the “Tweet, Tweet” station. Many times, the real kingfishers put on a show and the students got to see those amazing creatures fish the Boise River. The “H2O” station got the kids looking at the hills just beyond the river and making their own watershed sculptures. And last but not least were the Fungus and Cavity stations. Kids explored mushrooms and got to discover who lives in dead trees.

And once again, it was not just the kids who had fun. The volunteer educators and MKNC staff, though tired at the end, found the event very rewarding. Even though MKNC is an amazing place, it is nice to get away and teach offsite.

Thank you to Ruthann McManus and Becky Koessler for all your great scheduling for the event. We are looking forward to next fall for the 5th go around!

Volunteers and staff who made Riverside Rangers possible:

<i>Vicky Runnoe (IDFG)</i>	<i>Elyse Begnoche</i>
<i>Kevin Laughlin</i>	<i>Joyce Harvey-Morgan</i>
<i>Tim Merrick</i>	<i>Sara Focht (IDFG)</i>
<i>Claudia Klokke</i>	<i>Chris Mebane</i>
<i>Dave Cannamela (IDFG)</i>	<i>Mindy Jackson</i>
<i>Michelle Lasowski</i>	<i>Sandy Sweet</i>
<i>Edna Vizgirdas (USFS)</i>	<i>Amanda Bremner</i>
<i>Ron Lopez</i>	



Above left: Mushroom prints! Bottom left: Sara Focht (MKNC) leads a birdwalk. Wow, look at that kingfisher perched right in front of the kids! Below: GK-12 Fellow Elyse Begnoche helps students sculpt a watershed.

As a result of the 2012 Riverside Rangers Program, MK Nature Center received a generous donation from a Riverside Elementary School family. Acting as chaperones during Riverside Rangers, these parents were impressed with program! We could not reach the family to get permission to thank them publically, but the donation was very much appreciated! Private donations to the Nature Center, like this one, are an essential piece of our funding puzzle!

MK Nature Center-Your Face-to-Fish Connection

NATURE CENTER SUPERINTENDENT WINS COMMUNITY AWARD

The “Leadership in Motion Awards” are given out by the Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (Compass) in order to recognize businesses, individuals, and projects that have demonstrated leadership in supporting the goals and vision of the Treasure Valley’s regional long-range transportation plan, Communities in Motion.

Awards were presented on December 17, 2012. The “Leadership by Example” was awarded to MKNC’s Superintendent, Dave Cannamela! Dave lives 10.5 miles from MKNC and he rides his bike over 80 percent of the time. This totaled to 3,557 miles last year! Dave rides for fitness, no doubt, but more importantly, Dave believes that individual actions matter! He believes that each time you can ride your bike and not drive...you contribute to cleaner air, less resource use, and a better quality of life in the valley. He admits, most people could not ride their bikes every day, but he contends that everybody can ride once a week or take the bus or carpool....even just once a week. It all adds up!

With a 21 mile bike ride each day, you would think the man would be tired, but he rides in on the bike each day full of energy and spark....ready to teach, dig in the dirt, greet customers or write reports and verify timesheets (his two favorites). www.compassidaho.org.



Dave Cannamela receives the Leadership by Example award from Ada County Highway District Commissioner



VISITOR FINDS HIS PICTURE AT THE NATURE CENTER



Steve Walker poses by a picture of himself and his brother, Travis when they were about 12 years old. Steve comes in regularly to look around, but never noticed his photo on our wall at MK Nature Center until this year! He was surprised to see himself there!

POLLEN-NATION

The Boise National Forest and the MK Nature Center have teamed to get kids outside, learning about their local forest habitat! The partnership comes in the form of a grant from the Forest Service to the Nature Center. It is comprised of many different projects:

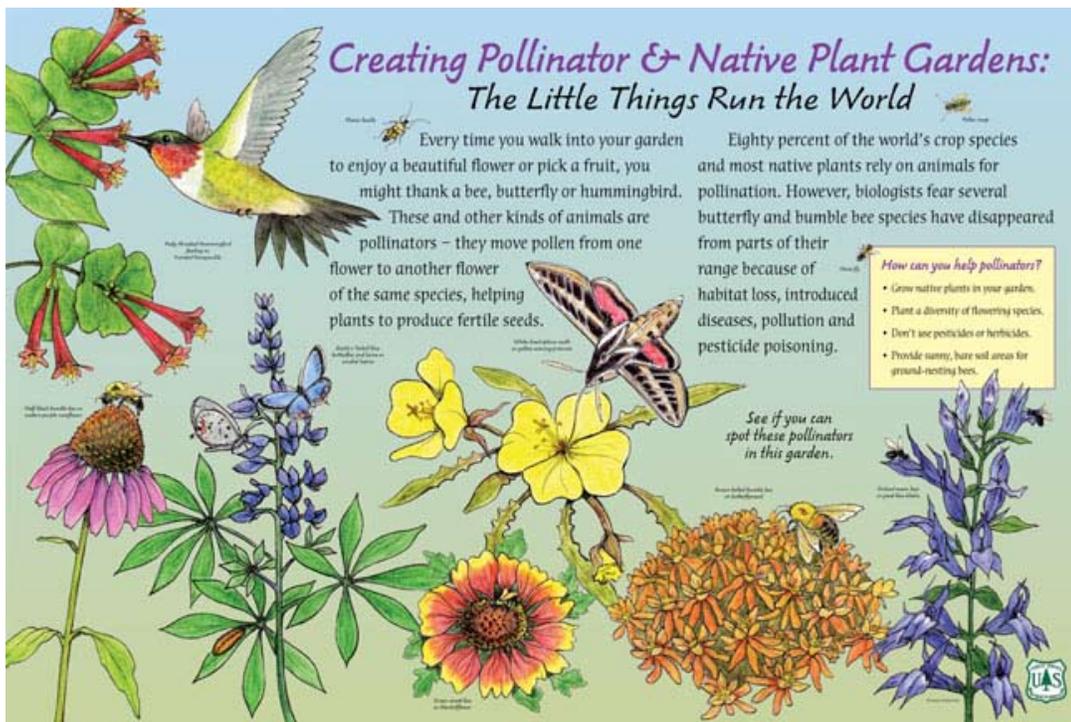
A pollinator garden: We call this area Pollen-Nation! It is the fenced garden outside the Nature Center Grounds to the north of the front door. We have native plants and flowers growing there. It is where we will be able to teach kids about native plants and pollinators, and do nature art and journaling.

Free programs for underserved kids: We are offering a variety of free programs for underserved youth at schools, community centers, and at the Nature Center.

“Earth Fest” during Unplug and Be Outside Week: On Saturday, April 27th, we will host a free public event at the Nature Center. We’re calling it “Earth Fest”. Perfect timing! That is the same day as the Native Plant Sale. A coincidence? I think not! There will be a variety of fun & exciting activities for the whole family!

Promotional video to highlight the efforts: IDFG videographers will help document our efforts and successes.

The whole point is to get kids outside and to get them learning about the local forest, habitats, & recreational opportunities near where they live. Nearly everything we do at MKNC can be related to the forest! So far, we have provided free programs to over 200 underserved youth. We hope to connect many more children with nature in 2013. We enjoy teaching children who might otherwise not be able to get to the Nature Center!



This beautiful sign from the Forest Service now stands out by the pollinator garden. Most of the plants featured on the sign are growing there.

MK Nature Center-Your Face-to-Fish Connection

CELIA MORENO RECEIVES 2012 HAHN SCHOLARSHIP

Celia Moreno is also a recipient of the 2012 Hahn Scholarship (see Mindy Jackson-Perring article on page 4)! Celia is a sophomore in the Social Work Program at BSU. When not in school or working at MK Nature Center, Celia likes to read, watch horror movies and fish!

She enjoys her work study time at the Nature Center because, “[She gets] to be outside, to play in dirt and learn more information about the animals and the Nature Center from the staff.” She also is amused by our resident deer population that eats all the flowers!

Her goal in life is to use her social work degree to help teen moms. Her mother and her cousin were teen moms and she has seen how difficult it was for them. Celia also hopes to go to Kenya on a missions trip. She thinks, “the experience of visiting the people that live in the harshest conditions will teach [her] more than [she] could ever teach them about the true meaning of hope and happiness.”



Celia Moreno, a BSU workstudy student at MKNC is visited by Santa just before Christmas. Santa delivered Celia a nice present...the Hahn Family Scholarship (see Mindy Jackson-Perring article on page 4). Celia has been working at MK since January 2012.

CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY VISITS MK NATURE CENTER

Mark Your Calendar!

Jason Martin of Cornell Lab of Ornithology will be presenting the NestWatch Program on Friday, January 11th at 6:00 pm at the Nature Center. NestWatch is a citizen science program run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that monitors status and trends in the reproductive biology of birds across the United States, including when nesting occurs, number of eggs laid, and how many hatchlings survive. Every year, thousands of volunteers find and monitor nests, and report their findings online at NestWatch.org. These observations are added to a continually growing database that is used by researchers to study how nesting biology is affected by environmental change. While contributing extremely valuable information to science, NestWatch volunteers also learn firsthand about the often unseen world of nesting birds and form lifelong connections with the natural world. Come learn all about the NestWatch program and how you can make a difference. <http://nestwatch.org>

The **Cornell** Lab  of Ornithology

MK Nature Center - Your Face-to-Fish Connection

MK BIRD HELPS IN RESEARCH PROJECT

Julie Heath, Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, BSU

Many of you may already know Fiona. She is a female American Kestrel that came to the MK Nature Center earlier in 2012 after an injury made her survival in the wild unlikely. During her time at the MK Nature Center she has captivated many visitors with her graceful flights and tail-bobs. While Fiona is primarily an education bird at the Nature Center, she has also been moonlighting as a research assistant in Dr. Julie Heath's laboratory at Boise State University. Julie and her graduate students Allie Anderson and Terra Gleeson, are studying wild



Graduate Student Allie Anderson watches Professor Julie Heath (BSU) remove a harness from Fiona the American Kestrel.

kestrels around the Treasure Valley. Some of the kestrels that nest near Boise migrate away from Idaho to winter in southern areas. Other kestrels stay here year-round, tolerating our winters to get first dibs on the territories. As many of you know, our winters have become less severe over the past 30 years. In particular, days with snow cover (which make hunting for voles, the favorite food of kestrels, quite difficult) are far less common in the valley now than they were in the past. Consequently, more and more kestrels have been sticking around all winter. In fact, our local populations may be transitioning from a mostly migratory population to a mostly resident population as our winters become less severe.

So how does Fiona get involved? Well, it has always been challenging to track birds across the entire year. Birds that are banded in nest boxes here in Idaho during the breeding season may never be recaptured in their wintering areas which include large parts of the western US and Mexico. In recent years, there have been some major advances in the miniaturization of technologies that can be used to track birds. One particularly promising piece of equipment is called a "geolocator" a small instrument about the size of nickel that records the number of daylight hours wherever the bird may be. This information can be used to predict a birds location on different days and allow for better migration distance estimates.

To better understand the migratory and over-wintering strategies of kestrels in the Treasure Valley, the Heath lab is planning to fit wild kestrels with geolocators. Of course, these geolocators, while small and lightweight, must be carried by the birds; which leads us back to our research assistant. Fiona has been modeling different "harness" designs for Boise State researchers who have been able to observe her (as she is accustomed to being around people) closely to see how well different harnesses fit. Fiona has helped Boise State researchers refine harness designs to where they are confident that fitting wild kestrels with geolocators to study their movements will not interfere with their typical daily routine. The Heath lab has been grateful to Fiona (and the MK Nature Center) for this service, and looks forward to reporting results of the "geolocator" study to the Nature Center in the future.